

# History

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Introduction The Kinawley & Killesher parishes in South Fermanagh have long been strongholds of the GAA in the Erne County. The Club, it's players, administrators and Gaelic supporters from the area have played important roles in keeping the Gaelic torch burning since its inception in Co. Fermanagh in 1904. Of course there were periods of time when things were bleak and contributions less notable but happily today we see the Kinawley Club as one of the strongest units of the Association in the County. This account is an attempt to summarise these contributions. Luckily my task is lightened somewhat by the existence of an earlier Club history - A Gaelic Tradition: Kinawley Brian Borus (1888 - 1984). It gives an account of the origins of the GAA in the district and a history up to 1984. Frank McManus (Drumbrughas, Macken), P.G. McManus and Frank McManus (Enniskillen and formerly of Clonliff, Macken) have also made contributions to this historical account - many thanks to them for their assistance.

The Early Years "You boys of old Kinawley and the sons of Brian Boru, I hope you pay attention, and I will tell you something new. It has been on a Sunday evening on the 17th of May, that I steered my boat from Corra-coash to see a grand display" These few lines from an old local song commemorating a famous match played in Inishmore between Kinawley "Brians" and Lisbellaw "Clunes" on the 17th of May 1888 is the first factual evidence available of GAA activity in Kinawley. Subsequently in 1890, Kinawley were one of eleven Clubs listed as existent in the County. Apart from this old song, no further records exist of GAA activity in the area around this time. However, based on local stories handed down through generations, we can assume that some form of Gaelic games did take place in the late 19th century. After the formation of the Fermanagh County Board in 1904, there were two parish teams - Montiagh Emmets and Inishmore Slashers. By 1906, a team called Kinawley Sons of O'Connell were in existence. One interesting fact about this team is that they never competed in any League or Championship games. Little further detail is in existence until 1913 when Kinawley Brian Borus, Montiagh and Macken all had teams. 1914 saw some success for a parish team when Kinawley reached a Senior final, only to be defeated by Newtownbutler on a score of 1-2 to 1-0. Some success followed with a Kinawley team winning the Fermanagh Junior Championship in 1917. In the 1920's, Kinawley and Killesher both had teams and indeed met in 1925 in the Junior Championship semi-final, Kinawley winning on a score-line of 0-7 to 0-3. In the final Newtownbutler defeated the Brian Borus on a score of 0-3 to 0-2. In the mid 1920's, Derrylester O'Neill's came to fore in the Junior grade and won the Junior football league in 1925. The Derrylester Club remained in existence until the early 1940's. Gortoral also had a team during the 1920's but suspensions and bans shortened their existence and they disbanded in 1925. In 1928 Kinawley got to the Intermediate Cup final only to be defeated by Lisnaskea on a score of 2-5 to 0-4. Some names to the fore in these times were Charles Murphy, Terence McDonnell and Eddie McHugh.

The 1930's to 1950's The 1930's were a much more successful era for the Club with a string of successes. By 1934, Kinawley were competing at Senior level and after a good run they qualified to play Lisnaskea in the league final. This game was played on Sunday 19th of August in Enniskillen and Kinawley were victorious on a score-line of 2-4 to 2-1. Some of the stars of that success were John Melanophy, Terry Baxter, Johnny Drugan, Redmond Shannon and James Owens. This was Kinawley's first ever success at Senior competitive level. For the remainder of the 1930's, Kinawley 'Young Erin's, as they were known then, were one of the strongest Club's in Fermanagh Football. In the 1935 Father Trainor Cup, Kinawley qualified for the final against Mulleek at Irvinestown. This game was not actually played until April 1936. Mulleek defeated Kinawley in the game but after an objection (Mulleek played 4 illegal players from Bundoran), the Cup was awarded to Kinawley. The Club's Junior team qualified for the league final in 1935. A youthful Kinawley outfit defeated Teemore by 6 points. To cap off a tremendous year for the Club, the Senior team qualified for the league final. As was the case with the Father Trainor Cup and the Junior league final, the Senior league final wasn't played until the spring of 1936. Kinawley defeated Belnaleck at the Gaelic Park in Enniskillen on a score-line of 1-7 to 0-3. The Kinawley goalscorer on the day was James Owens. Others to feature prominently around this time were the McDonnell brothers, Eamon, Tommy and Charlie, Johnny McBarron and Joe Shannon. In 1937 Kinawley qualified for the Senior Championship final after defeating Teemore in the semi-final. However a strong Lisnaskea team defeated them. In 1938 Kinawley again qualified for the league final with Lisnaskea the opposition. The game was played in Derrylin on Sunday 30th of October. After a titanic struggle Kinawley emerged victorious on a score-line of 1-6 to 2-2. After the game Fr. Rudden, P.P. Knockninny, presented the Cup to the Kinawley captain Charlie McDonnell. There is no doubt that these years were highly significant in our history with many great players representing the Club. Unfortunately this success could not be sustained into the 1940's. Kinawley competed well in competition in the early 40's. In 1943 the Senior team qualified for the league final but were defeated by Lisnaskea. Prominent players from these times included Paddy Parker, Tommy Friel, John Patrick Kellagher, Johnny McBarron and Ted Owens. Sadly, due mainly to emigration, Kinawley had reverted to the Junior grade by 1947. However they were unable to fulfil fixtures and the Club went out of existence until 1950. Killesher also had a Junior team in the 1940's. Again emigration was a problem and they went out of existence for a time in the late 40's and not reforming again until the early 1960's. Kinawley re-formed in 1950 under the Chairmanship of John P. O'Reilly with Paddy Reilly acting as Club Secretary. The Club played mostly at Junior level during the 1950's. In 1951 they defeated Derrygonnelly in the league final on a score-line of 4-4 to 3-3. In 1957 they qualified for the Junior championship final but were defeated by Tempo. The 1950's seen the emergence of youth football in the County and Kinawley played their part, producing many fine young players. Devenish defeated a talented under 18 team in the 1955 league final. Some of the stars of that team were Patrick McArdle, Terry McManus, Sonny Gilleece, Joe Gilleece and Terry Greene. In 1956 a Kinawley parish team, made up with players from Kinawley and Swanlinbar, won the Cavan School's Championship with Mullahoran defeated in the final at Breffni Park. Kinawley also won this competition in 1958. In 1959 Kinawley played at junior level and won the league by defeating Belcoo in the final on a score-line of 3-7 to 0-7. The 'Fermanagh Herald' reported that 'Kinawley had outstanding performers in McCormick and Greene, fine fielders and lengthy kickers. The McManus brothers were also

very prominent.' Also in 1959, Kinawley defeated Ederney to win the minor league title. The score-line was 5-4 to 2-2 and stars on that side included Sean McManus, Benny Murphy, Tony Cullen, Aidan Curry and Joe McHugh. The 1960's and 70's The swinging sixties, as they were known, started with Kinawley playing at Junior grade. Soon however, the Club moved up to Senior grade where they were one of the strongest teams in the County. Many talented players were playing with the Club in the early 60's and it was not too long before a breakthrough was made at Senior level. In 1962 Kinawley defeated Aghadrumsee and Lisnaskea to qualify for the final of the Senior Championship. However in the final a formidable Roslea Shamrocks team defeated them. Kinawley won many admirers on the day and led by 3 points at half time. Two second half goals by Roslea ended Kinawley's Championship run and the final score-line was 2-9 to 0-9. The Kinawley team on the day was: Tommy Dolan, Michael McManus, Benny Murphy, Patrick Murphy, Vincie Greene, Tony Cullen, Terry McManus, Terry Greene, Mick Cullen, Aidan Curry, Joe Gilleece, Patrick Murphy, Joe McHugh, Gerry Owens & Sean McDonnell. So bitter disappointment for this young squad of Kinawley footballers. In 1963 hopes were high that Kinawley could go a step further and win a first Senior Championship for the Club but Devenish knocked us out in that year. In the 1963 league Kinawley displayed good consistency to qualify for the league final versus Devenish. The 1963 final stands out in the memories of all the players involved and all that were present as one of the greatest robberies of the decade. The match was fixed for a 3.30 start but because of atrocious weather, the referee (Billy Charleton from Irvinestown) delayed the start of the match for almost an hour, having made repeated pitch inspections. The match was played in torrential rain but by all accounts the fare was much better than the conditions. It is questionable whether it happened 5 minutes or 3 minutes before the end of the match, but it did happen - the referee abandoned the match. The score at that time was 2 points a piece and Kinawley were in the ascendancy, having been awarded a 14-yard free in front of the posts. Before the free could be taken the referee called for the ball and abandoned the match - depriving Kinawley of a famous victory. The replay was not played until August 1964 and by that time a depleted Kinawley outfit were defeated. Unfortunately this was as good as it got for Kinawley for quite a long period. Many of the great young players of that time moved away from the area and distinguished themselves with Clubs in Ireland and London. For the remainder of the sixties there were no notable successes at adult level. In 1964 our Minor team had great success in winning the Minor League and Championship. By the mid sixties the Club were struggling at adult grade and in 1967 were competing at Intermediate level. No great change in fortunes without any honours being claimed. In 1969 our Minor team defeated St. John's (Garrison) in their League final on a score-line of 2-9 to 0-12 to finish off the decade on a more positive note. Killesher fielded a team through to the mid sixties. However there was a constant interchange of players between Kinawley and Killesher and it became increasingly evident that the area would be better served by one Club. Therefore the Killesher Club as an entity went out of existence in the late 1960's, amalgamating with Kinawley Brian Borus. The 1970's proved to be a decade of fluctuating fortunes for the Club, on and off the field. For most of this time our adult team played at Intermediate level. In 1971 Kinawley qualified for the Intermediate League final against Coa but were beaten on a score-line of 1-12 to 1-1. In 1974 Kinawley played in the new Senior League III and had a good season but were beaten in the final by Derrylin. In the Intermediate Championship it took 3 tense, hard hitting games to separate Kinawley and local rivals Belnaleck. As a result of the good league campaign Kinawley were promoted to Senior League II in 1975 but struggled against the stronger opposition in this division and were relegated back to Division III for 1976. It took until 1978 for the Brian Borus to win some silverware, winning the Intermediate Championship final against Maguiresbridge. This was a major breakthrough for the Club as it was our first ever Championship success and it heralded the emergence of some exciting playing talent. Kinawley won the final by 1-8 to 1-4 with Mickey Boyle grabbing the all-important goal with Joe McCarney, Dinny Doogan and Paudge Donohoe among the point scorers. Kinawley also qualified for the League final but on this occasion Maguiresbridge won the day. As a result of finishing top of League III, the Senior were promoted to Division II for 1979. Whilst no silverware was won the team performed well and were a force to be reckoned with. The 1970's saw much more effort been put into the promotion of youth football not only in Kinawley but also in most Clubs in the County. Notable successes were the qualification for finals at U-16 level in 1973 and 1974. On both these occasions we suffered defeat. In 1978 Kinawley won the Minor Rural League, defeating Maguiresbridge by 2-11 to 1-6 in the final. Stars of this team included Paul McKenna, Patrick G. McManus, Frank McManus, Seamus Owens, Dominic Corrigan and Brian Donohoe. During the 1970's many people worked hard to keep the Club afloat. Patrick Murphy and Tony Cullen were the Club referees. Fr. Liam Gaffney, Fr. Con Dolan, Oliver Jones, John Doonan, Aidan Melanophy, Martin Murphy and many others spent valuable time and money providing transport for the under-age players. The 1980's and 90's The 1980's began with the Senior team playing in Division II, but after an inconsistent season they were relegated back to Division III for 1981. Kinawley re-organised somewhat for 1981 with a more youthful squad, and with some degree of success. Aghadrumsee defeated Kinawley in the Division III final but this was made up for by the winning of the Intermediate Championship. Enniskillen 'B' were the opposition in the final, with Kinawley winning on a score-line of 4-4 to 0-10. The goal scorers were Dinny Doogan, Barney Curry (2) and Dom Corrigan. 1982 saw further success for the Club with the winning of the Division II title. The underdogs Kinawley defeated a fancied Derrygonnelly Harps team in the final on a score-line of 1-5 to 0-6. Dinny Doogan was the scorer of the all-important goal. This success elevated the Brian Borus to Division I for the first time since the early 60's. Kinawley found the going tough back in Division I and were involved in a relegation battle in 1983. Luckily we managed to avoid the drop and maintained our status in the premier division until 1987. In those years Kinawley played in the Senior Championship but without any success. Belcoo defeated Kinawley after a replay in both 1984 & 1985. The Junior team began to come to prominence around this time and won the Gallagher Cup in the spring of 1987. With Sean Martin as manager, the Junior Championship and Division II finals were also reached in that year. Irvinestown won the Junior Championship on a score-line of 2-6 to 0-7 whilst Coa defeated us in the league final after a replay. Prominent players in the Junior team at this time were Barry Murphy, Sean Maguire, Paddy Maguire, Patrick G. McManus and Jimmy Leonard. 1988 saw Kinawley back in Division II and in the Intermediate Championship. This proved

to be a successful season with 2 pieces of silverware being won. Firstly Brookeboro were defeated in the Intermediate Championship final at Donagh on a score-line of 1-13 to 0-6. Later that year a previously undefeated Derrygonnelly team were put to the sword by the Brian Borus in a thrilling Division II league final. Team captain, Michael Corrigan raised the trophy after the 0-8 to 0-7 win. Michael's brother, Dominic, fisted the winning point with time almost up. That league success should have led to promotion to Division I for 1989 but due to a reorganisation of the leagues, Kinawley played in Division II in 1989. Kinawley were again Division II champions in this year defeating Irvinestown in Enniskillen in the final on a score-line of 1-14 to 0-5 after a replay. On this occasion, promotion was secured. However, Kinawley found it hard to compete in Division I in 1990 and went straight back down. On a brighter note, 1990 saw Kinawley winning a Senior Championship game for the first time in many years. Derrygonnelly Harps were defeated in Irvinestown after a replay on a score-line of 1-12 to 0-6. Lisnaskea subsequently defeated Kinawley by 5 points in the quarter-final. In 1991 Kinawley again won the Senior League Division II title, defeating Irvinestown in the final on a score-line 1-12 to 0-8 in Enniskillen. Ciaran Corrigan was the team captain that year. 1991 also saw a memorable Junior success with the winning of the Division II title, with local rivals Belnaleck defeated in the final on a score-line of 3-5 to 2-6. The game played in front of a huge attendance in Teemore witnessed a Paul Devlin penalty save and a Paul Allen piledriver goal only to be followed by his dismissal from the field of play. This Junior team had a good blend of youth and experience and were managed by Aidan Leonard. In 1992 Kinawley showed signs that they could compete with the top teams in Division I with a mid table finish and with Jim Carty from Garrison appointed as team manger in 1993, expectations of success were high. A series of good performances in the League sent Kinawley into the Senior Championship quarter-final against Enniskillen Gaels in a confident frame of mind. The game, played at Teemore, saw the Brian Borus master the town side by 2 points. Roslea were the opposition in the semi-final at Lisnaskea and an early Kevin Maguire goal plus a second half 'cracker' from Seamus Owens helped Kinawley stay in front for the entire game. The final score-line was 2-5 to 1-7. This victory sent Kinawley through to the Senior Championship final against Devenish, for the first time since 1962. The game was given an extra dimension due to the involvement of Jim Carty, who had previously led the same Devenish team to a string of titles. Due to a jersey colour clash both teams had to change, with Kinawley wearing a yellow 'Antrim' style kit. Influential midfielder, Ciaran Corrigan was to miss the final as he was on honeymoon. The game itself started particularly well for the 'yellows' with a 2 goal burst from Kevin Maguire and Raymond McKenna. This put Kinawley in a commanding position but in the run up to half time, Devenish came back into the game with Paul Coyle very influential for them. We were 2 points behind at half time but Devenish's greater experience of the 'big day' saw them pull away to win on a score-line of 1-15 to 2-5. The Kinawley line out in the final was: John Crudden, Frankie McManus, Paul McKenna, Ollie Prunty, Barry Cullen, Shane McGrath (captain), Declan Cathcart, Michael Corrigan, Raymond McKenna, Cathal Murphy, Kevin Gilleece, Liam McBarron, Dominic Corrigan, Kevin Maguire and Seamus Owens. The subs used were: Damien McKenna, Fergal Cleary and Martin McBrien. On reflection, too many of Kinawley's more established players did not do themselves justice on the day, in a game that was there for the winning. In 1994, Kinawley had a moderately successful league campaign and Lisnaskea Emmets were our opposition in the Senior Championship at Teemore. Lisnaskea had been performing strongly in the league and had given Kinawley a 'hammering' some weeks earlier but Kinawley put up a great display and were unlucky to lose by 1 point. Lisnaskea went on to win the Senior Championship in 1994. 1995 was a poor one for the Seniors with relegation from Division I. No Championship success either as we lost to St. Joseph's after a replay. From hereon to the end of the decade, Kinawley Seniors played their football in Division II but were unable to challenge for major honours. We also competed in the Intermediate Championship but without success. From the mid 90's onwards, our Junior team had a very successful era winning at least one piece of silverware each year. League titles were won in 1996 (defeated Teemore at Teemore), 1997, 1998, 1999 and 2000. Jimmy Leonard and Terence Baxter were the men in charge in this era and the pinnacle of these successes was the winning of the Junior Championship in 1999. The team had a very experienced spine but with a good sprinkling of youth talent. Brookeboro and Tempo were defeated in early rounds and we edged out a strong Roslea side in the semi-final at Donagh. This set us up for a final meeting with Enniskillen Gaels at Lisnaskea. In a tense encounter an early Sean Doonan goal gave Kinawley the impetus. However it was not until a late goal from super-sub, Dom Corrigan, that put some daylight between the teams. The final score was 2-5 to 1-6. There was great delight among the Kinawley players and supporters as team captain, Ciaran Leonard, was presented with the cup for Kinawley's first ever Junior Championship success. The Kinawley line out in the final was: Paul McKenna, James Owens, Ciaran Leonard (captain), Colm Leonard, Jason Martin, Brian Melanaphy, Mark Cornyn, Shane McGrath, Fergal Cleary, Dinny Doogan, Darren Boyle, Francie McGovern, John Crudden, Tommy McManus and Sean Doonan. The subs used were: Dom Corrigan, Pdraig Murphy and Michael Corrigan. This success was well merited and was just reward for a hard working squad and management. Youth football in the 80's and 90's provided sporadic success. 1992 saw U-12 success with the winning of a blitz competition whilst in 1993, the U-16 Division III title was won. St. Patrick's were defeated in the league final at Lisnaskea after a replay. The final score was 0-9 to 1-2 with Ciaran Boyle putting in a 'man of the match' performance whilst cousin Darren Boyle top scored with 5 points. Damien Owens was captain of that team and other players included Shane Anderson, Sean Leonard (Rua) and Brian Melanaphy. 1996 was a successful year for the minor team with the winning of the Division III league plus the 'B' Championship. Brookeboro were defeated in the league final at Donagh and Coa were defeated in the Championship final. The Championship final played at Derrygonnelly saw Kinawley fall behind to 2 early goals but as the game progressed they got the upperhand of a gallant Coa outfit. The final score was 2-11 to 2-8 with the Kinawley goalscorers being Paul Melanaphy and Sean Leonard (Rua). Brian Melanaphy was captain of that team. Towards the end of the 1990's the Club has implemented a much more structured coaching programme. This led to successes at U-10 and U-12 levels and ensured a regular supply of good players coming through at each age level. The 21st Century Kinawley entered the 21st century with our Senior team competing in Division II. No notable successes in 2000 but our Juniors continued their winning ways by winning Erne Cup II. Kinawley were playing in

the Intermediate Championship at this time and qualified for the finals in 2001 and 2002. Irvinestown defeated us in 2001 on score-line of 1-8 to 0-14 whilst in 2002 Tempo got the better of us, winning on a score-line of 2-6 to 0-8. Kinawley played in the Senior Championship in 2003 and began to show good potential. We were unfortunate to lose out at the semi-final stage to St. Patricks by 5 points. Kinawley dominated the game for long spells and it was only in the closing stages that the Donagh men pulled away to win by 1-14 to 0-12. With Cathal Murphy at the helm, Kinawley performed consistently in Division II in 2004 and won promotion back to Division I for 2005. The present Kinawley Senior team is a mostly youthful one with County stars Niall Bogue and Sean Doherty being joined by the likes of the 2 Sean Leonards, Mark Monaghan, Garret Owens and Brian Melanaphy. The Juniors continued to be successful and featured in the Erne Cup II finals in most years, winning the titles in 2001 and 2003. At Youth level, much work is being done in terms of coaching. Some talented players are coming through every year. These include Ciaran Crudden, Tomas Corrigan, Sean Crudden, Cahir Gilheany, Patrick McGovern, Ryan Scallon and Donal Owens. Our main successes at youth level in recent times have been at U-10 and U-12 levels. The U-12's were victorious in their league section from 1999 to 2003. Participation at all levels is at an all time high and with the excellent facilities available at McManus Park, more success is bound to follow in the not too distant future.

Source

"A Gaelic Tradition - A History of the GAA in Fermanagh"

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