

Long Road to Glory

Pat Mc Weeney



WHEN KILTUBRID LADIES won their first Senior Championship on the 13th of September 2015 many thought it was their first attempt in a final, not so. As far back as 1997 Kiltubrid ladies appeared in the County decider with a young, promising team.

Ladies football was first played in Kiltubrid in the early 1980's however, the 90's turned out to be a golden era for underage football in the club. From 1992 to 1997 fourteen titles from U-12 to minor were captured. Small wonder then that Kiltubrid developed a senior team. Kiltubrid had plenty of talent and confidence and contested the Senior Championship final of 1997, their first year in the senior ranks. This young team took Aughawillan to a replay, losing out the second time round. Not to be discouraged, Kiltubrid went on to

win the Senior Shield that same year. To quote the *Leitrim Observer* 'Kiltubrid have a bright future ahead at senior level, it's only a matter of time before they win numerous County titles'. Kiltubrid landed back in another senior final the following year again facing the reigning champions, Aughawillan. Once more the girls missed out on glory. Who would have thought it would be 17 years before Kiltubrid would reach another senior County final? A long road indeed.

By the time the new millennium came, a lot of that team had broken up and the club slipped down to the junior ranks. Luckily, our underage was getting strong again and in 2002 the Junior League and Championship was won. In 2004 and 2005 the Senior B and Minor

Championships were achieved with more young players emerging. Like all roads in life, our journey has had as many lows as highs and in 2006 our former Chairwoman, the driving force of our underage success, Ann Guckian sadly passed away at a young age. Ann was a much loved member of the club.

In 2007 the U16 9 aside and Intermediate Championships were won, and we also reached a Connacht Intermediate semi-final. With a 24 hour turnover after defeating Mohill in the County final, the Kiltubrid girls showed great character to beat Swinford of Mayo in the quarter final. Unfortunately St Nathy's of Sligo proved too strong in the Connacht semi-final.

The 2007 win brought us back to senior football and in 2008 we reached

the Senior League final against Aghawillan, again the result didn't go our way. However, in 2009 Senior League success was ours, beating St Josephs. In 2011 we reached the League final and Championship semi-final but were beaten on both occasions by Dromahair. These disappointments on the pitch did nothing to prepare us for what life was about to throw at us the following spring. On February 24th 2012 our team mate Sandra Earley died suddenly. Sandra, a mother to three young girls was gone in a split second, at the mere age of 26. This was our darkest hour. The girls knew nothing could ever erase the loss of their teammate and friend but our young team found the courage to carry on, reaching the championship semi-final later that year. We also reached the semi-finals in 2013 and 2014, both times falling short.

In 2015 a great run in the League was rewarded with a final appearance against, guess who.... Aghawillan! Aghawillan were victorious again, another bump along our long road. The summer months was where we flourished, playing great Championship football. Kiltubrid rolled the dice once more, finally overcoming the semi-final hurdle; yet again we were faced with our greatest nemesis. John Connolly of the

Leitrim Observer described this as a tension filled final, a contest of wills and inches. This time Kiltubrid's will was greater. Kiltubrid took an early lead, a lead that would not be relinquished, helped by a brilliant goal from our Captain, Aine Tighe. Kiltubrid held a two point lead in the last quarter. This win was inspired by a magnificent defensive performance, led by Miranda Foley, Sinead Ni Thiarnáin and Jenny Gill, who were members of the 1997 and 1998 teams. The girls held out against the fierce Aghawillan pressure to spark wild celebrations at last.

Inspired by this great win the Kiltubrid women took the All Ireland Sevens Senior shield title two weeks later, defeating the Dublin Senior Champions Foxrock-Cabinteely in the final. Representing Leitrim in the Connacht Senior Club Championship we overcame Geevagh after a pulsating semi-final played in Pairc Sean MacDiarmada. This led us to a first ever Connacht Senior Club final where we faced Galway champions Kilkerrin-Clonberne. The Galway side proved too strong and brought an end to what was a historic year for all involved.

They say success breeds success and in 2016 Kiltubrid Ladies went on to add a second Senior Championship title in a

row when they defeated St. Josephs in an exciting and entertaining decider. With a gale force wind making conditions difficult for both sides Kiltubrid settled a little quicker and got off the mark with two early points to settle the nerves. Kiltubrid were well organised all over the pitch and again it was a combination of their defensive solidity and attacking quality which built the foundations for another historic victory.

The year wasn't over yet however, as another Connacht club campaign awaited where Kiltubrid faced Kilbride of Roscommon in the Semi Final, with a place in a historic second Connacht Senior Club Final in a row at stake. The game was played on a beautiful October evening in Dromod. After a close first half, Kiltubrid's experience combined with a solid defensive display and excellent work rate throughout the field sealed a 4 point victory. This set up a Connacht Club decider where Cora Staunton's Carnacon would provide the opposition. Carnacon's overall strength and depth meant that despite Kiltubrid's brave performance they ran out comfortable winners. However, all involved can be proud of their achievements over the past two years. Securing back to back Leitrim Senior Championships and being the first ever Leitrim club to contest two Senior Connacht Finals in a row.

SNIPPET

HAPPY MEMORIES!

Alice O'Hagan, my darling mother-in-law, has gone to her eternal reward just six weeks before her 100th birthday. Mama lived life to the full, made the most of every opportunity and was happiest when she was surrounded by her family. She had an amazing ability to chat with ease to people of all ages. Living next door to each other for the last 32 years, we spent wonderful times together. I would doddle down to Mamas, make a wee cuppa and enjoy some of her delicious, homemade bread. Boy did we laugh. Mama was a fantastic knitter and many's a garment was knitted while we chatted.



One such garment was this jumper for her great granddaughter, Amy (my granddaughter) It has the alphabet on the front of it, with the letters A M Y placed directly under each other. Mama knitted this, without a pattern, when she was 95. What a beautiful, precious garment to have. Every time I think of Mama I smile.

