

Mayo Heritage

Newsletter

Newspaper extracts from The Mayo News, 3rd of December 1960 and The Ballina Herald, 16th of September 1961

CROSSMOLINA RUGBY CLUB



Another Rugby Club

A new Rugby club has been formed in Crossmolina which is expected to be entered in the Connacht Cup this year. The committee are arranging games with Ballina, Westport, Sligo and other rugby clubs in Connacht. The following officers were elected: President, Dr. W. O'Donnell; Vice-Chairman Mr. J. Barry; Treasurer, Mr. B. Cooke; Secretary, Mr. F. Moran. Committee: Messrs. J. Cawley, G. Walshe, M. Hughes, E. Cooke, P. Maughan, P. Munnally, S. Magee.

Crossmolina R.F.C. Elect Officers

Crossmolina Rugby football club held their annual general meeting in the local Parochial Hall on Monday night. The following officers were elected: Chairman, Mr. Gerry Walshe; President, Rev. Fr. Gilroy; vice-presidents, Mr. Sean McGee, N.T., Mr. John Cawley, Mr. Frank Corduff, Mr. Frank Moran and Mr. John Barry; Secretary, Mr. Sean Thompson; Treasurer, Mr. Billy Cooke. Billy Carson was chosen as captain of the team, and Paddy Maughan was selected as vice-captain.



The Crossmolina Rugby team of 1961 (back, left - right): Ollie Flanagan, Moylaw; Murdie Doran, Michael Tolan, Main St; Anthony Browne, former IRFU President, Moygownagh; John Cawley, Chapel St; Gerry Walsh, Bridge St; Robert Morrow, Ballina. Front row (left-right): Billy Carson, Killala; John O'Malley, Ballyvicmaha; Frank Moran, Ballina; Paddy Gallagher, Richmond; Gerry Browne, Main St; Paddy Maughan, Church St; Billy Cooke, Fortland; Kieran Cooke, Dunmore; Gerry Browne, Jnr. (Image: The Mayo News, 12th March 2003)

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Crossmolina's Rugby Club

Crossmolina Rugby Club was formed on Monday the 21st of November 1960 in the Angler's Nest Hotel,¹ and among the first committee were Dr. W. O'Donnell (vice-president) and Fr. Gilroy, the curate in Rake Street, who was the chairman.

This was the era when the G.A.A enforced its ban on 'foreign games' and, as one of the club's founders, Paddy Maughan explained in 2003, *'the parish priest was a staunch GAA man, and told the parish that they shouldn't support us'*. Having his curate on the committee might have helped to keep an eye on developments.

Despite this, *'support from the public was pretty strong ... although we never got huge crowds'*. Paddy Maughan was introduced to rugby while in Terenure College, and afterwards, together with Gerry Walsh, and *'10 or 12 local lads'* formed the club. The remaining players travelled from Dublin for games.²

The club chose black and white for its colours. It had no home ground, and so its first game, a friendly against Ballina, was played at Enniscrone on the 27th of November 1960. Crossmolina lost to their more experienced opponents by 11-0.³ The game was *'a battle between forwards'* in which *'the ball seldom seen daylight'*.⁴



The Crossmolina Rugby team which played Corinthians in the Connacht final in 1962
(Image: The Western People, 11th May 2010)

A week later, they travelled to Westport, where they met *'a very strong fifteen'*. Crossmolina lost by 12-3, but *'put up a very determined showing'* which was all the more remarkable given *'that some of their new members had not played in a rugby match previous to Sunday'*.⁵

The club had arranged to travel to Sligo two weeks later, and the intervening Sunday would be used for *'an extensive team practice'*. The club were busy at work. They rented a field on the Ballina road, and later secured a grant of £80 from the Irish Rugby Football Union for improvement works to their home patch.⁶

The first home game took place on the 5th of February 1961, where their opponents were Sligo. Later that spring, Crossmolina beat Ballina in a friendly at Belleek.⁷

By the 1961-62 season, the club had entered the Connacht Junior Cup.

It made it all the way to the final, beating the *'highly fancied'* Galway Rovers 3-0 in the semi-final,⁸ before losing the final to Galway side Corinthians by 18-3.



Left: Corinthians' Terry Crosbie kicks for touch as Crossmolina forwards (in white) advance during the Connacht Junior Cup Final played on the 15th of April 1962, Galway Sportsground.
(Image: The Connacht Sentinel, the 17th of April 1962).

SOURCES:

- ¹ The Ballina Herald, the 26th of November 1960
- ² The Mayo News, the 12th of March 2003
- ³ The Mayo News, the 3rd of December 1960
- ⁴ The Ballina Herald, the 26th of November 1960
- ⁵ The Western People, the 10th of December 1960
- ⁶ The Western People, the 5th of May 1962
- ⁷ The Mayo News, the 1st of April 1961
- ⁸ The Ballina Herald, the 24th of March 1962
- ⁹ The Mayo News, the 12th of March 2003
- ¹⁰ The Mayo News, the 12th of March 2003
- ¹¹ The Connacht Telegraph, the 26th of October 1963 and the 2nd of November 1963



Crossmolina: S. Balle (capt.), G. Browne, J. Cawley, K. Cooke, S. Mulhern, M. Cullen, L. Concannon, T. McFale, P. Maughan, F. Moran, P. Gallagher, M. Tolan, G. Walsh, A. Browne, M. Doran.

The Connacht Sentinel, the 17th of April 1962. (Crossmolina team which played in the Connacht Junior Cup Final)

However, they were *'not in the least despondent'* and had high hopes for the following season. One of their players, Gerry Walsh, outlined *'we intend, not alone to capture the cup next year, but also to take the league title'*.

'We had a good side, but we probably didn't train enough' recalled Paddy Maughan in 2003, *'players like Michael Tolan and Tony Browne were very good, we enjoyed every bit of it.'*⁹ However, keeping the club afloat was proving difficult on meagre resources. *'It was becoming very difficult to run the club, the costs were high and we weren't getting the crowds'* recalled Paddy Maughan.¹⁰

Twice during October of 1963, the club had to forfeit the points from league matches because they couldn't field a team.¹¹ Sadly for sport in the town, the club died out almost as quickly as it had been formed. Paddy Maughan later built his house on the field where he and his comrades had battled when the short-lived club was alive.

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