

'I loved playing, I absolutely loved it!'

Winning the Towns Cup, training without a rugby ball, and dealing with tragedy: Fintan Buckley (pictured below) looks back on his time playing for North Kildare Rugby Football Club during the 1950s

by Peter Stones

FOUNDED in 1928, North Kildare Rugby Football Club (NKRFC) didn't have the smoothest of years during its infancy.

Cash-strapped and low on players throughout the 1930s, it wasn't until 1941 that the club saw its fortune change when a man named Michael Prendergast led a revival campaign.

The war years saw clubman, Jack Guiney, earn a war-time cap, which later became an official cap following the decision the IRFU's decision to recognise matches played during the war.

This quick history of the club's early years brings us into the 1950s, the decade that Fintan Buckley not only joined the club, but secured two Towns Cup medals, the first in 1953 and the second 1958.

Hailing from Maynooth, Fintan attended primary-school at the Christian Brothers in Kilcock before pursuing his second-level education at Colaiste An Droichead Nua (Newbridge College).

Fintan joined NKRFC in 1951 at eighteen-years-old and despite it being seventy-three years since first-taking to the pitch, he remembers it vividly; the highs, the lows, and everything in-between.

The beginnings

The interview begun by asking Fintan the simple question of what position he played for the club, however, due to a disparity between the number of backs and forwards, Fintan soon realised that versatility would be on elf the most important traits when playing for NKRFC.

"When I joined North Kildare in 1951, the captain was a fella called Michael Ward. He was a fantastic player and Bective Rangers were after him, but all he wanted to do was play for North Kildare as all the players were gentleman farmers if you don't mind me saying.

"Anyway, Michael was a farmer out in Kilcloon and when I played at school in Newbridge, I was always either an out-half or a centre and for my first match in North Kildare, I was playing centre and my brother was playing out-half.

"After the match though, Michael Ward came to me and he said: 'Fintan, we have a load of backs, I'm going to play you front-row from next week on', so I won my first Towns Cup Medal playing front-row."

Before talking about the 1953 victory, Fintan took to explaining what a rugby season entailed during the 1950s.

"Well, there were no coaches and there was no training until after Christmas. Then, we trained twice a week up in North Kildare but it was harmless now.

"We didn't have a ball and we were running around on our own really and the fellas who were fond of the jar would go over to Dan Finn's in Kilcock afterwards.

"I didn't drink and when I



joined first, there was one or two others who didn't either. I tried it for a while but I didn't like any of the drinks and after so long, they (the team) wouldn't let me drink because I was the driver.

"Later on and I don't know how it happened but we became friendly with Johnny Boyle, a great Dublin footballer, who was in the Air Corps, and we went over and trained with him in Baldonnell twice a week.

"Mind you, we only ever trained there because everybody knew that there was no closing time for the bar over there."

Rule 27 and the desire to improve

One major problem facing men who wanted to play rugby for their local club during the 1950s was trying to curb 'Rule 27'.

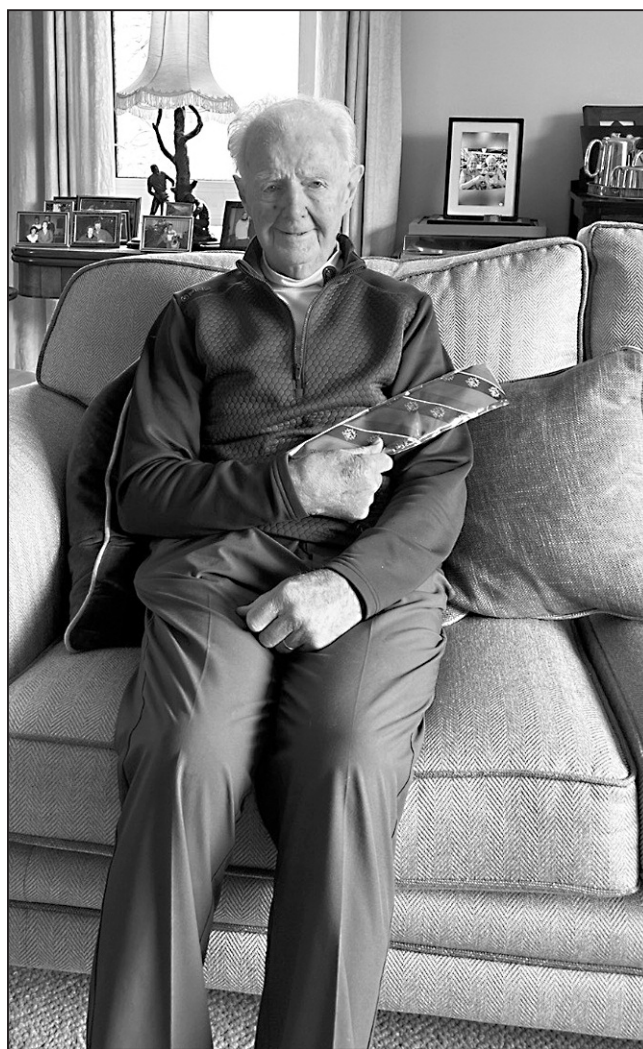
Introduced by the GAA in 1905, Rule 27 (also known as 'The Ban') prohibited GAA players from playing and attending 'foreign' sports such as rugby, soccer, and hockey.

Luckily for Fintan, Maynooth GAA were prepared to ignore his love for rugby, allowing him to play both sports simultaneously.

"I played with Maynooth, who were prepared to ignore what was called 'The Ban'. There were four of us who played both sports, my brother Colm, myself, and brothers Tim and Tony Twomey.

"Tim was a great GAA player and Tony was with North Kildare for two years before he went to Lansdowne where he got on the first team straight away before getting an Irish trial."

From this desire to ignore Rule 27 to play with NKRFC, it's evident that Fintan always had that sporting mentality and this



came in handy when NKRFC wanted to improve.

To enable this improvement, NKRFC would attempt to play

Dublin teams in friendly matches as they were usually playing at a faster and higher standard.

"We used to always try and organise matches against the Dublin teams," Fintan said.

"Every September, there was a meeting between the Leinster Branch as they discussed the entire province and the games to be played.

"We liked to play matches against the Dublin teams because they were better sides usually and you were more likely to get hurt playing provincial teams because a lot of their players had never played in school or anything like that."

The glory years

As mentioned above, it was in the year 1953 that NKRFC first tasted success as the club won the Provincial Towns Cup for the first time.

The match was played in Carlow with North Kildare taking on Rathdowney RFC (Portlaoise) on what Fintan described as a "ferocious day with appalling weather".

In the 1950s, a try was worth three points, a conversion was worth two, a penalty was worth three, and a drop goal was worth three.

On the day, NKRFC won the match 9-0, scoring three tries but missing the conversions, a statistic that still irks Fintan.

"Michael Ward was the captain the day and I was playing in the front-row but I was also the place-kicker," explained Fintan.

"Anyway, I scored under the posts but missed the convert. Then our big winger, Billy McDonald 'The Vet', he scored two tries out on the touchline and I missed those also.

"During this time, the scrum-half lay down on his stomach and held the ball for me to kick it, there was no tee and you kicked it with your toe."

Despite the massive win, Fintan mentioned that there was a change of venue, which upset the men as they looked forward to a day out in Dublin.

"One thing I can remember is that the final of the Provincial Towns Cup was always played in Lansdowne Road until the year that we got to the final in 1953 and we were very disappointed at that.

"Anyway if we were playing down the country, we would generally change in a hotel in the town that we were playing in, few had a clubhouse that you could change and shower in."

It only took NKRFC five years to reclaim the Towns Cup as they beat Naas 6-3 at Athy RFC in 1958, with Fintan captaining the side and subsequently acknowledging the importance of the day.

"There was a big crowd in Athy for the second Towns Cup win because we were playing against Naas, so there was a bit of rivalry there.

"In one sense, we were robbed against Naas because at one point, my brother, Colm, broke through the line and from nowhere, Colm Hassett, one of our front-rowers appeared beside him and scored under the posts.

"The referee was a fella called George Ford from Lansdowne, and he said it was a forward pass the try was disallowed.

"This happened very early on in the match and like, we were a far-better team but they were dogged in fairness to them and kept us to two penalties but honestly, I've always felt that if we scored that try under the posts, we would've walloped them."

When asked about what the determining factor was in NKRFC's success during the 1950s, Fintan highlighted the grit of each individual rather than their skill.

"Well, the majority of North Kildare's players were at least thirty years of age and they were farmers who were as tough as nails.

"The hooker for example, Tom Wolfe, he was an officer in the army and he left the army before going back in as a private.

"They (Fintan's teammates) kicked anything that was above the ground, they were the Trevor Brennan type, that kind of mould.

"They were dirty, filthy players and what went on in the scrum was unbelievable."

Tragedy and trying times

Notwithstanding the success of what can only be described as a 'glory decade', NKRFC also experienced many hardships during both this decade and throughout the 1960's also.

Following the victory in 1958, the club came into financial trouble, with Fintan admitting that the club was "kept going" by a farming family.

"I loved playing, I absolutely loved it. In 1958, we sort of got into financial difficulty.

"The Cosgrave family, Tom and Kit Cosgrave, were huge farmers down in Enfield and they kept the club going financially.

"From 1958-62, we had no money and because I lived in Maynooth and near to the club, if we had a home match, I went over and lit the fire in the morning for the hot water and I would bring a girl over to make sandwiches and tea for everybody and brought her home after then."

Besides financial difficulties, NKRFC suffered a harrowing loss in 1954 when player, Brendan Colman, suffered an injury on the pitch that ultimately led to his tragic death.

Fintan recalls both the day vividly and month following Brendan's death as the team had to decide whether they would carry on with their season.

"In 1954, we were playing a match down in Birr on a terrible pitch and within the first minute, our centre, Brendan Colman, went to tackle Birr's out-half and got a kick in the head.

"It's funny how things stick in your mind but it was a terrible day and lashing away and Brendan was brought over to the sideline and had a big Crombie coat put over him.

Continued on page 30

'I loved playing, I absolutely loved it!'

From page 4

"Then at half time, Michael Prendergast came into the changing room and said to our captain Michael Ward: 'I think you better stop the match because Brendan Colman is dead.'"

"After that day, we had several meetings and there were no psychologists at that time, but older people

spoke to us. I was only 18 at the time.

"The Leinster branch gave us about four or five weeks to make up our minds whether we wanted to continue the season and we decided that we would go ahead.

"We played Birr again that season for the second time in Tullamore and we beat them."

Following Brendan Colman's death, NKRFC commenced the Colman Flynn Memorial Competition in 1954, a 'Sevens' tournament for Junior Players in Leinster that commemorates the lives of Brendan Colman and Ernie Flynn.

Ernie Flynn also played for North Kildare before sadly passing away in a car accident.

In 2014, NKRFC held a sixty-year anniversary for the competition and relaunched the tournament for the first time since its inception as the 'Premier Sevens Tournament' in Leinster.

Fintan Lalor

Following the clubs climb out of financial difficulty, a second XV was formed in 1964, followed by a third XV in 1968.

Despite the club's positive growth through the 1960s, the decade started off with a harrowing loss as, Fintan Lalor, a fourth year Veterinary student from Maynooth, suffered a fatal head injury while playing for North Kildare.

Speaking about the injury, Fintan highlighted that it was an innocuous incident where nobody realised the severity of what had happened to Fintan Lalor.

"The first match of the season was always the Past Players versus the Present Players as it would get us out and playing.

"One of the men, Fintan Lalor, was tackled at the end of the match and there was nothing much in it at all.

"He fell onto the ground and it started to rain, so we picked him up and laid him onto a table in the changing room and a doctor and clergy man came in before he was brought to Vincent's hospital, which was situated in Stephen's Green at the time.

"I worked on Dawson Street and I used to go up to him everyday for 12 months at lunchtime.

"The nurses would say things such as talk to him and hold his hand, but he never regained consciousness."

Fintan Lalor died in September 1962.

NKRFC presented the Fintan Lalor Memorial Cup to

the North Midlands Area of the Leinster Branch in 1977 for a competition for a 2nd XV Area League.

Retirement and subsequent years

Coming into the mid-1960s, Michael played his last match for NKRFC, however, he was taken off early due to a head injury.

"My last match for north Kildare was against Delvin (Boyne RFC) at The Maws in the first round of the Towns Cup.

"During the match, Boyne kicked the ball in behind and it ended up on our end line and our fullback and myself went to tip it down but he ended up kicking me in the head.

"I had a bad gash on my head and had to be taken off and that was the last match I played for North Kildare, not because of the injury, I was getting married to my wife Betty that year also.

"I was closed up anyway and when I got home, my father called the doctor, I think he was worried but sure, all I wanted to do was play."

CELBRIDGE WHIST

By Mary Donovan

Peter blossoms on Bloomsday

Every few years or so, our little weekly whist get together coincides with Bloomsday, that highlight of all those Joycean scholars who seem to especially relish their "Liver and Kidneys" feast on 16th June each year. Well, as every Joycean scholar worth their salt knows, James's wife was none other than Galway woman Nora Barnacle whose unusual surname as Gaelige is, of course, "O'Cadhain", which itself is mostly translated into English as "Coyne" and not, thankfully, "Barnacle". It therefore seems very apt that the winner of our Bloomsday Whist last Monday evening in the Village Inn was none other than our resident Galwayman Peter Coyne who clocked up the best score by far on the night of 148 tricks. More Liver and Kidneys for Peter! Mary Mc Cormack continuing her summer visits from far off Clane was Top Lady on 143 and Athy native John Page was Top Gent with 132.

Kerry's Brendan Tarrant returning from his central European holidays where he assured us that the weather was definitely on the warm side, was the only one to break 40 in a Quarter; carding a very solid 42 to be best of the Quarters on the night.

Whist is a very sociable card game learned in minutes and enjoyed for years. All are welcome and Summer, when lots of people are on the move, is the very best time to join in the fun. Our door is always open, especially to novices and returnees.

Full results for Monday, 16th June:

TOP SCORE	148	Peter Coyne, Oughterard.
TOP LADY	143	Mary Mc Cormack, Clane.
SECOND LADY	129	Mary O'Neill, Tallaght.
TOP GENT	132	John Page, Celbridge/Athy
SECOND GENT	131	PJ Sheridan, Longford.
FIRST QUARTER	36	Anna Wright, Hacklow.
SECOND QUARTER	36	Paul Moore, Crumlin.
THIRD QUARTER	42	Brendan Tarrant, Rathmore
FOURTH QUARTER	36	Patrick Kirwan, Bray.

It being the 23rd of June

Whilst the good folk of Spancil Hill in County Clare were getting ready to celebrate their famous fair, the boys and girls of the Celbridge Whist were settling down to another evening of sociable card play in the Village Inn.

And this time round, when the dust settled and the tricks were added up there were no prizes for "The Tailor Quigley" or "Ned the Farmers Daughter", they being many miles away on Spancil Hill.

Instead it was a rout for our regulars (aka as "The Usual Suspects") who carried the day. Sam Howe won Top Score on 148. Cherry Ruane was Top Lady with 145, and the redoubtable P J Sheridan was Top Gent for about the hundredth time this year reaching 143 tricks.

Summer visitor Mary Mc Cormack again picked up a Quarter as did Yours Truly and Pamela Langley, who shared Quarter Four. We all reached forty tricks.

Whist is a very sociable card game learned in minutes and enjoyed for years. All are welcome and Summer, when lots of people are on the move, is the very best time to join in the fun. Our door is always open, especially to novices and returnees.

Full results for Monday, 23rd June:

TOP SCORE	148	Samuel Howe, Cabra.
TOP LADY	145	Cherry Ruane, Tallaght.
SECOND LADY	141	Mary O'Neill, Tallaght.
TOP GENT	143	PJ Sheridan, Longford.
SECOND GENT	138	Patrick Mc Garr, Naas.
FIRST QUARTER	39	Marie Weld, Clane.
SECOND QUARTER	40	Mary Mc Cormack, Clane.
THIRD QUARTER	42	Eileen Moynihan, Agher
FOURTH QUARTER	40	Mary Donovan, Celbridge.
(a tie)		Pamela Langley, Templeberry.

Now in its 64th year, the Celbridge Whist meets every Monday night in the Village Inn, Main Street, Celbridge. For information contact Mary Donovan 087-915 3117.



At the Sallins Sunshine Club's end of year barbecue for the summer on Friday, 18th June were (l-r) Theresa Donnelly, Bernie Johnson, Garda Deirdre Davorin, Caroline Brennan, and Mag Corley. Pic: Elena Stack Martin

Róisín is determined to build career as a writer

From page 22

The 'Rewind' anthology is available to order in paperback form or as an eBook on Amazon.

The group is fundraising to produce a special edition which they hope to distribute differently early next year.

All proceeds of this collection will be donated to As I Am, Ireland's Autism Charity.

According to Claire, many of Indie Authors Ireland's members are parents of autistic children and Roisin is a member of As I Am, so when it came to voting which charity they should donate the proceeds to, As I Am got the first pick.

"I am particularly delighted that Róisín Coyne has contributed her work to this volume—an important example of Autistic voice and one of the most talented young creatives in our community," wrote Adam Harris, Founder and CEO of As I Am, in the forward of the anthology.

Róisín said she felt amazing after reading Mr Harris' praise of her work.

"I love how Adam put it," highlighted Róisín.

Róisín started writing when she was in primary school, something she recalled when speaking to Liffey Champion last week.

"I used it as a second voice."

She is drawn to writing about fantasy due to its element of escapism, and her favourite authors are JK Rowling and David Walliams.

"Fantasy helps you get into the character's world," she stated.

"I was watching Narnia in third year when I decided I should write my own book and that's where everything kicked off."

Music is also central to Róisín's writing process, so much so that one of Taylor Swift's songs, Willow, inspired her book, Mystery Behind the Bookshelf.

"It helps me focus," she noted.

"I write my ideas down in a notebook and then I transfer it to the laptop."

"I go from start to finish, I go the old-fashioned way."

PLANNING PERMISSION

KILDARE COUNTY COUNCIL: I, Ken Richmond, intend to apply for: planning permission for development at this site: 25 Parklands Rise, Maynooth, County Kildare, W23 E6P8. The development will consist of: demolition of existing rear conservatory and construction of a single storey flat roof extension to the rear, a single storey front porch extension with pitched roof and side windows, and a first floor extension to the front and side incorporating a hipped roof, front-facing gable, and new windows to the front and side. The planning application may be inspected or purchased at a fee not exceeding the reasonable cost of making a copy, at the offices of Kildare County Council, Aras Chill Dara, Devoy Park, Naas, County Kildare, during its public opening hours. A submission or observation in relation to the application may be made in writing to the planning authority on payment of the prescribed fee, €20, within the period of five weeks beginning on the date of receipt by the authority of the application.

SOUTH DUBLIN COUNTY COUNCIL: I, Limmy Abraham and Josephine Chacko, intend to apply for planning permission for A. Change of roof profile from Hip end profile to full Gable end profile to accommodate attic conversion with dormer extension to rear, B. All associated site works at No 2 Fforsters Court, Lucan, County Dublin. The planning application may be inspected or purchased at a fee not exceeding the reasonable cost of making a copy at the offices of the planning authority during its public opening hours. A submission or observation in relation to the application may be made in writing to the planning authority on payment of a prescribed fee (€20) within a period of five weeks beginning on the date of receipt by the authority of the application and such submissions or observations will be considered by the planning authority in making a decision on the application. The planning authority may grant permission subject to or without conditions, or may refuse to grant permission.

SOUTH DUBLIN COUNTY COUNCIL: I, Mr George Bunici, seek planning permission for a front entry porch located at 6 Liffey Drive, Lucan, County Dublin K78R129. The planning application may be inspected or purchased at a fee not exceeding the reasonable cost of making a copy at the offices of the Planning Department during its public opening hours. A submission or observation in relation to the application may be made in writing to the planning authority on payment of a prescribed fee (€20) within a period of five weeks beginning on the date of receipt by the authority of the application and such submissions or observations will be considered by the planning authority in making a decision on the application. The planning authority may grant permission subject to or without conditions, or may refuse to grant permission.

KILDARE COUNTY COUNCIL: We, Trina and John Fanning, intend to apply for planning permission for development at 1 The Glen Easton View, Leixlip, Co. Kildare, W23 T651. The development will consist of (1) The construction of a First Floor extension over existing room below to the side of existing semi-detached dwelling, (2) The removal of the hipped roof to main house (3) The building up of the gable wall to form new 'A' roof extending the existing roof ridge to new gable (4) Insert Window in new Gable at attic level (5) Convert Attic over new room to storage area (6) Insert Velux roof window on rear pitch over existing landing and all associated site works. The planning application may be inspected or purchased at a fee not exceeding the reasonable cost of making a copy, at the offices of the Planning Authority during its public opening hours and a submission or observation in relation to the application may be made to the authority in writing on payment of the prescribed fee within the period of five weeks beginning on the date of receipt by the authority of the application. Planning application prepared and submitted by Devaney Williams Architects, Stream House, Main Street, Celbridge, Co. Kildare, (01) 610 2761, website www.dwarch.ie