

Croker footballing debutants honoured

Dermot Keyes in Lemybrien



The Waterford senior footballers of 1966, pictured with GAA President Aogán Ó Fearghail, at the special function held at Crotty's Bar, Lemybrien on Sunday last. | Photos: Will Cusack

The first Waterford senior football team to play a League or Championship match at Croke Park were recognised at a special function held at Crotty's Bar, Lemybrien on Sunday night, exactly 50 years to the day they faced Dublin at Headquarters. Honouring the players at Crotty's, GAA President Aogán Ó Fearghail acknowledged the efforts of Gaultier's John Martin, wing-forward for Waterford that day in Dublin, who first floated the idea of such a special event a decade ago. Addressing the gathering, John Martin thanked everyone who has assisted in making the night possible. And with 19 of the 21 players involved that afternoon present on the night - all of whom are still alive - there was a mood of reminiscence and celebration as old football comrades came together, a half century after losing a coin toss which triggered their trip to Croker.

County Board Chairman Paddy Joe Ryan said it was a pleasure to pay tribute to a Waterford team from a half century ago, all the more so given that all are still alive, and the vast majority of them in fine health.

In a touching and humorous speech, Uachtaráin Cumann Lúthcleas Gael Aogán Ó Fearghail championed the GAA's enduring commitment to community, "where we look out for each other, are kind to each other and help each other".

"I think it's fantastic to have a night like this, to honour men who wore your county colours with such distinction 50 years ago, and it'd be fabulous to bring the team back to Croke Park for a photograph, and we'd love to organise such an event."

Acknowledging the presence of Deise senior football manager Tom McGlinchey, the GAA President honoured Waterford's commitment to Gaelic Football, admitting that it is undoubtedly easier to manage a heavyweight outfit such as Dublin or Kerry.

"But if you're managing Leitrim, Longford, New York or indeed Waterford, it's more difficult as there's no doubt that you're swimming against the tide, so I'd like to acknowledge Waterford's ongoing commitment to flying the flag for football in the face of, at times, great difficulty."

Also present on Sunday night was Shay O'Connor, a member of the Dublin team that afternoon, who lined out for the Metropolitan at full-forward. Alongside him in attack that day was a young attacker, not yet then a household name: the great Jimmy Keaveney.

Master of Ceremonies for the night was well-known horse racing broadcaster Brian Gleeson, with special thanks on the night made by Paddy Joe Ryan to Patricia Walsh Dunford, who played a huge part in organising the function, Club Deise, Crotty's Bar, Mary Grimes Catering and Kilrossanty GAA Club.

The Waterford team that afternoon read: Peter Crotty (Rathgormack); Paddy Carlton (Ardmore), Ed Mooney (Ardmore), Mick Connolly (The Nire); Ger Mooney (Kill), Wally Connors (John Mitchels), Noel Walsh (Kilrossanty); Tom Riordan (Kilrossanty), Tom Flynn (Kilrossanty); John Martin (Gaultier), John Joe Carlton (Ardmore), Jim Rooney (Ardmore); Willie Connolly (Windgap), Tom Walsh (Kilrossanty), Tommy Kirwan (John Mitchels).

Also honoured on the night were the Deise's replacements, namely: Leo Gardiner (Erins Own, scorer of 1-1 that day), Tommy

Joe Harty (An Rinn), John Kearns (Bonmahon), Pa Walsh (Kilrossanty), Monty Guiry (Kill) and Pat Clancy (Stradbally). Sean Murphy, a Deise selector in Croker that day, was also in attendance on Sunday last.

Also in attendance on the night was Waterford Senior Football Manager Tom McGlinchey and members of the County Executive, along with representatives of the Eastern and Western Boards.