

Erin's Own G.A.A. Castlecomer

Official Opening
of

Canon Kearns Park

By Ned Quinn, Chairman, Kilkenny County Board
and

Áras Ó Meallaigh

By Nicky Brennan, President Elect, Cumann Lúthchleas Gael
Sunday May 29th. 2005 at 3.30 p.m.



Fáilte go Caisleán an Chumair

Is mór an onóir domsa mar Cathaoirleach Cumann Lúthchleas Gael Rogha Éireann, failte Uí Cheallaigh a chur romhaibh go léir, chuig an ócáid stairiúil seo inniu.

It is a tremendous honour for me as Chairman of Erin's Own G.A.A. to officiate at this historical and wonderful event. Today we celebrate the fruits of years of dedication and hard work by so many of our members both present and past. Sadly, many of them have gone to their eternal reward and are not with us today to enjoy this marvellous occasion. I wish to acknowledge the astute vision and leadership of the various Officers and members of the Club since the purchase of the property in 1986.

The courage they showed to commence and advance this project will benefit the youth of this Parish forever more. To one and all that have played their part in this development, I say thank you very much and well done.

While it would be impossible to mention everybody that helped out on this project I wish to especially thank Terry Brennan for the professional services that he has given since the first sod was turned on the property. Terry designed and project managed the complete development from the construction of the pitch to the completion of the Clubhouse, at no expense to the Club. Thank you Terry.

I welcome our guests here today, the Meally and Kearns families, Ned Quinn Chairman of Kilkenny Co. Board and Nicky Brennan, President elect of Cumann Lúthchleas Gael who will perform the official openings of Canon Kearns Park and Áras Ó Meallaigh respectively. On behalf of the Club I congratulate Nicky on his marvellous achievement. We are proud to have a neighbour achieve the highest sporting position in the country. I welcome both teams who are indeed honouring us with their presence here. Your exploits on the field continue to inspire our young players and to have you playing here in Castlecomer today is very special for them.

I want to take this opportunity to thank Joe Coogan who has been our Club Sponsor since 1993. Everybody is aware of the financial difficulties involved in running a hurling club in the present day and Joe's generous contribution over the years has eased that burden for Erin's Own. Today is also a special day for Joe as his family were the previous owners of this property and Joe is delighted that the land where he farmed as a young boy will provide healthy recreation for the youth of our Parish for ever more. I must also mention the Piltown Club and men like the late Sean Gorey R.I.P. whose vision in setting up the "Piltown Draw" enabled Erin's Own and many clubs throughout the country, to finance the purchase of facilities such as Canon Kearns Park. In the first year alone of the draw, under the shrewd stewardship of George Kelly, Erin's Own sold 700 tickets and earned in excess of £20,000.

Finally, a míle buíochas, to those that advertised in this booklet and around the pitch and also to Seamus Buggy who provided most of the photographs for the publication.

Go Raibh Maith Agaibh go Léir

Is Mise,

Pádraig MacÓda

Cathaoirleach

Editors Note: Every effort has been made in the short space of time available to the editorial team to present accurate and balanced information. This production is not intended as a History of the Club, rather as a glance back over the years. If there are omissions or mistakes please accept this as our apology and hopefully they will be rectified when a full history of the Club is produced at a future date.

Cathaoirleach CLG Cill Chainnigh

[Nedquinn.jpg](#)

Is ábhar áthais agus is cúis bhróid domsa mar Cathaoirleach Cóisde Contae Chill Chainnigh fáilte ó chroí a chur romhaibh go léir ar an ócáid stairiúil seo.

I wish to congratulate Erin's Own G.A.A. on the occasion of the official opening of their wonderful pitch and clubrooms. I am delighted to be associated with this marvellous event and I am deeply honoured to be invited to officially open Canon

Kearns Park. As a Mooncoin man I am especially proud that the grounds are to be named after a fellow Mooncoin man - Canon John Kearns. I am confident that I speak for all Mooncoin people when I sincerely thank the people of Castlecomer for the manner in which they welcomed Canon John to their Parish and to their homes during his ministry here. The honour bestowed on him today is a fitting tribute to such a great man and you have ensured that his great deeds will not be forgotten.

The opening of Áras Ó Meallaigh is both a joyous and a sad occasion. Joyous in that it is such an excellent facility and because it is dedicated to the memory of one of one of the outstanding Gaels of our Association, since its foundation in 1884 - Kieran Meally. Sad, of course because of the untimely passing of Kieran who was himself the instigator of this fine project. However, I am sure that as he looks down upon us today he is smiling proudly and approvingly at a job well done.

Erin's Own is one of the longest established clubs in Ireland having been founded in 1885. It has always been a progressive and forward thinking Club and you are to be complimented on your vision and courage in acquiring and developing this new facility. Considering you already owned your own premises at the Prince grounds your efforts are all the more praiseworthy, as it would have been the easy option to sit back and avoid the stresses of development. You are fortunate to have excellent officers and members guiding your club over the years and your structures and administrative policies are first rate. I sincerely hope that the people of the Parish, especially the youth, appreciate the facilities you provide for them and I hope that they will reciprocate by supporting the club both on and off the field.

Erin's Own have enjoyed tremendous success over the years but I know that you would dearly love to land that elusive Senior Hurling title that you were so close to on several occasions. I urge you to continue your efforts and to take inspiration from this great development and from the people whose memories you have honoured. Rest assured that that title will come, but why not sooner rather than later? I, for one look forward to it. Go raibh math agat.

Is mise, Éamon Ó Coinn,
Cathaoirleach, Cóisde Contae Chill Chainnigh

Uachtarán Tofa Cumann Lúthchleas Gael

[Nickybrennan.jpg](#)

Over the past one hundred and twenty years since the foundation of Cumann Luthchleas Gael, the development of club and county grounds has seen our Association expand into every parish in Ireland. A big effort was made during centenary year in 1984 to improve facilities throughout the country and further progress has been made in the intervening years. Almost every club in the country can now boast of owning their own grounds and dressing rooms. Thankfully the day of having to tog out under a ditch or in a car is long gone.

A major development in the past few years is the number of clubs who have acquired additional property for the purpose of providing more playing fields. The popularity of Gaelic Games has seen a steady increase in the number of young people playing

our games and when you add in the increasing number of girls playing camogie and ladies football, the requirement for additional playing facilities was never greater.

I am honoured to be asked to pen a few words on the occasion of the opening of the new grounds and dressing rooms at Ballycomey for the Erin's Own Club. I have watched this development from its infancy and the Erin's Own Club are to be congratulated on the excellent development which provides top class facilities not just for the Erin's Own players themselves, but also for all the visiting teams who will play on the new pitch.

Canon John Kearns, after whom the pitch is named, was an imposing figure of a man who guided the fortunes of the Erin's Own Club with energy and enthusiasm for a number of years. The Canon was a highly respected man and it is only right that his immense contribution to the G.A.A. in Castlecomer should be acknowledged in a major way. Canon Kearns Park is a fitting memorial to a great cleric and G.A.A. man.

I personally knew Kieran Meally very well and his untimely death some years ago left a huge void in the lives of many people, particularly his family. Kieran held a proud record with both Erin's Own and the Railyard along with his brothers and the naming of the new dressing rooms in his honour is most appropriate. No man worked harder for the Erin's Own Club during his many years of involvement and it is fitting that his work should also be acknowledged in a fitting manner. I personally have a lot to be grateful to Kieran for because as a Kilkenny Senior Hurling selector he may well have helped his neighbour from the next parish hold on to his place on the Kilkenny team once or twice. Kieran's passion for Gaelic Football was well known and his desire to have Kilkenny play its part never wavered. His pleas to support Gaelic Football came from the heart and I guess he would be bitterly disappointed today to see Kilkenny more or less absent from the senior inter-county scene.

I am glad that the Prince Grounds will continue to be an important centre in Castlecomer where Gaelic Games will be played by the younger members of the club in particular.

Well done once again to the Officers and members of the Erin's Own Club on this great development at Ballycomey and I wish everyone involved with the club the very best for the future.

Níoclás Ó Braonáin.

Uachtarán Tofa Cumann Lúthchleas Gael

V. REV. JOHN CANON KEARNS ~ *Canon Kearns Park*

Frjohn.jpg

“Give me 20 dacent men and we'll win a County Final” or “Ya wouldn't cross the Sahara with that lad” These are two phrases that were frequently articulated by Fr.Kearns as he pondered 'Comers prospects of winning that elusive senior hurling

title. *"Show no weakness"* was another of his favourite one-liners. Fr. Kearns knew what the ingredients of a good hurler were, *character and skill*. He pursued these qualities relentlessly during his time in Castlecomer. He sought out the men with the right character regardless as to whether they had the interest or time to hurl and he was often known to have brought some farmer out "from under a cow" (milking) to go play a match. Coaching was constant and certainly was not confined to what is now known as formal training times. It was more likely to happen at meal time when Fr. John would firstly examine what you were eating for dinner, secondly relieve you of at least half of it and thirdly put you standing with your back to the kitchen wall, hurl in hand and tell you to "hit it now". This was a free lesson on how not to be "hooked" by forcing you to extend your arms out in front of your body and perform a "wristy" swing.

Canon John Kearns died on 15th. November 1985, in the Golden Jubilee year of his ordination to the priesthood. A native of Mooncoin, he received his secondary education at St. Kieran's College before going on to the National Seminary. During his priestly life he spent two periods totalling 14 years as a missionary in Nigeria ~ 1935 -1938 and 1945-1956. Between these periods he was curate in Ballyragget, and on his return in 1956 was appointed to Castlecomer where he was to remain until his appointment as Parish Priest of Dunnamaggan in 1967. He will be best remembered there for building the new Church of St. Leonard. In 1969 he returned briefly to Nigeria to visit and help his long time friend Bishop Joseph Whelan but ended up in prison with several other missionaries and was eventually deported. He was to return to Castlecomer in 1978 as its Parish Priest, and ministered there until 1982, the year of his retirement.

Canon Kearns could count among his friends the most diverse group of people of all nationalities — from the first African Cardinal (whose elevation he attended in Rome) to senior government officials in the British Colonial administration, and from members of the 'gentry' in the 'big houses' of Kilkenny to the simplest sport-loving parishioner with a couple of greyhounds in the backyard. But at his funeral, it was the parishioners of Castlecomer (and of Dunamaggan and Ballyragget) who predominated in the simple and moving farewell to a much-loved pastor

The decision to name our new pitch 'Canon Kearns Park' is testament to the high esteem in which Fr. John was held in the parish. This was the late Kieran Meally's wish when he took on the job of chairing the development committee that would oversee the building of our new clubhouse. The club members granted Kieran's wish unanimously. Fr. Paddy Comerford relates that Fr. Kearns once told him that he had two ambitions in life. The first one was to spend some time, as a missionary priest in Africa and the second was to train a team that would win a county senior championship.

When Fr. Kearns came to Comer he replaced Fr. Carrigan, who had laid a solid foundation especially in the younger grades on which he immediately proceeded to build. Comer had scarcely a respectable junior team at that time but by 1958, they won their first Junior Championship. This was a far greater achievement than it might seem today because there were no intermediate teams. Tom Boran, an officer in the Irish army and Comer's poet-laureate penned the following lines of which he was so fond, describing the scenes which followed that victory. *'And now we cross the Dinan, in thousands teeming down, by the leaning tombs at Dysart, we're bringing home the crown.'* Poets are allowed a certain degree of exaggeration on auspicious occasions and though 'thousands' was not perhaps fully accurate, the victors were grandly feted on their homecoming. And the enthusiasm carried over to the following year when

‘Comer reached the County senior final. That senior title has not yet come to ‘Comer but when it does, the first stop as the victors enter the parish with the cup will surely be at the magnificent entrance to Canon Kearns Park and there where his name is proudly etched in Kilkenny limestone that great friend and servant of the people of Castlecomer will be saluted. *Ar dheis Dé a raibh a anam.*

Kieran Meally ~ *Áras Ó Meallaigh*

[Kmeally.jpg](#)

In January 1999 Kieran Meally was appointed Chairman of the Erin’s Own development committee with the sole purpose of advancing the facilities at our new Ballycomey grounds by building a clubhouse. This was a job he asked for and was duly granted. Following the great initial excitement at the purchase and levelling of the grounds the club suffered a major set back with the planning authorities putting a stop to all work. It took over seven years to sort out these difficulties so it was essential that the new project was a success in order to restore the confidence of the members in the development. At the first meeting on 25/1/1999 Kieran’s first item on the agenda was a motion that the grounds be known as Canon Kearns Park in memory of Canon. John Kearns who was not just a great hurling man but also a true friend of all the people of Castlecomer and surrounding areas. The motion was carried unanimously and later ratified by the executive committee. Kieran laid out his stall at that meeting and declared that he wanted a state of the art building constructed that the members would be proud of and that players would respect. He set the ball rolling immediately, personally collected £11,000 in the first fortnight to put in a car park but little did he realize that before a block would be laid in this superb new building that he himself would be gone, gone to join his great friend Fr. Kearns at the Lords right hand. He surely never dreamt that this building that he wanted completed so much would shortly be dedicated to none other than himself. Kieran’s passing almost halted the project; such was the pain of his loss. However, it was his sad passing that was the inspiration to complete the project. He would have been so disappointed had we weakened. In his final days he whispered, “finish it” and when push came to shove the loyal members of Erin’s Own were not going to let down “the Bun”. How often his name is mentioned in *Áras Ó Meallaigh* and how fitting that his memory is preserved for ever in the bricks and mortar of the club, the club that he was so proud to help build.

Kieran was born in 1938. and lived in the “Timberoe” Moneenroe. At that time there was no Parish rule as we know it now and so Kieran was able to lead a “double life” ie. play football with his beloved Railyard and hurl with Castlecomer. When the parish rule did come in there was still an arrangement for several years whereby ‘Comer players could kick with Railyard and vice-versa in the hurling. That he served both clubs in later life with such distinction is remarkable and unique. He was Chairman of Railyard from 1982 to 1993 and was County Board representative for Erin’s Own for as long as anybody can remember. He was the driving force behind the building of two fine Clubhouses, Railyard and *Áras ó Meallaigh*. To top that he also served as Chairman of Kilkenny Football Board from 1989-1996 as well as a couple of spells as vice-chairman. Kieran is still remembered at County Board level as one of the very few, but great-defenders of Kilkenny football.

As a player Kieran enjoyed a very successful career. He won 14 Senior and three Minor Football championships with Railyard. Kieran won a Junior Hurling

Championship with Erin's Own on the famous '58 team and was on the '59 team that were beaten in the Senior final. He also played Junior Hurling with Kilkenny in '59 and twenty years later in 1979 he became probably one of the first “managers” in Gaelic games as he became manager of Erin's Own. His lifetime dream of bringing a Senior hurling title to Castlecomer was shattered, as victory was snatched from his team with the last puck of the ball. In 1982 Kieran was a selector on the Kilkenny Team that won the All-Ireland and League double. He travelled on several memorable “Referees trips”, mostly to the states but to date no clear evidence of him actually refereeing matches can be found. Maybe his great friend from Omagh in Co. Tyrone, Pat Quinn whom he met on one of these trips can shed some light on this secluded part of his career.

Outside of G.A.A. Kieran was deeply involved in community life. Each involvement carried it's own stories and adventures. During his early years he spent many a summer in the F.C.A. and had great stories to recall. He was an outstanding supporter of Rehab and went on six fundraising walks for the organization. Among the places he walked were Australia, Thailand, The Holy Land and the U.S.A. All in all he probably personally raised in the region of £18,000 for Rehab and he is sorely missed by all his friends in that organization. Kieran was a renowned singer. His party piece was “the Isle of Inishfree” He was a member of the Castlecomer Male Voice Choir and enjoyed their many outings especially their trips to Wales. Himself and his great friend, the late Joe O' Neill often formed a two man choir at Sunday Mass in Moneenroe.

Kieran was forever grateful to the G.A.A. for the memories he had and the friends he made. After his family, it was his greatest love. Erin's Own G.A.A. were privileged to have him as a member and are honoured to name their headquarters in in memory.

Ní Bheidh A Leithéid Ann Arís

Tom (Bishop) Owens

One of the legendary heroes of the G.A.A. in Castlecomer was the late Tom Owens from Kilkenny Street. Many great tales have been told over the years concerning Toms exploits to such a degree that even the younger members of the club who never actually met the man, feel they knew him well. Tom was a good footballer and won the Kilkenny Junior Championship with Castlecomer in 1930. He was also a well-known referee and refereed many a football match in the Prince Grounds.

However, it was as an administrator that Tom was better known in the 1930's, 1940's and the early 1950's. His house was the headquarters of the G.A.A.

Committee meetings were held there, teams were picked there, jerseys, hurleys, footballs and sliotars were kept there. At various times he acted as chairman, secretary and treasurer and also represented the club on the Northern Hurling Board and the County Football Board.

At that time the local schoolteachers had very little interest in hurling or football, so it was Tom who organised local leagues for the schoolboys. He also ensured that 'Comer had a team in the county's Primary Schools Championship each year. Transport to those games was also a problem but Tom always made sure the team got there somehow. On one occasion he walked to Ballyragget with the school team to fulfil a fixture against Lisdowney.

When he was secretary of the club each player and substitute was handed a note reminding him of the venue and time of the game, and each note ended with the words, "Have boots and togs"! The work he put in for the club was phenomenal and if there were no ball for the players to practice with he would buy one from his own pocket. The club enjoyed very little success at that time but Tom soldiered on year after year.

Tom was known all over County Kilkenny for his dedication to the G.A.A. and but for him and a few more stalwarts the 'Comer club might have faded out altogether in those hard times. Sadly he fell into bad health in the late 1950's and died in 1960 aged 68 years. Looking back over some of the old newspapers, Kilkenny Peoples and Journals, Toms name often crops up.

Erin's Own GAA – 1885- 2005

What follows is a brief outline of some of the activities of our Club for one hundred and twenty years. In the absence of official records and under severe time constraints the information may not be one hundred percent accurate but as the Bible states it is told by "those that saw it happen"

The G.A.A. has a tradition in Castlecomer which dates right back to the birth of the Association. The Club was founded in 1885. Many for years disputed this date but two years ago hard evidence was found (reproduced elsewhere in this publication) in the archives of the old Kilkenny Journal, which gives details of the second annual GAA sports on Monday 13th. September 1886 commencing at 12 o'clock, noon. The first Annual Sports would therefore have been held in 1885 which means that the Club may even have been formed during that celebrated year of 1884. There is evidence to suggest that 'Comer had a representative, John P. Fogarty at the inaugural meeting of the GAA in Hayes's Hotel Thurles on that famous day in 1884. Following the first G.A.A. convention in Kilkenny, which was held in the Workingman's Club in Walkin Street on January 30th, 1887, Martin P. Kenny of Castlecomer, is named among the committee. Edward Kenny also attended as a Castlecomer delegate.

The first function of the County Board of 1887 was to organise a hurling and football championship and Castlecomer were one of the 4 teams that took part in the competition. At the end of 1887 on December 30th the next G.A.A. Convention was held in Kilkenny and Martin P. Kenny was again elected on the committee to help organise the G.A.A. for the following year. At the G.A.A. convention of 1889 Martin P. Kenny was elected chairman of the County Board, then called President.

Down the years Castlecomer had some fine hurlers and in 1958 they won the Kilkenny Junior hurling championship. They reached the senior final the following year but were beaten by Bennettsbridge on a score line of 4-6 to 1-4. It took 20 years to get back to the senior final and in 1979 with a fine team balanced with youth and experience it looked like Erin's Own's day had finally come. With what was supposed to be the last puck of the game Erin's Own pointed a free to give them a one-point lead over reigning champions Ballyhale Shamrocks in a classic. However, the referee played on for a further three minutes and awarded a free to Shamrocks to draw the game. The replay was a dour affair, which was abandoned mid-way through the second half. Controversially, Shamrocks were awarded the title at a subsequent Co. Board meeting. The general feeling throughout the County was that Erin's Own were hard done by on both days but the records will show that the Club has yet to achieve

that ultimate goal – The County Senior Title. This objective took a serious setback in 2002 when following a great run in 2001 when the team reached the League Final and Championship semi-final, the Club was relegated to Intermediate status. Thankfully, that setback was rectified straight away with the Club gaining immediate promotion back to the senior ranks the following year, by defeating a promising Carrickshock side in the Intermediate final. So now that the train is back on track, the dream carries on.

The Club landed their first Roinn A U-21 title in 1978 and added further titles in 1989 and 1990. They had to wait until 1987 to record their one and only Minor Roinn A victory having lost the '75 (replay) and '84 finals previously. At U-16 Roinn-A two titles have been secured in 1965 and again 20 years later in 1985. It is a long time since Roinn-A u-14 titles have been won with just two recorded in 1961 and '62.

Following several under age victories in football in the 90's the Senior Football title was won for the first time in 2002.

All-Stars Martin Coogan and Mick Brennan and All Ireland Senior Medal winners Martin Brennan and his son James and are the best known Erin's Own players to have represented Kilkenny at Senior Inter-County level. Eamon Wallace, Eamon Holland and Sean Meally also won All-Ireland Senior medals as subs.

There is not a great amount of information on the Club from the early days though if one had time to browse through the archives of the Kilkenny Journal it is very interesting what is contained within. We have reproduced some of those articles elsewhere in this publication including the very interesting one that reports on the accidental death of William Brennan in 1889 while playing football.

A lot was happening in the thirties and all games at the time were played in the Prince Grounds. They ranged from hurling and football to hockey, athletics and even coursing. The story goes that during a particular coursing meeting one of the hares escaped and made it's way up along Barrack St, the dogs continued their pursuit but the hare was too cute and managed to get away by running in through someone's open front door. A compulsory tillage order was placed on the Prince during World War II and instead of sporting entertainment, wheat and barley was in its place. Castlecomer, as the club was known at that time, needed somewhere to train and the Tank field, or Batts Inch, was the new home until the fifties. The reason for the name of the tank field was because there was a sewage tank in the field. This field is the one that passes parallel with the Kilkenny road from the Enterprise Centre (old vocational school) to the Golf Links road. Jimmy Farrell then bought the field and built a piggery in the bottom corner of this field.

The club returned to the Prince in the early fifties. Many other fields were used, particularly for matches. The tank field was mainly for training and juvenile matches. Adult games mainly took place in Coogan's field (beside Canon Kearns Park). It was hired for £2 per match. There was the odd game played in Canon Kearns Park and often for these games the players had the luxury of togging out in Coogans cow house. That was the pre-dressing room era and any improvement on the ditch was a bonus. Posts had to be put up and taken down before and after each game. Games were also played in Hoyne's field, Ryan's of Dysart, and in Rowe's Inch, beside the old bridge on Kilkenny road.

The return to The Prince in the 1950's was a welcome one and it came during a very successful part of Erin's Owns history. During this time there were also two other significant happenings. A transformation in fashion and a name change. Castlecomer GAA's first colours were, a black jersey with a red hoop. This

progressed to the forties were there is record of green jerseys with a round neck. The blue jersey was first introduced in the early 50's at a cost of £40. It has been blue and white ever since. The club name has also had many transformations Castlecomer, Spike Rangers, St Mary's and Erin's Own.

Committee meetings in the G.A.A. are legendary and it was no different in Castlecomer. Most of the "stories" recounted by the older members revolve around meetings held in the back of Michael Fogarty's shop or in the "Bishop" Owens house. The Secretary at that time was Bobby Brennan from Deer park who worked for Michael's father Frank. Frank had a garage, hired cars and had one of the few radios in the area at the time and crowds often gathered round the shop door to listen to a match. Tom Owens, better known, as the Bishop Owens was the Chairman during the 40's. There was no clubhouse and no access to the local hall as this was used as a cinema and billiards hall. A simple note was sent out by the affable Bishop- "meeting in my house". He also was the keeper of hurls, sliotars and boots. The meetings could last well into the early hours. This has moved on significantly since with the new office and meeting rooms now in Áras Ó Meallaigh. While some of the old stories are very funny, the Club in the "old days" was highly organized. Newspaper cuttings report on meetings where for example new members had to be proposed and seconded by current members before being allowed join the club. For the Annual sports, entries had to be made well in advance and a very detailed catalogue was printed for the event.

Transport in the 30's and 40's was very scarce and in particular during the war years. Bus hire at the time was £5. Alternative transport was the hire of "Fogarty's Brake", a four-wheeled horse drawn carriage owned at the time by the Fogarty family. From about 1939 to 1947 the way to a match was either by bike, pony or "shanks mare" (you walked). Bikes were very scarce and there were no spare tyres available. It was a common requirement of players to walk to matches, play the game and walk home again. Imagine trying that today! One interesting account was of an U-13 game played against Lisdowney in Ballyragget during this time on Easter Monday 1944. Three ponies were to be there to transport the players over to Ballyragget but only one turned up – Simon Sweeney's pony. Everyone, including players, had to run to Ballyragget. Vincent Moran was the only one with a bike. Bishop Owens secured the only available pony. Now the Bishop was no small man so the journey would be a slow one. The players and mentors eventually got to Ballyragget and to their disappointment only six Lisdowney players turned up. They played some sort of a game and as it was finishing the Bishop arrived and the poor pony nearly collapsed. They all retired to Fr Kearns (who was curate in Ballyragget at the time) house for orange and biscuits to prepare for the journey home. Some managed to get a lift on handlebars but others had to make the run home again. Once they reached Byrnesgrove School it was downhill to home and to bed. A long time later some of the players from the Barrack St. area recalled, as they lay in their beds, hearing the Bishop arrived around the corner shouting "Up 'Comer".

Tournament games were extremely popular with the paying public as well as the players as the prizes available to the players ranged from gold watches and shoes to new pairs of boots and other playing gear. Today this may not seem all that much but in harder times such prizes were very welcome to the club and players. The most popular tournaments that Erin's Own took part in during the 50's, 60's and 70's were the Mullinavat Tournament where up to 15,000 people turned up for one particular final when 'Comer beat Ballygunner in the Final. Such a crowd would be considered a very big one these days even at a County Final. Other great tournaments were held

in Abbeyleix, Durrow and Ballyragget. Erin's Own managed to win the first four tournaments held in Ballyragget. Many of these games were serious encounters and as Championships were played on a knockout system at the time most teams relied on the tournaments for games. The quality of the games was superb and indeed many of the "altercations" resembled the "coliseum" so it was high entertainment and little wonder the fans turned out in their thousands.

Erin's Own, as the Club was now known, were back in the Prince from the mid fifties. The Wandesforde Family owned this land and club officials were eager to make it a home for themselves. The TDA (Town Development Association) agreed to meet with the Wandesforde Family in an attempt to secure some of the land for a new factory and more of it for sporting purposes. They wanted to buy the 'field'. Agreement was reached on a sale to the TDA to a cost of £3,500. They then decided that the only way to raise such money was to go to every household in the Parish and look for £10 towards the payment. This was a huge requirement and in the end proved to be very successful. Erin's Own, in the meantime, decided themselves to encourage as many members to join the TDA in an attempt to get a vote on the handover of part of the 'field' for hurling and football purposes. They canvassed as many members as possible and in the end proved successful and the rest, as they say, is history. The Club was given an option on purchasing part of the "field" while the soccer club were given a similar option. The new factory "The Mills" would be built on another part of the field where previously the young farmers used hold their Annual Agricultural Shows. Croke Park officials grant aided the Club to the tune of £400 and so the local GAA club, Erin's Own had finally found their own home. These grounds are still in place today and are an integral part of the association and in particular the underage structures. Fr. Kearns was heavily involved in the negotiations at the time as was Nicholas Downey. Nicholas was one of the stalwarts of the Club at the time and served as Chairman for an outstanding thirteen years. He kept the show on the road through thick and thin for many years and was never found wanting when it came to putting his shoulder to the wheel. His long time friend Micheál Ó Ceallaigh was at his side for most of those years as Treasurer.

Around the late 50's 'Comer had a good team, that eventually won the Junior Championship in '58. Many stories are told about the training. The players used to run out as far as the Deer park (this was also done in '79 when Dr. McEaney introduced new methods of training) as part of their schedule. They used to shower in the recently installed "Baths" (hot showers) in the park and then run back in again. At this time Erin's Own again showed the way forward. There was hardly a changing room in the County at any grounds when the local committee decided to provide changing facilities for the players. They built what was simply known as the "Dressing Rooms" for a figure in the region of £400. These were very modern facilities at the time. They were constructed from timber and galvanize, originally painted green and later changed to blue. They had timber floors, seats and coat hangers and were very well made. They even had showers! Yes, in the 50's. A concrete room adjacent to the dressing rooms about 20' x 10' had a large tank overhead which collected rainwater and provided *cold* showers for the players. They were hardy in those days. In later years the dressing rooms fell victim to vandalism and downright abuse. Attempts were even made to burn them down (but failed). In 1994 the Club decided to replace the dressing rooms with a new structure and it was only when dismantling the old one that the real quality of the workmanship became apparent. £400 for almost 40 years of changing facilities wasn't bad.

During the early and mid 80's the club was strong with much hurling being done. We had a strong Senior team that contested several semi-finals, the minors made the A-Final in '84, the U-16's won the A-Final in '85. The Prince was under severe pressure and such was the demand for the field that the Club had to look at the possibility of getting another pitch. There was also, as mentioned above a great need to provide modern dressing rooms. A number of possibilities were discussed and researched. The Mills were approached with view to selling us the patch of land in front of the mill. This would have been an ideal location for a new Clubhouse. The management were anxious to accommodate the club, however the parent group (owners) in Canada would not agree to sell in case the ground was needed for later expansion. The area at the entrance gate to the Prince was examined also as a possible site but this was deemed unsuitable. The most extensive investigation that took place was the possibility of turning the pitch ninety degrees into Hollands hill and maybe getting two pitches. The Holland family were prepared to facilitate the move but when measurements and levels were taken it was totally unfeasible, as we would have had to go too far into the hill. The amount of earth to be moved and the resulting banks knocked the project on the head.

In 1986 a new chapter was written in the history of the Club. The Coogan family were selling some land at Ballycomey. There were maximum five fields in the entire Parish that would offer the remotest possibility of putting a hurling pitch on them and the Coogan family owned three of them. This was the chance of a lifetime for the Club and like the ball on the edge of the square, had to be taken on the hop, quickly. To mention leaving the Prince at that time was sacrilege and it was understandable that moves towards purchasing a field in Ballycomey would not meet with total approval. However, there was no time to linger as prime property like that would be very quickly snapped up. The Executive Committee put their heads together and quickly realised that there was only one course of action. The land had to be purchased. It could easily be sold off later if it was found that it was not the correct decision. There would be no question of selling the Prince. That would be retained for the youth. An offer was made for the field and was accepted. The Club had a second home and things were looking good.

Thanks to the Piltown Draw the Club had enough money in the development fund to pay for the field, level it to make a good start on dressing rooms. It was all stations go and the excitement was electric. Kileens of Portlaois were contracted to level and drain what would be a state of the art pitch, the same size (wider if necessary) as Nowlan Park. The diggers moved in and the work commenced. The children of the Boys National School and Firoda National School saved the club £2000 by picking the stones. Some of them even pucked a few balls so that they could claim to be "the first to puck a ball on the new pitch". Then disaster struck. A note from the County Council told the club to cease all work immediately that there was no permission to change the field from agricultural use to a sports field. After some dialogue permission was given to let Kileens finish (but they had to remove all advertising signs) but after that there was to be no further work. It was looking bad. Here we were with a lovely level field and the grass growing and the Council telling us that there would never be a ball struck on it. The Club was devastated. Nobody in their wildest dreams ever thought that permission was needed to level the field or indeed put hurlers on it instead of cattle. At this stage it must be mentioned that there was no attempt to build anything, that would of course require planning permission.

What followed was six years of anguish and sometimes despair. Every obstacle that could be envisaged was put in front of the Club. You couldn't change

from agriculture to leisure, you couldn't have a pitch opening out on to a main road, the County development plan would not allow the change etc. etc. Existing pitches such as Clara, Crettyard, Carrigeen, Ballyragget etc. were all mentioned by the Club as being in similar circumstances to ours but to no avail. The grass on the pitch had grown tall. Most of the money set aside for development had been used up to run the Club as running costs spiralled. Eventually in 1993 thanks to intervention by many people, support from many sectors and common sense by some forward thinking members of the Council the permission was got to use and develop Ballycomey as a sports field. The first thing that was done at that stage was to build dressing rooms in the Prince for the youth as it was felt that once development started in Ballycomey the Prince would be left on the long finger.

The Prince dressing rooms were built and the pitch in Ballycomey was restored. This took some time as the grass had gone wild. Railings were put up around the pitch and high nets erected. The pitch was now usable and it was like the old days with the lads togging out in the cars. It was not until 1999 when Kieran Meally offered to head a development committee to build dressing rooms that the project really kick-started again. Kieran put the structures in place and got the wheels in motion. Plans were drawn and re-drawn and the fundraising started in earnest. A car park was put in and then Kieran did what he never did before – he left the work to others! Our great friend and outstanding clubman passed away suddenly in his prime and left a numbness in the Club that could have finished us. The project that he started threatened to fall flat on its face as nobody had the heart to carry on. But then the inspiration that was Kieran Meally rekindled in the Club and the project was completed in his honour.

So it has been a long and interesting journey down through the history of Gaelic Games in the parish of Castlecomer. It has incorporated the time and effort of many a great man in the past up to this very day in a labour of love to bring hurling and football to young and old throughout the parish from 1885 to 2005. One hundred and twenty years later, four colour changes, at least 5 name changes, about a dozen different playing fields, two World Wars (and the odd tournament game!! Which were often referred to as World War 3), 15 different chairmen, hundreds of volunteers, thousands of broken hurleys and lost balls, hundreds of doctors and hospital visits to mend the broken bones and torn joints, tens of thousands of miles travelled to matches and practice games, dinner dances and racing nights, Piltown Draws and Christmas raffles, ages from eight to eighty supporting the game, playing the game and living the game and dying for the game. The latest chapter of this great club's history is now unfolding and the stories to be written are now being enacted on the playing fields in Ballycomey and beyond.

Let us remember in this paragraph the departed members of our great Club To spark your mind we list a few : Fr. Kearns, Kieran (the Bun) Meally, Dinny Brennan, Jim Buggy, Michael O' Kelly, Martin O' Neill (Hammer) Jimmy Brennan (Mousie) Tom & Denis Owens Tom (Bishop) Owens, Tom Shalloe, Tommy O' Neill, Bobby Brennan, Kit Weldon, Martin O'Grady, Joe O' Neill (The Barton) Seamus Moran, John (Tara) Ryan, Gar Moran, Jack Bolandunfortunately the list goes on ...add your own names to it and say a prayer for all. Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam

Officers of Erin's Own G.A.A. in recent years.		
Chairmen	Secretary	Treasurer
Paddy Coady	Bridie Walsh	Billy Moran
Tommy Buggy	John Rothwell	Richard Connolly

Martin Walsh Harold Stone Martin Fogarty Barney Young Larry O' Neill Michael Fogarty Nicholas Downey Paddy Kenny Fr. Carrigan Fr. Kearns Billy Mulcahy Fr. Purcell Hughie Cullen Tom <i>Bishop</i> Owens Pakie Dunphy Jack Corcoran	Ger Brennan John Kelly Harold Stone Michael Owens Martin Fogarty George Kelly Chris Weldon Martin O' Grady Jim Bollard Eamon Kelly Kieran Brennan Jack Dunphy Bobby Brennan Billy Mulcahy Tom <i>Bishop</i> Owens	Marie Therese Comerford David Buggy John Rothwell Michael Holland Walter Power Eugene Dillon Christy Hughes Brian Young George Kelly Michael O' Kelly Martin O' Grady Paddy Dowling Jack Corcoran Richard Fogarty
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From USA

Congratulations to Erins Own GAA club on the grand opening of Canon Kearns Park & Áras Ó Meallaigh. In early 1954 I went to live and work in Dublin. In May 1957 I emigrated to New York. The main topic amongst Irish emigrants in those days was to speak about home and Gaelic games. When introduced to other Irish emigrants, one of the first questions asked was what county you came from. When you said Kilkenny, the reply was always about the great hurling county it is. We got great pride from that, we would point out with pride Erins Own's contributions, Martin Coogan, Martin Brennan, Mick Brennan, and all the other players that represented Kilkenny in all grades, senior, minor, U-21 etc.

In the early years Comer emigrants would often get together on Sundays in Gaelic Park. Everybody wanted to get the news from home as the only communications in those days was by letter. We would talk about the days we played hurling and football in the Tank field, about the street games between Barrack St. and Kilkenny St. It was not a full size pitch, no championship games would be played there. We would talk about toggging out for games in Jenkinstown, Freshford, and other pitches under a Tree or beside a ditch in wet and dry weather.

In later years with the introduction of satellite T.V. we got the All-Irelands and other games live. I would on occasion meet, Michael Dormer, Joe Pickford, Andy Bealin and the late Tommy O' Neill to cheer for Kilkenny in many All-Irelands, winning most of them. We often spoke about 'Comers great victory in the 1958 County final, and all their success in the following years in all grades of hurling and football. We expect them to win the senior hurling championship very soon and cannot wait for that day..

I was home last year and my brother Edward gave me a tour of the impressive new pitch and club house. He told me the pitch is modelled after Nowlan Park. The clubhouse with dressing rooms with multiple showers is top class. It is hard to believe how far the club has come. It is great credit to the whole Castlecomer community on such a magnificent accomplishment. All of us living abroad are proud of you.

We have come a long way from the Tank field.

Continued success,

James Holland. (New York.)

The following are the results of some of the finals that Erin's Own have been involved in during the recent past.

Senior Hurling

Senior Hurling Championship

Beaten Finalists

1979 Shamrocks	0-14	Erin's Own	0-14
Replay Shamrocks	3-12	Erin's Own	1-06 unfinished
1959 Bennetsbridge	4-06	Erin's Own	1-04

Senior Hurling League

Beaten finalists

1993 Fenians	3-13	Erin's Own	2-12
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Byrne Cup Senior Hurling

Beaten Finalists

1987 St Martins	1-12	Erin's Own	1-08
1988 Rower Inistiogue	3-11	Erin's Own	2-12

Intermediate Hurling

Intermediate Hurling Championship

2003 Erin's Own	2-11	Carrickshock	1-13
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Intermediate Hurling League

Beaten Finalists

2003 Carrickshock		Erin's Own	
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Junior Hurling

Junior Hurling Championship

1958 Erin's Own	3-10	Knochtopher	2-04
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Northern Junior Hurling Championship

1958 Erin's Own	4-10	Young Irelands	1-03
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Beaten Finalists

1920 Tulla	bt	Castlecomer	
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Northern Junior Hurling League Div 2

1994 Erin's Own	4-10	Graigie Ballycallan	2-04
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Beaten Finalists:

1993 Dicksboro	2-13	Erin's Own	1-06
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Northern Special Junior Championship

1959 Erin's Own	4-05	Graigie	2-03
1985 Erin's Own	1-12	James Stephens	2-06

Beaten Finalists

1982 James Stephens	5-09	Erin's Own	3-03
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Under 21 Hurling

Under 21 Hurling Championship Roinn A

1978 Erin's Own	2-11	Piltown	2-08
1989 Erin's Own	2-09	Shamrocks	1-05
1990 Erin's Own	W/O	Shamrocks	

Under 21 Hurling Championship Roinn B

Beaten Finalists

1999 Mullinavat	3-07	Erin's Own	1-05
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Northern Under 21 Hurling Championship Roinn A

1978 Erin's Own	8-10	Muckalee/ Ballyfoyle Rangers	0-04
1989 Erin's Own	0-13	Young Irelands	0-03
1990 Erin's Own	2-08	Fenians	1-08

Beaten Finalists

1979 Clara	3-10	Erin's Own	2-11
1988 Tullaroan	2-08	Erin's Own	0-12

Northern Under 21 Hurling Championship Roinn B

1999 Erin's Own	1-16	St Patricks	3-08
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Minor Hurling

Minor Hurling Championship Roinn A

1987 Erin's Own	1-10	Thomastown	0-06
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Beaten Finalists

1975 Thomastown	4-10	Erin's Own	5-07
Replay Thomastown	2-06	Erin's Own	0-10
1981 Thomastown	5-12	Erin's Own	2-01
1984 John Lockes	2-11	Erin's Own	1-08

Minor Hurling Championship Roinn B

2003 Erin's Own	4-9	Thomastown	3-7
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Northern Minor Hurling Championship Roinn A

1975 Erin's Own	5-05	James Stephens	1-07
1981 Erin's Own	3-14	Bennetsbridge	4-04
1984 Erin's Own	2-10	Bennetsbridge	2-06
1987 Erin's Own	1-09	James Stephens	2-02

Beaten Finalists

1950 Graigue	bt	Erin's Own	
1952 Dicksboro	12-09	Erin's Own	1-03
1953 Dicksboro	5-01	Erin's Own	1-03
1958 James Stephen	2-05	Erin's Own	2-02
1977 St Lachtains	1-12	Erin's Own	1-08
1982 James Stephen	4-17	Erin's Own	0-04

Northern Minor Championship Roinn B

2003 Erin's Own	bt	Blacks & Whites	
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Minor Hurling Leagues Roinn A

Beaten Finalists

1981 Thomastown	2-12	Erin's Own	1-05
1984 John Lockes	2-09	Erin's Own	2-09
Replay John Lockes	2-06	Erin's Own	2-03
1987 Graigue Ballycallan	2-09	Erin's Own	0-10

Under 16 Hurling

Under 16 Roinn A Championship

1965 Erin's Own	3-06	Ballyhale	1-04
1985 Erin's Own	3-09	Thomastown	3-09
Replay Erin's Own	3-09	Thomastown	1-08

Beaten Finalists

1956 St Johns	5-09	Erin's Own	1-02
1973 Thomastown	4-07	Erin's Own	1-07
1980 Mooncoin	7-10	Erin's Own	2-05

U-16 Roinn B Championship

1979 Erin's Own	4-08	Pilltown	3-07
1984 Erin's Own	5-06	Graignamanagh	4-07

Beaten Finalists

1991 Pilltown	3-05	Erin's Own	0-06
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U-16 League Roinn A

1985 Erin's Own	3-12	James Stephens	1-03
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Beaten Finalists

1973 Thomastown	4-06	Erin's Own	1-03
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U-16 Hurling League Roinn B

1979 Erin's Own	4-07	Piltown	4-04
1984 Erin's Own	6-20	Rower Inistogue	1-05

Beaten Finalists

1977 Glenmore	2-05	Erin's Own	2-05
Reply Glenmore	5-08	Erin's Own	2-04
1991 Dunnamagin	5-07	Erin's Own	2-04

U-14 Hurling

U-14 Roinn A Hurling Championship

1960 Erin's Own	4-03	Graignamangh	5-00
Replay Erin's Own	6-04	Graignamangh	1-02
1961 Erin's Own	8-02	Mooncoin	6-02

Beaten Finalists

1955 Thomstown	14-03	Erin's Own	3-00
1958 Mooncoin	5-02	Erin's Own	3-03 unfinished
1971 Thomstown	9-08	Erin's Own	4-01
1980 Gowran	4-08	Erin's Own	2-04

U-14 Roinn B Hurling Championship

1978 Erin's Own	5-06	Bennetsbridge	2-05
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Beaten Finalists

2003 St. Lachtains	4-6	Erin's Own	2-7
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Football

Senior Football Championship

2001 Muckalee	2-7	Erin's Own	1-10
Muckalee	bt.	Erin's Own	Replay
2002 Erin's Own	1-08	James Stephens	0-08
2004 Muckalee	bt.	Erin's Own	Replay

Intermediate Football Championship:

1998 Erin's Own	0-10	Clara	1-3
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Junior Football Championship

Erin's Own 2-03
1997 Erin's Own 1-10
Carrickshock 0-04
Carrickshock 0-04

Special Junior Football Championship:

1989 Erin's Own 2-07
1997 Erin's Own 0-08
Replay Erin's Own 1-12
1979 Spike Rovers 1-07
Kilmoganny 1-02
Muckalee 1-06
Muckalee 0-13
Carrickshock 0-04

Beaten Finalists:

1982 Dicksboro 0-09
1996 Mooncoin 2-05
Erin's Own 1-03
Erin's Own 0-06

U- 21 Football Championship Roinn A:

Beaten Finalists:

1997 Glenmore 0-09
1998 Kilmoganny 2-10
Erin's Own 0-06
Erin's Own 1-06

U-21 Football Championship Roinn B:

1989 Erin's Own 1-06
1995 Erin's Own 1-07
Kilmoganny 1-05
Mooncoin 1-05

Beaten Finalists :

1994 Carrickshock 4-04
Erin's Own 1-04

Minor Football Championship Roinn A:

1999 Erin's Own 1-08
1948 Spike Rangers 1-04
1949 Spike Rangers 3-08
James Stephens 2-03
St Johns 2-00
Kilmoganny 0-01

Minor Football Championship Roinn B :

1981 Erin's Own 3-05
1987 Erin's Own 0-08
1991 Erin's Own 0-07
Replay Erin's Own 1-06
1987 Erin's Own 0-08
Piltown 2-01
John Lockes 0-03
Piltown 0-07
Piltown 0-03
John Lockes 0-03

U-16 Football Championship Roinn A

1997 Erin's Own 0-05
O` Loughlin Gaels 0-04

U 16 Football Championship Roinn B:

1977 Erin's Own 2-02
Graigue/Ballycallan/Danesfort 1-00

U – 16 Football League Roinn B :

1977 Erin's Own 14-10
1982 Erin's Own 3-02
Piltown 1-00
Bigwood 1-06

U -14 Football Championship Roinn A:

2000 Erin's Own Won
2004 Erin's Own 1-4
Mooncoin 1-2

All-Ireland Féile Division 5 Champions

U -14 Football Championship Roinn B:

1995 Erin's Own 5-05

Erin's Own – All-Ireland Medal Winners

MARTIN COOGAN

All Ireland Senior Title 1963, 1967, 1969, 1972
National League Winner - 1961/62 And 1965/66
Oireachtas Winner 1966, 1969
Railway Cup Winner - 1964, 1965, 1967, 1972
Allstar Winner – 1971

MARTIN (GOGGY) BRENNAN

All Ireland Senior Title - 1967, 1969
Oireachtas Winner - 1966, 1969

MICHAEL (CLONEY) BRENNAN

All Ireland Senior Title 1974, 1975, 1979, 1982
National League Winner - 1975/76, 1981/82, 1982/83
Oireachtas Winner 1972, 1973, 1975
Railway Cup Winner - 1972, 1974, 1975
Allstar Winner – 1975 , 1976 , 1979

JAMES (SHINER) BRENNAN

All Ireland Senior Titles 1992, 1993
All Ireland U 21 Titles 1990

EAMON WALLACE

All Ireland Senior Title 1982

EAMON HOLLAND

All Ireland Senior Title 1993

SEAN MEALLY

All Ireland Senior Title 2000
All Ireland Minor Title 1990
All Ireland U 21 Title 1994

DAMIEN FOGARTY

All Ireland Senior Title 2008, 2009
All Ireland Intermediate Title 2008
All Ireland U 21 Title 2006
All Ireland Minor Title 2003

CONOR FOGARTY

All Ireland Senior Title 2011, 2012
All Ireland Minor Title 2006

TERRY BRENNAN

All Ireland U 21 Title 1975

EDDIE MAHON

All Ireland U 21 Title 1977
All Ireland Minor Title 1975

BRIAN YOUNG

All Ireland U 21 Title 1984

PATSY BROPHY

All Ireland U 21 Title 1990

All Ireland Minor Title 1988

JOHN BUGGY

All Ireland U 21 Title 1990

All Ireland Minor Title 1988

MICHAEL OWENS

All Ireland U 21 Title 1994

All Ireland Minor Title 1991

COLIN DUNNE

All Ireland U 21 Title 2003

SEAMUS COOGAN

All Ireland Minor Title 1960

JIMMY BYRNE

All Ireland Minor Title 1962

SEAMUS BRENNAN

All Ireland Minor Title 1975

EAMONN BRENNAN

All Ireland Minor Title 1975

MICHAEL NASH

All Ireland Minor Title 1977

DAVID BUGGY

All Ireland Minor Winner 1993

PETER O'DONOVAN

All Ireland Minor Title 2003

MARTIN FOGARTY

All Ireland Masters Title 1997, 1998

TOMMY BRENNAN

All Ireland Masters Title 1998, 1999

ALL IRELAND SENIOR COLLEGES -A WINNERS

Terry Brennan 1971 St. Kieran's College

Seamus Brennan 1975 St Kieran's College

Brian Young 1981 Kilkenny C.B.S.
Michael Owens 1990 and 1992 St Kieran's College

FITZGIBBON CUP WINNERS

Terry Brennan 1975 U.C.D.
Anthony Owens 2003, 2004 W.I.T.

ALL IRELAND COLLEGES SENIOR B. WINNERS

1984 - Jamesie Brennan, Barry Rice, Tommy Buggy, Martin Carroll, Thomas Coogan, Martin O'Neill, R.I.P., James Breen, Martin Holohan, Paddy Brennan, David O'Rourke, Michael Baylon, Eamonn Connery, Kieran Bergin, Liam Young, Tom Hurley, Michael Brophy, Paul Nolan, R.I.P.
2003- Peter O'Donovan, Martin Boran, Damien Fogarty, Dermot Wallace, Patrick Shortall, David Stone, David O'Gorman.

ALL IRELAND COLLEGES JUNIOR B. WINNERS

1987 Jimmy Farrell, R.I.P., Martin Brophy, Joe Meagher, John Buggy, Sean Meally, Ken O'Loughlin, Martin O'Shea.

ALL IRELAND COLLEGES JUVENILE B. WINNERS

1987 Tom Brophy, Sean Meally, Ken O'Loughlin, Jimmy Daly, Patsy Brophy, Colm Meagher, Martin O'Shea, Tony O'Donovan.

INTER FIRMS ALL IRELAND SENIOR WINNERS

Avonmore Creameries

Donal Dunne - 1976, 1977, 1983, 1985, 1987 and 1988 -
Martin (Goggy) Brennan -1986, 1987 And 1988 -
Mick (Cloney) Brennan 1987 And 1988 -
Eamonn Holland 1988 And 1993
Sean Meally 1993
Patsy Brophy 1993

INTER FIRMS JUNIOR ALL IRELAND WINNER

Donal Dunne, Joe O' Neill 1979 *Avonmore Creameries*
Joe Byrne 1981 -*Building Systems Johnstown*
Colm Meagher, Ken Brennan, Anthony Owens, Gordan Byrne, Danny Byrne, Colin Dunne, Seán Meally, Lar Dunne - *2003 Dunreidy Engineering*
Eamon Brennan - 1978- St. Canices Hospital

Croke Park

A Mr. JB Dineens interest in Jones's road grounds was purchased on the December 22nd 1913 and became the property of the GAA to be known henceforth as Croke Park. The Purchase money including law costs amounted to £3641.8s5d which is equivalent to €4624. A resolution was passed, which stated that All-Ireland Senior Championship Finals be played at Croke Park on fixed Sundays in each year - one on the first Sunday in September and the other on the fourth Sunday on September.

Kilkenny had won the three previous All-Irelands, one in Dungarvan in 1911 and two in Jones's Road. It would be September 1923 before Kilkenny would record their first win in Croke Park. This was the postponed 1922 final and Kilkenny defeated Tipperary by 4-2 to 2-6. Twenty seven special trains ran to Dublin for this match. A classic that can be seen from the following account

“Alternate scoring, clean, hard hitting, with clashing, splintering ash, wielded by the greatest experts in the land. Electric movement from goal to goal; frequent blade to blade duels for possession; quickly changing fortunes – yet for all, a struggle fought out for the end with splendid though relentless spirit. These were the features of a game which will be ranked as perhaps the best played in the hurling code of modern times.”

Nowlan Park

In June 1927 the GAA in Kilkenny purchased a field from a Mr Peter Corcoran for the sum of £700. The grounds were formally opened on Sunday August 26th 1927 by the President of the GAA – Mr Sean Ryan. In his address he stated that they were dedicating the park to the late alderman, James Nolan, whom he described as one of the finest Gales they ever had in the country. He played a big part in the administration of the association, and had been president of the GAA for twenty years. His Lordship the most Rev Dr Collier then blessed the grounds and his speech said: “We particularly hope that this field, for many long years will be the scene of clean manly Irish games and that commercialism and professionalism, which would ruin games will be absent from the games played in this park. I bless this field and I hope that for many years the games played in it will be played for the honour of God and for the honour of the fair name of Ireland.”

After the official opening the All-Ireland Hurling semi-final between Cork and Dublin took place. The full-time score was Cork 5 – 3, Dublin 0 – 2. The attendance was estimated at 23,000.

Changing Times and Numbers

The Dimension of the playing field in 1887 was 196yds in length by 84yds in width. No number of points equalled a goal (so the team with the most number of goals won, regardless of how many points had been scored) Imagine a team winning a county final 0-25 to 0-0 with a minute remaining when the opposition scores a single goal to win the tie.

In 1892 the number of players was reduced from 21 to 17 and five points equalled a goal.

In 1913, the annual congress with Alderman James Nolan presiding passed a motion on the proposition of Mr Harry Boland (Dublin) to reduce the number of players from 17 to 15. This rule came into operation on the 1st of May 1913. The Introduction of this rule may have cost a Comer man his 3rd All-Ireland senior hurling medal in a row. In the pub in Kilkenny St. now owned by Davy Buggy – the McCormack family ran a

pub and grocery business. A Thomas McCormack was Vice-President of Castlecomer Irelands Own hurling and football club in 1906

Tom McCormack won All-Ireland senior medals with Kilkenny in 1911 and 1912 but failed to make the first 15 in 1913. He played his club hurling with Erins Own Kilkenny. He qualified as a doctor and practised in Portlaoise.

The Coolbawn ambush and the GAA

A Coolbawn Memorial Committee was set up in 1930 to raise funds for a memorial. The committee consisted of Tom Owens (Bishop), Nicholas Clancy, Paddy Mulhall and Ger Kelly. A main source of revenue for this project was a series of exhibition hurling matches held in the Prince Grounds. The teams involved were the top class teams of the era, and attracted large attendances at all matches. The teams were Tullaroan (including L.Meagher), the Army Metro team, the Guards team and Faughs. The inscription on the monument was composed (in Irish) by Ger Kelly. Both of the Volunteers shot in the ambush were active GAA members. Sean Hartley (Glenmore) played inter-county football. Nicholas Mullins (Thomastown) played All-Ireland Minor and Junior hurling.

Erins Own in 1959

Erin's Own welcomed the New Year with great joy and expectations. Some were still celebrating the Junior County final victory which was achieved on 14th Dec 1958. From the pen of John Ryan (Tara) in the January edition of the Deenside, came a gripping account of events leading up to the match – the game itself, the celebrations and the home-coming.

In his article under the heading “How did Comer win the Championship” he says “in his humble opinion”. It began a few years ago when Fr. Carrigan CC dwelt amongst us. His interest in the club and particularly in under age hurling brought about a great revival in the parish. With his departure from our midst, went a lot of our hopes for the future. But our fears were groundless. The arrival of Father Kearns CC, a native of a parish famous in the annals of GAA history was to prove eventful. The seed sown by Fr. Carrigan was carefully nurtured by Father Kearns, assisted by Fr. Ryan who was transferred to Kilamcow in 1958. On the occasion of the Presentation of medals in the Parochial Hall, Mr Nicholas Purcell, chairman of Kilkenny County GAA board wished to put on record that Erins Own were the most disciplined and best conducted team ever seen in Nowlan Park.

Committee in 1959:

President - Martin Ring

Chairman - Fr. Kearns

Vice Chairman - Fr. Fay

Joins Secs - W Mulcahy, R Brennan

Treasurer - M 'O Grady

Committee : Deerpark – M Baylon, L 'O Keefe, D Owens

Aughamuckey – K Mealy, M Shaw, E Kelly

Kilkenny St. – W Treacy, LByrne, J Walsh

Barrack St. – JJ Kenny, E Hetherington, E Holland

