

THE AIDAN
McANESPIE
FOOTBALL
CLUB

THE AIDAN McANESPIE FOOTBALL CLUB



■ AIDAN McANESPIE ... killed by a British Army gun.

The Aidan McAnespie Football Club was formed in 1996, to keep alive the name of Aidan McAnespie murdered by British Crown Forces on February 21, 1988.

Aidan, a young man of 23 years in the prime of his life, was walking to a G.A.A. match on a bright Sunday morning to play with his club, Team Aghaloo. While passing through the Army checkpoint he was shot in the back by a British soldier, killing him instantly. Aidan had been continually harassed by the Security Forces.

The day prior to his death, Aidan and his Mother were detained at the checkpoint for an hour during which time British soldiers said they would kill him.

A British soldier was charged with manslaughter three days after this death. Some months later the charges were dropped for so called lack of evidence.

The McAnespie family has brought their case to the United Nations and are trying to get a hearing at the European Court of Human Rights, but this could take years. Aidan was a past pupil of St. Ciarans Ballygawley. He lived in the border town of Aughnalloy with his parents. He followed the Tyrone Team to most of their games. The following statement was made by Cardinal Tomas O'Fiach after Aidan's death. He was constantly stopped and searched right up to the evening of his death and many find it hard to believe it was a complete coincidence that the same young man should be shot to death.

HONORS WON BY THE McANESPIE FOOTBALL CLUB

1997 - Boston Junior Champs, Beaten North American Finals

1997 - Beaten in Senior Final, Boston

1997 - Mawn Cup Champions

1998 - Senior Boston and North American Champions

1998 - Beaten in Finals of Junior

1999 - Mawn Cup Winners

1999 - Beaten Senior Semifinal after Replay

1999 - Beaten Junior Semifinal



1998 BOSTON AND NORTH AMERICAN CHAMPIONS

The The GAA scene in the US continues to more than hold its own and no more so than in Boston where new kids on the block, Aiden McAnespies GFC are making waves, as Kevin Carney discovers

Boston GAA

party

Despite the fact that the club is only three years in existence, McAnespies GFC of Boston is covering itself in glory right now.

Formed by a group of exiles to honour the memory of Aghnacloy footballer Aiden McAnespie (murdered by British soldiers on his way to a football match in the south Tyrone village in February 1988), the go-ahead, vibrant Boston outfit recently hit the high notes like never before when winning the North-American football championship title for the first time ever by beating fellow Bostonians Kerry.

In beating the best of the rest from Philadelphia, Chicago and San Francisco, the Boston kingpins proved themselves to be one of the most accomplished teams in the whole of the United States.

The win was a fitting tribute to the memory of Aiden and due reward for his family who weighed in with their full support for the club right from its inception.

Indeed when founding members of the Aiden McAnespie GAA club Johnny Guirke (Meath), Martin Harvey (Tyrone), Gerry McKenna (Tyrone), John Reilly (Meath), Tommy Courmane (Kerry), Carmel and Cathal Lynch (Dublin and Tyrone), Francis and Patricia Foster (Fermanagh) and Cyril Hughes (Galway) established the club in '96, little could they have imagined the enormous strides which the club would proceed to make over the course of the following couple of years.

Encouraged and prompted in no small way by Donegal native John McDevitt, Chairman of the Boston GAA Board, the embryonic McAnespie crew found their feet in double-quick time.

In those early days the club were particularly grateful to their sponsors, Molly Darcys of South Boston (owned by Mike Foley from Co. Kerry) and all the staff there, for their help.

Finding themselves increasingly enveloped by a veritable tidal wave of interest from fellow gael in Boston, the early movers and shakers within the rookie club were soon able to tap into a rich vein of football talent.

In 1998, that very same burgeoning start to the club's existence was converted into real-life celebratory fare.

The winning of the North-American championship was preceded by McAnespie's annexation of the hugely-competitive domestic Boston football championship.

In this respect, the club owes a lot of thanks to Vincent McAnespie (brother of Aiden's), for his contribution in keeping the club well stocked with players from Ireland during the summer.

Under the astute management of Moylagh's (Co. Meath) Guirke and coached by Clones man Martin Slowey, the all-conquering McAnespies team approached the commencement of the Boston championship last April with all the seriousness and intensity of a crack county squad back on the 'oul sod.

Training (under the guidance of John Daly) for all McAnespie players began in February last when a strict schedule was laid out and each player left under no illusion as to the level of commitment required by the club from them.

Indeed, that commitment was matched by many people associated with the club, including a whole host of ticket sellers who are vital in raising finance for the club and of course, other clubs and McAnespie club members who purchased tickets without fail.

In a series of league games which were very competitive and close affairs, McAnespies were one of nine teams in the Boston area competing for the right to represent the Boston Board in the North-

American championship.

Things went well for the would-be competition winners and even a drawn encounter with Connemara Gaels failed to stymie the team's growing confidence.

In fact, only Colmcilles, a team composed of Dublin natives mainly, managed to put a dent in McAnespies season, beating the champions-elect but thereafter failing to reproduce that form again.

Although the team failed to emerge from their group in the corresponding series in their inaugural year, those pundits with an insight into the Boston GAA arena knew that having missed out at the final hurdle last year (at the hands of Connemara Gaels), McAnespies would leave no stone unturned in their bid to go at least one step further in '98.

Still, the 13-aside Boston championship invariably assumes all the shape of a very level playing field and team-boss Johnny Guirke admits that his team did experience some uncomfortable moments en route to securing their holy grail.

"We got nothing easy in winning the Boston championship. All the matches presented us with some difficulties or other, especially the games we played early on in the competition.

"The team did well though in beating Donegal because they were hotly fancied to do well and later on when we beat Wolfe Tones in the semi-final, I felt confident that we could take the title.

"It helped too that we were playing Kerry in the final. We had beaten them earlier in the competition and knew what to expect from them," reflected Johnny who doubles up as the club delegate to the north-eastern Boston GAA Board.

The team's appearance in the final attracted a bumper attendance with most punters anticipating a rare 'oul battle between the new kids on the block and an experienced Kerry crew.

With 'guests' Peter Canavan (Tyrone) Martin Slowey (Monaghan) and Joe Coyle (Monaghan) all in brilliant form throughout the Boston championship campaign, McAnespies went into the decider as clear favourites and, as the script would have it, they duly secured a thoroughly



Left to right: Liz McAnespie, Aiden's mother; Gerry McKenna, Chairman; Nigel Regan, Senior Player of the Year; Paddy McCusker, senior captain; Johnny Guirke, senior manager; John McAnespie, Aiden's father

deserved victory with four points separating the sides at the end of a rip-roaring encounter.

Inspired by the performances on the day of Martin Harvey, Mickey Slowey (Player of the Tournament in the North American Finals) and Nigel Regan (McAnespies Senior Player of the Year Meath), McAnespies simply had too much firepower for the Kingdom representatives but as Johnny Guirke admits, it wasn't all plain-sailing.

"Kerry got the better start and they were leading at the interval and, to be honest, we were worried the way things were going at that stage.

"To try and shake things up a bit, we moved Martin Harvey to midfield and introduced Paddy Stones and luckily we started to get a lot more of the ball into our forwards," Johnny explained.

Employing the Route One method, McAnespies got the best out of the Regan/Canavan full-forward axis and with great determination and will-to-win, the Paddy McCusker-led team slowly but surely wore down their opponent's resistance to win by four points. The team which did the business that day was as follows: Nobby Walsh (Meath), Cyril Hughes (Galway), Paddy McCusker (Derry), Aidan Hurson (Monaghan), Martin Slowey (Monaghan), Martin Harvey (Tyrone), John Rennicks (Meath), Joe Coyle (Monaghan), Christy Roche (Meath), Mickey Slowey (Monaghan), John Cadden (Fermanagh), Nigel Regan (Meath) and Peter Canavan (Tyrone).

The North-American Championship semi-final pitted McAnespies against highly vaunted Chicago champions, St. Brendan's, in a match played in Washington.

As underdogs (Chicago's representatives had won the North-American championship in '97, '96 and '95), McAnespies knew that they were really up against it when they went 0-0 to 0-6 behind after just 20 minutes.

"We started very slowly and just couldn't get into the match but we eventually went on to probably play our best football to win the match by three points," recalled Johnny who was helped in the selection of the team by Gerry McKenna (Tyrone) and John Reilly (Meath).

With beaten finalists Kerry back in the frame, and back in the final, McAnespies squared up to their old rivals in confident mood.

Kerry were worthy finalists, having recovered from their early defeat to McAnespies to win the rest of their round-robin series of matches and thus make it an all-Boston decider, a tribute surely to the standard of the game in the Massachusetts GAA heartland.

Although Kerry were boosted by the addition of former Laois underage star Mark O'Brien and McAnespies were divested of the services of Peter Canavan (teaching commitments back home rendered him unavailable), the match was a very evenly contested affair in the early part of the game.

However, Kerry put the cat among the pigeons with some brilliant inter-passing enabling them to pull away by 0-7 to 0-2 with just minutes left before the interval.

Cue Joe Coyle, the Monaghan Harps and county star. With a beautiful goal, just two minutes before the break, Coyle helped his adopted team draw level at half-time.

McAnespies played much better in the second half and quickly stamped their authority on the match to run out convincing and deserved winners. The victorious McAnespies side that day was Stephen McCarron (Tyrone), Cyril Hughes (Galway), Paddy McCusker (Derry), Aidan Hurson (Monaghan), Martin Slowey (Monaghan), Paddy Stones (Offaly), Martin Harvey (Tyrone), Joe Coyle (Monaghan), Christy Roche (Meath), Mickey Slowey (Monaghan), John Cadden (Fermanagh), Nigel Regan (Meath), Eugene McKenna (Monaghan).

Reflecting on what was a year of unprecedented success for McAnespies, Johnny Guirke says that everyone associated with the club are delighted that the breakthrough has been made but that they're not now going to rest on their laurels.

"The next target for the club is to defend both titles next year. The



Aidan McAnespies GFC. Front row, left to right: Johnny Guirke (manager), Nigel Regan, Martin Harvey, Peter Canavan, Paddy McCusker (capt.), Cyril Hughes, Nobby Walsh, Michael Slowey, Padraig McKenna, John Reilly (selector). Back row, left to right: Gerry McKenna (Chairman), Martin Slowey, Damian McGorman, John Cadden, Eugene McKenna, Paddy Stones, Steven McGill, Eamon Brady, Steven McCarron, John Rennicks, Joe Coyle, Aidan Hurson, John Daly (trainer). Missing from picture: Christy Roche

Boston Championship will be the first priority but the club is growing all the time and we get valuable assistance from our friends back at home in Monaghan and Meath especially and with their help, I'm sure that the club will continue to go from strength to strength over the coming years."

Johnny is fulsome in his praise of the officers of the North East Board in Boston, namely Chairman John McDavitt (Donegal), Vice Chairman Pat Mulvihill (Kerry), Secretary Bridie Joyce (Galway), Assistant Secretary Joan Reen (Boston), Registrar Joe Lydon (Boston), Treasurer Martin Gallagher (Mayo), PRO Connie Kelly (Kerry), Youth Officer Donie Kenneally (Cork) and Trustees Pat Costello, Pat Blich and Martin Keane (all Galway).

Reflecting on their unforgettable celebratory banquet, Johnny Guirke says the club were delighted to host Aidan's father and mother, John and Lizzie, at the banquet and appreciative of Diane Hammill's gesture in speaking at the banquet.

Also, he remembers with great fondness the visit to last year's banquet by Eilish McCabe and her brothers Gerry and Vincent McAnespie.

Johnny and everyone at McAnespies will never forget Fergal (Ricky) McCusker who played for the junior team that won the Boston championship in 1997 and beaten North American finalists in 1997.

Fergal was home on holidays for Christmas and was murdered on the 16th of January by the L.V.F.

It is with great regret that the players and officials heard of Fergal's death.

Ar dheis de go raibh a anam.

Johnny is mindful too of the generous people who provided work for McAnespie players at various times; people like John Daly (Limerick), John Farrell (Meath), Steve Collins (Meath), Gerry McKenna (Tyrone), Francie Foster (Fermanagh), Declan Smith (Cavan) and Pat Costello (Galway).

Of course, a whole host of people do a lot of work to keep the club at the forefront and in this regard the following people deserve a lot of credit: Gerry McKenna, Martin Harvey (Tyrone), John Reilly (Meath), Raymond Brady (Cavan), Cyril Hughes (Galway), Austin Graham (Monaghan) and Carmel Lynch.

To his eternal credit, Johnny, realising that a club's second string is equally important, remembers the club's gallant junior side who lost out narrowly in the Boston semi-final to Shannon Gaels. The squad and selectors which did duty that day were Damian McGorman (Fermanagh), Benny Murphy (Junior Player of the Year) (Meath), Oliver Guirke (Meath), Mike Griffin (Kerry), Martin Joe Greaney (Galway), John O'Connor (Galway), Brian Gallagher (Donegal) capt., Ross Hainsworth (Dublin), Gerry Cullen (Armagh), Steven McCarron (Tyrone), Barry Keirns (Louth), Johnny Guirke (Meath), Steven McGill (Dublin), JJ Turner (Fermanagh), Benny Reilly (Meath), Raymond Brady (Cavan), Oliver Brody (Meath), Junior selectors Martin Harvey (Tyrone), Cyril Hughes (Galway) and Nobby Walsh (Meath).

As a new year rapidly approaches, expect the McAnespies crew to consolidate their burgeoning status on the US GAA scene.

THE AIDAN McANESPIE FOOTBALL CLUB



JUNIOR CHAMPIONS - 1997



SENIOR NORTH AMERICAN CHAMPOINS - 1998



JUNIOR TEAM - 1999