



A HISTORY OF IRISH LACROSSE

BY MICHAEL KENNEDY



**IRELAND
LACROSSE**

www.irelandlacrosse.ie

||

[@IrelandLacrosse](https://www.instagram.com/IrelandLacrosse)

||

info@irelandlacrosse.ie

PART ONE: HISTORY OF IRISH MEN'S LACROSSE

If an old Irish legend – that of St. Brendan the Voyager of Ciarraighe Luachra, County Kerry – is to be believed, then it was he, an Irishman, who was the first European to set foot in North America! St. Brendan set-off from the west coast of Ireland sometime between 512-530 AD, long before Leif Ericson (1003 AD) or Christopher Columbus made similar journeys. It is not beyond the realms of possibility, and many historians and folklorists have speculated as much, that Brendan and his fellow travelers brought with them the ancient Celtic game of hurling (also known as coman or trundling, and related to the Scottish game of shinty), which history shows was played as long ago as 1200 BC (and possibly longer if the legend of Cú Chulainn is to be believed).



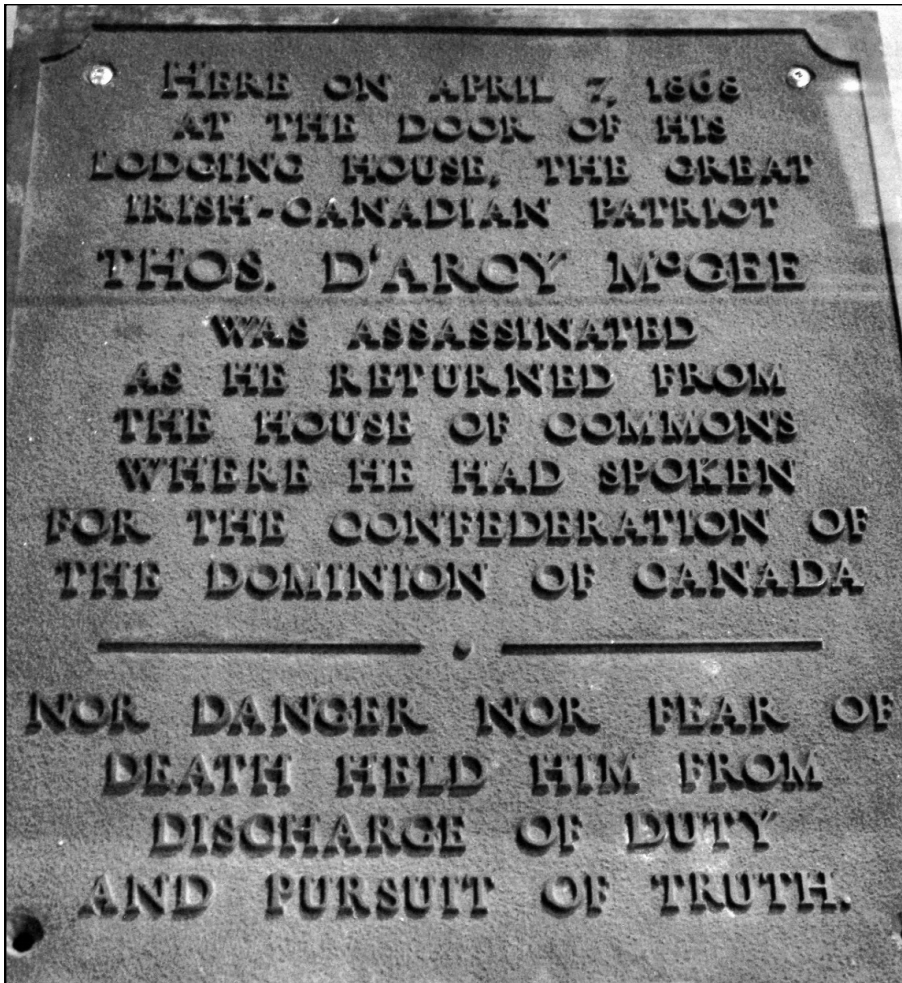
**LEFT: cú chulainn, THE
FIRST AND GREATEST
HURLER**

Upon arriving on the shores of North America, and encountering the native inhabitants there, it has been speculated that Brendan introduced hurling to them, and latter descriptions of the game of lacrosse by the likes of British explorer Captain Basil Hall in 1829 or American artist George Catlin in the 1830s have been compared with, and noted for their striking resemblance to, the Irish game of hurling. So goes the story anyway – a version of which, it should be noted, was relayed by William George Beers himself (the father of modern lacrosse) in his seminal work *Lacrosse: The National Game of Canada*, published in 1869.

In considering this matter in Chapter 1 of that book – on the “Origin of the Game of Lacrosse” – Beers also recalls a discussion on this very topic which he had with the Honourable Thomas D’Arcy McGee, a native of County Louth in Ireland, born in 1825 and emigrant to Canada in 1842, and a prominent Irish Nationalist and Catholic spokesman, as the two of them traveled aboard a Grand Trunk Railway train in Montreal sometime in 1867. D’Arcy McGee was an esteemed Montreal politician and one of the fathers of Canadian Confederation and a member of the first Canadian parliament, and had commented to Beers on the apparent similarities between the game of lacrosse and hurling.

**RIGHT: ST. BRENDAN SETS
OFF FOR NORTH AMERICA**





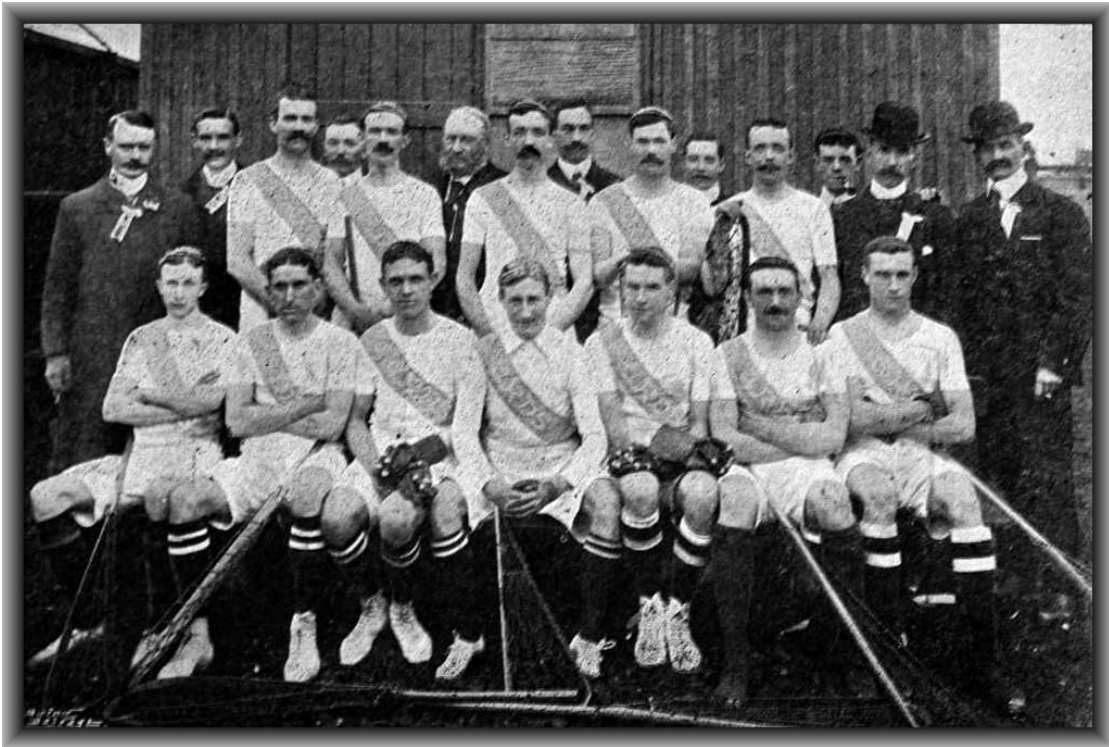
Unfortunately D'Arcy McGee's fleeting interest in lacrosse could not have been very long-lasting – he was assassinated on 7th April, 1868 by a member of the Fenian Brotherhood, which was an organization based in North America (and partnered with the Irish Republican Brotherhood in Ireland) that was committed to the overthrow of British rule in Ireland. As part of its efforts to confront British colonial power, and indeed to try to achieve a forcible takeover of Canada by the United States, the Fenian Brotherhood had in fact launched a series of raids into Canada (five of note from 1866-1871) and the assassination of D'Arcy McGee (once a staunch Irish Nationalist but who had latterly adopted stronger anti-sectarian views) was symptomatic of the various events within this context.

Indeed, there's no doubt that William George Beers and D'Arcy McGee's discussions aboard that Montreal train were not limited to matters relating to early Irish trans-Atlantic explorers and the similarities between lacrosse and hurling – apart from being known as a lacrosse enthusiast (and prominent dentist) Beers was also the founder of the Victoria Rifles of Canada, a military regiment that played a prominent role in defending Canada against the Fenians, in particular the raids of 1866 and 1870.

The Canadian-Irish connection does not end there. In the mid-to-late 1800s, in particular following the Great Irish Famine of 1845-1852 which saw nearly a million Irish people leave their homeland, the Irish emigrant community in Canada grew exponentially. In inner-city Montreal, the Irish Catholic immigrants in particular gravitated to a neighbourhood called Griffintown, just along the Lachine Canal. It was here that the Montreal Shamrocks Lacrosse club was founded by J. B. L. Flynn in 1867-1868. The Shamrock club would become a dominant force in Canadian lacrosse, and its fans were known as some of the most passionate supporters of any sport in the Montreal area. Their biggest rivalry was with the Montreal Lacrosse Club, which happened to also be the club of a certain William George Beers (when not performing his obligations as a dentist, writing the rules of lacrosse and creating the Victoria Rifles militia group, Beers was a goalkeeper for the Montreal Lacrosse Club). In 1886, an ice-hockey team (the Montreal Shamrocks) was formed as part of the club, and the team would go on to win the Stanley Cup in 1899 and 1900.



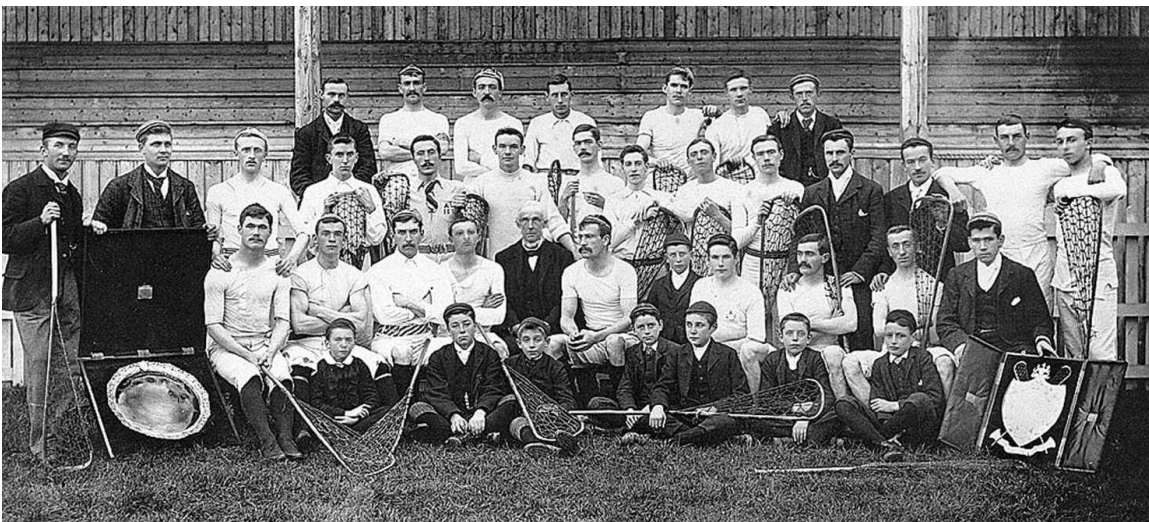
MONTREAL SHAMROCKS, 1867



THE ARDS LACROSSE CLUB IN THE LATE 1800S

The origins of lacrosse within Ireland itself lie with the establishment of the Ards Lacrosse Club in Newtownards, Co. Down (just outside Belfast) in 1872. The Ards club would become the dominant force in the domestic lacrosse scene, as it expanded mainly in Belfast and throughout Northern Ireland, with some activity (and regular games) in Dublin also. These teams competed for the Irish Lacrosse Challenge Shield as well as the Junior Lacrosse Challenge Shield.

Incredibly, these two impressive trophy plates are still held in the Ards Borough Council Offices today! In honour of this history, the Fall Ball season for Irish lacrosse is called the Newtownards Cup named after the first town to establish a lacrosse team in Ireland. The final for this competition is played in November and normally takes place in Newtownards itself!



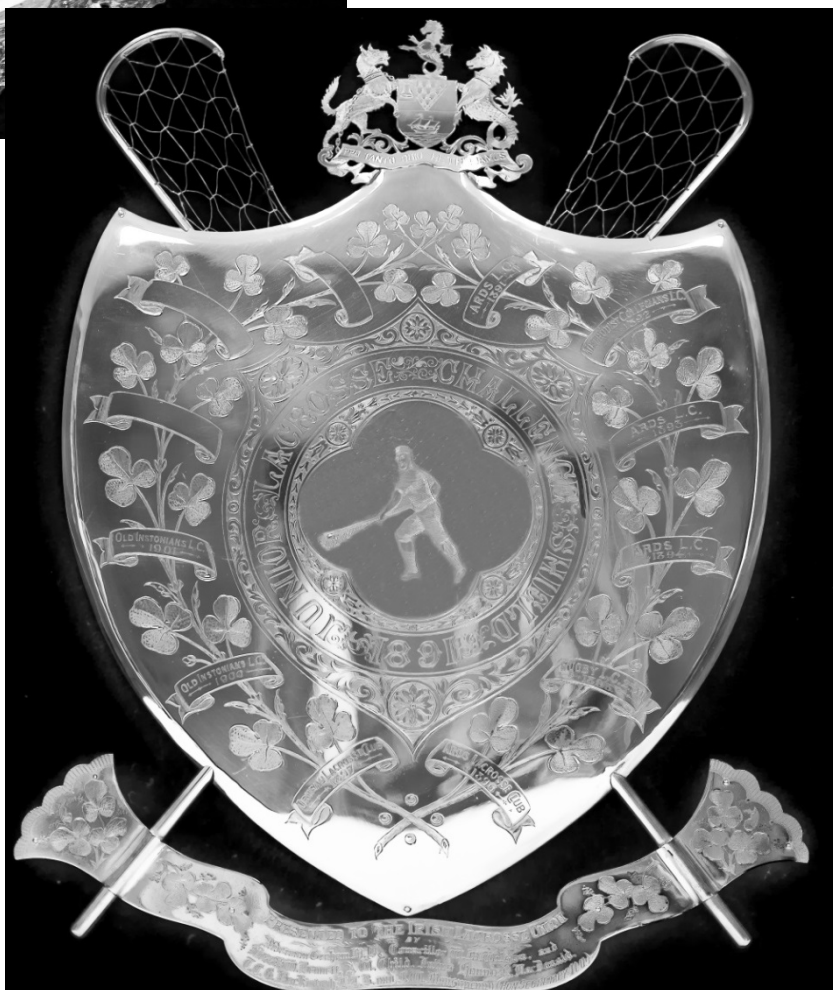
THE ARDS LACROSSE CLUB IN 1899 WITH BOTH THE IRISH LACROSSE CHALLENGE SHIELD AND THE JUNIOR LACROSSE CHALLENGE SHIELD



These shields are still held in the mayor's parlour of the Ards Borough council offices, in Newtownards, County Down, Northern Ireland.

**ABOVE: The IRISH
LACROSSE challenge
shield**

**RIGHT: The JUNIOR
LACROSSE challenge
shield**



As lacrosse continued to develop in Ireland, William George Beers, the man credited with modernizing and codifying the game in his native Canada and former travel companion of the late Thomas D'Arcy McGee, led a trip across the Atlantic in 1876 that included members of the Montreal Lacrosse Club as well as a team of Caughnawaga (Kahnawake) Indians. The tour started in Belfast with a number of exhibition games by these teams before moving on to England where, amongst other games, the teams put on an exhibition for the Queen at Windsor Castle. The next trip to Ireland was in 1883 and was also led by William George Beers, but this time he brought with him players from the Montreal and Toronto Lacrosse Clubs, plus a number of Caughnawaga Indians – these teams toured Ireland, Scotland and England playing a number of games.



RIGHT: WILLIAM GEORGE BEERS, 1843-1900

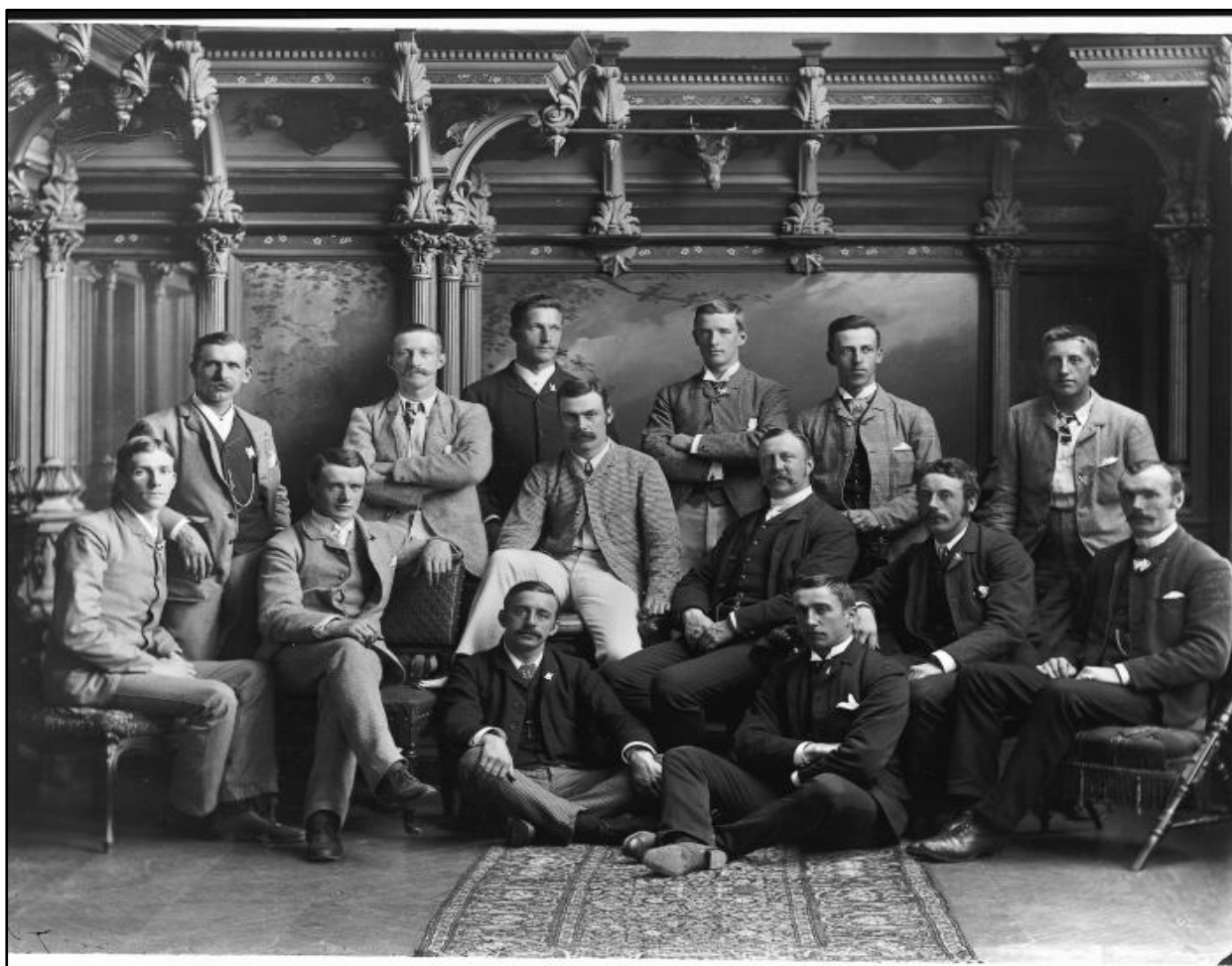


ABOVE: CANADIAN TEAM IN BELFAST, 1883

1891 (the oldest national governing body for golf in the world) and was also a keen yachtsman, having accompanied Sir Thomas Lipton through the entry of the Shamrock in the America's Cup yacht race of 1899.

The next trip was in 1884 – this expedition was led by H. H. Balch, captain of the New York Lacrosse Club, and Hermann Oelrichs, an American businessman, shipping magnate and multimillionaire. The players involved in this trip were drawn predominantly from teams in the United States, including the New York Lacrosse Club, the Union Lacrosse Club of Boston, the Druids of Baltimore, the Calumet Club of Chicago, as well as players from Harvard University, Princeton University and Yale University. This trip lasted from 3 May 1884 to 6 July 1884 and included matches against Cheshire County, Lancashire, Yorkshire, Notts, South of England, Middlesex, Cambridge Varsity and All England. Throughout these matches, the local teams were completely shut-out by the visiting American team and failed to score, with the exception of a single goal in the first game for Cheshire County. The visiting team then moved on to Belfast where they played an 'All Ireland' team which proved to be their tightest match of the expedition, narrowly winning by a slender margin of 3-2. A second game was then played in Belfast against a 'United Kingdom' team which would prove to be the sole victory for any local side against the visiting Americans with a score of 3-5, and it is worth noting that the report from that match highlights the fact that "over two-thirds of the winning team were Irishmen".

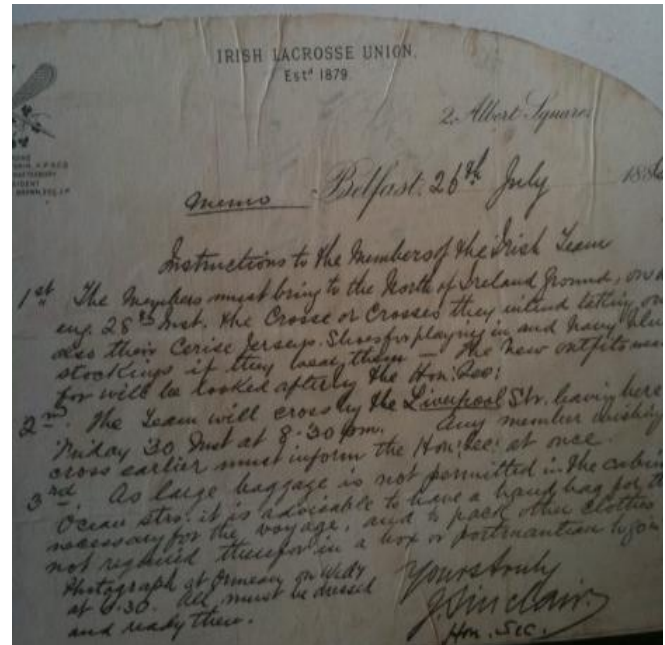
By this stage, an Irish national lacrosse team had been formed, and following an invitation from Beers, the team, ably led and captained by Hugh C. Kelly, traveled to the USA and Canada in the summer of 1886 to play a large number of matches. Incredibly, a scrapbook of this trip still exists and is held in the National Library of Ireland in Dublin. The scrapbook is an amazing and extensive resource of material from that trip, which includes a diary entry for each day of the trip (a trip which lasted nearly two months), match reports from the various games played, photos and drawings of matches and players, diagrams of the ship they traveled over on, copies of their tickets, sample menus from the various banquets which were conducted in their honour, copies of programmes from various theatre shows they attended, including one featuring the famous story of Wild Bill Hickock, as well as various maps on which their travels are recorded. There is also a sample of the crest worn by the Irish players on their uniforms, and even a personal note of support and condolence from William George Beers which has been appended to the scrapbook and was addressed to one of the members of the Irish team who had sustained an injury and was laid-up in a Montreal hospital following the team's first competitive match in Canada.



IRISH NATIONAL LACROSSE TEAM - MONTREAL 1886

Seated on chair, third from right: Captain Hugh C. Kelly - of Ballymacarrett, County Down - a founding member of the Irish Lacrosse Union and captain of the Irish Lacrosse team for 16 years

Among the various entertaining stories relayed through the daily diary entries was one concerning their voyage across the Atlantic: a number of other passengers on the ship (but also including Hugh C Kelly) had been playing cricket on the deck of the ship, and unfortunately had lost their ball overboard. Not wanting the opportunity for sporting endeavour on the high seas to pass them by, Kelly asked the ship's captain whether the bags containing their lacrosse sticks could be retrieved. The ship's captain obliged, and so an impromptu lacrosse game commenced on board the ship, until the ball was once again lost overboard. Unperturbed, the players fetched some onions, and continued on playing with these!



ITEMS FROM THE SCRAPBOOK OF MEMORABILIA, 1886

Men's lacrosse flourished in Ireland at the end of the 19th century and into the beginning of the 20th. In *The New York Times* report of the Irish team's arrival in New York City on 8 August 1886, there is a list of the names of the different players involved with the team, including their club affiliations, thereby illustrating the existence of several club teams (13 in total) in Ireland at that time: Chichester Park, Clarence, Cliftonville, Dublin University, Methodist College, the North of Ireland Lacrosse Club, the Down Athletic Club, the Rugby Lacrosse Club, the Ards Lacrosse Club, the Royal Belfast Academical Institution Lacrosse Club, Ulster, Windsor and the YMCA.

In 1888, the Toronto Lacrosse Club toured the UK and Ireland. The team arrived in Belfast from Liverpool on the morning of Thursday, 26 April. The team, many of whom were hosted in the homes of the host Irish players, played four matches while in Ireland, two of which were played in Newtownards. In addition to these games, the players from Toronto also engaged in a number of other activities, including a trip to Helen's Tower (between Newtownards and Bangor), lunch in the picturesque village of Crawfordsburn, dinner in the Central Hall of Belfast, a trip to Giant's Ring, another banquet at the Ulster Minor Hall in Belfast on 28 April, a tour of Grey Abbey ruins near Strangford Lough, a coastal tour of the Giant's Causeway and Portrush, and finally onward to Derry before sailing home for North America on Friday, 4 May.



ABOVE: ACTION FROM A GAME IN BELFAST AGAINST THE VISITING TORONTO TEAM, 1888

In the early 1900s, men's lacrosse then appeared to rapidly decline and disappear altogether in the lead-up to the First World War. It is unclear as to what factors contributed to this deterioration, but it can be speculated that the founding of the Gaelic Athletic Association in 1884, which is aimed at promoting the native Irish sports of hurling and Gaelic football, may have been a contributing factor.

Competition may have arisen for both field space and players in light of the general expansion of several sports during this historical period (including golf, rugby, soccer and Gaelic football and hurling), and in light of the changing political situation in Ireland in the lead-up to the Easter Rising of 1916, and the Irish nationalist agenda of the GAA (it is speculated that many of the founding members were also members of the Irish Republican Brotherhood), interest in lacrosse, which would have widely been perceived in Ireland as a "foreign" sport, may well have waned. There is no doubting also that lacrosse would have been most popular amongst the Protestant upper classes in Ireland, many of whom may have also been called into action during the First World War.



ABOVE: PROGRAMME FROM A BANQUET FOR A VISITING TORONTO TEAM

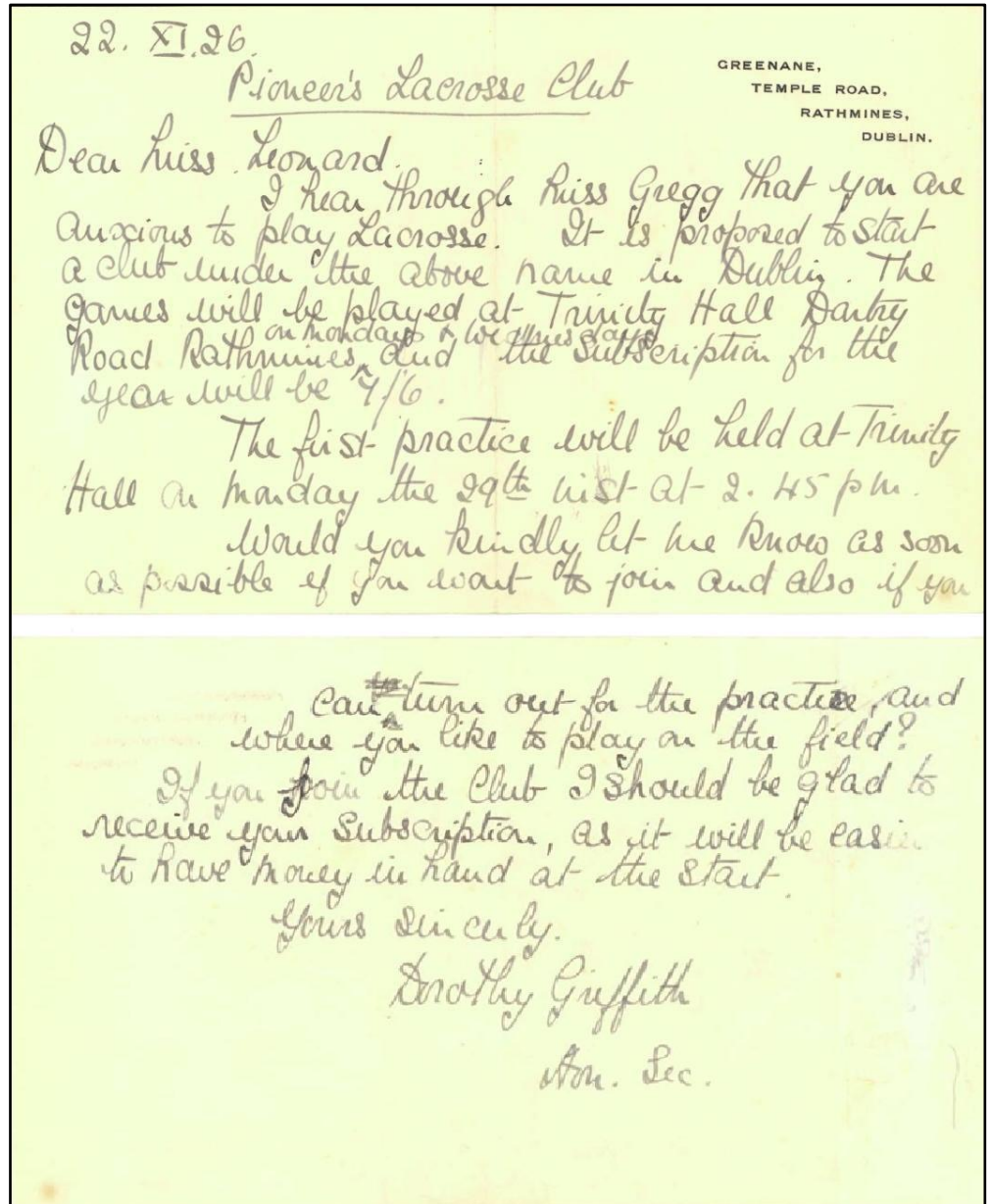
PART TWO: HISTORY OF IRISH WOMEN'S LACROSSE

While men's lacrosse waned and then eventually disappeared altogether in Ireland in the early 1900s, women's lacrosse emerged in the 1920s and achieved a substantial period of growth and sustainability all the way up to around 1970, with regular matches between women's club teams within Ireland, games against visiting club teams from the UK (and reciprocal trips by Irish teams), regular formalized competition between teams from Irish girls secondary schools, and regular international matches between Ireland, Wales, England and Scotland (and games in Ireland against a visiting USA team in 1935, 1951 and 1957).

The first women's team in Ireland was the (suitably named) Dublin Pioneers, and their first practice was held at 2.45pm on Monday, 29th November 1926 at Trinity Hall playing fields in Rathmines. Introducing a new sport like lacrosse to a country which is not very familiar with it requires, even to this day, the passion and drive of a number of leaders who take on the considerable responsibility of organizing practices, games and handling all the relevant administrative matters. In the case of the Dublin Pioneers, that person

was Dorothy Griffith, who lived at Greenane, Temple Road, Rathmines in Dublin. On the 22nd of November 1926, Dorothy Griffith, who herself played in the left attack wing position, wrote a note to a Miss Leonard outlining the plans to start a lacrosse club called the Pioneers in Dublin, setting out the first training time, location and annual subscription cost. She signed the letter as 'Honorary Secretary' on behalf of the club.

At the top right of the letter from Dorothy Griffith is her address: Greenane, Temple Road, Rathmines in Dublin. This house, though uninhabited and somewhat dilapidated, still stands on what are now the grounds of Trinity Halls, campus accommodation for students of Trinity College Dublin.



**LETTER FROM DOROTHY GRIFFITH TO A MISS
 LEONARD REGARDING THE FIRST PRACTICE OF
 THE WOMEN'S DUBLIN PIONEERS TEAM - DATED
 22 NOVEMBER 1926**



GREENANE, TEMPLE ROAD, RATHMINES, DUBLIN

engineering projects, in particular being active in the development of systems for harnessing peat energy and hydroelectric power. In 1922, he was elected by the Dáil (the Irish parliament) to serve as a member of the first Irish Free State Senate (Seanad Éireann) and remained a Senator until 1936. Dorothy therefore came from a well-known family, who were also known as being active within the Moravian community in Ireland.

The work of Dorothy Griffith and the other members of the Pioneer club would steadily grow, and by 1928, though the Pioneers were still the only senior club lacrosse team in Ireland, they were joined by two girls schools based around the greater Dublin area – the French School in Bray, Co. Wicklow and Hillcourt School in Glenageary, Co. Dublin. Lacrosse would become particularly popular at the French School, and there was another very noteworthy ‘pioneer’ of the game who was responsible for introducing it there – Margaret Robinson, who was Principal of the French School from 1927-1934.

Margaret Kennedy Robinson was born on 2 May 1876 in Banbridge, Co. Down. Her sister Elizabeth Edith was the first woman to qualify as a doctor from Queen’s University Belfast. Margaret herself was educated at the Ladies’ Collegiate School, Banbridge and Magee College, Derry and she received her degree from the Royal University of Ireland. Though only small in stature (around five feet tall) her reputation was large. She was a member of the Women’s Social and Political Union founded by Emmeline and Sylvia Pankhurst, and had been a suffragette in London where she was involved in various protests, some of which became violent. In one instance, she was arrested for having thrown a brick through the window of a department store. For this, she spent two months in London’s Holloway Prison.

Dorothy Griffith was born in Dublin in 1905 and was the grand-daughter of Sir John Purser Griffith, who spent 15 years as Engineer-in-Chief to the Dublin Ports and Docks Board (known today as the Dublin Port Company), and who was married to Dame Anna ‘Nina’ Benigna Fridlezius Purser (1837 – 1912). Nina Purser’s father was John Tertius Purser, owner of Rathmines Castle and Head Brewer at Guinness. Sir John Purser Griffith owed his second given name to a longstanding friendship between his father and John Tertius Purser. Sir John was a prominent figure in Ireland – he served on a number of government commissions relating to major



TOSSING FOR SIDES—Miss Griffith, Pioneers' captain (left); Miss Greig, Glasgow Ladies' captain, and Miss M. Leonard, the umpire, photographed before the start of the return match between these lacrosse teams at Rathmines, Dublin, yesterday.

ABOVE: DOROTHY GRIFFITH (LEFT)

In developing the game at the French School, Margaret Robinson was assisted by Jessy and Olive Scott, who were the daughters of the Reverend G.D. Scott, who was Canon of Christ Church, Bray, Co. Wicklow. These sisters had been pupils at the French School in the mid-1920s before then moving to London to attend the Princess Helena College in Ealing. This is where the two girls learned to play lacrosse, and after leaving school they offered to teach the game to pupils at Irish Protestant girls' schools such as the French School and Hillcourt. Later, similar schools like Alexandra College in Milltown (Dublin) and the Hall School in Monkstown (Co. Dublin) would also introduce lacrosse.

In 1928, the pace of development of women's lacrosse in Ireland began to accelerate. As lacrosse had spread throughout various parts of the UK, there were a number of teams available to play matches against, and a trend of arranging games for visiting teams (and also undertaking tours of the UK) was set in motion. On Wednesday, 11th April 1928 the Dublin Pioneers hosted a game against an All-England Ladies team at the YMCA Ground, Claremont Road, Sandymount in Dublin (where, by coincidence, the 'modern version' of the Dublin lacrosse club would train from 2010-2013). This visit was organized by the All-England Ladies Lacrosse Association (AELLA) and included several players from the English national team. The Pioneers lost the game 23-0 to a much more experienced English side. The visit was organized with the assistance of Miss Marjorie Lockley, who at that time was Secretary of the AELLA. Marjorie was very interested in helping to promote lacrosse in Ireland and was another great 'pioneer' of the game. In addition to organising this trip of the All-England Ladies team, she also assisted with the establishment of the Irish Ladies Lacrosse Association in 1930 and was a selector and coach for the first ever Irish women's national lacrosse team.



Encouraged by the success of the game against the visiting English side (as an event at least, not as a sporting contest given the one-sided scoreline...), Dorothy Griffith, Captain and Honorary Secretary of the Dublin Pioneers team, organized a tour of England which spanned from 4th to 12th December 1928. This trip involved a joint practice and scrimmage with Merton Abbey (in southwest London) on Wednesday, 5th December, and games against the Beckenham Club on Thursday, 6th December (which the Pioneers lost 9-3), Reigate on Friday, 7th December (which the Pioneers lost 13-0), Newcastle-on-Tyne on Monday, 10th December (where the match was canceled owing to wet weather) and Sunderland on Tuesday, 11th December (which the Pioneers lost 6-0).



Members of the Pioneer Lacrosse Club of Ireland arriving at Euston Station, London, to begin their English tour.

DUBLIN PIONEERS AT EUSTON STATION IN LONDON, DECEMBER 1928

Trips such as this one were supplemented by various activities at home and with domestic competition. Often times, where there may only be a small number of clubs and players, it can be useful to create different types of events and teams where players can mix between teams or create new teams, just to keep things interesting for all involved. One example of this kind of activity was the establishment of the Lady Harty Cup – Lady (Elizabeth) Harty was the wife of Sir Robert Harty, Lord Mayor of Dublin from 1830-1831 and Whig Member of Parliament representing Dublin City for a few months in 1831. The first iteration of this tournament was held on 14th January 1929 at the Trinity Hall playing fields on Darty Road in Rathmines. Seven teams competed for the cup presented by Lady Harty, and they were designated with particularly colourful names – they included the Imps, Wild Horses, Banshees (an Irish fairy usually seen as an omen of death and known to wail if someone is about to die), Ginger Snaps, Leprechauns, Kelpies (the name of a supernatural water-horse from Celtic Folklore) and Goblins, with the Banshees winning the trophy by beating the Leprechauns 4-1 in the final.

Further major events included a visit by a team from Liverpool on 28th January 1929 where they defeated the Pioneers 12-0 at the Palmerston Rugby pitch in Milltown (the rugby club had its grounds here before moving out to its present location in Kiltiernan in Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown). On the 11th of April 1929 the Dublin Pioneers played a match against the English Rovers (who would become a frequent visitor to Ireland) at the Sandymount Cricket Club in Dublin. The Pioneers lost 23-2. The following day (at 11am to be precise) there was a practice game with the English Rovers team at Hillcourt in Glenageary, Dublin. This trip was again led by Marjorie Lockley. Later that same year (in October) the Pioneers hosted two games against a team from Newcastle-on-Tyne. In game one the Pioneers lost 15-2, and the following day (game two) the Pioneers lost 8-4, both games held at the Leinster Cricket Ground in Rathmines in Dublin.

The Pioneers took their next major tour, of Lancashire in the UK, in November 1929. They played a game against the Liverpool Ladies team on 25th November and lost 9-0, played the Liverpool University Ladies team the following day to a 1-1 draw (which was perhaps the best ever result for the Pioneers team), lost to the Mersey Ladies team 10-3 the subsequent day in a match which was played in fog and heavy rain, and upon returning to Ireland on the morning of 28th November, played a game against a team from Belfast at the Leinster Cricket Ground where they drew 4-4. This particular game is particularly noteworthy as it is currently the earliest known mention of the Belfast Ladies Lacrosse Club.

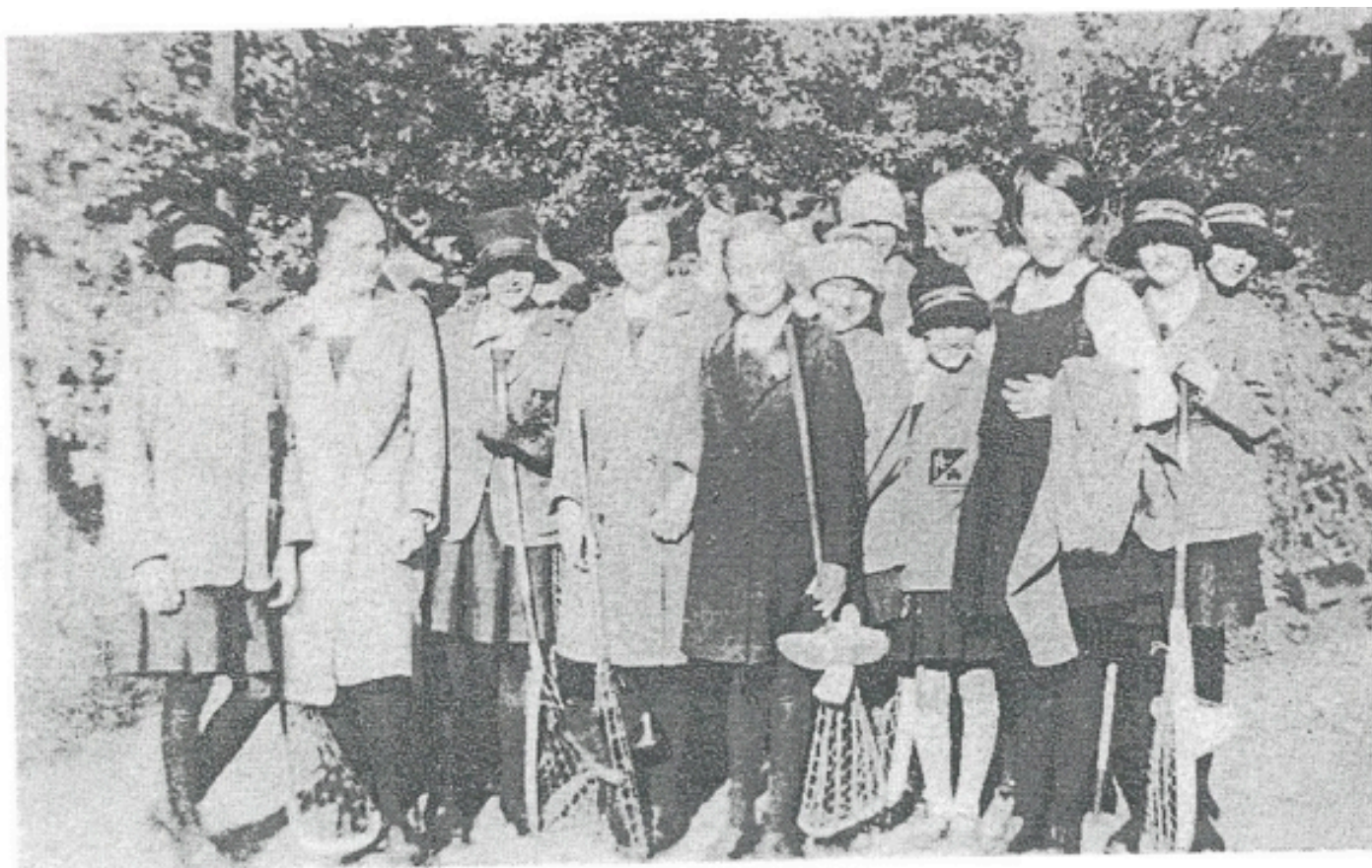
Visits from the English Rovers team continued (again led by Marjorie Lockley) with games being played against the Dublin Pioneers on New Year's Eve in 1929 (a 17-2 victory for the English Rovers at Hillcourt School in Glenageary) and New Year's Day (a 19-5 victory for the English Rovers at the Leinster Cricket Ground). Bucking the general trend, the Pioneers were victorious over a visiting English Schools team in a game played on 6th January 1930 at the Leinster Cricket Ground – perhaps there was a significant advantage for the Pioneers in terms of age and experience as compared to a school-age team. Three days later the Pioneers played Holy Child Convent from Harrogate in North Yorkshire in England at the same venue and lost 11-0. There is also a report of a game on 20th February 1930 between the Belfast Ladies Club and the Dublin Pioneers team held at Bladon Drive in Belfast, with the Pioneers losing 13-3.



BELFAST LADIES TEAM, 20 FEBRUARY 1930

In a report on the state of the game in Ireland in the Irish Independent newspaper on 22nd March 1930, it's noted that the Belfast Ladies Lacrosse Club, "encouraged by the start of the game in the [Irish] Free State," which the Republic of Ireland was known as at that time, had re-formed after a lapse of several years. Furthermore, the report states that there was a Belfast girls' school called Richmond Lodge which had "played the game since before the war" (referring to the First World War, which started in 1914). This would therefore imply that in fact, the first instance of women's lacrosse in Ireland was actually in Belfast (and not with the Dublin Pioneers).

Indeed, there was a very rich tradition of lacrosse at Richmond Lodge, and this history has been uncovered by members of the 'Arellian' (as in 'R.L.' (Richmond Lodge) –ian) Association who are past pupils of the school. There is evidence that lacrosse was played in Richmond Lodge as far back as 1922.



Going to games (c. 1922).

RICHMOND LODGE GIRLS IN 1922

The women's team at Richmond Lodge competed in the School Challenge Shield from its inception (and won the trophy first in 1935, in the second edition of that competition) and girls from the School would go on to play for the Belfast Ladies Lacrosse Club, which would also supply players for the very earliest Irish national teams.

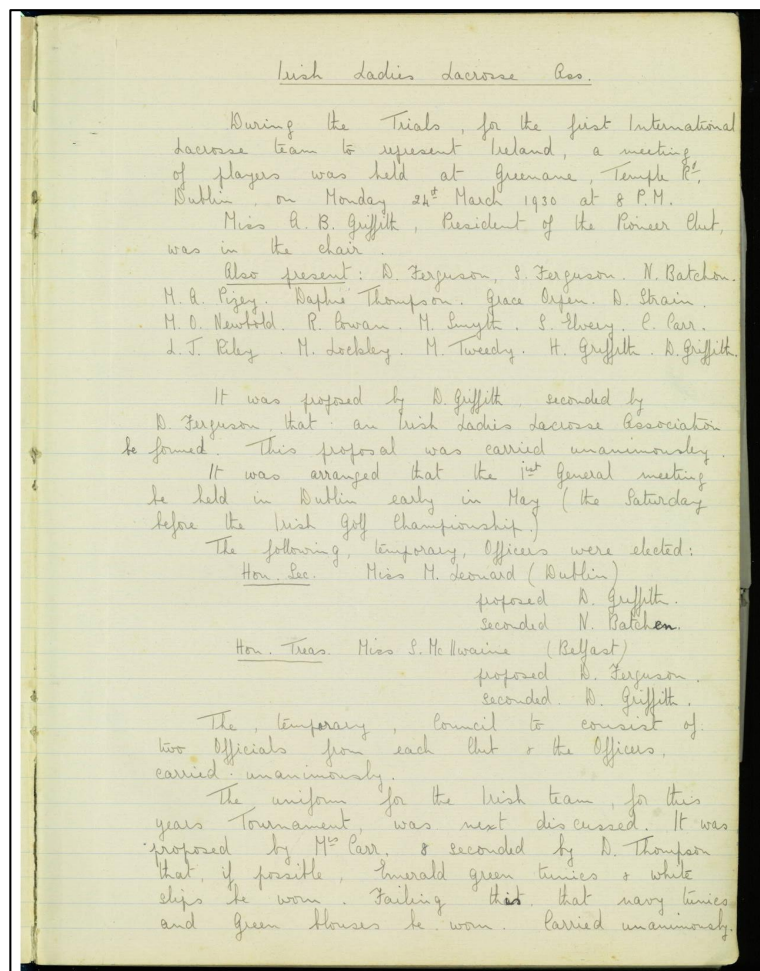


RICHMOND LODGE (BELFAST) TEAM, 1938-1939

Richmond Lodge also wasn't the only girls school in Northern Ireland to play lacrosse, as the sport was also popular at Manor House School in Co. Armagh.



MANOR HOUSE LACROSSE TEAM



**LEFT: MINUTES FROM
THE FIRST IRISH
LADIES LACROSSE
ASSOCIATION MEETING,
24 MARCH 1930**

Women's lacrosse in Ireland then took a major step forward when, on 24th March 1930, the Irish Ladies Lacrosse Association (ILLA) was founded as the national governing body of women's lacrosse in Ireland. Simultaneous with this was the establishment of the Irish women's national team, which would play its first ever international games at a tournament hosted by the All-England Ladies Lacrosse Association (AELLA) in April 1930.

It was here that Marjorie Lockley would again play a pivotal role. Together with Miss Newbold, referred to as "the celebrated coach and one of the greatest authorities on Lacrosse," and Joyce Riley, an English international player and member of the Council of the AELLA, Marjorie agreed to travel to Ireland to help select and coach the Irish team due to compete in this tournament.

The first trial for the first ever Irish women's national team was held at the Leinster Cricket Ground in Rathmines on 23rd March 1930. Participants in the trial mainly consisted of Pioneers and Belfast players. A further trial was held the following day on 24th March, and a meeting to establish the first Irish Ladies Lacrosse Association was held that same evening at Greenane, Temple Road, Rathmines, Dublin – the home of Dorothy Griffith and the origins of the Dublin Pioneers club. The minutes of that meeting show that Mes. Lockley, Newbold and Riley were all present, along with 14 others. Eventually, 14 players were selected for the Irish team, 7 from Dublin (Leinster) and 5 from Belfast (Ulster), with 2 additional reserve players, one each from Dublin and Belfast.

This would be the first ever Irish women's national team and this team would travel to London in April 1930 to play in its first ever set of games against England, Scotland and Wales.

The first ever game played by the Irish national women's lacrosse team commenced at precisely 3.15pm on Thursday, 10th April 1930 at Merton Abbey (southwest London) against Scotland. Ireland lost 10-1, with the only goal for Ireland scored by Miss S. Ferguson from Belfast. In the second game on the following day, Ireland faced England and were beaten 26-0. In the final game of the tournament against Wales, Ireland lost 18-4. England dominated the tournament, beating Wales 12-6 (in what was reported as also being the first ever game for the Welsh women's national team) and beating Scotland 13-4, in addition to their victory over Ireland.

A regular international series between Ireland, England, Scotland and Wales would then become a regular feature from this first edition in 1930 until 1940 (with a break of 7 years, no doubt owing to the outbreak of the Second World War), and then subsequently from 1947 all the way up to 1970. Oftentimes across that period, rather than having a single event involving all four teams, the individual games were played over a six week period, with the teams taking turns hosting one another.

The games were often supplemented by banquets to honour the events, and programmes were drafted which announced the event and which often included the team rosters as well as the menus for the banquets. The Irish team played Scotland on 25th March 1931 and played England three days later. For the game against England held in Liverpool on 28th March 1931 (which the Irish team lost 17-5), the menu included Consommé Brunoise, Boiled Tay Salmon with Cucumber and Parsley Sauce and Roast Aylesbury Duckling.

Season 1929-30.

Team		
Goal	D. Thompson	Leinster
Point	J. Dunlop	Leinster
B. Point	M. Smyth	Ulster
3 rd Man	N. Batchen	Leinster
L. Def:	S. M ^{rs} Hwaime	Ulster
R. Def:	N. Meldron	Leinster
Centre	J. Dermody	Leinster
L. Attack	R. Bowan	Ulster
R. Attack	D. Ferguson	Ulster
3 rd Home	J. Rotherham	Leinster
2 nd Home	S. Ferguson	Ulster
1 st Home	L. Morton	Leinster

N.B. This is the first Ladies Lacrosse International Team Ireland put on the field.



25TH MARCH, 1931



Scotland v. Ireland



SCOTTISH LADIES'
LACROSSE ASSOCIATION



ALL ENGLAND LADIES' LACROSSE
ASSOCIATION.



Ireland v. England.



SATURDAY.
MARCH
TWENTY-
EIGHTH.

NINE-
TEEN
THIRTY-
ONE.

Also of note with respect to major international competition was the visit of the USA team to the UK and Ireland in 1935. This trip was organised by the indefatigable Marjorie Lockley from the AELLA and spanned the whole month of September. The USA team was in Dublin from 17-19 September. In the evening of Tuesday, 17th September, a party hosted by the Irish Ladies Lacrosse Association was held for the USA team at Rathmines Castle "by kind permission of Sir John Griffith" and the game against the Irish team was held on Thursday, 19th September at 3.45pm at the world famous Lansdowne Road Rugby stadium (the world's oldest rugby union test venue). The Irish team won the game in front of their home crowd 12-2.

The USA team would go on to visit Ireland again in 1951 and 1957. In 1954 there were two Irish players selected to join up with a Great Britain and Ireland touring team that travelled to the USA to play a number of games there – these were Rosemary Moffett and Rita Rutherford.



TEAMS	
AMERICA	IRELAND
1. K. WETHERILL	Goal A. D. MAGUIRE (Capt.)
2. L. SCOTT	Point B. J. LATCHFORD
3. B. FREEMAN	Cover Point C. B. GARRROD
4. G. HOOPER	3rd Man D. D. HYDE
5. D. BENSON	Left Defence E. J. B. SMYTH
6. S. CROSS	Right Defence F. B. SCOTT
7. E. TOULMIN	Centre G. D. YOUNG
8. A. PUGH (Capt.)	Left Attack H. E. B. SMYTH
9. J. TURNBULL	Right Attack I. M. WILSON
10. E. EATON <i>President of U.S.W.L.A.</i>	3rd Home J. A. DARLEY
11. E. BONTHRON	2nd Home K. S. DUNLOP
12. G. SCHUYLER	1st Home L. C. MAGEAGH



**ABOVE: IRELAND TEAM V.
ENGLAND, 1948**



**ABOVE: IRELAND TEAM V. ENGLAND,
1949, LANSDOWNE ROAD, DUBLIN**





**ABOVE: IRELAND
TEAM V. SCOTLAND,
1950**



ABOVE: IRELAND TEAM V. WALES, 1953





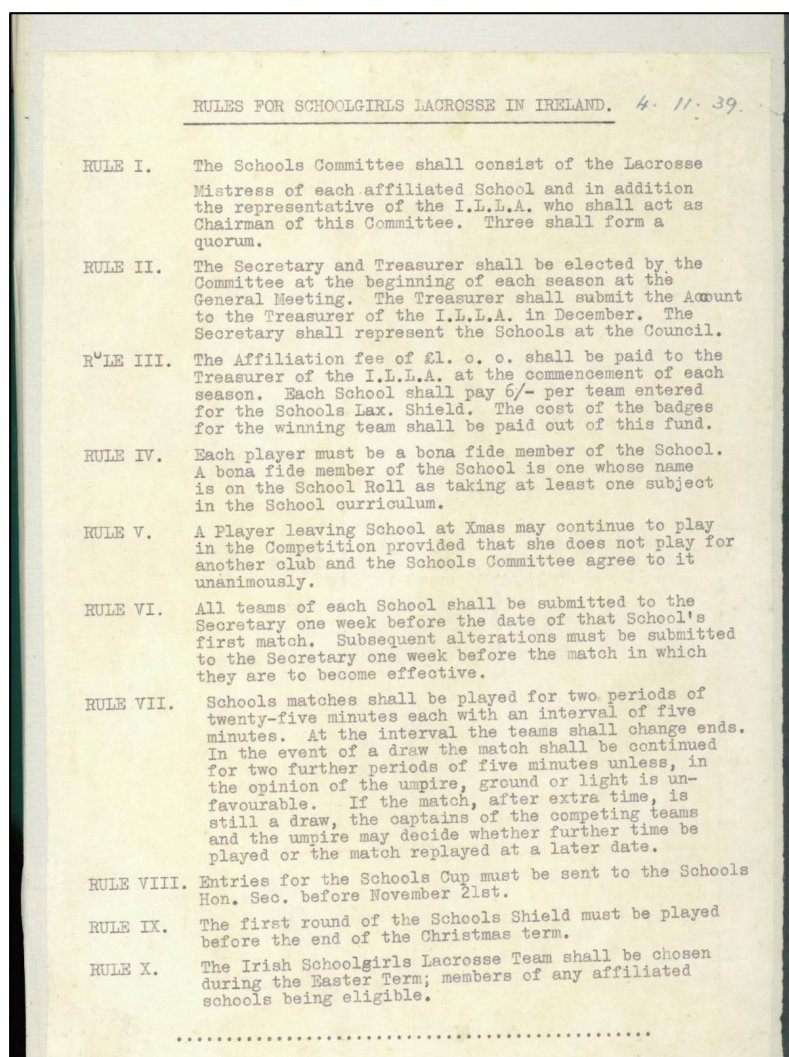
**ABOVE: IRISH TEAM V.
ENGLAND, 1956**



**ABOVE: IRISH TEAM V.
WALES, 1962**







At schoolgirl level, the First Irish Schools Lacrosse Shield competition was held in 1934 and included three teams – Alexandra College, Hillcourt (Glenageary) and French School (Bray), with Alexandra College winning the tournament. In 1935, five schools competed – Richmond Lodge (from Belfast), French School, Alexandra College, the Hall School (Monkstown) and Hillcourt, with Richmond Lodge winning the tournament. In the third year of the competition in 1936, the French School finally got its hands on the silverware.

The Schools Shield competition ran all the way from 1934 to 1970. In 1973, four of the schools that had been participating in this competition – Park House School, The Hall School, Hillcourt School and Glengara Park School – merged to form Rathdown School, which is still in operation today in Glenageary, Co. Dublin. Perhaps it was this impending merger which led to the end of the competition. Fortunately, Rathdown School kept track of the lacrosse tradition that its constituent schools were such a key part of, and the trophy shield itself – resplendent with little silver buttons with the name of the champion team for every year – is still held in the trophy case at the School.



'Lacrosse was the game at which French School excelled.'
Winners of Irish Schools' Lacrosse Shield 1936.



**IRISH school
challenge shield,
PRESENTED
BY THE IRISH
LADIES LACROSSE
ASSOCIATION (ILLA)**

**THIS SHIELD IS
CURRENTLY HELD
AT RATHDOWN
SCHOOL,
GLENAGEARY, CO.
DUBLIN**



PART THREE: LACROSSE IN IRELAND: THE MODERN ERA

Men's lacrosse re-emerged in Ireland in 2001 with the Irish men's national team's first participation in the European Lacrosse Federation (ELF) European Championships in Penarth, Wales. The team continues to play in the European Championships tournament which takes place every four years, having participated in 2004 (in Czech Republic), 2008 (in Finland), 2012 (in The Netherlands, where the team finished with a silver medal) and the team is looking forward to the 2016 tournament in Hungary.

**RIGHT: IRISH men's TEAM,
2001**



**ABOVE: IRISH men's
TEAM, 2004**

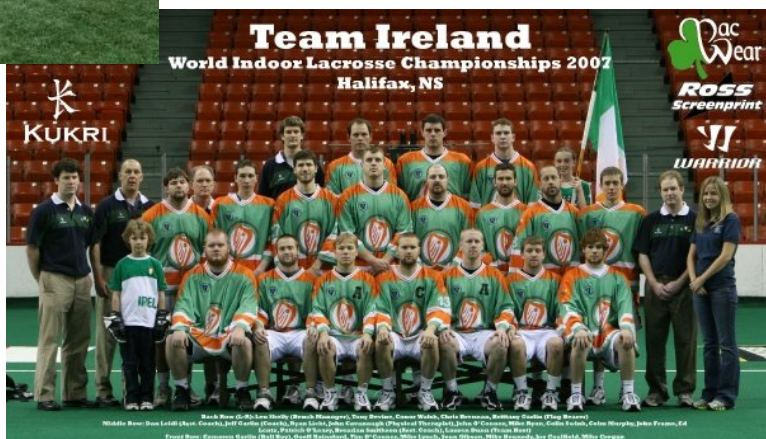


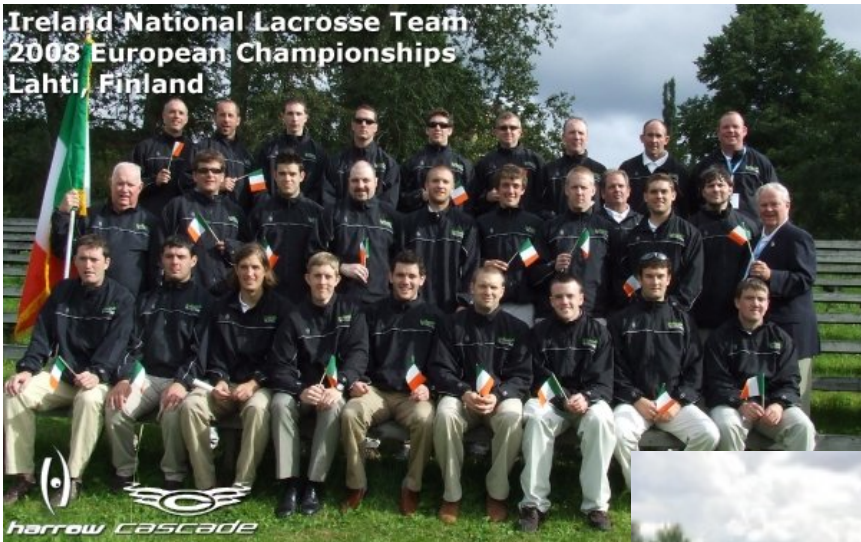
**ABOVE: IRISH men's
TEAM, 2005**



**ABOVE: IRISH men's
TEAM, 2006**

**RIGHT: IRISH men's
TEAM, 2007**





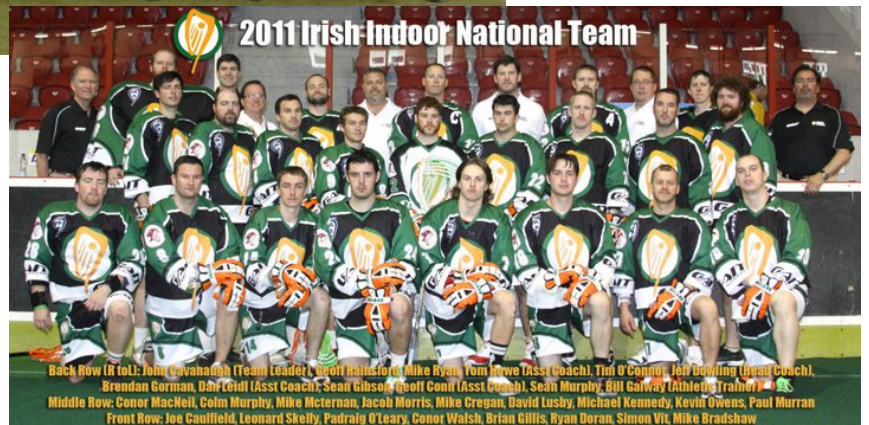
**LEFT: IRISH men's TEAM,
2008**

**RIGHT: IRISH men's TEAM,
2009**



**ABOVE: IRISH men's
TEAM, 2010**

**RIGHT: IRISH men's
TEAM, 2011**



The first time the men's team competed in the Federation of International Lacrosse (FIL) World Championships was at the 2002 event in Australia. Since then, the team has participated in every subsequent world championship event, including in 2006 (Canada), 2010 (England) and 2014 (USA).

**RIGHT: IRISH men's
TEAM, 2012**



**LEFT: IRISH men's
TEAM, 2013**

In 2005 a small tournament called the Celtic Cup was established which saw Ireland compete against Wales and Scotland, with the Irish team winning the inaugural title in Wales. In 2009 the tournament moved to Scotland, with the home team taking the title. And in 2013 the event was hosted by Ireland, which took home the title on home soil.

In 2007 the Irish men's indoor national team was established and competed in its first major event at the World Indoor Championships in Nova Scotia in Canada. The team competed in the next iteration of the event at the 2011 tournament in the Czech Republic, and is looking forward to participating for a third time at the 2015 event taking place on the Onondaga Nation Reserve and in Syracuse, New York in the USA.



ABOVE: IRISH men's TEAM, 2014

2016 will see a new and exciting development, as the Irish men's Under-19 national team will take the field for the first time at the World Men's U19 Championships on the west coast of Canada.

Women's lacrosse re-emerged in Ireland in 2005 with the Irish women's national team's participation in the European Lacrosse Federation (ELF) European Newcomers Championships in Copenhagen, Denmark. Many of the girls on this team had never played an official game of lacrosse before until their first game of the tournament, where they drew 1-1 with Finland. Incredibly, the team would go on to rack up a number of wins before defeating the host Danish team in the final to win the trophy.



IRISH WOMEN'S TEAM, 2005



IRISH WOMEN'S TEAM, 2008



IRISH WOMEN'S TEAM, 2009



IRISH WOMEN'S TEAM, 2012



IRISH WOMEN'S TEAM, 2013

The women's senior national team then played in the European Championships tournament in 2008 in Finland, and then again in 2012 in The Netherlands, and the team is now preparing for the 2015 tournament in the Czech Republic.

The first time the women's team competed in the Federation of International Lacrosse (FIL) World Championships was at the 2009 event in the Czech Republic, where the team finished the tournament in a very impressive 5th place. The team then participated in the next iteration of this tournament in 2013 in Canada.

The hope is that for the first time an Irish Women's U19 team will be able to participate in the next FIL World Women's U19 Championships, due to take place in 2019. Development of that team would then establish the full complement of Irish national lacrosse teams – men's senior, men's indoor, men's U19, women's senior and women's U19.

Ireland Lacrosse, with its headquarters in Dublin, is the national governing body for the sport of lacrosse in Ireland, and is recognised as such by the European Lacrosse Federation (ELF) and the Federation of International Lacrosse (FIL). Ireland Lacrosse is an Associate Member of the Federation of Irish Sport and is seeking membership of the Irish Sports Council. Ireland Lacrosse works in partnership with the Irish Lacrosse Foundation (based in the USA) to promote the development of lacrosse in Ireland.

In 2009 the Irish Lacrosse League (ILL) was established. Participating teams – both men's and women's – include the Dublin Avengers, University College Dublin (UCD), NUI-Galway, the Dublin Bay Prawns and Queen's University Belfast (QUB). Players from elsewhere in Ireland (including Cork, Kerry, Limerick, Waterford, Carlow, Kildare and elsewhere) join up with these existing teams to participate in the ILL until such time as a new team can be created in their area. The league is split into an autumn and spring season. In the autumn, the teams compete for the Newtownards Cup, with the final day of games played in Newtownards itself. In the spring, the ILL proper takes place over a series of 'Gameday' events, culminating in a finals weekend in April. The National Indoor Lacrosse League (NILL) also takes place indoor during the winter months from January to February.



2015 Dublin Bay Prawns



2015 UCD Coach & Captains



2015 UCD Men's & Women's Teams



2015 UCD Men's Team



2015 UCD Women's Team



2015 Dublin Avengers (Men)



2015 Dublin Avengers (Ladies)



ILL Logo



UCD v. Dublin Bay Prawns



UCD v. Dublin Bay Prawns



Dublin Bay Prawns's Star Cillian Murphy



Dublin Avengers v. NUI Galway



NUI Galway v. Queens University Belfast



Dublin Avengers v. UCD



Dublin Avengers v. NUI Galway



Dublin Bay Prawns v. UCD



Dublin Bay Prawns v. UCD



NUI Galway v. UCD



UCD Goalie Ause Abdelhaq-Braike makes a break upfield



UCD & Mayor of Newtonards, Philip Smith



UCD & Mayor of Newtonards, Philip Smith

The Irish club teams regularly travel abroad for games and tournaments in Europe and elsewhere. On the men's side, the ILL All-Stars team consists of players drawn from across all the Irish teams and they compete in several major European tournaments. The men's Éire team operates as a national team development programme, participating in festival tournaments which take place alongside major ELF and FIL events, and in various exhibition games in Europe, the USA and elsewhere. The women's programme also has a women's Éire team which likewise takes part in various tournaments, exhibition games and other events. On the indoor side, the Dublin Riggers men's indoor travel team was founded in 2005, and the Emerald Islanders team is the Éire team equivalent (national development team) for the men's indoor team.



2012 Éire Team



2013 Dublin Riggers



2014 Éire Team



2014 Emerald Islanders



An Taoiseach Enda Kenny & the 2014 Men's National Team



2014 St. Patrick's Day Parade - New York City



2009 Dublin Riggers



Éire Women's Team in New Jersey, June 2015



ILL All-Stars - 2013 Bluesfest Champions



ILL All-Stars - 2013 Bluesfest Champions



ILL All-Stars - Amsterdam



ILL All-Stars - London



ILL All-Stars Logo



Éire Women's Team trains at Iona College in June 2015



Members of the Women's Éire Team, June 2015



Girls Clinic run by the Women's Éire Team, June 2015



Girls Clinic run by the Women's Éire Team,
June 2015



Women's Éire Team v. NYAC, June 2015



Women's Éire Team v. NYAC, June 2015



Women's Éire Team v. NYAC, June 2015



2010 Irish Women's Development Team



2010 Irish Women's Development Team

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<http://www.irelandlacrosse.ie/>



<https://www.facebook.com/irelandlacrosse>



@IrelandLacrosse



@IrelandLacrosse

GO RAIBh mILe MAITH AGAIBh!



A debt of gratitude is owed to the following people for provision of assistance in compiling this story: Katharina Elberti, Tom Beary, Pamela Smithwick, Mandy Holloway, Sally Collins, Alison Carter, Doreen Muskett, Ruth Kohner, Patricia Shane, Feffie Barnhill, Jane Claydon, Jim Calder, members of staff at the Ards Borough Council Offices (Newtownards, Co. Down) and Rathdown School (Glenageary, Co. Dublin), the National Library of Ireland and the McCord Museum (Montreal). All current staff of the Irish Lacrosse Foundation and Ireland Lacrosse have also been critical in keeping the long tradition of lacrosse in Ireland going. I would afford the highest regard and respect to all former and current Irish players, in whatever century they have played, in whichever location, and for any club team or national team – they are the true keepers of the history of this great sport in this great country!

The work to record and bring back into view the tremendous history of lacrosse in Ireland is an ongoing task. Additional information about any aspect of the history of Irish lacrosse would be very gratefully received, and may be sent directly to the author at mkennedy@irelandlacrosse.ie.



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IRELAND LACROSSE

'I DTEANNTA A CHÉILE!'

'TOGETHER AS ONE'

