

Joe Mc Crory 10.02.24 – 25.03.06



I didn't realise that when my father introduced me to Clann Éireann Youth Club in the sixties, I was making a life commitment to the GAA. In fact a lot of us didn't even know what the GAA was then! It was just part and parcel of our club. I didn't know that Alf was the President of the GAA – he was just the soft spoken man who talked in Irish, encouraged the boys to play hurling and sometimes drove us to camogie matches “borrowing” a cigarette from an ever reluctant “Pandy” Lavery, smoking half of it and “snigging” it for later

Such is the connection with the GAA that people are described and defined by their club allegiance – you know him – he's a Tones man or, God forbid, a Peter's man! Joe Mc Crory is one such person – closely associated with Clann Éireann since the late thirties/early forties – a Clann Éireann man. He and his brother Fra both played for the club – Joe as “poocher and Fra as goalkeeper, until he (Fra) did the unspeakable and travelled to England for a soccer trial and promptly “got sin dye” for his trouble. Their older sister Lily also played for the then St Ita's Camogie Club so it's no surprise that Clann Éireann is in the family blood

I once asked “Business” (Séamus) Lavery to write a piece about dad, which he unfortunately never finished, but he did tell me some interesting facts about his footballing career. He apparently was a good enough club player, captaining the team in 1945, and renowned for his skill with “the dead ball”. According to Séamus – he took a total of twenty eight penalties – missed the first but scored with all the others. (Who counts these?) Séamus reckoned that if he had been in the panel for Armagh in '53 and called up to take the infamous penalty, Armagh would have won and Bill Mc Corry would have been exonerated and remembered just as the Tones man who played for Armagh and not as the one who missed the penalty

Another anecdote which Séamus shared with me was that on 13th July 1953 he remembered Joe Mc Crory putting the ball in the Clans net three times in the one game. This detail stays in my mind as I often wonder how my mother felt about dad away playing for Clann Éireann while she was giving birth to their first child Gerard!

The club's recent football celebration in 2009 saw several generations of teams reunited and I was delighted to meet Frank Toman, another Clann Éireann maestro of the dead ball. Frank told me that as a citeog (lefty) like dad, he used to practice the "Joe Mc Crory jink" whereby he approached the ball as if to kick with the right foot and jinked" to strike with the left – thus confusing the unfortunate goalie. He even obliged with a demonstration in the Beehive Bar!

Joe is probably best remembered for resurrecting the camogie in Clann Éireann, along with "Pandy" Lavery, in 1967 with players such as Deirdre Moore (captain), Irene Toman, Maria Magee, Deirdre Mc Cusker, Carmel Haughey (RIP) Linda Magill, Angela Lavery, Geraldine Mc Cready, Moira Kane, Marian Mc Cafferty, Maddie Stevenson, Anna Campbell, Niamh Murray, Aideen Creery, Patricia Byrne, Linda Marshall and myself and "our Maureen". Our first uniform was a black gym frock with a white polo shirt (what was he thinking!) – progressing to an all in one v-necked dress with bottle green tights!

During the seventies the Clann Éireann girls dominated the Armagh camogie scene winning both league and championship doubles three years in a row. At that time, under Joe's leadership, camogie was flourishing in the club and in St Michael's School although declining somewhat in other parts of the county and Joe recruited such players as Marian Courtney and Anne Mc Cone (Carrickcruppin) the Mc Alinden twins Pat and Paula (St Enda's) the Mc Stay sisters Catherine and Maura (RIP) (Clan na Gael) Maura, "Wuzzy" and Marcella (RIP) Crilly (St Enda's) and Anna Brown (Ballymacnab). During the late seventies and eighties such figures as Dympna and Paula Mc Cann, Ursula Mc Givern, Paula and Catherine Towe, Fra Marshall, Geraldine Grey, Cathy Henderson, Avoureen Kearney, Denise Mc Creanor, Kerry Fox, and Tracy Mc Donald all played their part with some bringing all Ireland glory to the club

Apart from his involvement in the sporting aspect of the club Joe was also part of the administration in Clann Éireann, serving on the committee with Alf, Gerry, Beetles and his good friend Ambrose among others. He was one of the many voluntary workers who gave of his time to help build St Colman's Hall, supervised the Sunday night skating and the céili nights and cut the grass and maintained the pitches for many years. He also chaired Armagh Camogie Board and fitted in a little refereeing in his spare time

Joe was also a bit of a club historian and liked nothing better in his later years than to have a yarn and reminisce about old times, people and places of the past. He had a wonderful memory and matched with his storytelling ability he could keep you entertained for as long as you could spare the time to listen. I just wish we had written down his tales!

Joe Mc Crory – Clann Éireann man – my daddy

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam dhíl.

Aideen Lavery