



# PILTOWN

## *Intermediate Camogie* **2014/2015**



# DRIVE FOR 5



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**AUTHOR: Seamus Norris**

*Limited Edition*

*“You have to learn how to lose before you learn how to win.”*

# DRIVE FOR 5

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## INTRODUCTION

On Sunday 1st March 2015, Piltown Intermediate Camogie team completed a wonderful journey as they captured the All-Ireland Club title by beating the reigning champions, Lismore of Waterford 1-10 to 1-9 in the final at the field of dreams, Croke Park. This chronicle which is a mixture of match reports, photos and stories tries to record the facts and the feelings that encase such a joyous victory and tries to capture what it means to the individuals, the players, the mentors, the administrators, the families, the supporters and the community. No one type of media could ever fully capture the range of emotions that resonate from such an experience adequately. This attempt has the ingredients of personal observations and memories combined with facts and statistics and the concept that a picture can paint a thousand words. The epic story does not just revolve around the final itself, but the steps to get there, the characters and the history of Piltown Camogie with a view to preserving the memories for decades to come. The facts are facts and opinions are an entitlement. In the main this is a personal journey, but no journey takes place without crossing paths with a variety of people and adventures. Those people should be able to associate with at least some of the content. Facts are easy to record but it is not easy to capture the mood of a community during Piltown's first ever All-Ireland club success. Capturing the mood and keeping it for generations is possibly impossible.

As a writer the seeds for this literary challenge were sown not long after the 2013 Intermediate championship county final when Piltown lost to Ballyhale Shamrocks by a single point after extra time in what was considered controversial circumstance. Soon it became apparent, that the players were reacting in the right way to the defeat. They had learned how to lose, now they were ready to win. They were not feeling sorry, but they were feeling challenged. They did not dwell on the way the game was lost but on how they could make things right. By March 2014, the Ballyhale team had reached the All-Ireland final against Lismore in Croke Park. They could have won. Unlucky is not a word that should be used in sport in the context of a result. Lismore took the replay by ten points in Clonmel, but the Croke Park outing was enough to highlight the huge potential of the Piltown team who would be a year more mature. In late March, though selector Tony Foley may not fully recall, I predicted in twelve months time he would be walking up and down the Croke Park side line. Mind you, I didn't go with a result until much later. That prediction was not just based on feeling, though the positive vibes of the players was a key factor. It was based on the science of statistics which will become apparent later.

This chronicle of events is aimed at preserving the memory of the first Piltown team to win an All-Ireland final in Croke Park and ensuring legendary status for all involved, though I doubt it will be the last Piltown team, male or female to achieve that prize. However, the first is always very special and given that the squad set off on a drive for five and succeeded in less than a year. This one deserves legendary status. This is a very limited edition and hopefully those who digest its contents are people who savoured the journey or future offspring. Let the journey begin, this is the story of All-Ireland glory!



## THE SEEDS

This journey started many years ago, but we will join the crew on the 29<sup>th</sup> September 2013. A day that saw Piltown win the Intermediate Camogie League title by beating Ballyhale Shamrocks by 0-13 to 1-0 in John Locke Park, Callan. The goal was conceded from a harsh free in the first minute after hesitation on the goal line led to the ball hitting back of the net. (A fault that had been the flaw of the defence in 2013). For the next 59 minutes, Piltown dominated to win their first ever Intermediate Camogie title.



INTERMEDIATE LEAGUE CHAMPIONS 2013

Twenty days later on the 19<sup>th</sup> October, the same two teams met in the Championship final in Mullinavat. Piltown were confident after their convincing league title victory. Belief without intelligence can be costly. It turned out to be a dour match, often lacking in quality. Once again a dropping free caused problems for the Piltown backs. A goal was again picked off in the confusion and the Shamrocks led 1-3 to 0-4 at the interval. Some doubts began to set into the minds of the young Piltown team. However, they did not lack courage and fought back to lead 0-9 to 1-5 with three minutes to go. Then a decision was called which long resonates negatively with many in Piltown. Full back, Elaine Kenny was driving out of defence while being fouled. Astonishingly, a free in was awarded for over carrying. The result was extra time. Ballyhale went on to win by 1-9 to 0-11. Interestingly, Piltown only conceded three points from play. Readers should keep that statistic in their pocket for later on. Could that have been one of the seeds on which the great oak grew from? The feeling at the final whistle was harrowing from a Piltown point of view. So close yet so far. Decisions made could never be reversed. It's difficult to change history, you can only change your future.

Ballyhale went from strength to strength. The following day they started their Leinster campaign by beating Oylegate/Glenbrien 2-18 to 3-5. Their forwards finding their range within twenty-four hours. The Leinster title was taken by beating Camross (Laois) by 3-3 to 1-4. 2014, came and the All-Ireland Semi-Final saw victory versus Portumna (Galway) by 2-3 to 0-7. Croke Park beckoned. Shamrocks looked forward. Some in Piltown thought like the Lotto; "it could be you". The results showed Piltown could not be far off the mark, provided the heads were right. The Croke Park final added fuel to the fire. The Shamrocks could have won, but unlucky is not a word that should be used in sports results. Injuries maybe, results no. It was a draw, 1-6 to 0-9. against Waterford senior champions, Lismore. To the smaller more compact Clonmel pitch they headed for the replay. A hat-trick of goals by Lismore's Catriona McGlone gave Lismore a 3-8 to 0-7 victory. One wondered would a miserly Piltown defence cough up such easy scores? There was enough data there to make madcap predictions of Croke Park in twelve months the Piltown target. Of course one can never be a hundred percent sure of the human factor, but redemption was a key word for the players. The quest for redemption can be very powerful. Once there was belief, all that was required was intelligence. More later.

# DRIVE FOR 5

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## LEAGUE TITLES

22<sup>nd</sup> March 2014, saw Piltown kick off their Intermediate camogie campaign with a challenge match against The Rower Inistioge in Piltown. The road to redemption started positively as Piltown won comfortably 3-11 to 1-5. The journey had commenced. Competitive action started away to Paulstown in the All-County League. Again the result was a positive, despite a nervous first half defensively, Piltown won 1-16 to 2-6. Katie Power and Laura Norris were with the county teams, so they were not eligible for the All-County League and a number of players were not available for the start of the competitive run including several who would play huge parts later on.

**Scorers:** Chloe Blackmore (0-7, 3f), Lorraine Long (1-2), Niamh Culleton (0-4), Kelly Ann Doyle (0-1), Leanne Dunne (0-1), Chloe Holden (0-1)

**Team:** Aoife Norris, Katelynn Phelan, Jennifer Norris, Ellen Commins, Debbie Phelan, Maria Foley, Kelly Ann Doyle, Fiona Long, Siobhan Dermody, Chloe Holden, Niamh Culleton, Lorraine Long, Chloe Blackmore, Leanne Dunne

**Sub;** Jean Power

Next came St. Brigids of Kilmanagh. Piltown won a high scoring affair by 7-7 to 4-9. There were some concerns about the defence settling, but the intelligence factor was being put to the test and the flaws were being ironed out for later in the year on the training ground. On the 26<sup>th</sup> April, the League Championship went into action and Piltown recorded an easy 3-16 to 1-7 victory at home to James Stephens.

**Team:** Aoife Norris, Katelynn Phelan, Elaine Kenny, Jennifer Norris, Ellen Commins, Debbie Phelan, Kelly Ann Doyle, Laura Norris (Capt), Alice Talbot, Chloe Holden, Niamh Culleton, Edel Long, Lisa McCarthy, Chloe Blackmore, Lorraine Long.

**Subs:** Fiona Long, Nicola Phelan, Mairead Power.

This was followed by a trip to Galmoy, (the first time ever for some) on a dull evening to play St. Annes. The Johnstown/Galmoy outfit were a huge competitive rival of Piltown. One casts a mind back to 9<sup>th</sup> September 2011 to a match that was key in the development of Piltown Camogie and showed the "never say die" spirit of the Piltown girls. It was the Minor Roinn "C" final in Clara. As the fog engulfed the Clara area, the Piltown girls battled to victory in a game they weren't really expected to win. Jennifer Norris led the battle from the backs as the Dermody sisters (Niamh and Siobhan) grabbed vital goals in a pulsating 2-8 to 1-6 victory. The team was superbly captained by none other than Laura Norris. It was to be the start of epic battles between the two clubs. Eight days later the same two club met in the Intermediate Championship, Piltown again came from behind to win 4-7 (19) to 2-12 (18). Interestingly, Katie Power was the goalkeeper for that game. But back to Galmoy in 2014 League/Championship. Yes it was another close battle and yet against Piltown won 2-14 to 1-13. Heart and spirit, the most important skill of them all.

**Team:** Aoife Norris, Katelynn Phelan, Jennifer Norris, Sinead Walsh, Fiona Long, Kelly Ann Doyle, Carol McCarthy, Laura Norris (Capt), Lorraine Long, Chloe Holden, Niamh Culleton, Edel Long, Lisa McCarthy, Chloe Blackmore, Jean Power

**Subs:** Soracha Phelan, Niamh Dermody

Then, came exam time. For Piltown it was a time that proved more than any that it is extremely difficult to take a break from sport and to come back just as good. The first match after the exams was a challenge against senior club Windgap in Piltown on the 20<sup>th</sup> June. Piltown, to say the least, were atrocious. This was the time when those predictions of Croke Park, just felt simply ridiculous. Piltown lost 2-8 to 6-7, but it was the performance was most worrying. Some of the girls who did exams had lost focus. Opportunities cropped up for others. The pit stop could well become a defining moment in the journey. The challenge for the mechanics was to get the bus back on the road. It was not going to be easy.

Jim Malone, Tony Foley and Eamonn Kenny set about the task of reconditioning the engine. Another challenge defeat came against Mullinavat. There was a slight improvement. Next it was another attempt at Windgap, seven days after the first. A 2-4 each draw suggested improvement, but the performance still wasn't where it should be. Lisdowney beckoned for the All-county League. Normal service looked like being resumed as Piltown cruised to a 3-20 to 1-5 victory.

Big wins in the League/Championship over Clara and one time bogey team Tullaroan followed in July. This was followed by another big win in the All-County League against Danesfort. Challenge matches and training sessions continued to

## PILTOWN INTERMEDIATE CAMOGIE 2014/2015

see the team progress, but many including this writer still did not see the Piltown team that easily won the 2013 league final.

The 25<sup>th</sup> August came and the first final of the year against their greatest rivals, St, Anne's. It was the All-County League Final (13-A-Side). The venue was Danesfort. The battle was tight and tense. Piltown trailed by 0-6 to 1-4 at the break. Piltown squeezed the victory by 1-9 to 1-7 but the defence once again had to survive an intense bombardment in the final moments. Relief followed the final whistle. Title number one was in the bag. The first cup was lifted by stand in joint captains Carol McCarthy and Niamh Culleton.

**Scorers:** Chloe Blackmore (0-4, 1f, 1'45), Chloe Holden (1-1), Lorraine Long (0-2), Edel Long (0-1), Niamh Culleton (0-1)

**Piltown:** Aoife Norris, Katelynn Phelan, Debbie Phelan, Jennifer Norris, Mairead Power, Karen Duggan, Carol McCarthy (Joint Captain), Lorraine Long, Edel Long, Chloe Holden, Lisa McCarthy, Chloe Blackmore, Niamh Culleton (Joint Captain)

**Subs:** Niamh Dermody for Niamh Culleton, Elaine Kenny for Lisa McCarthy

**Not Used:** Georgina Culleton, Ellen Commins, Sinead McCarthy, Jean Power, Aine Power, Nicola Phelan, Sinead Walsh, Fiona Long, Antonia Power, Leanne Dunne.



**Back Row:** Aine Power, Nicola Phelan, Alice Talbot, Debbie Phelan, Mairead Power, Jennifer Norris, Kelly Ann Doyle, Aoife Norris, Sinead Walsh, Georgina Culleton, Leanne Dunne, Karen Duggan, Edel Long, Niamh Dermody

**Front Row:** Ellen Commins, Chloe Blackmore, Fiona Long, Lisa McCarthy, Niamh Culleton (Joint Capt), Katelynn Phelan, Chloe Holden, Sinead McCarthy, Lorraine Long, Carol McCarthy (Joint Capt)

More challenge matches flowed with easy wins before heading back to Danesfort for the League Final against yet again St. Annes on the 28<sup>th</sup> September. The availability of Katie Power and team captain Laura Norris suggested this could be just as easy as the 2013 chapter against the Shamrocks, though few wanted a similar situation. St. Anne's had the same players available as they did for the All-County League.

Sport is strange. That's what makes it great. The battle was even more tighter despite a Piltown apparently having more strength for this one, the result closer, but the outcome the same. This time Piltown trailed 0-5 to 1-7 at half time. The defence were under siege but as will be a common theme, were hard to break. However, yet again heart and spirit won out. Piltown won by the merest of margins, 1-10 to 1-9, a score line that will be significant in later chapters. Let's read the match report from the County PRO, T.J. Mills;

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## *Piltown Edge St Annes in Thriller*

### **PILTOWN 1-10 ST. ANNES 1-9**

*Six points from Katie Power secured Piltown the Intermediate League title, when they defeated St Anne's 1-10 to 1-9 in a thriller in Danesfort on Sunday.*

*St Annes started the game brightly and were off the mark in the 8<sup>th</sup> minute when Catherine Doherty tapped over from 21 metres. Edel Maher doubled St Annes advantage when she gained possession on the 30 metre line to point. Katie Power responded for Piltown with a free in the 10<sup>th</sup> minute. Katie Power equalised the contest when she tapped over a free from 21 metres. Catherine Doherty put St. Annes into the lead again with an excellent point from an awkward angle. Laura Norris tapped over a point in the 18<sup>th</sup> minute and the sides were level for the third time. Catherine Doherty responded for St Annes to put them into the lead 0-4 to 0-3 after 20 minutes. Piltown then got two on the trot from Katie Power in the 22<sup>nd</sup> minute and Laura Norris in the 26<sup>th</sup> minute to make it 0-5 to 0-4. St Annes closed out the half excellently scoring 1-3 without reply. Catherine Doherty started the run in the 26<sup>th</sup> minute with a point from 35 metres. St. Annes then got in for the opening goal of the contest in the 28<sup>th</sup> minute, when Edel Maher gained possession on the 21 metre line cut through the Piltown defence to hand pass to the net from close range. St Annes got great momentum from this and closed out the half with two further points from Edel Maher in the 29<sup>th</sup> minute and a Sarah Whelan '45 in the 2<sup>nd</sup> minute of added time to make it 1-7 to 0-5 at the break. Piltown who played so well in the opening 20 minutes found themselves with a mountain to climb in the second half.*

*Similar to the start of the opening half, it took a while for the teams to open the second half scoring, with the defences for both sides on top. It was well worth the wait for the opening score as when it came it was a cracker. Chloe Blackmore gained possession on the 21 metre line rounded her maker to blast to the back of the St Annes net and Piltown were back in the game 1-5 to 1-7. Piltown continued the good run with two further points. A Katie Power '45 in the 40<sup>th</sup> minute cut the gap to the minimum. Piltown equalised the contest at 1-7 apiece in the 43<sup>rd</sup> minute when Chloe Holden tapped over a point. St Annes responded to the onslaught well and got two points on the trot from Edel Maher in the 47<sup>th</sup> minute and when Catherine Doherty got her fifth point of the contest in the 49<sup>th</sup> minute they were two points ahead going into the final ten minutes. Piltown responded brilliantly and closed out the contest with three points on the trot. Katie Power started off the burst with a free from 21 metres in the 52<sup>nd</sup> minute. Laura Norris equalised the contest in the 55<sup>th</sup> minute from 21 metres and a cracking final few minutes was to be had. Katie Power put Piltown into the lead 1-10 to 1-9 with a '45 in the 56<sup>th</sup> minute, her sixth of the contest. Piltown had a nervy final 8 minutes as St Annes threw everything at them, but the Piltown defence stood firm to run out 1-10 to 1-9 winners to claim the title.*

**Piltown Scorers:** Katie Power (0-6, 3 frees and 2 x 45s), Laura Norris (0-3), Chloe Blackmore (1-0) Chloe Holden (0-1)

**St. Annes Scorers;** Edel Maher 1-3, Catherine Doherty 0-5, Sarah Whelan 0-1 (1 '45).

**Piltown:** Aoife Norris, Katelynn Phelan, Elaine Kenny, Jennifer Norris, Debbie Phelan, Kelly Ann Doyle, Carol McCarthy, Laura Norris (Capt), Niamh Culleton, Lorraine Long, Katie Power, Chloe Holden, Lisa McCarthy, Chloe Blackmore, Niamh Dermody

**Subs:** Georgina Culleton, Sinead McCarthy, Aine Power, Mairead Power, Ellen Commins

**Not Used;** Leanne Dunne, Jean Power, Siobhan Dermody, Alice Talbot, Nicola Phelan, Fiona Long, Antonia Power,

**St Annes:** Siobhan Corcoran, Lauren Stanley, Tara Warren, Roisín Brennan, Niamh Sweeney, Claire Hughes, Chloe Purcell, Mary Corcoran, Orlaith Curran, Edel Maher, Niamh Norton, Catherine Doherty, Ellen Fitzpatrick, Noelle Russell, Sarah Molloy.

**Subs:** Aoife Sweeney, Karen Brennan, Shauna O'Grady, Emma Sweeney, Sarah Whelan, Maria Hughes, Marion O'Connell, Claire Phelan.

**Referee:** Julian O'Dwyer.

The two St. Anne's finals confirmed the fighting qualities of the squad. However, not too much was being read into league victories by the supporters, many fearing disappointment again in the championship, the real target. Then others like this writer believes that if you got a puncture passing the GAA complex on Monday, you are very unlikely to get another one on Tuesday provided you fix it properly. The competitive campaign to date had not registered a goal against from a free dropping in. Signs that the defensive frailty had been repaired.

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**Back Row:** Ellen Commins, Carol McCarthy, Niamh Dermody, Mairead Power, Georgina Culleton, Aoife Norris, .Antonia Power, Elaine Kenny, Laura Norris, Niamh Culleton, Nicola Phelan, Jennifer Norris, Aine Power, Siobhan Dermody, Alice Talbot  
**Front Row:** Jean Power, Leanne Dunne, Fiona Long, Kelly Ann Doyle, Katelynn Phelan, Lorraine Long, Lisa McCarthy, Chloe Blackmore, Sinead McCarthy, Katie Power, Chloe Holden

**Chairman of Kilkenny County Camogie Board, Martin Quilty presents Captain Laura Norris and Vice Captain Katie Power with the League Cup.**



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## KILKENNY COUNTY CHAMPIONSHIP

The championship started with a bye in the quarter final thanks to the good showing in the league. Next up was James Stephens in Mullinavat on the 4<sup>th</sup> October. This was the day the championship journey started in earnest. The engine revved up and shot powerfully out of the garage as Piltown cruised to a 2-14 to 1-2 win, having led 1-7 to 0-1 at half time, to qualify for the county final for the second consecutive year.

**Piltown:** Aoife Norris, Katelynn Phelan, Elaine Kenny, Jennifer Norris, Kelly Ann Doyle, Karen Duggan, Debbie Phelan, Laura Norris (Capt), Niamh Culleton, Chloe Holden, Edel Long, Katie Power, Lisa McCarthy, Chloe Blackmore, Lorraine Long,  
**Subs:** Georgina Culleton, Alice Talbot, Sinead McCarthy, Carol McCarthy, Leanne Dunne,  
**Not Used;** Niamh Dermody, Siobhan Dermody, Nicola Phelan, Fiona Long, Aine Power, Mairead Power, Ellen Commins, Antonia Power.



There was a sensation in the other semi final as St. Brigids of Kilmanagh beat St. Annes 5-13 to 3-11 in a high scoring game. The expected final was not going to happen. Had St. Anne's taken their eye off the ball? Were St. Brigids that good?

If Piltown were to play to form, they should produce a big win. Jennifer Norris' last words going out the door on the morning of the final were "losing is not an option". This was indicative of the focus of the squad. A prediction of a high scoring win was not that far fetched and still the result that was to come, exceeded all expectation.



*ALL SMILES BEFORE THE COUNTY FINAL*

## **KILKENNY COUNTY FINAL**

When the final whistle sounded at the end of the county Intermediate Camogie Final in John Locke Park on 11<sup>th</sup> October. For many the overriding emotion was relief. Piltown had taken a while to find their rhythm, but when they did it was devastating. The county PRO report tells the match story;

### ***Piltown Power To Intermediate Title***

#### ***PILTOWN 4-18 ST. BRIGIDS 0-5***

*Katie Power finished with 3-8 as Piltown eased passed St Brigids on a score line of 4-18 to 0-5 to claim the Intermediate county title and make amends for last year's final defeat.*

*Chloe Holden opened the scoring within the first minute when she tapped over from 21 metres. Katie Power doubled Piltown's advantage with a free a minute later. Aisling Dunphy replied for St Brigid's with a free in the 3<sup>rd</sup> minute from 45 metres. Edel Long put Piltown two ahead again when she tapped over in the 7<sup>th</sup> minute. Chloe Blackmore then pointed for the town a minute later to make it 0-4 to 0-1. St Brigids were then awarded a penalty in the ninth minute and Aisling Dunphy decided to tap it over to narrow the gap to two. Katie Power responded for Piltown with a point from 30 metres in the 13<sup>th</sup> minute. Laureena Murphy replied for St Brigids with a point from play in the 16<sup>th</sup> minute from 30 metres to make it 0-5 to 0-3. Chloe Holden got in for her second point in the 17<sup>th</sup> minute from 30 metres. Chloe Blackmore then got in for the games opening goal in the 26<sup>th</sup> minute when she gained possession on the 21, rounded her marker to blast home from the edge of the small square. Edel Long then got in on the scoring act when she gained possession from a brilliant lob kick pass from Katie Power to point from 21 metres. Katie Power then tapped over in added time to see Piltown lead 1-8 to 0-3 at the break. St Brigids were in serious trouble and needed a good start to the second half. The Piltown backs were in control in the opening half with Kelly Ann Doyle outstanding at half back.*

*St Brigids started the second half well and got two quick points from Aisling Dunphy. The first was when she gained possession on the 45, cut through the Piltown defence to tap over in the 32<sup>nd</sup> minute. She then gained possession to point from 45 metres in the 36<sup>th</sup> minute. Little did many think that this would be St Brigids last score of the contest as Piltown completely took over for the remainder of the game. Piltown got their opening score of the half in the 39<sup>th</sup> minute when Kelly Ann Doyle pointed on the run from 35 metres. Katie Power then tapped over a free from 35 metres in the 14<sup>th</sup> minute. Power then got in for Piltown's second goal a minute later when she latched onto a Karen Duggan pass to hand pass home from close range. Katie Power got in for her own second goal when she latched onto a Georgina Culleton effort to kick home in the 44<sup>th</sup> minute. Edel Long then got a point in the 47<sup>th</sup> minute to make it 3-11 to 0-5. Katie Power then tapped over a free in the 53<sup>rd</sup> minute from 21 metres. Power who was outstanding in the second half then put over a brilliant effort from 35 metres from right out on the sideline. Laura Norris then pointed a minute later from just outside the 45. Katie Power then tapped over a point from a place ball in the 56<sup>th</sup> minute from 45 metres to make it 3-15 to 0-5 going into the final quarter. Power then pointed from play a minute later and St Brigids were just hoping for the referee to blow the final whistle. Alice Talbot was introduced as a sub and within a minute she was on the score board for Piltown when she tapped over from 21 metres. Katie Power got in for her hat trick in the 59<sup>th</sup> minute when she gathered possession on the 21 rounded her marker to goal. Chloe Blackmore got the last score of the game when she pointed from 21 metres going into added time to secure the Intermediate title on a 4-18 to 0-5 score. Piltown now can look forward to the Leinster Championship campaign next weekend when they take on the Offaly champions in Birr.*

**Piltown Scorers:** Katie Power (3-8, 0-4 frees), Chloe Blackmore (1-2), Edel Long (0-3), Kelly Ann Doyle (0-2), Chloe Holden (0-1), Laura Norris (0-1), Alice Talbot (0-1)

**St Brigids:** Ashling Dunphy 0-4 (2f), Laureena Murphy 0-1.

**Piltown:** Aoife Norris, Katelynn Phelan, Elaine Kenny, Jennifer Norris, Debbie Phelan, Karen Duggan, Kelly Ann Doyle, Laura Norris (Capt), Niamh Culleton, Chloe Holden, Edel Long, Katie Power, Georgina Culleton, Chloe Blackmore, Lorraine Long,

**Subs:** Alice Talbot for Niamh Culleton, Sinead McCarthy for Chloe Holden, Mairead Power for Lorraine Long, Carol McCarthy for Debbie Phelan, Leanne Dunne for Georgina Culleton

**Not Used:** Lisa McCarthy, Jean Power, Aine Power, Niamh Dermody, Siobhan Dermody, Nicola Phelan, Sinead Walsh, Fiona Long, Ellen Commins, Soracha Phelan, Maria Foley, Antonia Power

**Player of the Match:** Kelly Ann Doyle.

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**St Brigids:** Emma Boland, Ciara Murphy, Nicola Butler, Tara Hogan, Sarah Mockler, Therese Muldowney, Sarah Dunphy, Laura Hennessy, Amy O'Connor, Ashling Dunphy, Laureena Murphy, Ann Doheny, Antoinette Power, Bronagh Power, Marie Doheny.

**Subs:** Miriam Walton, Amy Hennessy, Caoimhe Murphy, Lena Butler, Ashling Kelly, Charlotte McCluskey, Bernie Ryall, Ann M O'Brien.

**Referee:** Richard Dowling.

It was a convincing victory. Redemption, but only to a certain extent for the girls. The sun had shone beautifully on Piltown Camogie's greatest day to date. The defence were superb, yet again. Aoife Norris was never really tested in the goal. The full back line put in some big hits which certainly rattled the opposition. The half back line was the fulcrum of every creative move. Kelly Ann Doyle got player of the match, but Karen Duggan could only have been marginally behind. Laura Norris and Niamh Culleton worked hard at midfield. Edel Long took some great scores in a forward division where Katie Power was unstoppable scoring 3-4 from play, proving beyond doubt why she is an All-Star winner, twice. Once Chloe Blackmore rattled the net, there was never a chance of a repeat of the 2013 disappointment. The ghost was buried. Leinster beckoned and this time it was a team which was a year more mature. Aoife Norris was now eligible for the goal in 2014 thus releasing Chloe Blackmore to the forward division where she was a huge danger.



**Management Team: Eamonn Kenny, Jim Malone, Kay Phelan, Tony Foley**

The celebrations were great and one thought they could never be bettered, but time would tell. Older men and women dancing and letting what hair they have down in Kilkenny pubs, Puc Fada and The Field on a Saturday night... They should have more sense! Some felt anything from here on was a bonus, but a prediction of Croke Park as the final destination was out there. If Ballyhale could do it, why couldn't Piltown, sure we are better now than they were then. The belief was there, it just needed the intelligence to put the work in. For the management team of Jim Malone, Tony Foley, Eamonn Kenny and Kay Phelan, it was all about facilitating that. The addition of physio Sinead Doyle to the backroom team positioned the squad nicely for handling any injuries and of course first-aider and Club President Maura Brennan was still there for the TLC. The journey is no longer by car, a roller coaster ride is about to begin, hang on tight.



**INTERMEDIATE CAMOGIE CHAMPIONS 2014**

**Back Row:** Tony Foley (Mentor), Niamh Dermody, Edel Long, Soracha Phelan, Ellen Commins, Siobhan Dermody, Sinead Walsh, Mairead Power, Katelynn Phelan, Kelly Ann Doyle, Aoife Norris, Sinead McCarthy, Nicola Phelan, Jean Power, Niamh Culleton, Aine Power, Georgina Culleton, Alice Talbot, Carol McCarthy, Kay Phelan (Mentor)

**Front Row:** Jim Malone (Mentor), Antonia Power, Chloe Holden, Leanne Dunne, Chloe Blackmore, Elaine Kenny, Katie Power, Laura Norris (Capt), Karen Duggan, Debbie Phelan, Jennifer Norris, Lorraine Long, Fiona Long, Maria Foley, Eamonn Kenny (Mentor)

# PILTOWN INTERMEDIATE CAMOGIE 2014/2015



# DRIVE FOR 5

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## LEINSTER CAMPAIGN BEGINS

The Leinster championship started a week after the county final on the 19<sup>th</sup> October with a trip to Birr to play the Offaly senior champions on a dull day in the quarter-final. The atmosphere in the nearby hotel before the game was a happy one. Still smiling after the previous week. Still smiling because Piltown were in the Leinster Championship. Piltown got an easy start to the campaign with a 1-11 to 0-4 win. The defence only conceded one point from play. A trend of meanness in defence was developing.

### *Piltown Off To Flyer In Leinster Quarter Final*

#### **PILTOWN 1-11 BIRR 0-4**

*The weather wasn't as perfect as last Sunday's sunshine for the Intermediate County final but the blustery showers didn't deter the Piltown ladies in their quest for dominance over Offaly Senior champions Birr in their home grounds at St Brendan's Park. They had happily trained in the rain on Friday night to acclimatise themselves to the autumn weather.*

*Katie Power opened the Piltown account with a point, quickly followed by another from Niamh Culleton, playing at centre forward. A '45 was tapped over by Katie Power and was followed with a fine point from Chloe Blackmore and another from Katie before Birr managed to register on the scoreboard. Offaly senior county player, Arlene Watkins, scored an unmissable free in front of the goal which settled the Birr team to some extent as they fought their way back into the game. A further point from a placed ball by Birr centre back Orlagh Kirwan, was followed shortly after by Birr's only score from play, again by Orlagh Kirwan. Katie Power tapped over a point from a free, before Kelly Ann Doyle made a sprint from her position at wing back to score. A dubious free awarded by the referee to Birr was pointed by Arlene Watkins, much to the anger of Piltown Centre Back Karen Duggan who worked like a demon throughout the match. Two further points from play were executed by Niamh Culleton and Katie Power before half time, giving Piltown a lead of 0-9 to 0-4 with a strong wind behind them.*

*Many wondered if this would be enough to see them through the second half as Birr burst from the dressing room with all guns blazing. Surprisingly the wind gave Birr no advantage in the second half as they failed to score. Piltown's three substitutes provided fresh legs when they were needed most on heavy ground, particularly the hardworking Carol McCarthy. It was 17 minutes before Katie Power pointed for Piltown, and another 10 minutes before super-sub, Lisa McCarthy found the net when she was almost over the end line, sealing Piltown's victory. One more point from Chloe Blackmore closed the scoring and the supporters started to think ahead to next Sunday's semi-final against Myshall of Carlow.*



**Piltown Scorers:** Katie Power (0-6, 2 frees, 1 '45), Chloe Blackmore (0-2), Niamh Culleton (0-2), Kelly Ann Doyle (0-1), Lisa McCarthy (1-0)

**Birr Scorers:** Arlene Watkins (0-2 frees), Orlagh Kirwan (0-2, 1f)

**Piltown:** Aoife Norris, Katelynn Phelan, Elaine Kenny, Jennifer Norris, Debbie Phelan, Karen Duggan, Kelly Ann Doyle, Laura Norris (Capt), Alice Talbot, Chloe Holden, Niamh Culleton, Katie Power, Chloe Blackmore, Georgina Culleton, Lorraine Long,

Subs: Lisa McCarthy for Lorraine Long, Mairead Power for Niamh Culleton, Nicola Phelan for Georgina Culleton

Not Used: Sinead McCarthy, Jean Power, Leanne Dunne, Siobhan Dermody, Sinead Walsh, Fiona Long, Ellen Commins, Soracha Phelan, Maria Foley, Antonia Power

**Birr:** Mairead Jennings, Danielle Ryan, Claire Ryan, Sheila Sullivan, Deirdre Cashin, Orlagh Kirwan, Katie Bergin, Ciara Ryan, Mairead Dooley, Gillian Irwin, Kady McKenna, Eimear Mooney, Katie Dooley, Rebecca Hctor, Arlene Watkins.

Subs: Shauna Carroll, Jane McCarthy, Sarah Lyons, Natalie Hehir, Dawn Whelahan, Ciara Maloney

**Referee:** Brochan O'Reilly (Laois)

## LEINSTER SEMI-FINAL

Carlow Senior champions and reigning All-Ireland junior champions, Myshall were in a confident mood as Piltown headed away to take on another senior club in their own backyard. Research suggested that this Carlow team was physically strong. The convoy of cars following the team had noticeably grown. Again the 26<sup>th</sup> October was a dull day as Piltown faced their fifth competitive match in five weeks. This was going to be a tough task. The referee was delayed and Myshall looked a very confident and athletic side during their warm up. At this stage more people were daring to dream, but could Piltown hold out? Ciara Quirke was one of the several names been mentioned as being a big threat. Would the Piltown backs put up the shutters and barricades again long enough for the forwards to get a few scores? The referee was pernickety, but maybe this was the day Piltown needed such a referee. Let's see the County PRO match report.

### *Piltown Reach First Ever Leinster Final*

#### **PILTOWN 1-12 MYSHALL 1-9**

*Frees and penalties defined this club championship dogfight between Piltown and Myshall last Sunday in Myshall, with Ciara Quirke and Katie Power claiming most of the scores for their respective teams. With an average age of 26 and two Junior All Ireland's under their belt Myshall were a force to be reckoned with. It was one point apiece before Piltown were awarded a penalty in the 9<sup>th</sup> minute, which was executed like a professional by Chloe Blackmore. Points were exchanged by Ali Ruzchitzko and Edel Long before Ciara Quirke scored a goal and two points in a period of domination by Myshall, giving them a lead of two points. Katie Power scored the next three to give Piltown a margin of one by half time, having played with the wind in their favour. Worried supporters on the sideline wondered if this was enough to see them through the second half facing a strong breeze but the Piltown girls showed their fitness and mettle in the next 34 minutes by chasing and harrying for every ball.*

*Katie Power opened the scoring with a placed ball and this was quickly followed by a point from team captain, Laura Norris. Ten minutes before full time, with Myshall a point behind, a penalty was awarded to them by referee, Jenny Byrne. When Kelly Ann Doyle and Chloe Blackmore stood in at either side of Aoife Norris to prepare for battle their management had the utmost confidence in their ability. Aoife made a lightening save and the ball was cleared down the field. A final tussle in front of the Piltown goal gave Myshall their last opportunity to make up the five point gap, although they scored a couple of consolation points. Piltown now meet Camross (Laois) in the Leinster final on Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> November.*

**Piltown Scorers:** Katie Power (0-10, 8f, 1'45), Chloe Blackmore (1-0 pen), Laura Norris (0-1), Edel Long (0-1)

**Myshall Scorers:** Ciara Quirke (1-6), Kate Nolan (0-1), Katherine Foley (0-1), Ali Ruzchitzko (0-1)

**Piltown:** Aoife Norris, Katelynn Phelan, Elaine Kenny, Jennifer Norris, Debbie Phelan, Karen Duggan, Kelly Ann Doyle, Laura Norris, Niamh Culleton, Chloe Holden, Edel Long, Katie Power, Alice Talbot, Chloe Blackmore, Georgina Culleton.

**Subs:** Lorraine Long, Sinead McCarthy, Carol McCarthy.

**Myshall:** Joanne Joyce, Niamh Quirke, Mairead Doyle, Laura James, Fiona Abbey, Michelle Nolan, Breege Nolan, Ciara Mullins, Kate Nolan, Tara Wilson, Olivia Jordan, Ciara Quirke, Ali Ruzchitzko, Katherine Foley, Marian Doyle.

**Referee:** Jenny Byrne (Dublin)

It was noticeable at this point and hopefully not too premature that the curse that upset the backs in 2013 had disappeared. That of the sliotar dropping into the back of the net from a long range harmless looking free was now marked absent. The work on the communication between the backs and the goalkeeper had come to fruition. Despite her young years Aoife Norris who was to celebrate her 16<sup>th</sup> birthday on the day of the Leinster Final had earned the confidence of the back line and the back line had matured. The management team had addressed a potential issue and the signs were good regarding its success. The belief was there that the goalkeeper had it under control and the backs often moved to take up a position to collect and start the ball rolling with a counter attack. This was a fine example of learning from past mistakes and a fine example of the spirit of trust that was growing within the squad.

### MEMORIES OF THE JOURNEY

Over 32 years ago, a massive sporting phenomenon took over the parish of Piltown which captured the imagination of so many local people that Sunday after Sunday there was a mass exodus from the parish to watch and cheer a local team as they achieved the status of giant killers supreme. That team was a soccer team called Templeorum United, a Division 3 team that went on an incredible journey beating several top division teams as they reached the 1982 McCalmont Cup Final versus EMFA, a team that was to become a League of Ireland team within two more years. The journey ended with a 2-nil defeat, but there was no shame and huge pride. And more than anything wonderful memories.

I was privileged to be one of the young lads on that team and the memories of that time will always stay with me. From piling into cars outside Daltons Shop and the convoy setting off, usually to Kilkenny to the smiles and cheers of a happy community. Often listening to 1960's music. The drivers were a lot older than me. (I remember "the wings of a snow white dove" for some reason- not really a great sporting anthem, but then again it's not always the expected tune that juices the memory).

What I remember most was the sense of community as the fans rallied around and got behind the team. The fans were neighbours, friends, relations and although it was a different code, there was many GAA supporters, as many of us were hurlers at heart. Not only did they come from Piltown but they came from the surrounding parishes. As a young lad it felt massive, almost indescribable. The well-wishers made you feel like a celebrity. My only nerves at the time were caused by my own promises to myself not to leave down the team management who had shown faith in me and the people who supported us loyally. And I was the young lad who always came on for the second half to run the legs off the opposition in midfield (Strangely enough I could run then). Even being a sub did not take away the joy of being part of it, though you always wanted to start. However, I always got plenty game time because most games went to extra time and penalties. Only now I realise how stressed the supporters could have been. The feeling at the end of each game was incredible, sometimes I felt more nervous at the end of the game as the supporters crowded round patting you on the back and praising your endeavours, as what had taken place began to sink in. You felt as if you never made a mistake, but maturity tells you that wasn't really the case, but who cared. The match was won, the celebrations begun.

Thinking back now, the memories are not so much of losing the final, but rather the journey to the final. Not the literal journey (well a bit I suppose), but rather the adventure of each match. It was a journey that I will be forever grateful that I was part of. The journey and the adventure is something I will always have regardless of the result.

When that final was over, as a young arrogant chap, I felt that it was something that I would be part of year in year out. How wrong I was, yes I was part of winning teams afterwards but even county finals didn't ever capture the imagination as much as that did. Probably as it was so unexpected. The nearest I've seen since was travelling on a bus in early December 2003 to support Piltown versus St. Vincent's in the Leinster Junior Hurling Final. I then experienced what it was like to be the supporter and I knew what the players felt. I envied them but knew like me they would not appreciate it enough at the time. It was fabulous and those players had the added bonus of winning the final. For me although I had been to all bar one of the Leinster games, I did feel I missed part of the journey, but come the final the sense of community was fabulous. As history showed, what is rare is wonderful. I remember writing a report on the final for the *Kilkenny People* afterwards and I was so excited as I wrote it. Even those opportunities don't continue forever.

It has taken another eleven years for another similar opportunity to come about for the community of Piltown to experience the journey and adventure of supporting a local sports team. This time the honour falls to the Piltown Intermediate Camogie team who have now gone 14 competitive games unbeaten in 2014 and have reached the Leinster Final. Heading to Myshall today and stopping off in Bagenalstown (Ironically one of the stops on the Templeorum United journey in 1982) brought all those memories back to me. Family, friends, relations and neighbours all now getting behind the Camogie girls. The battling quality of the girls as they are put to the pin of their collar on the pitch. The community becoming family at the final whistle, the result secured. The excited and relieved chatter on the field as clusters talk excitedly of the great obstacle crossed during the fantastic adventure. The knee jerk analysis, the pats on the back, the smiles, the praise. Thank God to be part of it, to feel it, to sense it. The added bonus is that I am proud to

## PILTOWN INTERMEDIATE CAMOGIE 2014/2015

be the father of one of the players, Jennifer, another first on these types of adventures for me. I do envy her and the players. As a family this is superb time and all of us feel part of it. We all feel Jennifer's joy and pain and sometimes the pain of her direct opponent. I looked around at the final whistle and saw big George Culleton, (I used to make the mistake of standing next to him in team photos, I swear I was big too!) He and his brother Nicky were part of that Templeorum adventure. Now he has two daughters, Niamh and Georgina involved and a niece, Edel Long. I recall Tom Duggan whom I partnered at midfield on that Templeorum team, he has a niece, Karen playing and Liam McCarthy, another young lad on that team has several nieces involved (Katelynn Phelan, Sinead, Lisa and Carol McCarthy). All I'm sure hoping the adventure will continue.

The Leinster Final is in two weeks time and many local people have not got on the bus for the journey and the adventure yet. Don't miss the bus! This team is showing what it takes to achieve success on the field. Lose the chauvinism. These girls are "our people" too. You may never find out what you have missed but take it from me you will have missed something extraordinary. I experienced it as a player in 1982. As a supporter in 2003 and something in between this time in 2014. The feeling of community cannot be surpassed, nor the magic of friendship. If you read this and your from Piltown or you know someone from Piltown. Become part of the journey, if you are not already belted up for the roller coaster trip. Get on the adventure bus. You're not a bandwagoner. You are a supporter. Yes the adventure could easily end the next day because sport does not do empathy for anyone in particular. But for the girls, in time it will be about the journey and they will be forever grateful for those passengers who joined them on the journey and believe me you will be glad you did. And don't assume it can happen again next year. It might and it might not. History has proven, for me, it is more likely to be "might not". For those who supported Templeorum United in 1982. Thank you for one of my life's best memories. Now I'm going to enjoy this adventure and not worry where it takes me.



**Back Row: Soracha Phelan, Katelynn Phelan, Niamh Dermody, Jean Power, Debbie Phelan, Ellen Commins, Jennifer Norris, Aoife Norris, Mairéad Power, Alice Talbot, Sinead McCarthy, Sinead Walsh, Maria Foley, Elaine Kenny, Siobhan Dermody, Carol McCarthy, Lorraine Long, Aine Power**

**Front Row: Antonia Power, Kelly Ann Doyle, Fiona Long, Laura Norris, Leanne Dunne, Niamh Culleton, Chloe Blackmore, Chloe Holden, Lisa McCarthy, Nicola Phelan, Katie Power, Karen Duggan, Edel Long, Georgina Culleton**

# DRIVE FOR 5

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## LEINSTER FINAL

### *Piltown Edge Camross In Clane Thriller*

#### **PILTOWN 3-10 CAMROSS 4-5**

*Piltown claimed their first Leinster Intermediate Camogie title when they edged out Camross of Laois 3-10 to 4-5 in a thriller in Clane on Sunday (8<sup>th</sup> November 2014).*

*Katie Power opened the scoring for the victors with a free in the third minute. Camross then got 1-1 without reply. Sarah Ann Fitzgerald started the burst with a free in the 5<sup>th</sup> minute. Niamh Dollard then got in for a goal for the losers in the 10<sup>th</sup> minute when she latched onto a Dawn Mortimer pass to tap home. Piltown responded to this concession as they got in for their first goal when Chloe Holden's effort for a point deceived the Camross keeper and dropped to the net to make it 1-1 apiece after 14 minutes. Katie Power then put Piltown ahead with a free in the 16<sup>th</sup> minute. Sarah Ann Fitzgerald equalised the contest with a forty-five in the 19<sup>th</sup> minute. Piltown then hit Camross for a second goal in the 26<sup>th</sup> minute when Niamh Culleton batted the ball to the net from fourteen metres after a pass from Katie Power in what was a brilliant piece of play. Camross bounced back to this concession with a point from Aoife Burke just on the stroke of half time to see them trail 2-2 to 1-3 at the break.*



*Piltown started the second half with three points on the trot. Chloe Holden started the burst when she pointed in the 32<sup>nd</sup> minute. Chloe Blackmore continued the run with a point a minute later before Katie Power tapped over an excellent score in the 34<sup>th</sup> minute. She was slipping at the time she hit the sliotar. Camross sensed the game was getting away from them and they got in for two goals in as many minutes from Dawn Mortimer. She got in for the first of her brace in the 35<sup>th</sup> minute when she ground pucked the sliotar home from fourteen metres to cut the gap to two points 2-5 to 2-3. Mortimer then got in for her second goal when she gained possession on the twenty-one to blast to the roof of the Piltown net. Piltown bounced back with 1-1. An Edel Long point in the 37<sup>th</sup> minute equalised the contest before Katie Power got in for a goal when she gained possession 20 metres out, rounded her marker to blast home from 14 metres to make it 3-6 to 3-3. Michelle Holmes responded for Camross with a point in the 41<sup>st</sup> minute. Piltown then got four points on the trot. Katie Power tapped over a free in the 43<sup>rd</sup> minute. Niamh Culleton then tapped over a point a minute later before a further Katie Power point in the 45<sup>th</sup> minute. Georgina Culleton then got a point in the 46<sup>th</sup> minute to see them 3-10 to 3-4 ahead. Camross were not out of the contest and hit back with 1-1 from Niamh Dollard. Dollard tapped over a point in the 47<sup>th</sup> minute before she got in for Camross's fourth goal when she blasted home from 14 metres in the 50<sup>th</sup> minute to set up a grandstand finish. Fair play to Piltown they weathered the storm and saw out some nervy minutes, to see them record a 3-10 to 4-5 victory to claim their first Leinster title.*

**Piltown Scorers:** Katie Power 1-5 (0-3F), Chloe Holden 1-2, Niamh Culleton 1-0, Chloe Blackmore 0-1, Edel Long 0-1, Georgina Culleton 0-1.

**Camross Scorers:** Niamh Dollard 2-1, Dawn Mortimer 2-0, Sarah Ann Fitzgerald 0-2 (1F, 1 '45), Aoife Burke 0-1, Michelle Holmes 0-1.

**Piltown:** Aoife Norris, Katelynn Phelan, Elaine Kenny, Jennifer Norris, Mairead Power, Karen Duggan, Kelly Ann Doyle, Laura Norris (Capt), Alice Talbot, Niamh Culleton, Edel Long, Katie Power, Chloe Holden, Chloe Blackmore, Georgina Culleton,

**Subs:** Carol McCarthy for Katelynn Phelan, Lorraine Long for Chloe Holden, Lisa McCarthy for Georgina Culleton

**Not Used:** Debbie Phelan, Sinead McCarthy, Aine Power, Jean Power, Leanne Dunne, Siobhan Dermody, Nicola Phelan, Sinead Walsh, Fiona Long, Ellen Commins, Soracha Phelan, Niamh Dermody, Maria Foley, Antonia Power

**Camross:** Jennifer Moore, Brigie Meade, Deirdre Moore, Ashling, Olga Parkinson, Sara-Ann Fitzgerald, Mairead Burke, Therese Keenan, Claire Fitzgerald, Aoife Burke, Karen Rice, Michelle Holmes, Lizzy Ryan, Niamh Dollard, Dawn Mortimer.

**Subs:** Collier, Síle Burke, Leona Conroy, Courtney Lally, Maeve Collier, Doireann Tiernan, Shona Carroll, Lisa Culleton, Ciara Delaney, Fidelma Conroy.

**Referee:** Peter Dowd (Meath)

## PILTOWN INTERMEDIATE CAMOGIE 2014/2015



- Top Left: The Final Whistle
- Top Centre: Captain Laura Norris and Vice Captain are presented with the Cup by the Leinster Chairperson
- Top Right; Debbie Phelan, Mairead Power, Siobhan Dermody, Jennifer Norris, Sinead McCarthy
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Row Left: George Culleton with daughters, Georgina and Niamh.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Row Centre: Lorraine, Edel and Fiona Long
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Row Right: Jennifer Norris with Grandmothers, Mavis Keegan and Eileen Norris
- Above: Players and Supporters
- Left: The Bonfire Homecoming

### SPECIAL MOMENTS BEFORE THE BREAK

Another stage of the journey has been completed. The bandwagon has pulled into a station. The atmosphere is electric. Thankfully we're picking up more passengers by the day, but there is no limit to what passengers this bandwagon can take and all are more than welcome. Enough of talking in riddles. **Piltown Intermediate Camogie Team are Leinster Club Champions!!!** Can it get better?

For anyone who read my "blog" of two weeks ago, I reminisced about the heady days of Templeorum United. Well coincidentally, on the bus trip to Clane on Sunday, I was able to go through it all again with team mate, big George Culleton as we shared a seat. What a sight! Me and George sharing a seat and as I said the last time I'm not small either. The enjoyable tête-à-tête, confirmed that what I felt at the time was what he felt then too, back in the day. So we were both well clued in to what our daughters were feeling as the great occasion and day unfolded.

Not that I can reveal all that was said, but I did confess to George my "secret" omen which we shared after Cookstown and which continues to be very successful. Later in Anthony's, George said we must indulge in the unusual habit again based on the success of the day. I might reveal to all before the next match (stay tuned) or maybe the answer might be instead of the next "spot the ball" competition, "spot the omen". No Norris's or Culleton's allowed enter.

To my surprise, George, one of the most calmest man I ever played with seemed a tad nervous, but why wouldn't he be? When you are playing yourself, you are or can be in control. Once the girls' cross the white line, there is nothing we can do only shout, hope and pray. And I have been told on more than one occasion by more than one family member that I have a distinctive voice at matches. Not clear whether that is a "compliment"... Admittedly arriving at the pitch in Clane gave you a slight tingle, but reading the impressive list of honours in the match programme won by the Piltown girls reassured. Anyway to cut a very long story short, Piltown won a brilliant match against worthy opponents in Camross. It takes two great teams to make a great match which it was. And as I had no responsibility for match reports, the victory was something I was able to savour. No need to worry about the essential facts, the scores, the scorers, the wides, the major contributors, the changes, but plenty of room to waffle and savour. So let me share some of the things that should be recorded so that when the memory diminishes someone will remember and also try to capture something which is almost impossible to put into words. That victorious feeling.

First, that last two minutes of the game. It's not often myself and Sheila watch a match together as one or the other of us is usually involved in some shape or form. And going by her behaviour in those last two nail biting minutes, it may not happen again. In GAA, a two point lead with two minutes to go is the most dangerous lead possible, but no matter how many times you look at the watch the time will not go any quicker and grabbing my hand at that point is not a romantic gesture! We'll say no more. And lets be clear, the hug at the final whistle was neither romantic or reconciliatory, but rather uncontrollable joy and ecstasy or should we remember the words of jockey Mick Fitzgerald when he won the 1986 Grand National on the appropriately named horse for this occasion Rough Quest?

Then savour the moment or moments. The magical moment the cup was presented to Laura Norris and Katie Power on the balcony in front of an ever growing Piltown following although with my failing eyesight I could not see Jennifer. Forget your Champions League or FA Cup. A GAA crowd is way more intimate. There were plenty tears, no shame, but I was not one of them. Not sure why because I can be emotional, I think. But for me this was just a stop off on the journey to the Holy Grail, albeit a wonderful break in the journey. Like stopping off at Universal Studios on the way to Disneyland. No, sorry, way better than that! The moment all the girls passed from the presentation to the hall and Jennifer was not one of them. The moment I looked along the back row numerous times and couldn't see Jennifer as they were taking the team victory photo. That back row that she insisted she always went to for pictures so like her father she could stand next to the tallest players on the team! The moment I wondered was I really blind or was she injured in the dressing room or stuck in the toilet. The moment, I finally saw her beaming smile in the front row. So much for consistency! The moment I finally got to give her a proud hug, the match must have been over about a week, well it felt that way. Proud moment.

Then the moments came quick and fast, none more special than watching her hugging her granny (Mavis Keegan) who was in tears. Jennifer remarked, "don't worry, we won". I wonder where she gets that wit from. Most special was the moment, the tough corner back, with proud Mammy and Daddy were joined by her equally proud brother and sister, Jamie and Lisa for a photo with the shining cup adorned with black and amber ribbons and filled with a sliothar at that point. I'm lost for words here. Family is special. Then Jennifer posed with her two grannies, her biggest fans. Their eyesight is very poor as she never makes a mistake in their eyes. A lot of grannies and even parents are like that though. At that moment, I thought back to when she was about 10 and she didn't want to do any sport. Heartbroken, I agreed that was fine, but insisted she ring her trainers to tell them. I think she now knows what a disaster that would have been if she ever had made that call. Did Garth Brooks have a song about? "thank god for *unmade* phone calls". If other parents face a similar issue, do the same. Remember, subliminal pressure only. I have no doubt, Jennifer has no regrets. As I think back to an Under-12 photo of a team that played Windgap in Mullinavat which Jennifer was a sub on and the many names in that photo who have since disappeared from the camogie and sporting sphere... look what you've missed out on!!

I also look around and notice all the Camogie coaches there in support or helping out. They are not just there for the final, they were there for the first round and challenge matches too. All of them. Yes that is one of the camogie club secrets, unity of purpose and support for each other. I thank all of them individually as they all contributed in some way to Jennifer and the rest of the players. Sometimes these people who contribute so much, are forgotten and the spirit of one not there will never be forgotten either. Then to look around the other families all experiencing the same feelings of joy and utopia. The Culletons, the Powers, the Kennys, the Foleys, the Phelans, the McCarthys, the Walshes, the Doyles, the Dunnes, the other Norris', the Duggans, the Longs, the Holdens, the Blackmores, the Talbots and all the extended families, aunts, uncles, cousins, and grandparents. Fair play to Malone, Foley and Kenny for facilitating such a party. Fifteen competitive games in 2014, Fifteen wins, four cups, the only facts necessary at this point. A realisation was sinking in that the choreography of the match was not even on the agenda for discussion. Strange but nice for a change for a game analyst like myself. What was there to discuss, victory was ours.

The bus journey home felt slow as the longing to be back home among your own with the cup was getting tantalisingly stronger. The anticipation was exceeded as the team bus, supporters bus and the cars cruised up the drive to the GAA complex to the background of a fabulous bonfire and a wonderful shining moon. Poetry in imagery. It was only after that I realised that the young girls had never experienced the traditional victory bonfire before and boy did they love it! Thanks to those with the matches, the pallets, the bales, the cots. You are part of it now. The girls singing "Champioliés" silhouetted against the amber glowing flames in front of the joyous supporters, relations and community. What a sight, what a sound, what a feeling. If you missed, it was your loss.

Then to Anthony's Inn for the victory disco. Anthonys' rocked, the "wagon wheel" spun, the players bopped, the kaleidoscope lights shone. I thought of William Wordsworth. Continuous as the Stars that shine, they tossed their heads in sprightly dance. A small bit of poetic licence. People danced who I thought I'd never see dance, including a young lad called Norris... and his son. The joy in the air was thick. Smiles everywhere, laughter, singing out of tune that sounded perfect. "We are the Champions", "Rock Me Mamma" (the camogie team anthem), "Simply the Best", clichéd but apt. There were lads making a right eejit of themselves... and I was one of them. The place was buzzing. The immediate aftermath of tears long since gone to be replaced by the craziest of smiles, hands in the air, rocking, rolling and waving. This is what winning is about. This is the feeling.

My favourite sports adage is "You have to learn how to lose before you learn how to win". Now I know why. If you read this and can't feel the joy, well..... If you read this and want to experience it, please come join in. If you are depressed and need a lift, become part of it. Everyone is welcome and there's no doctors' bills or tablets involved. The bandwagon is stopped for a while and after Christmas, it will pull out on the final stage of the journey, The All-Ireland series. I predicted to Tony Foley last March that he would stand on the sideline in a certain big stadium. One more tough challenging game to overcome and I might hear the two words, we all love to hear. But then again Foley knows better than to feed an ego. You must, to keep a top class team on the right track. Come what may Christmas will be happy in Piltown Camogie households. Joy to anyone who wants to join in!! Surely it can't get even better?

## ALL-IRELAND SEMI-FINAL

### *Piltown Secure Lismore Croker Showdown*

#### **PILTOWN 3-5 CLONDUFF 0-6**

*Piltown's dream of claiming their first ever Intermediate All Ireland title lives on, but they had to survive a stern test from a brave Clonduff of Down in Clane on Sunday. (1<sup>st</sup> February 2015)*



*In a low scoring first half it was the wind assisted Mourne side that opened the scoring from a Paula Gribben point after a pass from Sarah Louise Carr in the 2<sup>nd</sup> minute. Clonduff who had seven of the side that won the Junior All Ireland title over Laois in September last continued their good run with a Sarah Louise Carr point from 21 metres in the 10<sup>th</sup> minute. Piltown were finding it very hard to get a foothold in the game with the Clonduff team dominating the early possession. Clonduff extended their lead with a Paula Gribben free from thirty metres in the seventeenth minute to make it three points to no score. It took all of 21 minutes for Piltown to open their account when Laura Norris tapped over a point from 21*

*metres. Piltown were beginning to enjoy a bit more possession in the game, and when Chloe Blackmore goaled in the 24<sup>th</sup> minute they found themselves ahead for the first time in the game. Blackmore latched onto a Niamh Culleton pass on the 14 metre line to blast the sliotar to the roof of the Clonduff net to put them 1-1 to 0-3 ahead. Paula Gribben equalised the contest for the Down side with a free in the 25<sup>th</sup> minute from 45 metres to see the teams level at half time 1-1 to 0-4 points. Piltown would of been the happiest of the sides, having been outplayed for most of the first half.*

*Clonduff began the second half well and opened the scoring in the 35<sup>th</sup> minute from a Paula Gribben free. Chloe Blackmore equalised the contest with an excellent free from right out on the sideline from 21 metres in the 37<sup>th</sup> minute. Piltown were enjoying a good period of possession and had two goal chances on the trot in the 38<sup>th</sup> and 39<sup>th</sup> minutes when Chloe Blackmore and Niamh Culleton found themselves behind the Clonduff cover, but the Mourne side recovered to clear their lines. Paula Gribben pushed the losers ahead again with an excellent point from 45 metres in the 43<sup>rd</sup> minute to make it 0-6 to 1-2. Piltown had a further goal chance in the 48<sup>th</sup> minute when Katie Power gained possession on the twenty-one, rounded her marker only to see her effort brilliantly saved by Clonduff net minder Kitty Fegan. Chloe Blackmore equalised the contest for the victors with a point from 35 metres in the 53<sup>rd</sup> minute to make it 1-3 to 0-6 and it was looking like the game could go to extra time. Piltown had other things on their mind and went on a devastating scoring spree outscoring their opponents 2-2 to no score in an eight minute spell. Chloe Blackmore started the burst with an excellent goal when her free from 40 metres found itself going straight to the roof of the Clonduff net in the 55<sup>th</sup> minute. Katie Power continued the run with an excellent point from 40 metres a minute later. Chloe Blackmore then tapped over a free in the 61<sup>st</sup> minute and then second half sub Nicola Phelan who just came onto the pitch goaled in the 62<sup>nd</sup> minute when she found herself with a tap in from 14 metres, Piltown were home and hosed and ran out 3-5 to 0-6 winners. Piltown now face reigning champions Lismore of Waterford in the final on March 1st.*

**Piltown Scorers;** Chloe Blackmore (2-3, 1-3 frees), Nicola Phelan (1-0), Katie Power (0-1), Laura Norris (0-1)

**Clonduff Scorers:** Paula Gribben (0-5, 3 frees, 1'45), Sarah Louise Carr (0-1),

**Piltown:** Aoife Norris, Carol McCarthy, Elaine Kenny, Jennifer Norris, Mairead Power, Karen Duggan, Kelly Ann Doyle, Laura Norris (Capt.), Alice Talbot, Niamh Culleton, Edel Long, Katie Power, Chloe Holden, Georgina Culleton, Chloe Blackmore,.

**Subs:** Lorraine Long for Niamh Culleton, Lisa McCarthy for Carol McCarthy, Nicola Phelan for Georgina Culleton

**Not Used:** Sinead McCarthy, Katelynn Phelan, Debbie Phelan, Leanne Dunne, Niamh Dermody, Siobhan Dermody, Sinead Walsh, Aine Power, Fiona Long, Ellen Commins, Maria Foley, Jean Power.

**Clonduff:** Kitty Fegan, Nicola O'Hagan, Jenna Boden, Debra Murray, Orla Maginn, Fionnuala Carr, Clare McGilligan, Lisa McPolin, Ursula Quinn (Capt.), Lizzie Wilson, Paula Gribben, Cassie Fitzpatrick, Petrina Lively, Sara Louise Carr, Orla Gribben.

**Subs:** Shannon O'Hagan, Niohmi Murray, Cailin Hynes, Oonagh McClorey, Niamh Brown, Niamh Canning, Karen Haughey, Leanne Quinn.

**Referee:** Peter Dowd (Meath).

### THE FINAL COUNTDOWN

Yet another piece of verbal garbage from the Master of gushing, sometimes cryptic, thoughts. Firstly the semi-final win in "brief". Semi-Finals are for winning. That's what Piltown did against Clonduff. They won! In the process they may have caused huge stress on weak hearts but that leads to even greater stress on them same hearts as the supporters and families celebrate what some may have thought unlikely with 8 minutes to go as the girls finished with a flourish, putting all their good hurling into the last 5 minutes or so. Well, that is very simplified. Those who asked for my traditional prediction pre-match (probably regretting it in seconds!) which takes the form of a points difference plus or minus a puck of the ball followed by the statistical analysis to back up the bold claim, would remember that I said that looking at Clonduff scores in recent times, they did not appear to be very prolific in front of the posts. On the day, their tally of six points, two from play, substantiates that claim. Against a strong team defensively such as Piltown (with the exception of the Camross game) that did not bode well for the Down side. Match that against a Piltown team that scored 3.2 goals per competitive match in 2014, one would have to have been "quietly" confident. As it turned out given the misses and the saves it did take a lot of persistence to grind out the win. That they did. Job done. For the record the conservative prediction was 3 points plus or minus a puck of the ball which allowed for a draw or 6 points. Thanks to Nicola Phelan whose brilliant late goal made it 8 points and undermined a "good career" as an expert in GAA result forecasting. What a feeling... Piltown heading to Croke Park to play an All-Ireland final.

It was great to see the Piltown Under-12's there for the guard of honour and the half time exhibition game. What a historic photo was taken after the game with the young girls all kitted out with the older girls who are now Piltown GAA legends and super role models and who will become the first Piltown team in any code to play an All-Ireland final in Croke Park on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2015. I have no doubt the



memory will always stay with those young girls. Imagine, your photo while you are kitted out in your club colours with living local legends (pardon the gratuitous alliteration).

It got me thinking about what constitutes success in life. There is no one answer, but if we are remembered for something good, then surely that is success. Recently, I did a little experiment with some young people (Teenagers) I know. I asked them what club did Katie Power play for and what was her position. No problems with the answers. I repeated the question with the legendary 10 times All-Ireland winner, Henry Shefflin replacing Katie and again no issue. These were intelligent and knowledgeable teenagers from the parish. So I changed the question. Who does Katie Power work for and what is her position? Blank expressions met my question. They did not know even though she was one of their own. I changed the query to the legendary Shefflin. Yes, they knew who he worked for but were not clear on his position. What did it prove?. It proves that you will be remembered and recognised more for something you do for enjoyment, something you do for fun, something you do for community, something you do with your friends, something you can share with your family and friends, something you do voluntary without any guarantee of compensation, but something that has priceless rewards in acclaim and respect an potentially legendary status. Very few will be remembered for what they work at and the huge pay packets and the holidays you take on the back of that big bonus or that overtime. To labour the point. Kilkenny won their first ever senior hurling All-Ireland final in 1904 beating Cork at Deepark Carrick-On-Suir. This was the team;

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Pat "Fox" Maher, Jack Hoyne, Jack Rochford, Paddy "icy" Lanigan, Dan Grace, Dick "Drug" Walsh, Eddie Doyle, Dan Stapleton, Pat Fielding, Pat Saunders, Jim Lalor, Martin Lalor, Sim Walton, Jack Anthony, Jer Doheny (Capt), Dick Brennan, Mick Doyle, Subs: Jim Dunne, JJ Brennan and Pat Clohessy

The 1904 team included seven players from Tullaroan – Jer Doheny, Pat 'Fox' Maher, Jack Hoyne, 'Little' Sim Walton, Pat Saunders and subs Pat Clohosey and Jim Dunne. There were four players from Mooncoin (Eddie and Dick Doyle, Dick 'Drug' Walsh and Pat Fielding), four from Threecastles (Dan Grace, Jack Rochford, Jim and Martin Lalor) and Piltown's Jack Anthony. The side also featured a quartet from now extinct city club Erin's Own. Dick Brennan, Paddy 'Icy' Lanigan, Dan Stapleton and J.J. Brennan. That was 111 years ago. Even my parents weren't born. Is there anyone who could say who they all worked for and what was their position???

Though I'm not giving anyone a licence to "not study" for that big job or whatever, success can be much closer at hand with your GAA club, working with your friends, family and neighbours as part of the community, a team, a squad, a club. Life is about balance and knowing what really is important. Truth, honesty and integrity is high up on that inventory. In the year 2126 (111 years from now), the members of the Piltown Intermediate Camogie team will be better remembered for being the first Piltown team to play in a Club All-Ireland Final at Croke Park than what they work at.

Even the girls who got Piltown Camogie Club to its first ever adult county final on the 9<sup>th</sup> October 1988 when they lost to Tullogher in the Junior "B" County Final (0-3 to 6-6) at Nowlan Park on a wet day are still remembered despite defeat because they were the first to get to an adult County Final. It was a huge achievement. These girls, some of whom had mothers involved in 1988 are the first to get to an All-Ireland Final. Win or lose who will forget their achievement? They are already legends just by getting there, but they are sixty minutes away from emulating the Kilkenny Senior Hurling team of 1904. They have long surpassed the achievement of the previous generation, although their experience is a contributing factor to the current success. I hope all the people of Piltown will take the historic opportunity to get to Croke Park, get a photograph and bequeath it to their grandchildren. Everyone can be part of it and enjoy it. The final countdown is on.



**Back Row:** Claire Giles, Annie O'Toole, Sheila Keegan, Yvonne Fitzpatrick, Margaret Norris, Ann Walsh  
**Middle Row:** Judith Phelan, Michelle Butler, Kay McCarthy, (Alf the Mascot) Mary Norris, Ann Dwyer, Maureen Dooley  
**Front Row:** Joan O'Gorman, Mairead Brennan, Maura Brennan, Lillian Foran, Martina Brennan, Josephine Norris

### PLANNING FOR THE DAY

A little over a week to go before the big match. The amphitheatre Croke Park will soon echo to the cheers of Lismore and more importantly Piltown supporters as their Camogie teams do battle in the All-Ireland Intermediate Camogie Final. The build-up is a great time for supporters. The excitement of wondering, even dreaming of what will happen on the day. The preparations, the gathering of the colours which in both cases will be black and amber. The planning of how to get there, the time to get there, the how to get there, the who to get there with. The pre-match analysis of the “experts”. Sure aren’t we all “experts”? The planning of what to do after the match, hoping for the ultimate in ecstasy to follow a glorious match with a glorious result. *“A goal without a plan, is just a wish”* (Antoine de Saint-Exupéry)

For the administrators this is the most awkward time. They are busy, busy, busy!. Preparing for before, during and the toughest challenge, after. For them to dare to dream is a must. They must prepare for a positive homecoming. That time when you are back among your own on your own patch, hopefully with the silverware and the broad beaming smiles. However, should the unthinkable happen, then is the time to celebrate the achievements on the march to the summit. This period for the players and management is a time of mixed emotions. They have to enjoy the build-up. If not, what is the point of it all? However, they also have to focus on the planning and preparation for what will be the biggest game of their lives to date. The training, getting the touch sweet, making sure the body is tuned to its ultimate. Nutrition, hydration, energy levels, all need to be at their peak. Getting the head right. Ensuring the confidence is there to perform. Having the belief that you can be the best, but combined with the intelligence to make sure your body is right, your skills honed and you know the capabilities of your team mates, the opposition, the game plan and the range of your own abilities. There is nothing wrong with dreaming that you and you alone will produce that ultimate play, that piece of magic that wins the cup. From Goalkeeper, to backs, to midfield, to forwards. All are entitled to envisage the heroic moment. It’s tough to get the balance right. Get the preparation right and still have time to enjoy it. Success in that quest will lead to an unbelievable feeling that is very hard to match.

The match itself is a bit like a wedding ceremony. It’s the most important part of the whole adventure. Without it none of the rest could happen. There would be none of the enjoyment of preparing for the big day. There would be no family, friends, colleagues, acquaintances turning up to support you on your big day. The players are like the bride and groom. It is all about them. The match is them. The team management is like the celebrant, facilitating the important event, preaching the right things, orchestrating a successful occasion. The administrators are like the wedding planner, limiting the effects of the hype and making sure all the pieces run smoothly together for a perfect day while allowing the bride and groom time to enjoy the occasion. It is a cliché, but fail to plan, plan to fail. The supporters are the guests. Looking forward to the ceremony, but looking forward even more to the after ceremony celebrations known in wedding terms as the reception. It could be the best wedding ever.

Nerves can be a factor. Nerves are natural. Nerves can be overcome. Like the nervous bride and groom, they usually disappear when they step foot on the aisle and the Bridal March has finished. For the players, the key points of nervousness is that time when you are waiting for the transport to the venue, that time when you enter the stadium, that moment you step on to the hallowed ground and that moment before the action begins and your first involvement which might just be a simple jog into position. Like the bride is relaxed knowing the groom feels the same, the player can be relaxed knowing the opposition feels the same no matter how many times they have done it before. That’s when the belief of your own talents, those traits that make you so attractive or handsome, come to the fore. Again, belief is the key. Again plenty of fluid is required. Again that’s where the intelligence comes in. The right type of fluid!

This writer is just a like the father of the bride. Enjoying the build-up (quietly!), looking forward to the big day, confident she has made the right choices and will make the right choices and he will be supportive regardless. This team, the management, the administrators, the past coaches are all legends, no matter how things turn out. No rush, Sunday 1st March. This is such a good time. Here comes the bride! All we need is some confetti.

## ALL-IRELAND FINAL PREVIEW

*Preview by Hawkeye*



Facts are Facts – Opinions are Hawkeye's!

## **PILTOWN KITTENS BY A WHISKER**

It is branded “The Toughest”, but for any GAA club in any code it is the greatest. The build up is ramping up for the 2015 All-Ireland Intermediate Camogie Club Final which takes place in Croke Park on Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> March between Piltown and Lismore from Waterford. The game is the biggest so far in the history of Piltown GAA and crowds from the southern parish and surrounds are expected to flock to GAA headquarters for a titanic battle which forms a double header with the Senior Club Camogie final.

Piltown's journey started in 2014 with a bye in the first round of the county championship as a result of winning the Intermediate League and the All-County League with two narrow final victories over St. Annes. The semi-final was an easy win for Piltown against city side, James Stephens by 2-14 to 1-2 in Mullinavat. They had an equally convincing 4-18 to 0-5 win over St. Brigids in the County Final held at John Locke Park to seal an unprecedented treble of Intermediate county trophies in 2014. However, celebrations were cut short and a week later they faced their first ever Leinster Championship match away to Offaly Senior champions, Birr. Piltown came through this in style winning by 1-11 to 0-4. Next up, they were away to Carlow Senior champions, Myshall. After a bruising physical battle Piltown came out on top by 1-12 to 1-9. The Leinster Final saw them against another Senior club. Camross of Laois who had seven of the Laois junior team beaten by Down in the All-Ireland final, mainly sharp shooting forwards and of course soaring star Sarah Ann Fitzgerald. The game was played in Clane, Co. Kildare. This was a super game with Piltown edging the result by 3-10 to 4-5 to end 2014 with 4 titles comprising of 15 competitive games unbeaten, scoring 40-206 (326 pts) and only conceding 20-103 (163 pts).



2015 saw action in the All-Ireland series commence as Piltown returned to Clane, scene of the Leinster title win to face yet another senior club and Ulster champions, Clonduff. The Clonduff side featured seven of the victorious Down Junior team of 2014 including the Carr sisters. This game was dominated by the Northern team but a strong finish saw Piltown score 2-2 in the last 5 minutes to seal victory by 3-5 to 0-6 and gain legendary status in Piltown GAA history to become the first Piltown team in any code to qualify for a Croke Park Final. Opponents, Lismore are another Senior club with four Munster Intermediate titles and they are reigning All-Ireland champions having beaten Ballyhale Shamrocks in

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a replay in 2014. This means Piltown will have to beat all senior clubs outside the county to win the national title. As Lismore are from Waterford and Waterford is graded as an Intermediate county, Lismore did not have to go senior outside Waterford unless they win the All-Ireland Intermediate twice. Lismore's experience of Croke Park will make them the bookies favourites. They feature six of the Waterford Intermediate county team which reached the All-Ireland semi-final in 2014. Piltown will be wary of Captain Shona Curran, Ruth Geoghegan, Waterford footballer Grainne Kenneally, Catriona McGlone who scored three goals in the 2014 replay against Ballyhale, sharpshooting Aoife Hannon, Nicola Morrissey and Shauna Kiernan. However, the south Kilkenny outfit is not short of experience and not just in GAA. Piltown's best known player is senior star, Katie Power. Four Ashbourne Cups, 2 All-Stars and a National League is just the tip of the iceberg when listing her honours. Team captain Laura Norris was on the Kilkenny Intermediate team that reached the All-Ireland Final in 2014. Lismore had four players who won a Minor "B" All-Ireland with Waterford in 2014, but then again Piltown had five (Alice Talbot, Lorraine Long, Jennifer Norris, Sinead McCarthy, Debbie Phelan) who won a Minor "A" All-Ireland with Kilkenny in 2013.

Piltown talents reach across different sports. Kelly Ann Doyle is an international athlete and Irish record holder at Under-18 400m hurdles. Karen Duggan has been capped by Ireland in soccer at juvenile and senior level while Chloe Blackmore has been capped by Ireland at juvenile level in Rugby. The squad features players who have won many All-Ireland, provincial and county medals in Ladies Gaelic Football like Jennifer Norris (captained Kilkenny at Minor), Mairead Power (Currently on Waterford Intermediate squad with Grainne Kenneally), Kelly Ann Doyle, Aine Power, Lorraine Long and Sinead McCarthy. In fact, in Camogie alone, between, club, county and schools, the squad of 31 boast a total of 32 All-Ireland or National winners medals and 116 provincial winners medals and countless county medals from Primary School to Intermediate.



The journey for Piltown Camogie has been long and not straightforward. The earliest reports of a Camogie team in the parish was Owinging Camogie Club. This team existed around the late fifties, early sixties. They trained in a field in Fanningstown and attracted players from neighbouring Windgap. There are no reports of any successes on the field, although there are some granddaughters and grand nieces involved in the current team. In the late seventies, Piltown had a minimal club fielding at only Under-14. This team did compete in the Under-14 Féile Na nGael competition when it was held in Kilkenny in 1978 and 1979. Those teams featured Marie Fitzpatrick who went on to win 7 senior All-Irelands and 6 National Leagues when lining out with St. Brigids of Ballycallan. In the 80's, Piltown Camogie Club emerged with

the driving force being Maura Brennan who is now club President. They contested the Junior "B" County Final in 1988. A strong Tullogher team beat them by 6-6 to 0-3 on a very wet day in Nowlan Park. The team included several girls who have offspring on the current Intermediate team such as current secretary Sheila Norris (Keegan), Martina Power (Brennan) Kay Phelan (McCarthy) and Teresa Phelan (Brophy) and the aforementioned Maura Brennan. In addition, Aoife Norris's aunts Margaret and Josephine were on that squad. Jennifer Norris' aunt Mary Norris was one of the Windgap contingent on this squad. This club won an Under-14 Roinn C title in 1987 with players like Cathy and Mairead Brennan, first cousins of Katie Power. The club emerged again in the 90's and won titles at Under-14 Roinn "C" (1994) and Under-16 Roinn "C" (1996) with both teams captained by current juvenile coach Miriam Reid.

As the new century dawned in the year 2000, the current version of Piltown Camogie Club re-emerged like the phoenix from the ashes. Marie O'Sullivan and Eileen O'Toole were involved and Maura Brennan was there again. Jim Malone became Chairman. They were joined by Kate Foley who proved to be a top class administrator. Jim was coaching teams from the off and later joined by his good friend, Tony Foley. Starting with a group of 20 primary school girls, the club claimed County titles at Primary Schools and Under-14 in 2002. A hat-trick of primary schools titles was claimed by 2004. The club has since built up a membership of over 100 players, competing at all grades. The first big breakthrough at adult level was in 2008 when after a replay they claimed the Junior county title beating Dicksboro in Piltown. Nine of

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those players are still on the current Intermediate squad. They were all very young because the average age of the current intermediate squad is 19.2 years, ranging in age from 16 to 28.

As the first decade of the new century continued, the focus was on developing juvenile players and creating a professional administration. It did not happen overnight. Sheila Norris joined Kate Foley and both excelled in the organisational side. Both went on to contribute at county level where Sheila is still county secretary. The hard working Eileen Dunne managed the finances of

Committee And Coaches 2012



what was becoming a very efficient and successful operation. Enthusiastic and committed coaches came on board, people like Andrew McCarthy, Gay Doyle, Seamus Dunne, Eamonn McGowan, and Miriam Reid and of course the sadly missed Tom Holden (RIP). No matter what age group is playing, they were all there with a unity of purpose. They move up with players as they develop so that knowledge is not lost and when they have brought through a player, they'll go back and start again, adding in new enthusiasm when required with coaches like Michael Long, Michael Brophy, Marie Flynn, Brian Gallagher, Sinead Doyle, Teresa Kirby, Noelle Doyle, Stephanie Coffey and Andrew Norris. Since 2005, the club has claimed the Intermediate and Junior championships, 2 Intermediate Leagues, an Intermediate All-County League, an Under-21 title, 3 Minor titles, 3 Under-16 championships, an Under-16 League, 2 Under-14 championships, an Under-14 Shield, a 4<sup>th</sup> Primary schools title, a county Féile title, 2 county Community games titles where one was followed up by a Leinster and a national bronze. All but two of that squad are still playing and on the current Intermediate squad. During that time 34 players from the club have donned the black and amber of Kilkenny from Under-14 to Senior. In secondary schools camogie, Piltown girls have dominated Scoil Mhuire Carrick-On-Suir selections as the school has claimed 2 Munster Senior championships, 2 Munster Senior leagues and an All-Ireland senior colleges title.

Besides the breakthrough at junior in 2008, the victory in the 2011 minor county final against St. Annes and the 2012 Under-21 championship win against the Rower Instioge have to be seen as key moments in the history of the club. Both were wins that were not widely expected and both were won with late goals. All three aforementioned titles epitomised the "never say die" spirit of Piltown girls which was also evident in the final flourish which saw off Clonduff in the All-Ireland semi-final and which held out in the Leinster Final against Camross.

Many ask, what is the secret of success for the Piltown girls? Those involved say there is no secret other than commonsense and the gospel that the legendary Kilkenny Senior hurling manager, Brian Cody often preaches. The words spirit, unity of purpose, togetherness, commitment and family are key constituents of that formula. Family in the literal sense is there also. The squad of 31 features six pairs of sisters. The Culletons (Oldcourt), Dermody's (Mountain Grove), Powers (Rathgormack), Powers (Garryduff), Longs (Tobernaborne) and McCarthys (High Road). Eleven have at least one first cousin on the panel. GAA heritage is there too, Marie Fitzpatrick's nieces Lorraine and Fiona Long are involved. Liam McCarthy who won All-Ireland senior medals with Kilkenny in 1992 and 1993 has four nieces involved, Katelynn Phelan, Carol, Lisa and Sinead McCarthy. Like the Owing team of the fifties, there is still some Windgap blood in players like Elaine Kenny, Kelly Ann Doyle, Jennifer Norris, Ellen Commins, Debbie and Katelynn Phelan. Family, heritage and spirit, a fine recipe for success.

There is also massive belief in the sporting gospel but without intelligence the results would not be achieved. To this end there is a very enthusiastic management team involved. As the greatest day in the club history approaches, the management team will leave no stone unturned. Tony Foley and Jim Malone were there for the junior success in 2008. Jim is still chairman and Tony is noted for detailed preparation. These two men have done more than any for the

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successes on the field of play. Over the past few years, Eamonn Kenny, who won a Vocational Schools All-Ireland with Tipperary in 1999 joined them. He is a true Kilkenny man though and he's added some extra ingredients to the mix which have proved successful. Also on the management team is player liaison, Kay Phelan who comes from the great McCarthy hurling pedigree. In the backroom, there is physio Sinead Doyle, a true Tipperary woman who has enthusiastically adopted Piltown to her heart and vice-versa. Finally the first aider is the long serving and passionate, Maura Brennan, club joint President. Maura and the other joint president, Mary Reid have been involved for many years. Sunday, 1<sup>st</sup> of March will be a dream come true for them

As for the match itself, who will win? It's an All-Ireland Final, the greatest day for any club and for any community. It is a day to remember forever for the players, their families and their friends, a day that for many remains only a dream. The build-up is wonderful as the anticipation and excitement grows by the day. Leaving your parish on the morning of the match as a team together with a unity of purpose and hopefully returning with silverware to a rapturous welcome. GAA Superstars like JJ Delaney and Tommy Walsh have never experienced it with their clubs. To put it in perspective, there are only 14 All-Ireland titles at stake annually in Croke Park. Based on an average of 30 players per squad, that gives a chance of about one in every 15,000 people on the island of Ireland a chance of even playing a Croke Park Final. This equates to one in every 30,000 (about the size of Leitrim) people on the island of Ireland who will win an All-Ireland medal in Croke Park in any given year. To be involved in a Croke Park final is precious. To win one in Croke Park is priceless. It will be the same for Lismore who failed to win the final in Croke Park in 2014 and who coincidentally also don the black and amber, although on the day both teams will wear their county colours. Lismore are slight favourites based on their 2014 Croke Park experience. Hard to argue, they are a very good team. You don't get there two years running unless you are very good. Hawkeye has forecasted Piltown all the way predicting the score "plus or minus a puck of the ball" each time. The forecasted result has been right to date but the victories get harder and accuracy is slipping. For this one the head and the stats apparently say a draw... "plus or minus a puck of the ball". Statistics do not win matches, they just tell the story. The Piltown heart is strong and willing, ably supported by the aforementioned "never say die" attitude, so the puck of the ball has to be "a plus" ... in the favour of the south Kilkenny club. That's not forgetting the club championship is still branded "The Toughest"!

**Panel:** *Chloe Blackmore, Ellen Commins, Georgina Culleton, Niamh Culleton, Kelly Ann Doyle, Niamh Dermody, Siobhan Dermody, Karen Duggan, Leanne Dunne, Maria Foley, Chloe Holden, Elaine Kenny, Edel Long, Fiona Long, Lorraine Long, Carol McCarthy, Lisa McCarthy, Sinead McCarthy, Aoife Norris, Jennifer Norris, Laura Norris, Aine Power, Antonia Power, Jean Power, Katie Power, Mairead Power, Debbie Phelan, Katelynn Phelan, Nicola Phelan, Alice Talbot, Sinead Walsh,*  
**Team Management:** *Jim Malone (Bainisteoir), Tony Foley, Eamonn Kenny, Kay Phelan.*

**First Aid:** *Maura Brennan*

**Physio:** *Sinead Doyle*



### GOOD LUCK IN THE FINAL

The biggest weekend in Piltown Camogie history is upon us. The final training session took place on Friday night under lights. It was more of a puck around. The “touch” looks good. The parents and fans are hugely excited. Though it is noticeable how calm and relaxed most of the players are. Broad smiles, even from players notoriously tense before games. The medics are happy that there is a clean bill of health, for the first time since the county final.



A huge moment in the build-up was the rapturous and warm applause the girls got from the men and boys who had been training earlier as the girls left the dressing room to trot out on the back field in Piltown. Brothers, cousins and friends united behind the team. Another one of those touching moments. It contrasted with a less rapturous applause after the session as they returned to the dressing room. One worried, if enough people would get behind the team. Surely more people wanted to say goodbye and good luck from the parish. They deserve the support. People will not regret getting behind these girls.

For most of the players, the Saturday was spent with the people they trust the most, their families. What better way to spend the eve of an All-Ireland Final but in the relaxing company of your family? Or with the siblings who occasionally divert the nerves with accidental aplomb by tangential conversation or possibly a good argument. At the end of the day, the family understand best what spikes your ire and how to manage it.

The first words of the second reading at Saturday evening mass in Piltown spiked interest too. It was a reading from St. Paul's letter to the Romans. Normally, I find St. Paul hard to read, let alone understand but this time the sentence was clear and precise. "If God is with us, who can be against us?" Corner back, Jennifer Norris did the reading. I felt it was a message, Sheila reminded me about Lismore. Belief in something is always important though.

For the semi-Final eve, the Norris household watched the drawn 2014 All-Ireland final between Kilkenny and Tipperary on DVD. Jennifer did not join in. On the eve of the final they watched the replay. Jennifer joined them this time and was looking completely relaxed. Never have we seen her so relaxed before a match. Word around was it was the same for most of the players.



Sunday morning and the mood was still good. Sheila and Jennifer set off to get the team bus at the Complex. Martina Power later commented on her pride when dropping Katie off to see the crowd and the colours proudly displayed at the Complex. There had been a huge surge in Piltown car flag sales. The signs coming into the villages of the parish were loud and clear. Many houses around had the colours proudly displayed especially the three primary schools and by the Garda barracks in Piltown. The word from the bus was the atmosphere was still very relaxed. Later the squad and mentors spoke

of the moment the bus went under the stands into Croke Park. A camera man waiting to film them getting off the bus and walking into the dressing room. What a moment that most have been. The concern about the crowd was soon allayed. Although both teams were black and amber and it was hard to tell who was who, just by the colours, when the cheers went up, it was clear the people of Piltown had come to support and outnumbered their rivals. Let the games begin!



## **ALL-IRELAND FINAL**

### ***Piltown Hold Off Lismore Comeback To Claim All-Ireland Honours***

#### **PILTOWN 1-10 LISMORE 1-9**

*By Kilkenny County PRO*

*Piltown's dream of claiming their first ever All-Ireland Intermediate Club Camogie title became reality as they held off a late rally from champions Lismore to record a 1-10 to 1-9 victory in a cold Croke Park on Sunday last to claim a clean sweep of titles that included the All County League, League, County Championship and Leinster title over a total of 17 games undefeated.*

*Lismore started the contest well and were on target with a free from Aoife Hannon in the 3rd minute after Triona McGlone had been fouled. Piltown bounced back well and got 1-3 without reply. Edel Long started the burst with a point in the 7<sup>th</sup> minute. Katie Power then tapped over a forty-five after the Tanya Morrissey stepped over the line, taking a puck out. By the 11<sup>th</sup> minute Piltown were motoring when Niamh Culleton tapped over an excellent point from play. Things got even better for the challengers when Chloe Blackmore got in for the opening goal of the contest. She gained possession from a Katie Power pass to drive the ball to the back of the Lismore net to put Piltown 1-3 to a 0-1 ahead. Nicola Morrissey replied with a point in the 18<sup>th</sup> minute to end a baron patch for Lismore. Katie Power responded with a further forty-five to nudge Piltown four clear. Lismore bounced back with two frees on the trot from Aoife Hannon. She started the burst with a free from 35 meters in the 20<sup>th</sup> minute before she tapped over a further free from the same distance in the 24<sup>th</sup> minute to see Lismore trail by a goal coming up to half time. Piltown nudged themselves further clear when Katie Power tapped over a free a minute later from 21 meters before Laura Norris scored an excellent point from 35 meters to make it 1-6 to 0-4 points. Lismore were given a lifeline just on the stroke of half time when they got a goal. Piltown were penalised for fouling and Aoife Hannon rocketed a 20 metre free to the Piltown net, despite the presence of six players between the posts to leave them trailing by just two, 1-6 to 1-4 at half time. Piltown would of been kicking themselves going in only two ahead having played against a strong breeze. They would of felt they should be further clear.*

*Piltown started the second half well and got the opening score of the half from Chloe Holden when she tapped over from 21 meters. Katie Power pushed the victors four clear again in the 35<sup>th</sup> minute when she tapped over a free from 21 metres to make it 1-8 to 1-4. The Piltown defence were beginning to find their feet in the game and were limiting the scoring opportunities for the Lismore side. Aoife Hannon responded for Lismore with two points on the trot. The first came in the 43<sup>rd</sup> minute from a free from 30 metres. She followed this up a minute later with a further free to cut the deficit to two points, 1-8 to 1-6. Katie Power responded for Piltown with two points the trot. The first came from a free in the forty ninth minute from twenty one meters. Katie Power then tapped over a point from 35 meters in the 53<sup>rd</sup> minute to put four in it again. It was going to take one hell of an effort for the champions to get back into the contest. A challenge they were more than up for. They cut the gap to a goal in the 57<sup>th</sup> minute when Aoife Hannon tapped over a free from 35 metres. They had the ball in the net a minute later when Nicola Morrissey tapped the ball passed Aoife Norris in the Piltown goal, but her effort was overruled by the referee as she was in the square when providing the finishing touch, a serious let off for Piltown. The loser finished the contest with two points from Grainne Kenneally from 30 metres in the 59<sup>th</sup> minute to cut the gap to two points going into added time. Aoife Hannon then tapped over a free in the 61<sup>st</sup> minute to cut the gap to the minimum in added time. Try as they might Lismore could not get the equalising score as the Piltown defence held firm led by Player of the Match Kelly Ann Doyle to record a famous win.*

**Piltown Scorers:** Katie Power 0-6 (3fs, 2 '45s), Chloe Blackmore 1-0, Edel Long 0-1, Niamh Culleton 0-1, Laura Norris 0-1, Chloe Holden 0-1

**Lismore Scorers:** Aoife Hannon 1-7 frees; Nicola Morrissey 0-1, Grainne Kenneally 0-1

**Piltown:** Aoife Norris, Mairead Power, Elaine Kenny, Jennifer Norris, Debbie Phelan, Karen Duggan, Kelly Ann Doyle, Laura Norris (Capt), Alice Talbot, Niamh Culleton, Katie Power, Edel Long, Chloe Holden, Chloe Blackmore, Lorraine Long.

**Subs:** Georgina Culleton for Alice Talbot (47), Lisa McCarthy for Chloe Holden (59), Katelynn Phelan for Debbie Phelan (60+1)

## DRIVE FOR 5

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**Not Used:** Carol McCarthy, Niamh Dermody, Ellen Commins, Sinead McCarthy, Aine Power, Nicola Phelan, Maria Foley, Leanne Dunne, Siobhan Dermody, Fiona Long, Jean Power, Antonia Power, Sinead Walsh

**Lismore:** Tanya Morrissey, Niamh Molumphy, Shauna Prendergast, Marie Russell, Aoife Houlihan, Shauna Kiernan, Sarah Fenton, Sharon Williams, Shona Curran (Capt), Nicola Morrissey, Grainne Kenneally, Aoife Hannon, Ruth Geoghegan, Caithriona McGlone, Johanna Houlihan.

**Subs:** Laura Buckley for Sharon Williams (28), Sarah Coughlan for Niamh Molumphy (HT), Aisling O'Brien for Johanna Houlihan (46).

**Not Used:** Sarah Geoghegan, Alice Russell, Kate Heneghan.

**Referee:** Peter Dowd (Meath)

### ***Heartbreak For Lismore At Croke Park***

*By Thomas Keane (Deise Abu)*

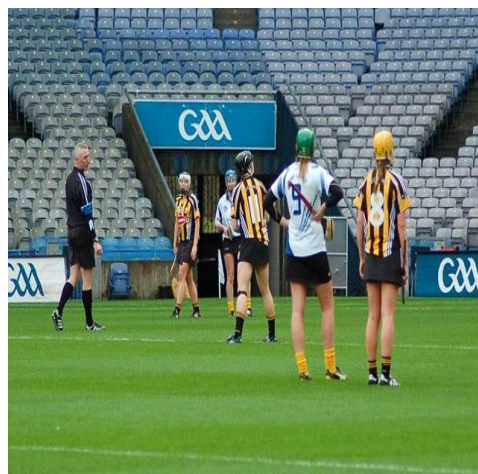
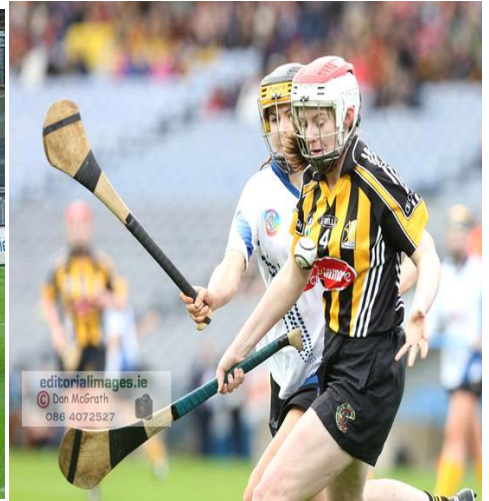
*This years All-Ireland Final was always going to be hard fought. Both sides qualified on merit, and whichever was going to come out on top, be it after one game or two as was the case twelve months ago, they were going to be worthy winners. Between them, the two respective sides lost just one game over the past twelve months. The South Kilkenny side went into the game with a perfect record, winning the Kilkenny Intermediate League, the All-Kilkenny League, the Kilkenny Intermediate Championship and the Leinster Intermediate Championship. Lismore went into the game having won last years All-Ireland Intermediate Club Final, the County Senior Championship and the Munster Intermediate Club Championship. Their only competitive defeat in the past twelve months coming in the County Senior League Final against arch rivals Saint Annes.*

*While it was Piltown that made the better start to this game, it was Lismore that scored first, Aoife Hannon putting over her first of the afternoon from a free on three minutes. Edel Long levelled matters on six minutes and from the restart Tanya Morrissey was adjudged to have come outside the 14 metre line, a harsh call maybe as she appeared to have had the ball released from her grasp before momentum took her over the line. From the resulting strike from the forty-five metre line Katie Power made no mistake, sending the challengers into the lead, a lead they never lost. Niamh Culleton gave her side a two point advantage on the score board on 8 minutes and three minutes later, that lead was five. Following some good work by Katie Power and Niamh Culleton, Chloe Blackmore a player to keep an eye on in the coming years beat Tanya Morrissey with a low shot. Nicola Morrissey who moved from corner forward in semi-final win over Oranmore Maree to wing forward for this game pulled a point back for Lismore on 17 minutes to leave her side trailing by four. Katie Power from a '45 restored a five point advantage with ten minutes of the half remaining but that lead was cut to three on 24 minutes after Aoife Hannon put over a brace of frees. Points from Katie Power from a free and Laura Norris followed for Piltown inside a minute of each other to open a five point lead once more with four minutes of the half remaining. Lismore however went to the dressing rooms in a confident mood after a free won two minutes from the break was moved to a more favourable position after some descent from the Piltown players. Aoife Hannon stepped up to take the free and she made no mistake in dispatching to the net.*

*Coming out with a 1-6 to 1-4 advantage on the score board Piltown extended their lead by two within six minutes of the restart as Chloe Holden and Katie Power put over points. Aoife Hannon had what looked like to be a point ruled out by the umpire soon afterwards, waving the effort wide. Was it some sort of "justice" for Lismore? In their County Final win over Saint Anne's at Fraher Field at much the same point in the game, Saint Anne's had what looked like a point waved wide, which if given the game would have ended in a draw. Two points in a two minute spell did follow for Lismore both from Aoife Hannon to leave just two between the sides at the end of the third quarter. Katie Power followed up with a brace points on 49 and 52 minutes, the latter the only score from play in this game by the former WIT Ashbourne Cup winning captain to give the South Kilkenny outfit a 1-10 to 1-6 lead with eight minutes to play.*

*The sign of a good team is one that keeps going right to the end, and this is exactly what Lismore did. Aisling O'Brien played the ball in around the Piltown goal with five minutes to play. Nicola Morrissey finished to the net, but before the Lismore support in the stand could raise what would be the loudest cheer of the day up to that point Peter Dowd gave a loud shrill of his whistle and indicated that the Lismore player was in the small square before the ball arrived in. Lismore however still refused to give up. An Aoife Hannon effort went wide of the posts before she cut the Piltown lead to three with two minutes to play. Grainne Kenneally who impressed throughout followed up with another Lismore point on the hour mark and Aoife Hannon put over a free of the game to leave just one between the sides. Time however ran out for Lismore. Piltown ran out winners 1-10 to 1-9. They will now play in the senior championship in 2015 and with a young team it will be interesting to see how they will get on.*

# PILTOWN INTERMEDIATE CAMOGIE 2014/2015



### ALL-IRELAND FINAL REVIEW

*Review by Hawkeye*



Facts are Facts – Opinions are Hawkeye's!

Piltown are All-Ireland Intermediate Club Camogie Champions and showed no signs of nervousness from the word go. An early point came for Lismore from a free, but the free was the result of a message been sent out as three Piltown backs (Karen Duggan, Elaine Kenny and Jennifer Norris) converged on attacker, Lismore Catriona McGlone. After it, she looked like someone who got a south paw from Rocky Balboa, legs wobbling. Message sent out loud and clear! Although the free was easily pointed by Aoife Hannon, goal threat, McGlone was rendered ineffective from there on and ended up scoreless. This was after three minutes and it was the only time Lismore led. By the 15<sup>th</sup> minute all of the Piltown half forward line of Edel Long, Katie Power and Niamh Culleton had scored and the game was in effect over with Lismore just playing catch up. Laura Norris was dominating the midfield and got a superb point from a great Katie Power pass. The Lismore midfield were being pushed back into their own half back line and their game plan to bypass the Piltown half back line was in tatters. When they did, the full back line were taking no prisoners.

The Piltown forwards were sharing the scoring. Chloe Blackmore's goal was a peach following a superb move by Niamh Culleton and Katie Power. Chloe Holden sent out an early message on behalf of the forwards in the second half with a point from under the Cusack. Yes, the forwards do "messages" too! Katie Power's point which made it 1-10 to 1-6 was brilliant with Karen Duggan the initiator feeding Laura Norris and then onto Katie. There were nervous moments as Lismore fought back, but the game was long won. If the minutes of a match were pieces of a jigsaw, thrown up into the air and mixed up, the result would always be the same when put back together. It just so happened the last couple put in place were around the Piltown goal with backs prepared to put their bodies on the line for club, county, family and most of all themselves. What Lismore's top scorer Aoife Hannon was thinking, going for a point with only 40 seconds of injury time to go, having scored a goal from a similar free in the first half, only she knows. Aoife Norris' final puck out found Katie Power's paw under the Hogan, the Agnes O'Farrelly Cup landed in the paws of Laura Norris on the steps of the Hogan and the rest is history.



By the end of the game, all the forwards scored from play except Lorraine Long who was employed as an extra midfielder contributing to the downfall of the Lismore game plan. Laura Norris played a captains role leading by example in the middle of the park and ably supported by Alice Talbot. Aoife Norris's puck-outs were superb but she never was really tested for saves thanks to a solid defence in front of her. Mairead Power had her best ever game for Piltown, ironically wearing the black and amber of Kilkenny against Waterford. Her athleticism honed play Ladies Football. Elaine Kenny and Jennifer Norris as is usual left nothing go by easy. Debbie Phelan was very assured on her return from injury

reading the ball very well. Kelly Ann Doyle won player of the match. Her pace in the open spaces of Croke Park was immense. Karen Duggan could not have been far behind as she excelled limiting any threat through the middle. Only two points conceded from play, four in the All-Ireland series, tells a huge part of the success story. Of the three Player of the Match awards (County, Leinster and All-Ireland), all three went to the backs. Who says forwards always get them? Kelly Ann got two and Karen the other. The Piltown backs are solid and provide a dependable foundation to build on and any forward on any given day can notch a vital score. Substitutes Georgina Culleton, Lisa McCarthy and Katelynn Phelan all got their feet on the hallowed turf having made huge contributions along the way. Another 13 didn't get their feet on the hallowed turf during game time but their value should not be underestimated. They all contributed to the victory by their spirit, enthusiasm and loyalty. Games are won on the day. Titles are won by winning many matches and having meaningful training sessions contributed to by many players, team management and backroom. Yes, Piltown are All-Ireland Intermediate Club Camogie champions and it still sounds awesome.

## THE OCCASION

There are many memories, stories and observations which make up the memorable occasion that was the All-Ireland Intermediate Camogie Club Final. Here are some.

Before the match, seeing vendors selling “hats, flags and scarves” on Jones Road, outside the Hogan Stand for a Piltown match. Seeing more Piltown people in the Croke Park Hotel than you would see at 7pm mass in Piltown on Christmas Eve. Giving the promised “sour” to George Culleton as he entered the foyer. Ah the secret is out! – Sour sweets, always try to get a packet before a big match. If you had the patience to stick reading this, you now know the secret omen. Everyone is entitled to an odd omen. On the 1<sup>st</sup> March 2015, they were the sourest ever! Meeting relations, friends, neighbours, parish priest Fr. Paschal Moore and people from neighbouring parishes in the foyer.

I had a ticket for the Ard Chomhairle, but was never really comfortable. Probably because I don't fit in too well with the dignitaries. Not sure they were comfortable with me either. I spent the first half in the front row reserved for the dignitaries like the president of the Camogie Association. Don't know how I didn't get moved back to my own seat. I moved back a small bit for the second half. At one stage I roared “C'mon Piltown!”. They all turned and look back at me. I leapt over the rail and out of the Ard Chomhairle at full time, losing the ticket in the process, so couldn't get back into for the second game. Great contraptions those bionic hips!



The Piltown crest appearing on the big screens and the names appearing one by one. Wow! The pitch looking immaculate despite the snow flakes. Watching the teams, especially Piltown including Jennifer Norris running out on to the Croke Park pitch to the Croke Park fanfare and it snowing! Breath-taking! I'm told some of the players thought it was confetti for a moment. I told you it was like getting married and the “confetti” provided as promised. All of us who have played have always dreamed of playing in Croke Park in a major game. We dreamt it playing in the back yard or a nearby field on our own while imagining Michael O'Hehir, Mícheál Ó Muircheartaigh, Marty Morrissey or Ger Canning commentating. Maybe sometimes forgetting ourselves and saying it out loud, only to have your father or mother or some misfortunate neighbour think you were losing it. However, I would love to meet the person who imagined snow in their dream of Croke Park. No, I doubt if anyone ever had snow in the dream.

There is a story that at the final whistle, Niamh Culleton's marker, because the game was so tight and probably because Lismore were so confident, threw her arms in the air to celebrate. Niamh fell to the ground in dismay fearing the worst. Her sister Georgina and few other team mates in celebratory mood looked on in puzzlement. So much for the GAA spending money on big scoreboards! Still Niamh was on the right side of that story end.

I do regret and I believe Pat Duggan, Karen's father, does too, jumping around celebrating at the final whistle and not taking a moment to observe the reaction of the girls. But I hadn't practised that bit. Nothing had prepared me for what it would feel like. Eamonn Kenny stood back and admired it and apparently loved it. Next time...

There were many tears shed, no shame in that. I was too happy to cry, but the defining moment for me was just before the cup was presented and the players stood along the steps of the Hogan Stand with beaming smiles and the big screen read “Comhghairdeas Piltown” and displayed the club crest. More than awesome. Then it was time for the presentation of the Cup and the pride in captain Laura Norris' face as she hoisted it high with the black and amber ribbons flowing from the handles amidst cheers from friends, family, neighbours and supporters from all over Kilkenny. She was a worthy captain. I finally got to congratulate, Jennifer and like every other parent of a Piltown player that day, words cannot describe what I felt, so if you are reading this, you may not know what I felt unless your offspring has been part of such a sporting success. There are no words. Sorry.

## DRIVE FOR 5

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# THE BANQUET AND HOMECOMING

At the end of the game, I wanted to be in multiple places at the one time. With the players, with my family, on the bus, not on the bus. I was looking forward to analysing the match, but the occasion had taken over and the knee jerk analysis was non-existent. Sure I could hardly remember most of the game this time. It was only later watching the DVD that it came back to me.



The journey back to Langtons in Kilkenny by car to join the crowd felt like an age, but it was not longer than any other time. What a feeling walking into Langtons to join my fellow supporters. Then, a while later the players arrived to a standing ovation. I could go to a dictionary or thesaurus and try to come up with new words to describe all these moments, but they are all basically the same, so for gratuitous vocabulary this time, we'll say amazing! Another standing ovation when they took their seats for the banquet in the restaurant. Yes, we will use the word, "banquet". It's been used since medieval times for meals to celebrate great victories on the battle field. You can get a "meal" for your lunch every day you go to work. There, the chat and the stories were set free.

I did have a moment to myself after the Banquet as I went to collect the car parked at McDonagh Junction to pick up the two Grannies (Eileen Norris and Mavis Keegan, two of the top supporters). I passed through the grounds of St. Johns Church. I stopped and turned back to look up at the front of the Church, the steps, the door, the building. I paused and thought and then said "Thank-You". What more needed to be said? Belief sometimes needs an extra ingredient and when "God was with us", well who could be beat us?

After Langtons, the convoy of buses and cars headed back to the GAA Complex in Piltown. Hundreds gathered along the driveway to the Complex. A huge bonfire blazed on the front juvenile pitch. The population of Piltown had grown dramatically. If the reception in Langtons was huge, Piltown was purely incredible. The players got off the bus and marched up the drive like a victorious army, led by Laura Norris and vice-captain Katie Power with the Agnes O'Farrelly Cup (a former Camogie Association President) held between them. They sang their victory song. Discarded was "Wagon Wheel" but who would have thought it would have been the ironic "Walking In A Winter Wonderland". A tribute to the snow in Croker. One had forgotten at this point that the snow actually stopped for the match. Grown men shed tears. There was an incredible emotional moment when Banisteoir Jim Malone embraced GAA club president, Ned Power on the driveway to the complex. Ned was the first Piltown man to play for Kilkenny in a match in Piltown itself. This meant so much to the old and young alike. It was an fantastic turn out to welcome back the heroes. The days of Templeorum United in 1982 far exceeded. The days of the Leinster Final win in 2003, far exceeded.



## **PILTOWN INTERMEDIATE CAMOGIE 2014/2015**

The sight of the squad singing “Champlolies” in front the huge fire. The sound, the flames were all massive and unforgettable. Piltown was single entity one at that moment. Those lucky to squeeze into the Complex were introduced to the players one by one. Fantastic! In the words of former GAA Club chairman, it was the greatest night in the 30 year history of the GAA complex. The floor, wall and ceiling of the building literally rocked! For many it was a fairy-tale end to the dream. But I have news for all of you, it’s not a fairy-tale, it is a true story!

The following day, saw the majority of the squad visit the three national schools in the parish. First Piltown. Over 300 hundred pupils welcomed them as principal Mark Connolly reminded people that the girls had started their Camogie while in primary school and many had won Schools championships. The smiles on the girls faces as they were introduced by Secretary Sheila Norris, looked like they would have to be surgically removed. The girls whose alma mater was being visited got the biggest cheers, a trait that happened in all three schools. Next it was to Owinging and a rousing reception and a guard of honour. Great delight here that Kelly Ann Doyle, the player of the match was a past pupil. Finally on the smallest school Templeorum, but the school with the most past pupils on the squad. The highlight here was a match report written by budding seven year old sports journalist DJ Knox who in his educated opinion, thought Katie Power should have got Player of the Match.



**Piltown NS**



**Owinging NS**



**Templeorum NS**



**DJ Knox - Reporter**

The celebrations continued and will continue for a long time, but stories of these are for another writer. The plaudits are well deserved for all involved. Its written here to help preserve the memory for generations to come and this writer is happy to take the congratulations though he contributed nothing on the pitch, be it a funeral or county board meeting.

### STATISTICS DON'T WIN MATCHES, BUT THEY HELP

Like Nostradamus, anyone can make a prediction. If you're right, you're a genius. If you're wrong, you're crazy. Predictions are risky business for the reputation. Unless you are a millionaire one should never back on two horse races. As a Business Analyst by profession, My philosophy is to study the statistics carefully as science and trends do play a part in getting "accurate" predictions. Almost every business forecast and the best ones are the most successful ones. In sport, it's like doing Sets in Maths in first year. Find the overlap or common denominator and focus on that. The bit that is almost impossible to legislate for is the human factor. Sean Norris, Aoife's dad, says statistics don't win matches. He is right. However, if you analyse the correct statistics it will show trends of strength or weakness. The success of that is to build a team plan to counteract or take advantage. For example, before the Clonduff game, a team that was hard to find overlapping sets, I noticed that their score tally was never very high. Therefore it was going to be a case of sticking to the task breaking down their defence. Six points, two from play in the semi-final, confirmed that trend. Did the management react to the trend? Of course they did! Piltown won. Did they know about the trend? Not necessarily. They just got Piltown to play their game with a "never say die" attitude. My prediction was Piltown by four points, plus or minus a puck of the ball. Always allow the puck of the ball to cater for the human element. This showed complete confidence in Piltown winning by anything from one point on a bad day to seven points. The result was an eight point win. The prediction was very close until the very late Nicola Phelan goal. How many would have predicted Nicola's introduction and huge contribution? On the other hand Camross forwards looked very good on paper and they did go on to be the one team that breached the Piltown back line scoring four goals in the process. To break a trend, you have to react to it. Einstein (who has many GAA relevant quotes) says "Insanity: doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results". So if you haven't noticed it's the same thing, you cannot react to it. You can only notice it by studying it. Yes, stats, don't win matches but they can help a manager facilitate advantages for his team.

For the final, the prediction was a draw, plus or minus a puck of the ball. The astute Eamonn Kenny pointed out that I was predicting a draw, a win or a defeat. I couldn't be wrong. Well spotted, but... For the final I went a step further and involved the heart. Dangerous move. "The puck of the ball would be in Piltown's favour". What was the science part based on? The overlapping set was Ballyhale Shamrocks. They drew with Lismore in Croke Park in 2013. Lismore won the replay by 10 points in a smaller Clonmel Sportsfield. Also in 2013, Piltown drew with Ballyhale in 60 minutes in the championship final. (Extra time left out so the tests are equal). However, Piltown had also beaten Ballyhale in the league final by, wait for it, 10 points! So why did the heart give Piltown the edge? It was very noticeable that the weight around the Lismore necks was not winning the title in Croke Park. Instead of focussing the minds on winning another All-Ireland, the key factor became where it was won. It was a distraction. Combine this with studies of the 2013 final and the goals from the replay showed Piltown had an edge in several areas. Lismore did not have a Katie Power, They did not have a Karen Duggan, the speed of Kelly Ann Doyle, the engine of Laura Norris. They did not have a "hells kitchen" like full back line. They were going to face the black and amber stripes of Kilkenny, whilst wearing the white and blue of Waterford, a massive psychological issue since the 2008 All-Ireland. The change to black and amber stripes was going to be less of an issue for Piltown who were still wearing club colours effectively, and this was on Lismore's mind also. In general, the final for Lismore was about where and the colour and not about how to beat Piltown. Piltown were purely focussed on winning. Winning can often be about mentality and be it by accident or design, Piltown's focus was spot on. Sometimes the heart can overrule the head. But at the end of the day, it always unknown until often the final whistle sounds and predictions can be way off and that's what makes sport so exciting.

## PILTOWN INTERMEDIATE CAMOGIE 2014/2015

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### Some like statistics, others don't but for those who do, here's some trivia;

- By winning the All-Ireland, Piltown became the first Kilkenny adult Camogie team, club or county, to win an All-Ireland Final since 2006 (9 years).
- In the All-Ireland series, only four points were conceded from play in 120 minutes plus.
- The average age of the panel was 19.2 years with Maria Foley the oldest at 28 and Nicola Phelan the youngest at 16.
- The player of the match awards in Kilkenny, Leinster and the All-Ireland finals all went to backs. Kelly Ann Doyle (Kilkenny & All-Ireland), Karen Duggan (Leinster)
- The only Piltown players to play in every minute of the 5 finals were Aoife Norris, Jennifer Norris and Chloe Blackmore
- The only players to play every minute of the 7 championship games in Kilkenny, Leinster and the All-Ireland series were Aoife Norris, Elaine Kenny, Jennifer Norris, Karen Duggan, Kelly Ann Doyle, Laura Norris, Katie Power and Chloe Blackmore,
- The average winning margin in 17 competitive games was 10 points.
- Outside, Kilkenny the only opposition team not to wear black and amber were Birr (Though it could be argued that Clonduff wore navy)
- 14 of the starting team in the All-Ireland Final have played Camogie for Kilkenny at some level. The exception, Mairead Power played ladies football for Waterford.
- 9 players went to Piltown NS, 9 went to Owing NS and 11 went to Templeorum NS with the two Powers going to Rathgormack. However, Sinead and Lisa McCarthy did go to both Piltown and Owing.
- 30 of the All-Ireland panel went to Scoil Mhuire (Carrick-On-Suir) and 25 won at least Munster colleges Camogie Medals. Alice Talbot went to Presentation Kilkenny and won an All-Ireland colleges Camogie medal.
- 16 of the panel have played club Ladies Gaelic Football for Piltown and 10 of the panel have played inter county ladies Gaelic football for Kilkenny, Tipperary or Waterford at some level.
- 9 of the panel won a county Junior medal in 2008; Carol McCarthy, Karen Duggan, Laura Norris, Georgina Culleton, Niamh Culleton, Elaine Kenny, Katie Power, Leanne Dunne, Niamh Dermody.
- **Connections to Owing team of 50's and 60's.** Kelly Ann Doyle's Gran Aunt, Eileen Doyle (Kelly) played with that team and she was joined by Jennifer Norris's Grandmother Eileen Kiely (Norris) and Ellen Commins' Gran Aunt, Wazzie Power (Kenneally). Jim Malone's father, Jimmy was the team manager.
- **Windgap connections in the Backs.** Piltown GAA team talents have always been focussed on skill, Windgap is more on mettle. Mix it and you have a lethal concoction. When it is in the backs, it's hard to pass. Elaine Kenny, Jennifer Norris and Kelly Ann Doyle's fathers all hurled for Windgap. Debbie Phelan and Katelynn Phelan's grandmother is from Windgap. Substitute Ellen Commins' mother is from Windgap. Maria Foley started playing with Windgap and team mentor, Eamonn Kenny's father Tom was also from Windgap.

# DRIVE FOR 5

## THE FUTURE

As stated so often before, predictions are so hard to get right. The science is generally sound, but the human element is not so easy. What does the science say about Piltown Senior Camogie? Yes, from here on, it is Senior! That's a nice fact to start off with. Let's look at the All-Ireland Senior Club final between Oulart the Ballagh (Wexford) and Mullagh (Galway), a game that was played immediately after the Intermediate final in Croke Park. The result was a comprehensive 3-13 to 0-7 victory for Oulart. According to newspaper reports, Oulart are "renowned for their goal threat" and they proved this inside the first minute with the first of their three goals. Another significant point is that Mullagh only scored one point from play and it took them 49 minutes to achieve this. So what is the common denominator or overlapping set? It's Oulart. On 11<sup>th</sup> February, 17 days before the final, Oulart played Piltown in a challenge match in Piltown under lights. The final score was very similar to the senior final, Oulart 4-13 Piltown 1-5. Oulart were pretty much at full strength but Piltown were missing several players who were to start in the All-Ireland final and Piltown led after 15 minutes by 1-4 to 0-2 and showed no fear of the more illustrious Wexford side. Alright, they didn't hold out and does mean Piltown have some work to do before they reach the level of All-Ireland Senior Champions, Oulart The Ballagh, but the score would suggest they are not too far off Mullagh's capabilities, Mullagh who defeated the reigning champions Milford of Cork in the semi-final by 2-5 to 0-9. So scientifically, there is enough to suggest that Piltown on their day could compete with some of the best senior clubs in the country.

In the Leinster Final, Oulart beat Kilkenny champions, Thomastown by 3-9 to 1-5, suggesting Thomastown would be slightly ahead of Mullagh, possibly by the bones of five points, plus or minus a puck of the ball. There is no doubt that in recent years Thomastown have had the edge on Piltown in underage winning the 2013 Minor "A" final by 3-4 to 0-3. However, using that score and those statistics, it confirms that Piltown are in or around Mullagh at this point and with an average age of 19.2, there is room for improvement. That's where the human element comes in. As it stands, Piltown are not ready to win a Kilkenny championship, let alone any greater achievement. Yet one has to believe they will do it. The bit again that needs to be added in, is the intelligence and that comes in the form of every player picking one thing to improve on over the year. If successful, that gives the team a massive percentage increase in capability. Unfortunately, the human element means that not all the players will accept that challenge. When Piltown won the junior county title in 2008, the world was ahead of that team too as they were very young as well. Yet only eight of those went on to win an All-Ireland Intermediate Club medal. More recently, the Piltown squad that won the Intermediate League in 2013 has lost five of the squad before the All-Ireland was won in March 2015. There are many reasons why players depart the scene, but it's that human element that makes it so unpredictable. Many people spoke of the All-Ireland final, that it "may never happen again". The reality is, that to have any chance of it happening you have to believe it will, at least. Then you have to work to make it happen. So the majority of ingredients to make the events of 1<sup>st</sup> March 2015, reoccur is within the scope of almost every player. Please try to give us more of the same.



**Piltown - Junior Camogie Champions 2008**

**Back:** Nicola Jordan, Mary Drennan, Niamh Dermody, Emma Walsh, Jessica Norris, Brid O'Shea, Charlene Norris, Niamh Culleton, Carol McCarthy, Michelle Foley, Anita Duggan, Fiona Malone, Geogina Culleton, Leanne Long, Michelle O'Shea.

**Front:** Leanne Long, Hilary Power, Nicole Culleton, Emma Dunne, Nicola Foley, Mairead Diffily, Elaine Kenny, Karen Duggan, Laura Norris, Katie Power, Sinead Long, Nicole Grace.

**First Piltown Camogie team to win an Adult County Title**

**RESULTS - 2014/2015**

No.	Date	Competition	Venue	Against	PILTOWN	OPPOSITION	WDL
1	22-Mar-14	Challenge	Piltown	Rower Inistioge	3-11	1-5	W
2	06-Apr-14	All County League	Paulstown	Paulstown	1-16	2-6	W
3	19-Apr-14	All County League	Piltown	St. Brigids	7-7	4-9	W
4	26-Apr-14	League/Championship	Piltown	James Stephens	3-16	1-7	W
5	09-May-14	League/Championship	Galmoy	St. Annes	2-14	1-13	W
6	20-Jun-14	Challenge	Piltown	Windgap	2-8	6-7	L
7	25-Jun-14	Challenge	Mullinavat	Mullinavat	2-4	4-15	L
8	27-Jun-14	Challenge	Windgap	Windgap	2-4	2-4	D
9	14-Jul-14	All County League	Piltown	Lisdowney	3-20	1-5	W
10	16-Jul-14	Challenge	Rathnure	Rathnure, Wexford	Won	Lost	W
11	22-Jul-14	League/Championship	Clara	Clara	5-17	0-6	W
12	25-Jul-14	League/Championship	Piltown	Tullaroan	2-16	0-8	W
13	31-Jul-14	All County League	Danesfort	Danesfort	4-16	3-8	W
14	18-Aug-14	Challenge	Glenmore	Glenmore	4-18	1-10	W
15	25-Aug-14	All County League Final	Danesfort	St. Annes	1-9	1-7	W
16	05-Sep-14	Challenge	Piltown	Mooncoin	Won	Lost	W
17	13-Sep-14	Challenge	Piltown	Windgap	2-12	2-5	W
18	20-Sep-14	Challenge	Piltown	Young Irelands	3-17	1-3	W
19	28-Sep-14	League Final	Danesfort	St. Annes	1-10	1-9	W
20	04-Oct-14	Championship Semi Final	Mullinavat	James Stephens	2-14	1-2	W
21	11-Oct-14	Championship Final	Callan	St. Brigids	4-18	0-5	W
22	19-Oct-14	Leinster Club Championship QF	Birr	Birr	1-11	0-4	W
23	26-Oct-14	Leinster Club Championship SF	Myshall	Myshall, Carlow	1-12	1-9	W
24	09-Nov-14	Leinster Club Championship Final	Clane	Camross, Laois	3-10	4-5	W
25	28-Dec-14	Challenge	Kilkenny	Presentation College	4-16	4-4	W
26	12-Jan-15	Challenge	IT Carlow	IT Carlow	3-15	1-2	W
27	18-Jan-15	Challenge	Carriganore	Waterford IT	3-8	4-8	L
28	23-Jan-15	Challenge	Piltown	Kilkenny Minor	0-9	2-13	L
29	01-Feb-15	All-Ireland Club Semi-Final	Clane	Clonduff, Down	3-5	0-6	W
30	11-Feb-15	Challenge	Piltown	Oulart The Ballagh, Wexford	1-5	4-13	L
31	01-Mar-15	All-Ireland Club Final	Croke Park	Lismore, Waterford	1-10	1-9	W

**Competitive Games 2014/2015**

- Unbeaten in 17 competitive matches
- 5 Titles - 5 Cups.
- 157 medals
- Scored 44-221 (353 points) (Average per game 20.7 pts)
- Conceded 21-118 (181 points) (Average per game 10.6 pts)
- Average winning margin of 10 points in competitive games



Croke Park – 1<sup>st</sup> March 2015

# DRIVE FOR 5

## PICTORIAL VIEW



Under-12 Mini Games



Scoil Mhuire Caman And Run



The Fans



Members of the 2014/15 Committee that made It happen

# PILTOWN INTERMEDIATE CAMOGIE 2014/2015



# DRIVE FOR 5

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This small tribute to Piltown Intermediate Camogie, All-Ireland club champions 2014/2015, started as a small seed and got carried away in the journey of euphoria that surrounded the success. I hope in years to come it will in some way give future generations an idea of what it was like, what it felt like, what it meant to the players, their families and the community as a team from the parish won its first ever All-Ireland in Croke Park, though I wonder could anyone possibly capture it accurately enough. The thing to remember is that it was a long journey and not just one long day.

I would like to thank people who contributed to this book for the want of a better word. Gay Doyle and Noelle for the majority of the photos. Gay is one of the few to realise in Piltown, PR is not just about the writing of match reports and his "Spot The Ball", was a huge success during the campaign. Though, I have reminded him I was in the original Windgap one along with Gerry Kenny, Elaine's father. I wonder will a future one be called "Spot The Snowball"? I would also like to thank Kilkeny County Board PRO, T.J. Mills for his factual reports which record the mechanics of the matches with clarity. I would also like to thank Thomas Keane of Deise Abu for the Waterford slant, which was one of the best reports of the final that I came across. I would like to thank all those people who helped provide me with historical information, no matter how big or small. All served their purpose in recording the events of the journey.

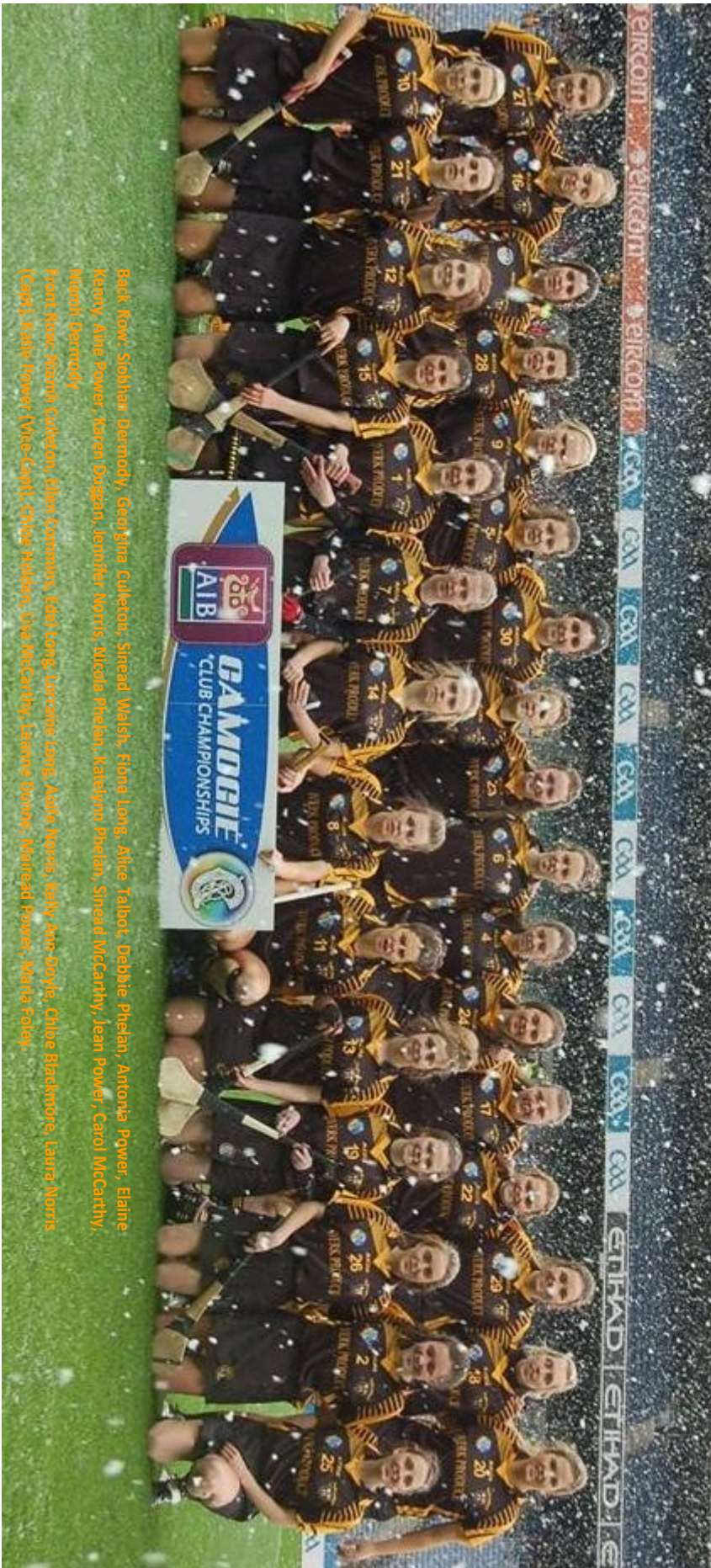


I would like to thank my family. My wife, Sheila is the best administrator there is. No arguments from me. People may not realise how big a part administrators play in success. Think Ned Quinn and Kilkeny hurling. Jennifer, I would like to thank her so much for not giving up when she could so easily have and working so hard to be the best she possibly could and by being a huge part of the success story. I would also like to thank Jamie and Lisa as they have supported loyally throughout. They have had their big days and I have no doubt they will have more big days in the future. Family support is a powerful weapon. One cannot underestimate the affect of their competitiveness in the family hierarchy that has brought this family so many glorious GAA days.

I would to thank all those who helped in any positive way to develop the players. From coaches to administrators, the success is a tribute to you all and the time spent developing our local heroes. Finally, I would like to acknowledge the players. The game is about the players. The rest of us can only facilitate them to be the best they can possibly be, but none of us can do it for them. It may be many years before they realise the enormity that their achievement has meant to so many. Always be proud of that achievement. It wasn't just another match. It was a journey. A journey which visited so many wonderful places over a long period of time. A journey which allowed you to meet such a variety of talented people along the way. A journey which allowed you to develop as a person and a character. Thank you on behalf of so many for persevering with the journey. **The Drive For 5**, was completed in less than a year but the preparations took a lot longer. Recording the events tingled my passion, I hope those who read it in the future will be tingled too.

*Seamus Norris*

# PILTOWN: ALL-IRELAND INTERMEDIATE CLUB CHAMPIONS 2014/2015



Back Row: Siobhan Dermody, Georgina Colleton, Sinead Walsh, Fiona Long, Alice Talbot, Debbie Phelan, Antonia Power, Elaine Kenny, Aine Power, Karen Duggan, Jennifer Norris, Nicola Phelan, Katalyn Phelan, Sinead McCarthy, Jean Power, Carol McCarthy, Aislinn Dermody  
Front Row: Sarah Colleton, Eilín Conboy, Ede Long, Bernice Long, Aislinn Norris, Kelly Ann Doyle, Chloe Blackmore, Laura Norris (capt), Katie Power, Mira-Carol, Chloé Holden, Una McCarthy, Lorraine Doherty, Mairead Power, Aislinn Foley.