

Monagea Gaa and Parish Information

Parish History

Brief Parish History & Geographical Location

The village of Monagea is situated on the N21, the road from Limerick to Tralee, three miles from Newcastle West. Monagea has had a long and interesting past. According to Tim Mulcahy, a hoard of Vikings swords was found in the area.

In 1394, Monagay, as it was then called, was under the control of the Archbishop of Cashel. The parish of Monagea has been reduced in size over the years, with parts of the old parish being incorporated into Templeglantine parish in 1864 and into the parish of Newcastle West in 1833.

According to Art Ó Maolfabhail, Monagea is from the Irish Móin Achaidh Ghae, which means 'the bogland of the field of the spear'. However, it is generally agreed that Monagea is derived from the Irish Moín a Ghédh, which means 'The Bog of the Goose'. Locally the area is called Templenamona.

Churches

The present day church in Monagea was built in 1839. The church is dedicated to the Lady of the Visitation. A short tree-lined avenue leads up to the church. It is believed that some of the trees in the avenue were planted about the time that the new church was built, after the Big Wind of January 6th 1839.

Prior to its completion, this church was damaged on the Night of the Big Wind. The church was in the process of being built at the time, and it is claimed that the roof was knocked during this storm. However, according to the foundation stone building commenced on the 2nd of July 1839. Therefore, it is possible that the story about the Night of the Big Wind is inaccurate.

The church is built from stone that was brought from the nearby quarry of Ard na Sligna, which is in the parish of Templeglantine. The cut stone is at the front of the church while the rubble stone can be seen where the foundation stone is placed in the wall. The roof in the church is very high.

There are four plaques on the back wall of the church. One plaque commemorates the death of Donal Sheahan from Ballintubbrid, who was killed in action in 1916 on his way to meet Roger Casement at Banna Strand. Another plaque tells us that the priests and people of the parish erected the altar to the memory of John Donovan P.P., who died on July 24th 1860. There is also a plaque to the Sheehy family from Ballintubbrid, who were from the parish of Raheenagh. They were either landowners or land agents in west Limerick. They have a tomb in the

graveyard in Monagea. There is also a plaque to Fr John Clifford P.P. who died on August 1st 1880, aged 59. Fr Clifford is buried in the church.

In the church there is a statue to St Joseph on the left of the church. Behind the altar there is a statue of the Sacred Heart on the left and a statue of Mary on the right.

There are two fine stained glass windows of St Patrick & St Brigid, with a small window of Jesus above them, at the back of the church, in memory of Catherine and John Hanley. They were given to the church by the self-styled "Baron of Broadway", John J. Hanley. The Baron Hanley was a native of the parish who went to America and found his fame and fortune in the USA. Harry Clarke, who was employed by Fr Ryan, the parish priest at that time, designed the windows. Clarke also designed the windows in the Honan Chapel in UCC.

In the grounds of the church, there is a cross to the Mission that was given by the Redemptorists in June 1944.

There is a post-box to the right of the entrance to the church grounds. This post-box dates back to the time when the postal service was run by the Royal Mail and bears the symbol of the crown. Today the box has been painted green. Fr James O'Shea built a large parochial house in the mid-1860s for the two parishes of Monagea and Templeglantine. After the splitting of the parish in 1864, Fr John Walsh built a parochial house in Templeglantine with the assistance of the local landlord.

Buried within the church are:

Fr John Clifford

Parish Priest

Died 1st August 1880

Aged 59

Two other priests were reputedly buried in the church. It was claimed that Fr John Donovan was buried in the church but no remains were found when Fr. Costello excavated the alleged site of the burials.

Buried in the grounds are:

Canon C. Mulhane

Dean of Warrington

A native of the parish

Daniel Curtin

Died on 11th November 1913

Aged 75

Patrick Ryan

Parish Priest

Died on May 5th 1942

The oldest church ruin in the parish is called "Teampull na hInge Baoit" after the Dalcassian saint, St Baoith. The ruin is situated in Strand. Westropp claims that Lewis was incorrect in calling the church "The Church of the Devout Daughter". He also lists a church called Killoccally, which he says may in fact have been the church in Strand. In 1839 the north and east walls fell in the "Night Of the Big Wind". The ruins are now over grown but the remaining walls are in good condition. There are two windows in the south wall as well as what appears to be a door or large window. Fr Irwin believes that this site may have been an abbey when it was first built. Locals claim that there was a tunnel connecting the church in Strand to the castle at Glenquin. However, there is no proof as to the existence of this tunnel.

According to Begley, there was a church in Rathcahill, which was mentioned in the records in 1302, and which was burned in 1306. The site of this church was across from Lady's Well. All that remains of this church is a pier that was probably part of the entrance to the church. Begley concludes that after the fire of 1306, the church was rebuilt in the townland of Monagea, in the parish of Rathcahill. During the penal era, the church returned to Rathcahill. About the beginning of the nineteenth century, the church was again removed to Monagea. The parish was renamed Monagea. The ruin of this church can now be seen in the graveyard at Monagea.

Graveyards

The graveyard in Monagea is situated in the village, across from the National School. This graveyard is in the grounds of Rathcahill church ruin. The oldest headstone that we came across dated from the 7th of March 1805. It was erected to the memory of Mauritius Fitzgibbon. The inscription on the headstone, while difficult to read, is poetic and gives the impression that the deceased was a man of education and possibly some wealth.

There are two tombs in the graveyards. One of the tombs is to the memory of Edward J. Sheehy and Helena Clancy Sheehy. Both were from Cherry Grove and the tomb dates back to 1884. The dates are given in roman numerals. We could not find an inscription on the second tomb.

Also buried in the graveyard is Liam Hough, captain of the Limerick side that won All Ireland Hurling Finals in 1918. He also played in the finals of 1921 and 1923.

Holy Wells

Danaher mentions four wells in the parish of Monagea. However, two of these wells are nowadays in the parish of Templeglantine, and one is in the parish of Newcastlewest. The only remaining well in the parish of Monagea is in the townland of Rathcahill East.

This well is called Lady's Well and is on the roadside across from the site of the 14th century church in Rathcahill. Three statues have been erected at the well, and it has been surrounded by a wall. The railing around the well was built in the 1930s. Workers on the FAS scheme maintain the well. In the past a large willow tree grew near the well and rags were tied to the tree as offerings. It is claimed that the water can cure sore eyes.

The feast day at the well is the 15th of August. Behind the well there is an area of ground, where three rounds of the well are done in a clockwise direction while saying the Rosary. The water in the well is crystal clear. Legend has it that the well moved when it was cursed. Another legend tells of a woman who took water from the well to boil and she found a fish in the water. It is claimed that St Brigid visited the well when she was on her way to Killeedy to see St Ita.

Danaher also mentions a second well at Mountplummer called St Broney's Well but nothing is known about the well, its location, or its patron saint.

According to local tradition, there was another Holy Well in the townland of Ballyshane. This well is called after St Banbhan, who was from the same race as St Ita. The well is on the land of Eamonn Cregan. No devotions have taken place in a number of years and no one visits the well today.

However a local man told us that he remembers rosary beads were left at the well when he was as a child. The water was believed to cure a number of ailments. The well is situated in boggy land. The water is clean. St Banbhan's feastday was on May 1st or 9th.

Mass Rock

Monagea mass rock is in the townland of Glenmore and is known locally as Clash an Aifreann. Mass is usually held here on the 15th of August.

The mass rock is in a grove of trees and an altar was erected at the site. The original mass rock was just below the altar and over looks a stream the flows along the valley. Mass was said at the site in 1999 when an oak tree was planted.

Before you reach the mass rock, a large Holy Cross dominates the hillside. This cross was erected in the Holy Year of 1950 to commemorate their ancestors who suffered for their faith in Penal days.

A chalice was found approximately a ½ mile from the mass rock in Clais an Aifrinn in the townland of Strand. Local people believe that a priest buried the chalice in a hurry when he was escaping from a raid by British soldiers during mass at the mass rock.

Famous People

The area is renowned for the ash trees that grow in the area. This could be one of the reasons why so many All-Ireland hurlers have come from West Limerick. Natives of Monagea parish who have won All-Ireland medals in hurling include Liam Hough and Ned Cregan, father of the present County Hurling Manager, Eamon Cregan. At the turn of the century, Larry Sheahan achieved a rare feat by winning All-Ireland Football medals with two different counties. In 1896 he won the title with his native Limerick and ten years later he again tasted victory with Dublin.

John Begley was also from this parish. Begley was a priest in the diocese and was an Archdeacon in the parish of Bruff when he died in 1941. He wrote a three-volume history of the Diocese of Limerick that was published over a period of thirty years. Local historian Tim Mulcahy told us that Begley was put through school by his brother James. James Begley was an ace marksman and due to his success in shooting game, he could afford to fund his brother's education.

In 1905, a horse named Kirkland won the Aintree Grand National. Fr Edmund Clifford, who was parish priest from 1892 until his retirement in 1919, bred Kirkland. Kirkland won in Kilmallock at the age of four and was owned at this stage by a Mr T. A. Hartigan. Hartigan then sold the horse onto a Liverpool manufacturer Frank Bibby.

Kirkland was well fancied by the general public at Aintree as he had earlier won the Grand Sefton chase (run over the National course) and had finished fourth in 1903 and second in 1904 in the two previous running of the National. Kirkland was trained by Mr. E. Thomas and ridden by Frank 'Tich' Mason. He won by three lengths from Napper Tandy at the odds of 6/1.

It is sometimes argued that Kirkland was a Templeglantine horse. However, Kirkland was born in 1896, while Fr. Clifford was parish priest in Monagea.

Another local who achieved fame (or infamy in this case) was "Terrible" Tommy O'Connor, who shot his way out of Chicago jail in 1910.

The leader of the local division of the Whiteboys was Captain Rock, a Fitzmaurice. A faction group called the Rockites emerged from this organisation. A Mulcahy led them at one stage. Like the Whiteboys, their objective was to grab land from farmers. This usually happened for one of two reasons; a dispute with another local farmer, or simply wanting their lands.

Townlands

| English Name | Irish Name | Meaning |
|-------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------|
| Arranagh | Aránach | <i>Meaning uncertain</i> |
| Ballintubbrid | Baile na Tiobradie | The town of the well |
| Ballinvallig | Baile an Bhealaigh | The town of the way |
| Ballycluvane | Baile Uí Chlúmháin | The town of Ó Clúmháin |
| Ballyconway | Baile Uí Chonnmhaigh | The town of Ó Connmhaigh |
| Ballygeel | Baile an Gheimhil | The town of the fetter |
| Ballylinane | Baile Uí Leannáin | The town of Ó Leannáin |
| Ballymurragh East | Baile Uí Mhurchú | The town of Ó Murchú |
| Ballynahown | Baile na hAbhann | The town of the river |
| Ballyquirk | Baile Uí Choirc | The town of Ó Coirc |
| Ballyshane | Baile Sheáin | The town of Seán |
| Camas | Camas | Winding feature |
| Cloonyscrehane | Cluain an Screatháin | The meadow of the shallow sod |
| Crean | An Crián | The clayey place |
| Gardenfield | Goirtín an Gharraí | The small field of the garden |
| Garryduff | An Garraí Dubh | The black garden |
| Glebe | An Ghléib | |
| Glendarragh | Gleann Darach | Glen of oaktrees |
| Glenmore | An Gleann Mór | The big glen |
| Glenquin | Gleann an Choim | The glen of the shelter |
| Gorteenreynard | Goirtín Raghnairt | The small field of Raghnairt |

| | | |
|-----------------|---------------------|---------------------------------|
| Lissurland | Lios Urlann | Enclosure of the weapon-handles |
| Rathcahill East | Ráth Chathail Thior | The rath of Cathal |
| Shangarry | An Seangharraí | The old garden |
| Strand | An Trá | |
| Teermena | Tír Mhaonaigh | The land of Maonach |
| Treanboy | An Trian Buí | The yellow third |

GAA Club History

Monagea G.A.A club, originally known as William O'Brien's, is one of the oldest in county Limerick, having been founded in 1896. Whether this came about, because of a plentiful supply of ash, within the parish, the presence at the time of many young men of twenty, or the vision of a few dedicated young men is uncertain. What is clear is that in Monagea hurling and football were played with a great deal of enthusiasm and no small degree of success in the early days of the fledgling organisation.

The first of these days came on the 31st of May 1903 when Monagea contested the delayed 1902 County Senior Hurling final played at the Markets Field in Limerick, when Monagea had to give best to Young Ireland's on the score of 2-9 to 0-5.

Even before this Larry Sheehan of Camas had won an All Ireland Senior football medal, with Limerick Commercials at Jones's Rd Dublin on Feb 6th 1898. Soon after he moved to Dublin where he was employed by McBirney's on O'Connell Bridge. He was a member of the beaten Dublin team of 1904 but won another Senior All Ireland two years later when playing corner forward with Dublin against Cork.

In 1914 Dr Jim Reidy from Gardenfield became the first Limerick man to captain U.C.C to Fitzgibbon cup success a feat which was to be emulated twenty four years later in 1937 by Maurice Roche from the neighboring townland of Ballygeale

Willie Hough Monagea's most famous sportsman was born in the townland of Ballyshane in 1892. His father William was the first chairman of the West Limerick G.A.A board. As a student

in De La Salle College in Waterford, Willie made his debut with Waterford in the Munster Championship of 1913 against the "Toomevara greyhounds".

Two years later he lined out with Limerick against Tipperary at Dan Fraher field in Dungarvan. Between 1917 and 1923 he was a pillar of the Limerick team that reached seven consecutive Munster Senior Hurling finals. By now the team in Monagea had lapsed and in 1917 four men from the parish, Willie Hough captain, John Hough, Dan Greene and Ger Brouder were members of the Newcastle West team that won the County Senior hurling championship.



In 1918 Willie Hough became the first West Limerick man to captain an All Ireland winning Senior-hurling team, he lined out at centre back. He was to the fore again in 1921 and was on the beaten 1923 team. In 1936 he was elected treasurer of the Munster council a post he held with distinction for 26 years. He was principal teacher in Monagea School from 1914 until 1957 and was succeeded by Sean O'Sullivan from Ballinskelligs who had won an All Ireland minor medal with Kerry in 1933.

Ned Cregan was a next-door neighbour of Willie Hough. He was born in 1901 and joined the volunteers as a young boy. He fought with distinction in the War of Independence. In 1927 he made his debut with the limerick junior hurling team and soon graduated to the great senior that included Mick and John Mackey, Garret Howard and Mickey Cross. He played in the All Ireland Finals of 1933,34 and 35 and was very proud of the fact that he never left the field of play because of injury. His sons Eamonn, Mickey and Conor all played for Limerick and Mickey trained the victorious Limerick senior side of 1973. Ned Cregan died in 1972 a short time before his son Eamonn, the first player in Limerick to follow in his father's footsteps by winning an All Ireland Senior-hurling medal.

Monagea contested the 1931 and '34 junior hurling finals without success and it would be another 39 years before Paddy Hogan captained the club to our only success in this grade in 1973. Monagea produced many fine hurlers over those years and none better than Tom McGrath whose career bridged two generations and he is still hale and hearty. At a later stage Paddy McCarthy, Jerome Keane, Con O'Keefe and Liam McKessey were hurlers of outstanding ability.

A forgotten side of most G.A.A clubs is our sister association the camogie club. Although there is no longer a club in the parish, they were a force to be reckoned with in the thirties and forties. During this period Kit McGrath and Mary Ita Connell (nee Delee) played for Limerick and in 1934 Monagea were County senior champions when they defeated Foynes in the final. In recent years Monagea Ladies football club have been very successful at under age level due to the great work of Dan Doherty, Joan O'Callaghan and Eileen Carmody.

During the 1950's Brother Eamonn Doody from Gardenfield was the guiding light behind Thurles C.B.S in Co Tipperary, when they won three Dr Harty Cup competitions and was trainer of the Tipperary minor hurling team when the premier county won six All Ireland Championships.

Monagea won the West junior b title in 1956. After failing to Tournafulla and Kilcornan in successive West Junior b finals. Monagea again won the title when they defeated an Abbeyfeale-Templeglantine selection in 1967 and repeated the success again in 1981 by defeating Kileedy in the final.

With the introduction of the Scor competitions in the early 1970's, Monagea's talent was to the fore. In 1971 Pat Mulcahy did the parish proud when he reached the Munster final in Public Speaking, a discipline which was annexed from the competition a short time afterwards. In 1995 Monagea's ballad group consisting of Deirdre Scanlan, Maria Heirlihy, Dan Brouder, Pat Heirlihy and John Flavin represented Limerick in the Munster final.



The 1980's was to prove an eventful decade in the history of the club. In 1986 David Hough who had taken over as secretary enlisted the services of the former outstanding Limerick and Dublin footballer Pa Leahy as trainer. Monagea went on to win the West and County Junior b football championship that year and repeated the success in hurling in 1987. These victories proved to be the turning point in the history of the club, and when Monagea again won the County junior B championship in 1991 with Stephen Murphy as trainer, nobody was surprised.

Over the years many dedicated people have worked hard with Bord na nÓg in Monagea. William Delee, Phil Sexton, Pat Mulcahy, Richard Barry, Seamus Flanagan, Pat Sugrue and

John O'Sullivan have all devoted much time and energy to the youth of the parish. More recently Noel McCarthy, Jim Moore, Gerry Phillips, Breda Breen and Liam Heirlthy have taken up the challenge. The clubs most successful under age period however was in the late 1980's. Around that time John McGrath and Tom Mulcahy both of who had won County senior hurling medals with Killeedy took over the running of the under age teams. Even with a good panel of players success did not come easily, particularly in hurling.

However in football a subtle but noticeable change was taking place. Monagea were now winning matches against more exalted opposition which they could and probably should have lost. This was due to more discipline on the field, some extraordinary and outstanding displays by the likes of Maurice Flavin and William Keane and perhaps crucially the ability of William Murphy to carve out match winning scores. The self-belief gained by those players at that time would be of immense benefit to them in the years ahead.

The 1980's were notable for another reason. Until then generations of Monagea athletes had sharpened their skills on the theater-like setting of Lissurland. In this respect the generosity of the Magner family to Monagea G.A.A over the years is much appreciated.

In the centenary year of the foundation of the Gaelic Athletic Association, 1984, a four acre site near Monagea parish church and close to the National School was purchased from Sean Riordan. A special fields committee was set up with the following as officers, President Rev Fr Patrick Howard, chairman John O'Sullivan, Secretary Noel McCarthy with Tom Brouder and Pat Harnett as joint treasurers; there were a further twelve people on the committee. Eight years later after much hard work and fundraising, locally, as well as generous national lottery grants, on May 31st 1992 a dream had come true for Monagea G.A.A club when, Pairc na nGeal Monagea was officially opened by Gearoid O'Beineid then Cathoirleach Contae Luimni.

It was a great and proud occasion for the club and the people of Monagea. While there was disappointment that none of the big three – Cork, Tipperary or Kilkenny could provide opposition to Limerick on that auspicious occasion. Ironically many of the Offaly team that graced the green sod of Monagea on that May evening were instrumental in Limerick's downfall on that ill fated day in Croke Park two years later. On the occasion of the opening of the new pitch a comprehensive history of the club was compiled and written by Pat Sugrue and John O'Sullivan, for which we are very grateful.



In 1994 Monagea won the West Junior hurling league, in 1998 the West junior football league but success in the championship eluded us. In the spring of 1997 however David Hough asked Jack O'Dwyer, the legendary Pallasgreen Centre back, to train Monagea. It was to prove a long arduous but in the end a memorable year, culminating when on an November evening in Kilmallock captain Eddie Hogan held aloft for the first time in the clubs history, the county Junior A hurling trophy, after Pat Heirlíhy had recorded the winning scores. It was one hundred years since Larry Sheehan had brought the first All Ireland medal to the parish. The reception the teams received on their arrival in the local village of Strand will live for many a year in the memories of those who were present. Old Gaels were seen to shed tears of joy at the homecoming.

Tom McGrath, a stalwart of the 1930's was there to welcome his son John and his grandson John (who also played in the English Premier League with Aston Villa), both who had done Monagea proud earlier in the day.

In recent years John Flavin has created his own niche in the annals of the club, he has played hurling with Limerick in every grade and has also played junior football. His many fine displays in the famed green of limerick and the renowned Green and Gold of Monagea has been a source of pride and joy for the people of his native parish.

Monagea is a small club with limited resources; we have a long and proud tradition. There have been great days, good days and bad days, and not in that numerical order, but the spirit of the Association is still alive and well due to the continuous dedicated commitment, down through the years of people who are willing to give of their time for the betterment of the club

Gaelic football, once a proud and noble game, has lost some of its traditional skills, primarily due to the overuse of the hand pass. Hurling still retains many of the unique qualities, which embody courage and skill. To this end a local committee in Monagea have been working hard

over the past couple of years to develop the pitch, provide an indoor facility and to set up an all weather astro turf, where young players can practice and develop the traditional skills of a great game. Due to the unstinting work of this committee and the generosity of the club sponsors Cavanagh's of Charleville and a sizable grant from the National lottery, this facility has now become a reality.