

Cumann Peile Long Cogaidh: 80th Anniversary

Opening Address

A chairde, distinguished guests, neighbours, and the proud community of Man O'War past and present.

You're all very welcome to Man O' War GFC. It is absolutely fantastic to see so many people here today as we celebrate a truly special milestone – 80 years of our club.

Looking around, I can see former players, current players, volunteers, sponsors, neighbours, families and friends. Some of you have been part of this club for decades, while others may only have joined recently. Whatever brought you here today, you're very welcome.

The Foundation: 1946

Eighty years ago, in 1946, a simple challenge match between Hedgestown and Man O' War sparked a flame that has burned brightly in North County Dublin for eight decades. A passionate group of local Gaels came together to form Cumann Peile Long Cogaidh. They shared a dream, they had the community backing, and above all, they had a vision for what this area could become.

To truly understand the magnitude of what we are celebrating today, we have to look back at the world of 1946. Our founders weren't just starting a football club; they were building an oasis of community in a completely different Ireland.

The Conditions They Faced

Think about the Man O' War area in 1946. There was no electricity running through this community. There was no running water on tap. There were certainly no mobile phones, and if you needed to make an urgent call, you had to walk the roads to find one of the very few houses in the entire area that actually possessed a telephone.

When darkness fell in the winter, it was total darkness. Yet, in those basic, challenging conditions, our club found its spark.

Our founders didn't let a lack of infrastructure stop them. When they couldn't pick up a phone to organise a match, they walked or cycled the roads to spread the word. When there were no floodlights, they trained hard in the fading natural light of Yellow Hill. And when the games were done, **Mrs. Martin** spent evenings washing big, heavy, muddy jerseys by using a washboard, heating up big pots of water on the open fire, and hanging those Yellow and white jerseys out on the line to dry. **Johnny Jones**, a founder member, player/manager, cycled to Dublin meetings and fluent Irish speaker, embodied that same grit.

That is the spirit this club was built on. The fact that we stand here eighty years later—with state-of-the-art facilities, a clubhouse that serves as the beating heart of our community,

and the lights blazing across our pitch—is a direct testament to the people who refused to let rural isolation keep them from playing the game they loved.

A Moment of Remembrance

Before we continue looking back at our history, it is only right that we pause to remember those who cannot be with us today. An 80-year journey is paved with the hard work of many hands, and we owe a massive debt of gratitude to the founder members, players, mentors, volunteers, and supporters who have gone before us.

(Pause)

I would ask you all to please bow your heads for a moment of silence as we remember all our deceased members who loved this club, wore the saffron, yellow and white, and helped build the foundation we stand on today.

*We particularly want to honor our Club stalwart and President, **John Martin**, who passed away earlier this year. His dedication, his kindness, and his unwavering belief in Man O' War will stay with us always.*

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a n-anamacha.

Our Milestones & Achievements

As we look back on our history, we remember the milestone moments that shaped our journey:

1954 — We recall our very first taste of silverware—winning the Nugent Cup in the Fingal Junior League.

1979 — We honor the legends who wore the jersey to capture the Dublin Junior Football Championship by edging out Fingallians.

2023 — After a long 44-year wait, our adult men's team brought the Dublin Junior 1 Championship trophy back home in thrilling fashion, defeating our North Dublin neighbours O'Dwyers. The scenes of pure joy from the Naul all the way to the five Roads and Man O' War reminded us all what it means to wear this crest. Most recently the lads winning Division 4 league (TBC due to an appeals outside the club)

1992 & Beyond — Our legacy didn't stop with the men's game. We look back with immense pride on 1992, the year Ladies' Football was officially established at Man O'War. Over 34 incredible years, our ladies have written their own glorious chapters in our history—culminating in those unforgettable, modern glory days when in 2019 Captain **Dearbhla Sheridan** proudly lifted the Adult Championship trophy for the club.

Recent Years — We have seen the incredible growth of our juvenile section. Hundreds of girls and boys proudly wearing the Yellow and Blue every week. League titles,

championship victories and thankfully a common occurrence these days – something we don't take for granted.

What Success Really Means

An 80th anniversary is about more than silver trophies. It's about the

- The friendships formed here
- The confidence children gain
- The memories families make together
- The lifelong bonds between teammates and mentors
- The incredible sense of belonging this club gives to so many people

We may be a very small rural community, but what we lack in numbers, we more than make up for in heart, loyalty, and unmatched pride. Every single juvenile and adult player who steps out today represents the bright future of this club.

To those families who have joined us in recent years, this isn't just somewhere children come to play football. It's somewhere friendships are formed. Where neighbours become friends. Where everyone belongs. So if you see someone you don't know today, introduce yourself. You never know—you might meet someone who'll become a lifelong friend.

Our Growth & Development

Over the past 80 years, this club has grown beyond anything many imagined:

- Our juvenile and ladies sections have flourished
- Our volunteers have stepped forward in incredible numbers
- We've built 2 pitches with state-of-the-art facilities
- We've opened this wonderful clubhouse with a gym and walking track
- We've built strong relationships with our local schools, introducing more young people than ever to Gaelic Games

None of that happened because of one person. It happened because people believed in this club and worked together. That's the Man O' War way.

Gratitude

To Our Sponsors

I'd like to thank our sponsors. Your continued support allows us to invest in our players, our facilities and our community, and we genuinely couldn't do it without you.

To Our Anniversary Committee

Days like today do not happen by accident. Putting together a milestone celebration of this scale takes an immense amount of planning, late nights, and hard work behind the scenes. On behalf of the entire club, I want to extend a massive thank you to our 80th committee—from the anniversary organizers and various teams to the hospitality volunteers—who have given up their time to make this incredible day possible for our community.

Watch out for more events to come later in the year.

To Our Volunteers

And finally, to every volunteer past and present—the coaches, the mentors, the committee members, the people who organise fixtures and have the pitches in tip top shape, the people who maintain our grounds and clean the clubhouse, the people who quietly get things done without ever looking for recognition.

Thank you. You are the heartbeat of this club. Everything we celebrate today exists because of your commitment, your patience and your generosity with your time. Without volunteers, there simply is no Man O' War GFC.

The Pitch: A Gift of Generosity

One of the defining moments in our history came through the extraordinary generosity of the **Rooney family**.

What the Rooney family gave us wasn't simply land. They gave us a home.

The pitch was owned by local farmer Nicky Rooney. He allowed the Club to use the field as a football pitch (he still put cattle and sheep on it during the week). The first set of goal posts were shaped from the acres of trees grown in the plantation across the road.

Nicky Rooney's simple act of kindness—"as long as there is a team in Man O' War, they can have the use of the field"—became the foundation of everything we celebrate today. Those words weren't just permission; they were a promise. A promise that this community mattered. That our dreams mattered.

On behalf of everyone connected with Man O' War GFC—past and present—we want to say a heartfelt thank you to the Rooney family. Your generosity, your trust, and your belief in what we could become has shaped the lives of thousands of people over these eighty years.

That legacy lives on every single day. It lives in the laughter of children on our pitches. It lives in the friendships forged here. It lives in the pride we feel when we pull on the yellow and blue. And it will continue to benefit this community for generations to come.

It is only fitting that we pause today to honor that generosity properly. So, if the Rooney family would join us, we'd like to unveil a plaque on our clubhouse wall—a small but heartfelt recognition of the extraordinary gift you gave us all those years ago.

Closing

As we celebrate eighty years, we wear our yellow and blue with the exact same pride as those who came before us in 1946. We have come from a time of no electricity to a time where the Man O' War lights up our entire community.

Let's enjoy today. Let's cheer on the teams. Let's catch up with old friends. Let's make some new ones. Let's celebrate everyone who helped build this remarkable club. And tonight, let's create a few more stories... stories that, no doubt, will become just a little bit better every time they're told over the next eighty years!

Congratulations to everyone who has played a part in the first eighty years of Man O' War GFC.

Here's to our club—past, present, and an even brighter future.

Go raibh mile maith agat.