### Vol. 1 Issue 9 2021 **Portlaoise GAA Club Newsletter** Edited by: Jennifer Fitzpatrick





### In This Issue:

**NEW\* Our Town** 

In Conversation With: Liam Breen

**Camogie Junior Team Make History** 

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## @PortlaoiseGaa

## **#ClubIsFamily**

# Editorial

Welcome to our 9th edition of the Tattler. As autumn takes over and, we, thankfully, have teams across the club still involved in Championship games, our front page photo, taken by Mary Murphy, is a throwback to 2018 when the jerseys were washed and ready for that year's Hurling County Final. A reminder of the many good days we have enjoyed on the field in all codes and the sense of community and belonging that we get from supporting our teams as they represent our great club. So as championship progresses, get the jerseys ready, fly the flags and be prepared to get behind "The Town". Your support is always appreciated.

Off the field, we have some other important events in the coming weeks for members:

- Wednesday 27th October Town 25 Development Plan Members Information Night
- Friday 29th October 20 Year Reunion Minor Hurling County Final 2001
- Wednesday 3rd November SGM Special General Meeting 1 Issue Agenda

We also introduce a new item to the "Town Tattler" in this edition entitled "Our Town". This item aims to highlight the new, the old, the weird & the wonderful things happening around us in "Our Town" that we think you would be interested in hearing about.

- The Tattler Team







Club Matters Wednesday 27th October Friday 29th October Wednesday 3rd November



### Invitation to all Members/Supporters of Portlaoise GAA Club

When/Where: 8pm **Wednesday 27th October** Killeshin Hotel What: Presentation on the new Club Development Plan **"Town 25"** How: Register for a free ticket on www.town25.com

We look forward to seeing you there

### 20 Year Reunion - Minor Hurling County Final 2001



Celebrate the 20 year anniversary of winning the last minor hurling championship for Portlaoise in 2001 on **Friday 29th Oct** in Peigs from 7pm.

All players , members and supporters, past and present, are very welcome. #CmonTheTown



### SGM (Special General Meeting) Wednesday 3rd November

All eligible adult members of Portlaoise GAA Club i.e. those registered before 31st May 2021 will be voting on a motion to change a decision made previously by the club. Further information and formal notification on this meeting will issue shortly to all members.



Our Town

Ahead of the launch of his latest book in Dunamaise Arts Centre on November 9 the Tattler team caught up with local historian John Dunne to hear his story.

### How did you become so interested in the history of Portlaoise?

I have traced my family on both sides the Dunnes and Lalors - back more than two centuries and all of them lived within a mile or two of the town.

I suppose it was this knowledge that, even unconsciously, got me interested in history in the first place. But my late father, John, was my biggest influence. He never stopped going on and on about who lived where; who was related to who; when that place was built etc. etc. and, to be honest, I didn't listen to him half the time, but some sort of spark was definitely lit and, now, I've turned into him.

I do believe, incidentally, that the older you get, the more interested you become in your past. Something which has, I think, a lot to do with mortality; the fact that there's far less time ahead than behind you.

### Apart from local history, what are your main interests?

As a young lad, I had no great grá for history at all. Music was - and still is my biggest interest. I also love reading, especially modern novels. I hold the dubious distinction of never being on any official team in any sport. I was absolutely useless at football and, as for hurling, I might as well have been wielding a long balloon. The nearest I got to the pitch was being chosen - by a benevolent Christian Brother who obviously took pity on me! - to carry the bucket of oranges to my classmates at half-time. On one occasion he even trusted we with a knife!

#### Tell us about your books.

My first book, years and years ago, was a novel, but the latest two - and the forthcoming one - are all about various aspects of life in Maryborough / Portlaoise over a period of centuries. The most recent book had long chapters on the history of music in the town in the 20th century and life in the 18th century. This time, most of the chapters are much shorter and deal with subjects as varied as the 'Bernridge', a young murderess, a detailed survey of Market Square people and, of course, the miracle that occurred in the town on the 19th century.

### How do you choose what to write about?

That's easy, I pick subjects I know little or nothing about, but want to find out more about. Then the research starts...

#### **Future writing plans?**

About ten years ago, I had almost a hundred pages of a novel about how a young Maryborough woman influenced Beethoven's piano concertos - all made up, of course! and, to this day, I don't know how I managed to delete it, but I did without keeping a hard copy. Maybe it's better gone, but I keep thinking about it and. Who knows, maybe I'll tear into it again as I still have all my research notes. But the more likely project is a history of the houses my parents grew up in. But there's really no accounting for what comes into your head

#### Your thoughts on the pandemic?

We were very lucky in that it had no serous effect on any of our loved ones. Of all the people I know, I was probably least affected simply because staying at home - being 'cocooned' - was not a major problem as all my interests are home-based. I can only imagine how difficult it must have been for sportspeople or anyone used to outdoor/social activity. I know how hard I'd find it to be deprived of books or music or my bouzouki for any extended period. But Covid-19 did yield one positive result for me; a chapter in the new book.



#### Finally, the launch of The Maryborough Miracle on November 9

I am feeling excited but appropriately nervous. Portlaoise people have been so good to me; my books have been bought by hundreds of people I know, and by as many I don't know from Adam. I can't wait for the launch in Dunamaise Arts Centre, a venue that's been so generous to me. The evening will also feature an audio-visual presentation - 'Music In Maryborough 1880 - 1950' - which I'm very proud of. The book itself will be launched by none other than All-Star footballer Colm Browne. You all know of Colm's prowess as a footballer, but I also know him as an avid reader with a great interest in local history And, of course, a real townie.

#### Book Launch - November 9th 2021

Well known Portlaoise historian, John Dunne, is launching his new publication 'The Maryborough Miracle' on Tuesday 9th November in Dunamaise Arts Centre.

The book will be launched by none other than our very own Colm Browne. Colm is a true legend of Portlaoise GAA Club of course – one of the greatest players in the history of our club, and our county for that matter.

> THE MARYBOROUGH MIRACLE other aspects of portlaoise histor

> > John Dunne

Get along to the launch if you can – another important part of the history of our town captured!

## In Conversation With: Liam Breen

This month that Tattler caught up with a man who needs no introduction to anybody who visits Rathleague on a regular basis. He is the Chairperson of the much- loved Grounds Committee and wherever you see this man, his sidekick Sonny will not be too far away. Meet one of the great volunteers of our Club – Liam Breen. Here Liam shares some of his memories and we hope you enjoy the read.

#### **The Early Days**

I started hurling and playing football at Under 12 and at that time Brother Nolan had a bit of an input into the teams. Mickey Early was the mainstay. He lived on the Stradbally Road, and he was with us and then at U14s Tommy Keogh, Sonny's father, he took over as the mentor and I think Tommy must have thought I was a superman because he wanted me to be in every position, but we got well beaten in that final. The Pike of Rushall beat us. That was 1962 – I was aged 12 and hurling U14.

#### Shemozzles in Mountrath

I hurled U16 in 1963 - I was 13 and I was corner back with Seamie Doran and Paddy Conroy alongside on the full back line...all noted players but obviously they were stuck and they needed a team so I was brought along. We beat Borris-in-Ossory in Abbeyleix in the semi-final and ended up in Mountrath in the final against the famous Pike of Rushall they were very strong. They were Camross, Castletown, Cuddagh - a combination over there. I didn't get to start in that match, I was on the bench, but into the second half a war broke out. A spectator came in off the line and hit one of our players, with an umbrella or some form of weapon, and then hell broke loose.

We were winning I think by 12 or 13 points, but the referee abandoned the match.We couldn't leave the field...the guards were called, and we were escorted off the field by different officials as well as our own people that were there, and onto Johnny O Brien's bus still in our playing gear. We were awarded the match anyway.

#### Disappointment

They were my early days with Portlaoise but then I went off to Rockwell and I kind of lost touch. But I came home fairly often. I still played hurling and football when I was away. We got to the minor final in 1968 but I lost my place.We had extra lads in from Clonad – back then they came in and played with us as they weren't a juvenile club.I was disappointed over losing my place for a good while after. But we got well beaten anyway.

#### Hardy Men

But I continued then and hurled Junior – it was very hard to get on the senior team as there were such big names in the 1970s.I remember hurling in Mountrath one day at corner back and it just shows you the age gap. Mick Twomey was fullback and Bill Murphy was corner back, God be good to them both.



I remember Mick Twomey shouting to me "Young Breen start pullin". "Sure there's no ball there Mick" says I. "No, but it's on its way!" That was the done thing then.

That was a team of great characters, Mick and Bill, Joe Lalor, Humpsten Fitzpatrick – hardy boys and great characters.

#### **Street Leagues**

I loved both hurling and football. The street leagues started around 1966/67 and I lived in Dr Murphys' and we were fairly prominent. We won everything.

Our big opposition were the Dublin Road or the Green Road. Paschal Delaney – 'the red lad', Harry Mulhaire, Louis Harkins, Michael Carroll, Liam Carroll were all playing with the Dublin Road and then down the Green Road you had the 'old timer' (John Joe Ging), Tom Lalor, Louis Duff came in from Ballyfin.

We had 4 or 5 Tynans', the late John Dooley – he died very young at 31 years of age, a lovely hurler and footballer – and then we had Jack, Kevin and Paddy McDonald, the two Tierney's, Seanie Bowe. John Joe Critchley wasn't allowed play because he played soccer – the Ban affected him.

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## In Conversation With: Liam Breen

#### Mam

Every Sunday the conversation at home was about a match up in the field. It was never O Moore Park, it was up in the field. My mother was a Stradbally woman, that was like a red rag to a bull to us. We hated Stradbally. She'd be bragging about Stradbally and we'd be grinding our teeth at the thoughts of them coming in but they won very little anyway which was great!

#### Up to the Field

When we'd walk in the main gate in O Moore Park we'd sit on the bank with my father and others. The craic used to be great, everyone from the town would sit on the bank.We used to train at a front pitch where the apartments are now and we 'd get togged out in the ditch. You got wet playing and your clothes got wet while you were playing. And you'd put the wet clothes back on you and walk home. There were no cars you'd just walk up and down. Noel Tynan would have been a great friend and if were up in the field on a Saturday we'd make a little niche for ourselves in the galvanise of O Moore Park, we'd pull it out and pull down the briars to cover it.And then on the Sunday we'd go up through there and get in for nothing and look at the matches!

#### Dad

He loved the town. He never played but he was a massive supporter of the town. He knew I was a red roaring supporter too.We had a great relationship. He died in 1987. He worked until he was 75 and died at 87. Many's the argument him and the mother used to have over Portlaoise and Stradbally.





## In Conversation With: Liam Breen

#### Heroes

Paschal Delaney was my idol growing up. Teddy Fennelly, Alfie Lewis, Paschal and Brian Delaney, John Fennell, Cyril O Meara...oh they were something else. Alfie Lewis – nothing would get in past him.He used to say the square was his dressing table and he owned the delph and anyone upsetting the delph was upsetting him. So, they wouldn't want to be coming in to him.

Those stories would give you a great boost to know that a character like that had your back. The 'Rake' McDonald would catch the wind he'd go up that high, Jim Hughes, Teddy – all big strong men. There was never any dirt. The 'red lad' might throw an oul skelp but having said that the red lad would have got a good few skelps himself so he was only giving back what he got!

#### I told ya!

It was so funny...we'd be playing games in the swimming pool field, it used to be Odlums field, we'd play All-Irelands there.I remember my father was a great man for the garden and every night I would be deputised to go out to the garden with him and this night we were playing Johns Square in the street league, and he knew by me - I was growling and giving out - that I wanted to go down to the match. "If you want to go down to the field go on down" he said. I was only on 5 minutes when I was bursted open over the eye with a hurl, I don't know who hit me. I came home and the blood was running down my face. My father came over "There ya are now I told you not to go down!" "Sure you told me to go down!" I said.

#### **AWOL to Derry**

In 1971 when we beat St Josephs in the county final, we won our first ever Leinster final and then our All-Ireland semi-final was in Magherafelt.

I was after spraining my ankle and I went up town that Saturday morning and I had a bedroom slipper on me and a shoe because I couldn't put a shoe on one foot. I went into Tony Delaney's to get a pint, and the boys were going to Magherafelt. They had a mini-bus organised so I won't name a certain person but money was getting a bit short in the pub and he demanded his money back that he had paid for the bus. So, Jimmy Fitzpatrick of the Square Bar said to me "Liam do you want to go on the bus".

Sure I never went home, I went on the bus to Magherafelt. That was a Saturday, and the game was on the Sunday. We stopped off in Monaghan and stayed in the Four Seasons Hotel. There was 12 of us on the mini-bus. Nackie Hyland was driving it, there were great characters.

#### **The Troubles**

It was intimidating enough at the match there were helicopters flying overhead during the game. I was told to get back into the mini-bus – I was shouting at the British Army, the RUC and everyone. We were in the heart of Derry. The following week the grounds were blown up.

(Editors note: Not sure if this is connected to Liam shouting at the British Army!). It was unfortunate we were beaten as we would have won the All-Ireland.



#### **The Town**

The footballers won in '66,'67 and '68...Timahoe beat them in '69.....and then we won in '70 and '71. It could have been 6 in a row, and it was nearly the very same team.

Then we had a lull for 5 years and the golden boys came on stream... we won in '76 and we thought we were going to be there for years. But we got beaten in '77, '78 and then '79 we were back again.

And then the hurlers were coming too.They got to their first final in '76 and got well beaten but you could see something was starting, and then in 1980 we got to the county final and were being beaten by two points with time just up.

Matthew Keegan got thrown into the Camross net and Pat Delaney gave a penalty to Portlaoise. He put the ball down but one of the Cuddys walked up and stamped on the ball. John Bohan went to take it, but the ball wouldn't come up, eventually he had to pull on it and it was saved.

So we got beaten that day but then '81 we went to Rathdowney and beat Camross in the final. '82 we went to Borris-in-Ossory and beat Errill, '83 we came back to Mountrath and beat Camross and '84 we beat the Harps in a replay.

The Bohans, Bergins, Critchleys, the Rigneys, John Taylor – they were household names and a lot of them played football as well.



## In Conversation With: Liam Breen

#### **Getting Back Involved**

I got involved around 1990 in the Juvenile section. We had a bit of success with our lads. We had Tommy Fitz, Aidan Fennelly, Eoin Browne, Colm Byrne, Bruno – all dual players who became household names. We used to do hurling one Sunday and football the next Sunday.

#### Hurling - Ups and Downs

You had old Billy Bohan and Paddy Critchley and their sons were involved and they threw themselves in behind Portlaoise and they gave it everything.

Jimmy Doyle then came on board with his expertise and there's no doubt about it while the men that were there had the passion, he had the skills and the experience, and he gave the team great belief in themselves. It was so unfortunate in 1987 in the Leinster final down in Kilkenny when Martin Quigley ran the length of the field with the ball and passed it in for Rathnure to get a goal. It broke our hearts.

I think anyone in Portlaoise at the time would have said we would have exchanged one of our Leinster Club football medals for that Leinster.

It was such a great bunch of lads it was just unfortunate. They were good enough to have won one and there is no question they were the better team on the day. That was disheartening.



#### Rockwell

I spend three years there in the catering school. As part of the work experience, I nearly worked in every hotel in Tipperary. And then as the holiday period was coming you had a choice to go home or go working and I chose to go working and I ended up in Kilkenny in the Newpark, the Majestic Hotel in Tramore, and I went to the Eglington Hotel in Galway. There were no mobile phones then.

The phone kiosk was down on the corner of St Brigids at Henry Bannon's wall (21594 was the number!). You'd ring home and that was your contact. The father used to send me the Leinster every week and I'd be up to date on everything that was happening at home.

#### **PV Doyle**

The Eglington was a seasonal hotel which means it would close. Emersons were the people that owned the hotel and they asked me what I was intending to do. Normally you'd go back to Rockwell and they'd send you to either Switzerland or Germany as part of the training. But the night before I was due to leave, I was brought out into the dining area, and I met a man called PV Doyle. I might as well have been meeting the Aga Khan as I didn't know who PV Doyle was, but he owned most of the hotels in Dublin and, I don't know if I impressed him or not, but he said I did anyway, and he offered me a job in the Montrose Hotel. So I completed three years of my apprenticeship in Rockwell, and then three in the Montrose in Dublin.



#### Breda

I came back to Portlaoise in 1972. I met Breda again then. I had first met Breda when she was 10 and I was 13, she and her family were after moving down from Dublin and even then, I fell in love with her and asked her to marry me!!!!

Although her parents came from Timahoe, Breda considers herself to be a proud Dublin woman but since she married me, she's got no option but to support D Town!!! She worked in Shaws and she got promoted to Shaws in Roscrea.

They were having their staff dance and my sister Vera was going to it with her now husband. Breda was mad to go to it but she had no partner, so Vera said that I was after coming home and that I was after getting a job in Kilkenny and was commuting every day. So Vera told her she'd ask me if I'd go and sure the rest is history. 10 years after I proposed to her, we got married!!! We're married 48 years now.



## In Conversation With:

## Liam Breen

#### The Family

Mark is the eldest and works in the Prison Service and is doing well.

Verona married Les Szwaglis out in Ratheniska. She's Secretary of the girls section out there. (Liam assures me that he only shouts for them if the grand-kids are playing and if they're playing Portlaoise he remains neutral).

Norma is in the bank in Portlaoise. She's a Josephs' woman. They own Pedigree Corner who sponsor Josephs. So I'd say she was saying Novenas that they'd win last weekend. I'd have no contact with her before the match or after it, maybe not for a week!

Sandra is a public health nurse based in Ballylinan, Timahoe, Stradbally area.

John is with Fastway and is heavily involved in the Juvenile section, coaching hurling and football. He's involved in the soccer too.





#### Rathleague

When I retired 12 years ago, I knew by Breda she was anxious that I get some interest, possibly get out of the house. She suggested I get involved in the committee. I went up and Vinny Dowling proposed me, and I started getting involved. And then when the move to Rathleague happened I saw the opportunity to help and I started coming out helping to pick stones, driving a dumper, driving the ride-on mower....whatever needed to be done. General dogsbody I suppose but I really enjoyed it.

The boys out here like Sonny, a great character, Ollie Byrne, Pat Keegan, Pat Loughman, JP Cahillane, and we had Jim Gaynor and the late Kevin Culleton in the early days. We all gelled, and all got on great together. In the last few years Seamus Smyth has joined the group and he's a great bit of stuff as well. I can't see myself going anywhere else. We're here most days, Saturdays if needed and Sundays as well. Pitches have to be maintained. We probably have it handy now we're sitting on machines but there's a lot of grass to be cut. To me the hardest part of the job out here is the marking of pitches and Sonny does that on his own. Often, we offer him help but he says 'No I'll do it on my own'...he's very adamant that way, it's not that he's stubborn, he just likes his pitches to be right, the lines to be straight. He takes pride in it and to me he has the hardest job.

We have come a long way since 2010. We still have the portacabins but we have good facilities and as Colm Browne said to me once you don't win county finals in dressing rooms, you win them on the field. We had little I suppose but we took pride in what we had and what we have.

#### Crisis..What Crisis ???

Do you know I often say it was probably the best thing that happened that we didn't have the amount of money that was allegedly coming.

I think it united us more, and I think more people came in and supported us rather than having a big monster of a clubhouse out there and nobody to maintain it and look after it. I feel we are a club first, with pitches where we prepare to win matches. Anything after that is a bonus that's the way I feel.

#### 9 in a Row

The lads here winning the 9 in a Row was unbelievable. People say that Stradbally stopped us winning ten. I don't think we envisaged that we would win 6, 7 or 8.

It got to the stage where we were just winning and winning, and somebody had to stop us. It was unfortunate that it was on the tenth but sure nobody stopped us winning 5, 6, 7, 8 or 9 in a row.

l put it up on a t-shirt that 'In 2016 we took a rest but in 2017 we're back, we're the best'.

Then we won 17, 18 and 19. Maybe the supporters became complacent but not the lads themselves.

They're down here tonight and its freezing cold and they're as hungry as ever to win. And we're only there to encourage them.

I take it bad when we lose but they are great lads.

## In Conversation With: Liam Breen

#### The Ladies

I think having the ladies in the club will be the best thing that will ever happen the club. I think the girls themselves, the Senior girls after winning their first senior title after knocking on the door for years – they have a great thing going at the moment. They were just unfortunate in the Leinster Final but to get there was an achievement in itself.

The girls in the Camogie with Teresa Scully and Damien Lynch and others, the time that they spend out here – I think it's only right and proper that we are one club for everyone.

And I would like to see more support coming from the lads for the girls at matches and that. I would love to see that happen.



**Portlaoise LGFA** 



#### **Best Players**

Paschal Delaney, Teddy Fennelly, Alfie Lewis from the 1960s.

Colm Browne, Gerry Browne, Tom Prendergast, Atch Whelan and Mick Dooley from the 1970s and 1980s.

Then we had the new crop that came on stream – Kevin Fitzpatrick, Brian McCormack, Ian Fitzgerald, Aidan Fennelly, Peter McNulty, Craig Rogers, Colm Byrne, Barry Fitzgerald.

In hurling I was fortunate enough to see the late Tom Lalor hurling and he was a class act. People used to say he'd pick the ball up with the side of his foot but he was emulating the great Finlay Mc – that's Skinner's father – who played in the 1943 final and he used to do that. I remember being asked by Skinner's mother at the wake did anyone know how Tom Mc perfected that and she said it was from watching Tom Finlay from the 1915 team – doing it. That's how he got the name.

In the 1970s and 1980s John Taylor – outstanding, Pat Critchley, the two Bergins, the Bohans, The Rigneys, Cheddar – ah sure look they were huge players and then coming along then you had Cahir Healy and Tommy Fitzgerald and lads like that.

#### Pick a Match

The Leinster Final in 2009 against Garrycastle. That was a tough encounter, and the boys really showed their stuff. Different county finals, even semi-finals when people thought we were gone....say the likes of Zach Tuohy who came on as sub and banged in a couple of goals...they were enjoyable to watch..to see that in replay after being down so much in the drawn game. We have been spoilt for games over the years.

#### **Looking Back**

Great men of past, Joe Fennelly of Grattan Street, Joe Bracken of Millview, Jimmy Sexton of Clonminam, Tommy Keogh of the Ridge Road, Peadar Molloy of Summerhill, and Jim Loughlin of the Borris Road.

#### **Looking Forward**

I would like to see us being still as successful as we were in the last 40 or 50 years. Hopefully some structure in place for dressing rooms.

I know there's a lot of people working hard for dressing rooms but to me, it's not the be all and end all, important too that we have decent lights, and all of our pitches are drained.

It would be great to see us strong in both hurling and football, men and ladies. I think there's a good crop of players coming again, and it augurs well for the future.

Once we keep encouraging young players and ensuring good mentors are over them, I think Portlaoise will always be there or thereabouts.

#### **Quick Fire Favorites**

Place: Portlaoise 1st, 2nd & last!

**TV Programme:** Killinascully & The Irish R.M.

Sport: Hurling & Football

#### **Dinner Guests:**

- 1. Tommy Murphy (The Wonder Boy)
- 2. Micheal O'Muircheartaigh
- 3. Padraig Pearse
- 4. Maureen Potter

The banter would be great!

Food: Roast Lamb

**Drink:** Guinness & I'm partial to a sherry too!!



# Mnásome

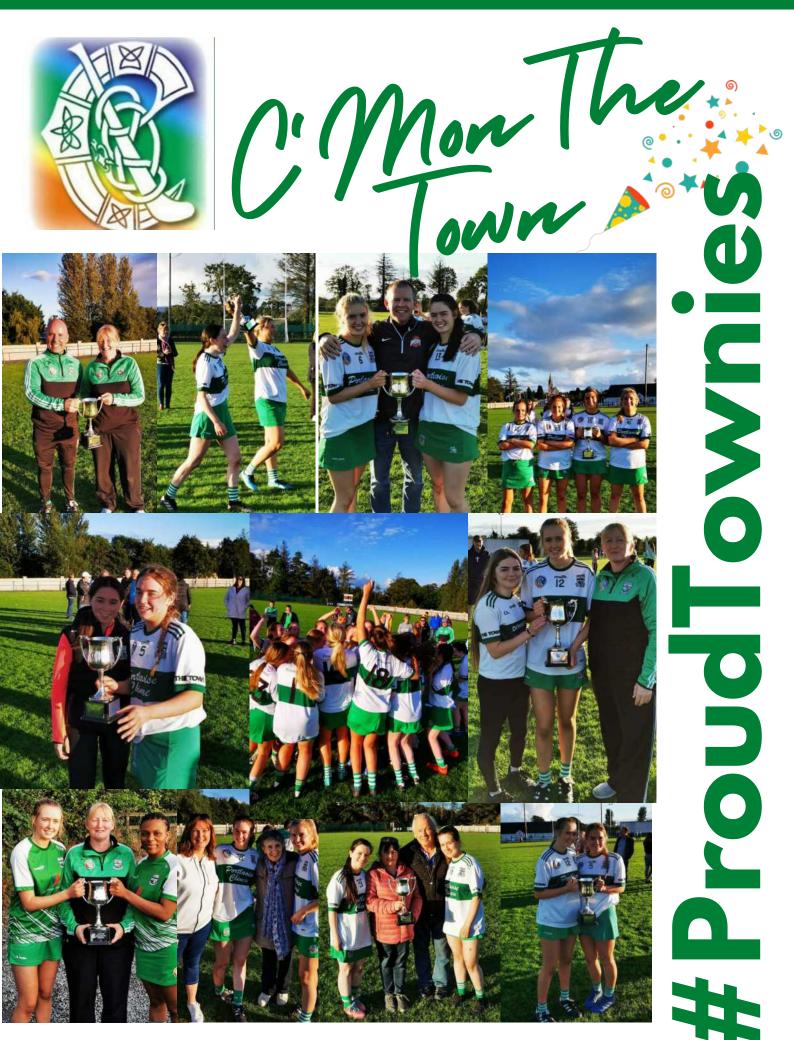
We must pay tribute to our Junior Camogie panel and management for the magnificent achievement in bringing the first ever adult championship to "The Town". Last year they drew with O'Moores in an enthralling county final but in the delayed replay last month the girls made no mistake, when they won on a scoreline of 3-12 to 1-4. A historic day that won't be forgotten for a very long time.



## **Junior Camogie County Champions 2020**

Next Fixture: Junior Club Championship 2020 Away to Raharny (Westmeath) 28th November 2021





## Portlaoise GAA

