

Vol. 1 Issue 6 June 2021

Portlaoise GAA Club Newsletter

Edited by: Cathal O'Sullivan



TOWN TATTTLER

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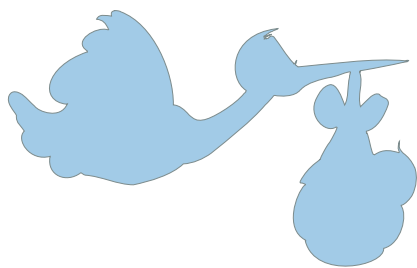
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Editorial

Hello and welcome to the 6th issue of Portlaoise GAA Club's new newsletter, Town Tattler. We are halfway through the year and it is incredible to see our teams back out on the pitch and continuing represent our club at the highest level. This month is Pride month internationally and it was a goal of mine to see the Pride flag raised at Rathleague. It might not seem like much to some people but to anyone within our club who is struggling with their identity or sexuality it means so much to know that Rathleague is a safe space. I can't thank everyone within the club enough for the support for diversity and inclusion in the club. I hope you enjoy this edition of, Town Tattler,

Cathal



New Arrival

Murry Rogers and his wife Líadhan are delighted to announce the birth of their son, Jonah. He was born on 17th June. Congratulations from all at Portlaoise GAA.



Portlaoise GAA's 'Lockdown Bingo' has been rebranded as 'Club Bingo Online'. The team behind it all have been doing trojan work to ensure that it is a continued success and all working towards the benefit of the The Town. Thank You all for the never ending support!



Congrats Lads!

Portlaoise were crowned 2020 U-13 football champions in the Centre of Excellence after a hard fought win over Portarlington last week.



PRIDE OF THE CLUB

Uefa's decision to decline requests to light up Munich's Allianz Arena with the pride flag ahead of the Euro 2020 match between Germany and Hungary reminds me why we still need Pride every year, especially in sport.

Uefa have since added the Pride colours to their logo, however this and their 'Respect the Rainbow' statement is meaningless if they are to continue to allow countries dictate their politics.

However, the reactions from Irish people across social media from different sporting organisations has given me hope, although there is still a way to go.

Growing up there wasn't a Sunday where I wasn't at Fr. Brown Avenue. We would spend an hour hurling followed by an hour playing football - I always enjoyed football more than hurling, probably because I could see the ball better.

I knew I was gay since I was around 10, I didn't really know what being gay was, but I knew I didn't like girls. In school and on the pitch, being called 'gay' was the worst thing that could have ever happened to me.

I stopped playing hurling at age 12, but football was still something I enjoyed as well as rugby. I wasn't necessarily masculine, but I definitely loved being part of the team and regardless of my talents on the pitch, I really liked it.

As I got that bit older, I was probably 17, my sexuality was something that was fully clear in my head. I was also after getting that bit better at football, at least I thought so.

I was starting matches, which was

a first for me. I was really enjoying playing and I didn't want to do anything to jeopardize that. Especially coming out.

I thought I had pulled the wool over everyone's eyes with my sexuality, but I think my team knew before I was ready to tell them. The thought of coming out and being part of a football team was unheard of and scared me.

What would happen if I did? Would I get dropped to the bench again? Would teammates feel awkward changing with me? Or worse would they bully me? Your mind goes into overdrive.

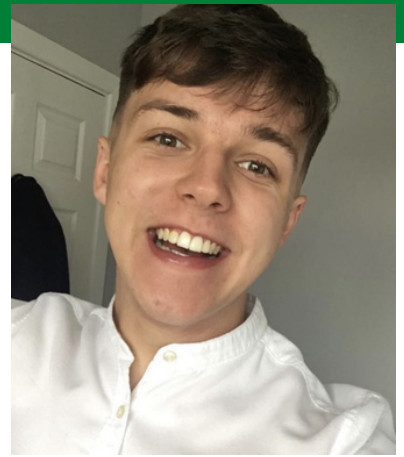
I'm a very positive person, a glass two-thirds full kind of guy. So, I never really get down or go to a dark place, looking back that was probably the worst thing I've gone through because your mind just thinks in worst case scenarios.

Donal Óg Cusack was finished hurling by the time he opened up about his sexuality. In the same fashion, I wanted to do the same and I decided moving away to university in Limerick was the ideal reason to not play football regularly, it also allowed me to open up about my sexuality.

I came out to my friends in 2017 and my family the following year, they had the best reaction and I couldn't have asked them for better.

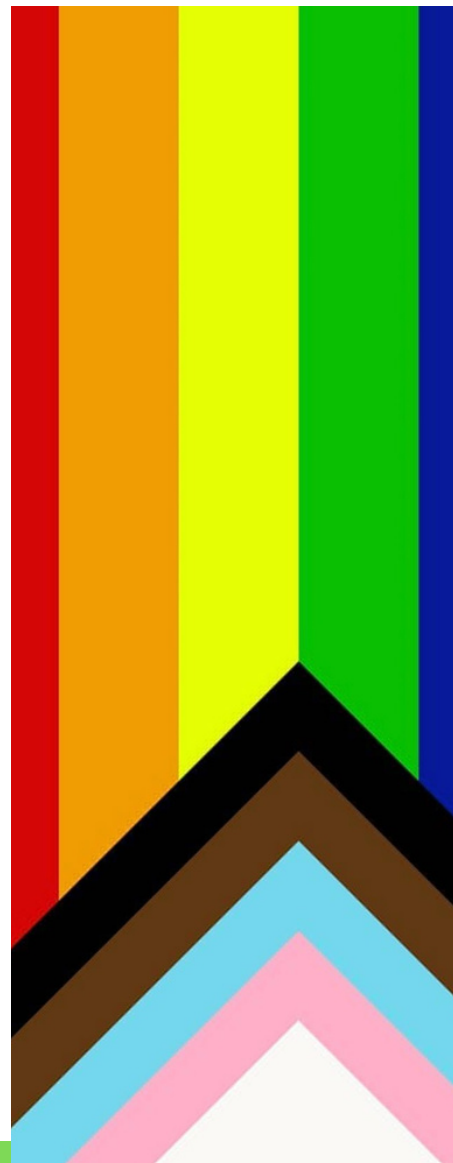
I knew my mom, Jacinta would be so good about it all. My dad, Mick was where my fear lied. He played football, rugby and even hurled for Laois in his prime.

I told Mom on a Wednesday and I remembering crying and she hugged me and told me that it was ok. I asked her to tell Dad. I woke up the next



morning, he had made me breakfast which is standard procedure for the two of us. He shook my hand and told me he was proud of me. I know not everyone has it this easy, but I am so grateful for how my family reacted.

Returning to play for a junior match in the summer of 2018 put the fear of God in me.



Regardless of whether anyone knew already, it was the first match I had played since coming out publicly.

I walked into the dressing room and my heart was in my mouth. We changed, managers spoke, the usual dressing room craic. Nobody said anything.

It wasn't that I was shocked, because the people in Portlaoise GAA are some of the best I've met, but there was a sense of relief, a weight off my shoulders.

Now, I am not one to take anything to heart and I was in and out of playing that year but if someone did slag me it was always coming from a good place - and I usually gave as good as I got.

Studies and college life got the better of me and I haven't played in three years, but I have recently started helping out with some of the media work within the club and it was like I never left. It is a close knit family in Rathleague, where a Pride flag has been raised for the month of June.

I have been welcomed back in with open arms and warned to dust off my boots.

The decision to come out to teammates isn't one that people should take lightly and there are some GAA teams and rural communities around Ireland where coming out wouldn't be the easiest thing to do.

The GAA are getting better every year at being inclusive on a national scale, however I think from a grassroots level we need to see more openness to the conversation around the LGBTQI+ community. We also need more role models setting an example in order to help those 17-year-olds who are at home coming home from training, afraid to be their true selves.

I spoke to Geraldine McTavish recently, the GAA's first Diversity and Inclusion officer. She said:

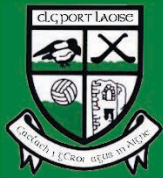
"I spoke to a couple of individuals who had walked away from their GAA club because of different things, wording and verbal abuse and I spoke to them about 'I haven't left the GAA because I want to change it from the inside out' and you can't do that if you're on the outside, you have to help educate while you're in the GAA - and that's the best gift you can give anyone of staying, educating, explaining to people, communicating and helping them understand you."

There are inter-county GAA players and club players around the country that are part of the LGBTQI+ community and they prefer to keep their personal lives separate, and I respect that. However, looking back to my younger self if I had a role model playing on the biggest stage in the GAA, I don't think I would've felt so alone.

After all, being gay is something to be proud of, isn't that what Pride month is for.

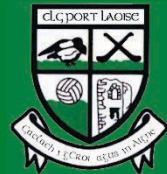


The Pride flag flying in the wind in Rathleague on Virtual Pride Day on Saturday, June 26 as Pride month for the LGBTQ+ community drew to a close.



Happy Pride Month!

June 1st - June 30th



LGBTQI+ Awareness in Portlaoise GAA

Let us start by wishing all our members a Happy Pride Month. We pride ourselves in Portlaoise GAA on being an inclusive GAA club that is open to people from all walks of life. Although the majority of our members are not part of the LGBTQI+ community, we have a duty to be allies to those in the club who are a member of the LGBTQI+ community and to those who may be struggling with their sexual orientation or identity, and do our very best as a club to support them. We hope this leaflet will help you to become more informed on the topic and help make everyone feel at home in Portlaoise GAA.

LGBTQI+ LINGO

LGBTI+

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans+ and intersex people.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Sexual and romantic attraction to other people.

LESBIAN

A woman who is attracted to other women.

GAY

Someone who is mainly attracted to people of the same gender.

BISEXUAL

Someone who is attracted to more than one gender e.g. both men and women.

PANSEXUAL

Someone whose attraction is not limited by sex or gender.

HETEROSEXUAL

Someone who is attracted to people of the opposite gender.

GENDER IDENTITY

Our deeply felt internal experience of our own gender.

GENDER EXPRESSION

How we show our gender through our clothing, hair, behaviour, etc.

TRANSGENDER

Someone whose gender identity differs from the sex they were given at birth. Trans+ includes non-binary people.

NON-BINARY

People whose gender identity is not exclusively male or female.

CISGENDER

A person whose gender identity matches the sex they were assigned at birth.

INTERSEX

People who are born with variations in their sexual anatomy or their hormonal patterns, variations that are not seen as fitting in with typical male or female bodies.

LGBTI+ BULLYING

Bullying based on prejudice or discrimination towards
LGBTI+ people.



HOW SHOULD YOU RESPOND IF A PERSON COMES OUT IN THE CLUB?

Most young people come out to a friend or another trusted individual before coming out to family. Sometimes this trusted individual is a coach or a teammate. All coaches need to be prepared for the possibility of a player coming out and the following points will support preparations:

We as a club communicate a message to all students that diversity is welcomed and respected. LGBTQI+ young people and other minority groups should be clear that they are valued, and that their identity doesn't affect their ability on the pitch. It is critical that a young LGBT person discovering their sexual orientation or gender identity feels supported and valued, regardless of whether or not they come out.

Often a young person experiences intense fear of rejection by their family and consequently finds it easier to come out to others first. A positive experience of coming out to others, where they are met with acceptance, is critical to safeguarding the young person's mental health and well-being; it can also lessen the young person's fear of disclosing to their family and friends.

HOW TO REACT IF YOU ARE BEING BULLIED OR HEAR SOMEONE BULLYING OTHERS IN THE CLUB?

- Talk with the person being bullied. Ask what you can do to help. Sometimes just chatting before and after training or matches can help.
- Listen without making judgments. The person being bullied could feel sensitive about what's going on and scared to talk about it. They may feel powerless and unable to get away from the bullying.
- Let them know you care. Show that you're a friend. Invite them into your group when training or to do things together. Being bullied hurts a person's confidence, but friends can make a huge difference.
- Tell an adult or coach you trust. Try to involve the person being bullied in the discussion. They might be afraid to tell someone, so your encouragement could help.
- Take a stand as a group. Talk with your teammates about how you can all stand up to bullying. There's strength in numbers.
- Don't repeat rumors. Bullies sometimes try to start rumours — you can help stop a rumour by not spreading it.
- Confront bullying. It takes courage, but talking to someone who's bullying lets them know that their actions aren't cool, and neither are slurs.
- Educate! Some types of bullying — like bullying someone for their race, religion, or being LGBTQI+ — is based on fear and ignorance. If you teach someone what you know about these things, you might be able to change the way they treat people.

Thank You Team Mulligan!



The Mulligan clan shrugged off the disappointment of losing the recent Junior B hurling final to pose for this great picture in O Moore Park. What a family and what a contribution they have made to their club. Eagle eyed observers may have spotted Brian, having come off with a hamstring injury, neatly placing his boots in a nearby dustbin after the game – if it's the end all townies are extremely grateful for the great memories you have given us. Thank you team Mulligan. C'mon the Town!

#ClubsFamily

Thank You!



A big thank you to Fitzfire for servicing, replacing and certifying the fire extinguishers in Rathleague. Fitzfire is owned by one of our own – former hurler with the town, Tommy ‘Humpsten’ Fitzpatrick, Tommy, as many of our more mature members will remember, had a very successful hurling career with the town. He won minor championships in 84 and 85, a Junior A title in 87 and senior titles as a dangerous corner forward in 1989 and 1991. The picture below is the ‘Year of the Row!’ 1989 and he is in the middle of front row flanked by John Taylor and Matthew Keegan.

If you are looking for someone in relation to protecting your home or business against the threat of fire don’t hesitate to call Fitzfire on 086-2257476 or 085-2437088. Website is www.fitzfire.ie. Thank you Tommy.

#GRMA

Thank You!

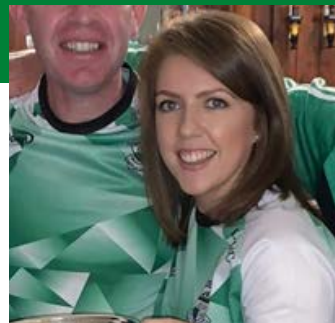


Thanks to David Coughlan, MD of Cool Springs, for kindly donating a water cooler to the club gym. David captained Portlaoise minor hurlers to championship glory in 1984 and is pictured above receiving the cup from then County Board Chairman Mr Sean Ramsbottom. Many years later he rolled back the years by lining out with this eclectic mixture of former greats below



In Conversation With: Lorraine McCormack

We caught up with well known member of Portlaoise LGFA and long time Portlaoise GAA supporter, meet Lorraine McCormack



Earliest memories of Portlaoise GAA

As a family we joke about - "if we didn't enjoy sport we'd get left behind" so my earliest memories of Portlaoise GAA would be attending my brothers, Brian and Keith's matches.

On a personal note it would be u12 with Joe Wright and Tony Ryan as managers, in the old GAA grounds, playing alongside the likes of Liadhan Cushen, Rachel Monaghan, Grainne Egan, Tara Moran Rebecca Kelly to name but a few.

Earliest involvements

I started playing football in primary school under the guidance of Mr Fennell and Mr Ahern. From there then I joined the Portlaoise Club when I was u12, in 2001- it was the first u12 team and that year I won my first county medal beating Ballylinan in a replay in O Moore Park.

Who did you look up to?

As an individual with any interest in sport, who has passed through the doors of Scoil Christ Ri, it was inevitable that you fell under the wing and guidance of Pat Critchley. His passion and commitment to sport in general is admirable and to hear the younger generation of today speak so highly of him proves what a legend he is!

Of course my family were huge influences in both my football and basketball days. Thankfully my playing days are over as some of the post-match analysis was a little brutally honest especially in football - basketball was more of a "foreign sport" so I got away with a bit more.

During your playing days, what were your highlights and disappointments?

Highlights - Winning the first Junior Ladies final since the ladies club was reformed. We played R & C Gaels in a comfortable enough battle. We then went on to win the Intermediate Championship the next year and broke into senior ranks in 2007.

Disappointment- missing out on a senior county medal, but take great privilege in being involved with the incredible bunch of girls who did last year.

Best players you played with and against?

Best players to play with would have to be Claire Dunne (current player), and Ash O Gorman, two solid backs who came out with many a ball, sometimes they didn't even have a right to win! Best players against - at juvenile level Claire Fox- St Conleths, her skill and work rate were unbelievable for her age. Maggie Murphy and Mo Nerney- Timahoe, both incredibly talented ladies and their never say die attitude always kept us to the pin of our collars in many a close encounter.

Best players in the game today?

I cannot not mention our Scoil Christ Ri girls, "the troublesome 5" - Rebecca Reddin, Ciara Byrne, Gra O Reilly, Rachel Glynn and Shauna Dooley. These girls have no fear. They have won many an All-Ireland with the school and this experience shows in the kind of players they are today. This year we have a few younger players join the squad, Eimear Marrum, Molly McNulty - both girls have huge potential and we look forward to seeing them break Junior and Senior ranks.

What is your current involvement?

I am currently the Female liaison Office for the Junior and Senior ladies, or as previously referred to in another issue as the "young mammy" to the 50 ladies that we have.

I am also involved in the Club Health and Well-being and the Grants action groups within the club.

What is your take on the development of senior ladies team over the years?

A lot of great work has been done for the development of the ladies team over the last few years, and it is great to see before our own training sessions on Tuesdays and Thursdays the huge turnout of u12, u14 and u16 girls.

The current ladies senior team, many of which I would of played with down through the years, have progressed enormously over the last 5 years, through the various coaches and and different structures, plays and

disciplines. Every lost final up to 2020, as hard as they all were, has benefited this group of girls - hindsight is a great thing I know! The current management of Stephen Duff, Ivan Byrne and Teddy McCormack, have capitalised on the foundation work that was done before them, brought the structure to another level, introduced a S & C coach and Sports Psychologist - both of which I never had in my time ha! But most importantly they instilled belief in the group- they changed the tune of "ye are just there, next year will be the year" - 2020 was the Year!

Who are the unsung heroes behind this?

There is many an unsung hero in the club - for me a special mention must go to Catherine Gavin and Deirdre Murphy. Both Ladies have done and continue to do so much for the ladies be it on the pitch or in the background. Sonny Keogh, Liam Breen and Crocky Maher - they have all looked after us on pitch 4 and ensured we had the lights when needed in the run up to the county final and our run in the Leinster campaign.

The Girls themselves- the last year and a half has been difficult and challenging and their dedication and effort hasn't gone unnoticed. The social group that we have within the team have done great work to keep the buzz and craic going within the group organising various zoom quizzes, awards nights etc.

What are your thoughts on the anomaly of different affiliations for LGFA and GAA?

All be it that there has been a lot of work done, there is plenty still to do in order to have the Ladies recognised under the GAA umbrella. Huge work has been done with regards to facility standards for the ladies, Mens GPA and the Ladies GPA are together and the fact that they are getting nearly 50k supporters at big games, which are also being televised, shows that the Ladies Gaa is getting more recognition. This has also been aided by the backing from Lidl and the 20x20 campaign which is great to see.

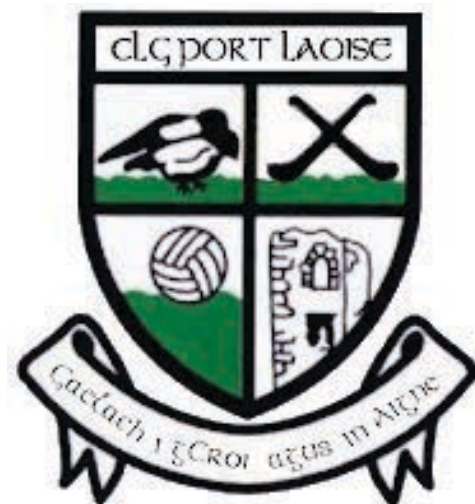
What are your hopes for Portlaoise GAA?

I would hope to see the club continue to grow and to continue its success on the field and of course a Leinster Title for the Ladies later this year- September 8th, hopefully we will be allowed supporters by then.

Off the field there is great work being done across all parts of the club, the various action groups shows that there is a movement happening and giving ownership back to the players and members of the club!

There is a feeling of a cohesive club community and the possibility of us all being under the one umbrella of Portlaoise GAA is very much welcomed and needed!

It would be great to see dressing rooms and a clubhouse in the not too distant future, a place where we can all gather again and celebrate future successes.



@portlaoisegaa



June Birthday Shoutouts



L-R: Crocky Maher, Ricky Maher, Deirdre Bohan, Kevin Farrell, Benny Carroll and Niall Gleeson. Happy Birthday to you all.

Special mention to Brian "Bruno" McCormack turned 40 on Sunday the 20th June. Happy 40th Bruno from all at Portlaoise GAA

Portlaoise Camogie June Birthday Shoutouts!



L-R: Eimear O Boyle, Mya Dunne, Cara Phelan, Abbie O Sullivan, Aimee Conlon and Aoife Morris. Happy Birthday to you all.

**Send your July Birthday Shoutouts to
pro.portlaoise.laois@gaa.ie**

TATTLER THROWBACK:

MICK DOOLEY

What are your earliest sporting memories?

My earliest memory is winning the under 13 Leinster school boys final under the management of Brother Nolan. He was an inspirational man who devoted a lot of his time and energy encouraging young people to develop their skills in sports and music. Another early memory is of winning a Leinster final with the VEC under the management of Bill Phelan. He was another great Portlaoise man who inspired and guided a lot of young people.

Who were your early influences?

There were a few people who inspired and encouraged me along the way. My parents, Brother Nolan, Bill Phelan, club players all had a huge influence on me. Bill was an influence on and off the field. He instilled in us that sport is a preparation for life, you take the ups with the downs, just life in life you win and lose. That's life and that's sport!

What players did you look up to/idolise as a kid?

As a kid I looked up to great players like Alfie Lewis, Teddy Fennelly, Paddy Bracken Rake McDonald, Pascal Delaney, John Joe Ging and John Fennell. To me

these lads were all powerful giants of football. All big physical men who went back from no one. I was fascinated with them all. I ended up playing with them at 18 years of age. I was a sub in 1969, that is the year Timahoe beat us in the final. I remember Ned Connolly turning to my wife and telling her "one swallow never made a summer". It was a great privilege for me to line out with these lads that I had followed and aspired to be like for so long.

First title 1970 and then 71 – what was it like coming onto that team as a young player?

I was 18 years old when I first played senior football for Portlaoise. I absolutely loved it. It was something I always wanted to do so I was delighted to be part of the panel. The older lads looked out for the younger lads coming onto the team and no better man than Pascal Delaney. I won my first title in 1970 but every other title that followed was just as sweet. We went onto win the Leinster Club Championship in 1972 which was a great occasion.

On to 76' – different team/style etc?

A lot of younger lads were selected in 1976. Impressive



players and all-time greats like Colm and Jerry Brown, John and Billy Bohane, Tom and Nodsy Prendergast, George Punkett and Bernie Conroy, Jimmy Bergin, Kieran Daly, Liam and Noel Scully came into the team that year. I might be missing a few names it's a long time ago now. But it was a great team.

Tell us a little bit about that great campaign, you as captain, beating Vincents, winning a final in Croker, Austin Stacks etc.?

Bill Phelan was manager that year with Paddy Critchley, Larry Dunne, and Teddy Fennelly as selectors. We had a training session the Thursday night before the county final in O'Moore Park. Teddy Fennelly gave a passionate speech after training. I still remember it to this day. He told us if it meant going through a brick wall it had to be done to win this game. I will never forget the county final against Graigcullen. It was a huge honour for me to be captain of this brilliant team. In the Leinster final we beat a brilliant St Vincents team. I have wonderful memories of winning the Leinster final that year and

and having the honour of accepting the cup in Croke Park. It's a memory I will cherish. We then went on to play Austin Stacks in the All-Ireland semi-final. The game was played in O'Moore Park, and it was full to capacity. The place was electric! Austin Stacks were a very powerful team with a lot of Kerry players, but the Portlaoise lads didn't fear them. It was a brilliant game but unfortunately, we were beaten by a few points that day.

What was it like playing with so many different great teams – the early seventies, mid to late seventies and the eighties..

In the 70s there wasn't much tactics, everyone had to win their own ball. It was more physical, there was a lot of hard hitting on and off the ball. Portlaoise were very clean players and loved playing football but there was definitely a lot of hard hitting. Players have dieticians, psychologists, and specialists for everything now. Back in the 70s the Portlaoise lads toggled out in a cow shed in Alfie Lewis' field on the Stradbally road. No such thing as dressing rooms. They have every facility now which is all positive, but the girls definitely need to be looked after and supported too. The Portlaoise team in 1970 and 1971 were mature, strong and physical team.

The 1976 team was the youngest Portlaoise team to win a county final. The early 80s were a mix of younger and more mature players like Mick Mulhall, Mick Lillis, Eamon Whelan and myself. St Josephs would have been a great team in the 70s and 80s. It was always a great game when we played each other. Paddy Doogue a great friend of mine and a gentleman was brilliant at midfield. O'Dempseys also a great team with the great John Costello at midfield. Annanough were the biggest and possibly strongest lads we came up against. That team was made up mainly of Millars. All gentlemen off the field but fine physical lads on the pitch

Who would you rate as the greatest players you played with and why?

I played on some great teams with some brilliant players. Tom Prendergast was an exceptional player. He was a natural and so talented. Colm Browne was also a brilliant and talented footballer, Atch Whelan was a great fielder and very skilful. Mick Mulhall who played in goals and also played for Laois for about 15 years was a brave and intelligent keeper. Two fine performers came to join the team in 1976 and possible 1979. They were a huge addition to the team. Mick Lillis from Clare and Sean Mullins from Dublin, we were delighted when they came!

Best players you played against?

The best player I played against was St Josephs Paddy Doogue, a giant of a man and a force to be reckoned with. There was always a good rivalry between ourselves and Josephs. I also played on John Costello of O'Dempseys, who was one of the best midfielders of the country at that time. Paddy Brophy, Mick Moore and the Lawlors of Emo were all great footballers.

What was the feeling when you finally reached the holy grail in 83?

To win the All Ireland in 1983 was indescribable. It was such a special day for the club and town! First and only time for a Laois club team to win an All Ireland. Reputations of other teams meant nothing to us, as Sean Mullins said "they can't bring medals onto the field." I was born and bred in Portlaoise so being part of the team that brought the All-Ireland cup back to the town was unreal. We had such a huge following and loyal supporters. Billy O'Brien was one of our greatest supporters and a great Portlaoise man. Have to say Portlaoise should have at least three All Irelands.

Whats the most memorable game you played in (not including 83 final)?

Most memorable for me was probably against Navan O'Mahonys from Meath. We had a lad sent off after ten minutes. I was marking Joe Cassells and when the sending off happened he was moved in full forward. Jimmy Bergin and Jimmy Harding were brilliant that day. We won by one point and it was a very tough game. Cassells went on to captain Meath to win an All Ireland final a few years after that game.

Any funny stories along the way?

There were plenty of characters on the teams I played with so we had some great times. I remember Jazz Reilly taking off a player one day and as he the player came off the field Jazz said to him "I don't blame you I blame myself for picking you." On another occasion we had a masseur and Tommey O'Reilly was injured. He was attending to Tom but Tom was trying to get his attention to tell him he was rubbing the wrong leg! One day we were playing in the Leinster club championship and Joe Keenan was marking an all-star full back and Joe shouted at me "Dooley kick in the ball this lad is useless."

You still keep a close eye on things? Have you enjoyed watching all the teams since continuing on the proud tradition?

Yes, I always keep an eye on games, it's always great to see the club winning titles. We had some absolutely great teams down through the years. They have been unlucky some years and I think they definitely should have a good few more Leinster titles and some All Irelands. My nephew Colm Parkinson captained Portlaoise to win a Leinster final and that team definitely should have won an All Ireland.

You've kept involved through Fiona etc? How satisfying it is to see her achieve success representing club and county?

I got involved with the girls at under eight level and continued until about under 16's. I trained the girls with John Bohane and Phil O'Keefe. John had his daughter Aisling playing, Phil had her daughter Ciara and my own daughter Fiona also played. These were great days and I have great memories of training these teams. I am very proud of Fiona, she plays midfield as I did and she loves the game and is very committed. She is currently part of a great team with some brilliant players, and it was great to see them win the county final last year, nothing more than this bunch of girls deserve.

Hopefully, it's the start of a lot of

a lot of success for the club.

Pat Critchley has played a huge part in the development of the Portlaoise ladies in both basketball and football. We are seeing the fruits of Pats hard work and dedication in the talented ladies' footballers and basketballers who are enjoying massive success at the minute. Pat has done massive work for the young people of Portlaoise, both boys and girls, and in a number of codes and in my opinion, there should be a massive civic reception for him. The young people and not so young people have massive respect for Pat and all he has done for them. No man more deserving of this honour.

What are your hopes for the club into the future?

I think the development of players from a young age is very important. Young players need encouragement and the opportunities to learn the games and develop their skills. Everyone develops at different ages so it's important to work with and develop everyone along the way. Keeping so many people involved and constantly developing and improving will lead to more success for the club!

I would love to see state of the art facilities for the lads and women. Work is being done within the club to get to this which is great! I'd love to see the club dominate more in Leinster and win Leinster titles and All Irelands. I think there is plenty of talent within the club to do this, both men and women.

Out of Town with Jimmy Harding

By way of introduction to our latest townie living away from town have a read of the following quotes from people who know..



"Jimmy Harding held Tony Doran scoreless against Buffers Alley

over in Borris in Ossory in the Leinster Club. We were eleven points down and came back to draw.

Jimmy was always reliable. If you wanted someone to mark a forward out of a game Jimmy was your man. And then he played in the forwards the odd time too. He was quiet but he'd do his job, He did his talking on the field."

- John Taylor

"The best player I ever played with is probably not one that people might come up with first. That was Jimmy Harding. A very understated player, technically a very gifted player. At different times against all the big teams when we were in trouble Jimmy Harding was the man who put the finger in the dam and neutralised great players in a very quiet effective manner. And he was probably one of the better Portlaoise footballers as well."

- Seamus 'Cheddar' Plunkett

"Jimmy Harding was a player that maybe doesn't get the recognition he deserves. I remember he was switched on to Tony Doran in a Leinster Championship match and we came from eleven points down to draw the match against Buffers Alley and we played the replay the following week, and Jimmy held scoreless for a game and a half. That's in hurling and I think he held Jimmy Keaveney scoreless from play against Vincents in the football championship. They were two fair feats for a man who was so versatile, some of those years he played up in the forwards for us and then he was often full-back - he could play anywhere really. He was a super super player."

- Pat Critchley

A lot of townies will look forward to hearing from this man. One of the great players of Portlaoise GAA you would never sense this from the interview he gives here. Genuine humility but the respect in which he is held by his peers tells the story. Enjoy our catch up with Jimmy Harding...

Where are you Jimmy?

I left Ireland in 1987 to seek my fame and fortune, I haven't found them but I'll keep looking. I'm retired and live in the South-East of England with my wife Emily in a town called Folkestone, which is on the coast. We've got 3 children and they work locally.

Zero to Hero

I must be the only former town player still alive who didn't win an underage county title. I managed to win junior and Intermediate football titles with Portlaoise in the early 70's. I didn't manage to make it onto the senior team until I was 23 years young. I won Senior football titles in 1971 as a sub, '76, '79, '81, and '82 while playing.

I feel we left a few more behind us in that period too. I was also fortunate enough to win 3 Leinster club title in football, 2 of those were won as a sub and 1 all Ireland in 1983 as a sub. At the age of 32, I retired from playing senior football in 1983 after our great rivals Saint Joseph's beat us in the Championship. We had some great battles with them down through the years. They had some brilliant players, and you'd need to be firing on all cylinders to have any chance of coming out on top against them.

Laois Days

I was honoured to have been chosen to line out for Laois Footballers in the late '70's. Unfortunately, it didn't go well for me at all, and I found out after a few games that there is vast difference between playing club and inter-county football. I'm grateful for the opportunity given to me to play for the county team but I came up short.

Some players will say that they didn't get a fair chance, justifiably so in some cases but I wasn't one of those players.

After about 12 games with the county, I informed one of the Laois selectors, the late Bill Phelan RIP, not to put my name forward for future selection and that was the end of my short inter-county career. To make a long story short, I simply wasn't good enough to play at that level. I had lost my confidence completely, which in turn affected my club form in both codes and it took me about a year to regain it. Back then, Laois had some great individual players, but they didn't really gel as a team until the mid '80's when they won the league title.

Work Life Balance

On a different note, I think the GAA is neglecting families in a big way by allowing county team managers to have 5 training sessions a week and a game at the weekend also. Many young families must suffer on the back of this due to players being away from home for long periods. I think they have forgotten the fact that they are still an amateur organisation. It's totally different for professional soccer players as they have free time to spend with their family during the day.

I would suggest a maximum of 3 training sessions during peak periods and just 2 otherwise. Too many people have a vested interest for this problem to be solved internally. I think it will have come as a directive from the suits in Croke Park.

The Modern Game

From a playing point of view, I don't think the game is better than it was back in the day. It's more possession based now and negative to point of boring in some games. Players are fitter now because of the number of hours put they into training. I don't see a marked improvement in skill levels, especially in football. It's run, run as fast as you can and so on. I won't start on the new advantage rule, better move on.



The Portlaoise team, that Jimmy was a part of that were crowned Laois senior hurling champions in 1981

Small Ball

I have to say that hurling is my number one sporting love, it came a little bit easier to me than the big ball game. I was fortunate to play in 6 senior hurling finals and ended up winning 4, my final one was in 1984, beating the Harps after a replay. It also turned out to be my last game for Portlaoise. Breaking the stranglehold our great rivals Camross had on senior hurling in the county was a massive achievement for us and a big thanks is due to our dedicated management team for making this possible. I think the four in a row team was good enough to have won a Leinster club title but for some reason it just didn't happen.

The Highs and the Lows...

The biggest disappointment I had in a Portlaoise jersey was not getting any game time in the All-Ireland club final in 1983. I thought with 5 minutes to go we had the game in the bag and I felt it wasn't a risk to bring me on. But the selectors felt otherwise, winning the title was rightly paramount in their minds. Introducing a player for sentimental reasons wasn't in their plans. Of course, I was delighted for the club and my team mates to win the biggest club football competition in the country, however, not having any part to play in the game leaves an empty feeling after the final whistle.

Grateful

I was very lucky and grateful to have gotten the opportunity to play for the town in both codes. I wasn't blessed with natural ability like most of my team-mates but through hard work and dedication I managed to get to a decent standard, and it was a dream come true to have played with and against some of the greatest players in the country. I played with many gifted players in both codes. I think it wouldn't be fair to single them out and I know that they will understand that without their team-mates in the trenches doing the heavy lifting they wouldn't have had the platform to perform to the level that they did.

Supporters..

I'd like to pay a big thanks to our thousands of supporters for their dedication to travelling all over to get behind us through thick and thin. It has been brought home to us in a big way how important fans are in a stadium to generate atmosphere since the pandemic has kicked in. Sport wouldn't survive very long without those supporters who are taken so much for granted but are so important to clubs and counties throughout the country.

Lar Coss

I can't finish without remembering one of our many legendary fans, the late Lar Coss RIP. I worked with Lar for a few years in the '70s, a more passionate town supporter you couldn't find. One Monday morning after we were beaten by O Dempsey's, I was chatting to Jimmy Bergin and Lar ambled over as usual to give us a dressing down. He looked at me and said, 'you know Harding, I've been following football and hurling for 55 years and I can safely say that you are the worst player I've ever seen in a Portlaoise jersey'. Jimmy Bergin burst out laughing, Lar looked at him seriously and said, 'I don't know what the f... you're laughing at, you're not much better'. Jimmy walked off with his tail between his legs. Lar finished by saying, 'Don't mind me Harding, I love ye all'. A nicer bloke you couldn't meet than Lar.

Jimmy's message for the Town for 2021

Finally, I wish all the town teams the very best for the upcoming competitions - Most players find it hard to get much joy from playing important game, that joy comes after the final whistle if you win. If I had it all over again, I'd try and enjoy every minute of every game because your career is over in the blink of an eye. God Bless for now.



**Do you know some 'Out of Townies' -
Get in touch so we can share their story!**



**Downey's Auto Stop - Proud sponsors
of Portlaoise GAA**

SUMMER HURLING!

Summer Hurling

Who Gets Bored During the Summer Holidays?

What better way to spend your Wednesday mornings than meeting your friends and having a few pucks, guided by some of the best hurling/camogie coaches in the club

When?: Every Wednesday starting on July 7th and finishing on August 18th from 11:00am to 12:30pm

For Who?: Boys & Girls born from 2004 to 2013

C'mon the Town



What to bring:

Hurley, Helmet,
Water bottle,
Runners & Football
Boots

The club plans to run a summer hurling/camogie programme every Wednesday morning for boys and girls born between 2004 and 2013.

The flyer above has all the relevant details and follow the link below to the expression of interest form, which will also be sent to parents.

<https://forms.gle/Ub2jjY7ZaENCMdVu7>

The club is also calling on coaches, teachers, students and senior players looking for volunteers, as we need all the help we can get!

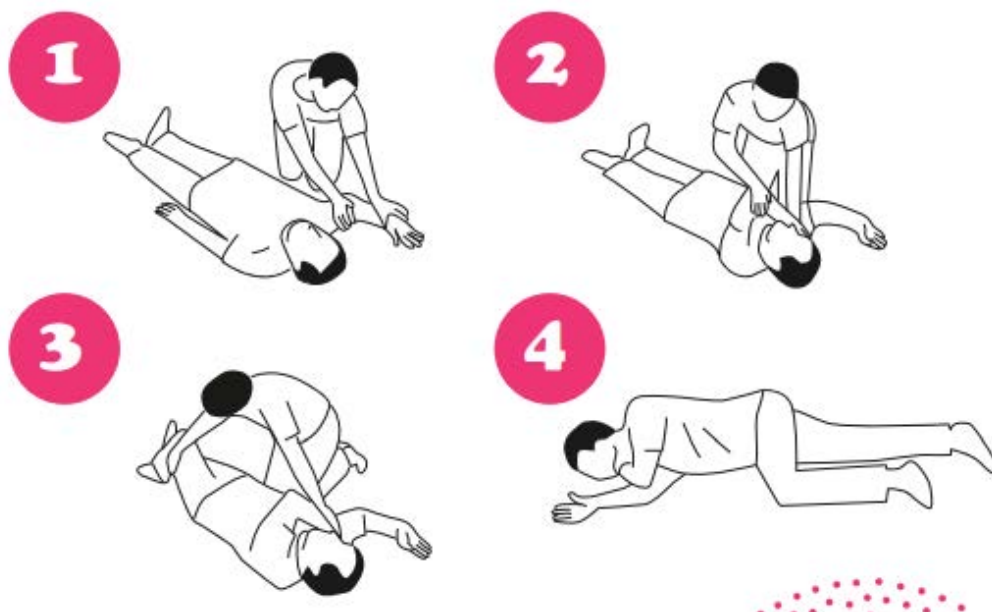
Cardiac First Response (CFR)

In light of the recent events involving Christian Eriksen at Euro 2020, we think it is important that we highlight there are currently two automated external defibrillators (AED) at Rathleague in case of emergency.

It is important to note that if you find yourself in an emergency in which someone is unresponsive and you are the Cardiac First Response, that you follow the HSE guidelines (Right)

Below, is an image of how to place someone in the recovery position when they are responsive and awaiting an ambulance

RECOVERY POSITION





COACHING
& GAMES



CÚLS IN FOR SUMMER 2021



Portlaoise GAA
12th - 16th July /
2nd - 6th August



LOETB Centre of Excellence
19th - 23rd July

GET YOUR NAME
IN THE GAME

REGISTER NOW ↗

kelloggsculcamps.gaa.ie



10am - 2pm
Age 6-13



MIKE.HENCHY.GAMESMANAGER.LAOIS@GAA.IE