

NC 0021572 4



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# Tradition<sub>versus</sub> Modernity

The G.A.A. and its Social and Cultural Significance in Modern Ireland

1997

Submitted to the Faculty of History of Art and Design and Complimentary  
Studies in Candidacy for the Degree of B. Des. in Visual Communications.

## Acknowledgments

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I would like to thank the following people  
for their help in the completion of this thesis:

Paul O'Brien, Thesis tutor for his help and guidance throughout the project.

Catherine and Ger in Roscrea public library for helping me to compile  
research material.

Paddy Bates, Principal of Coolderry N.S., for providing me with invaluable  
research material.

Seán Moran, G.A.A. correspondent, *Irish Times*, for a very informative interview.

Joe Pilkington, *Crossmaglen Examiner*, for a valuable interview and written material.

Jemma Bradley, Assistant Librarian, N.C.A.D. for furnishing me with numerous  
letters to visit Trinity College library.

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## Introduction

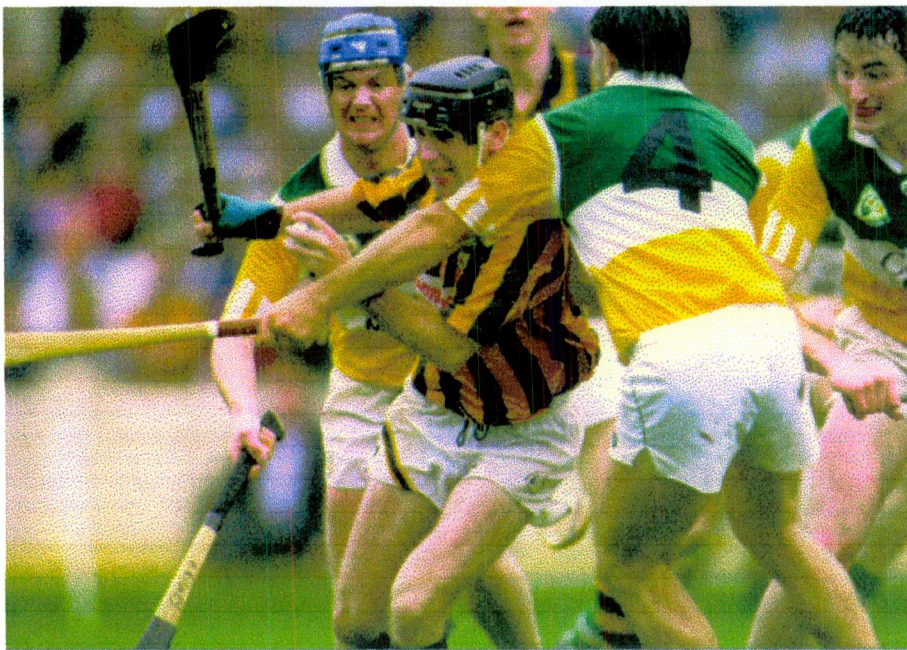
Paddy is at home here; all song, dance, good humour, and affection. His cheek is flushed with delight, which, indeed, may derive assistance from the consciousness of having no bayonets or loaded carbines to contend with: but, anyhow he's at home - his eye is lit with real glee - he tosses his hat in the air, in the height of mirth . . . If he meets his sweetheart, he will give her a kiss and a hug, and that with double kindness, because he is on his way to thrash her father or brother . . . to be sure, skulls and bones are broken, and lives lost; but they are lost in pleasant fighting - they are the consequence of the sport. (Carlton, c. 1830 in McDonagh, Mandle and Travers, 1983, p.45)

The above is William Carlton's description of an Irish faction fight of the early 19th century. This was considered a popular recreational activity in pre-famine Ireland and contributed greatly, I suggest, to the uncivilised, barbaric impression that *Punch* cartoonists published from the 1860's on, when depicting the stereotypical Irishman.

Considering this type of apparent primitivism plus the Great Famine of the 1840s it is astonishing that the people of Ireland could assert themselves to initiate a cultural revolution of the magnitude of that which followed. The 'Gaelic League', 'The Irish Literary Revival', the 'Gaelic scoile' and the Celtic revival were all established during the mid to late 19th century as a side aspect to the political, militant and agrarian nationalist movements. Another important element of the cultural nationalism was the Gaelic Athletic Association (the G.A.A.). The association was founded in Hayes Hotel, Thurles on November 1st, 1884. The inaugural meeting, which was held in the billiards room of the hotel, was attended by Maurice Davin (President), Michael Cusack, John Wyse Power, John McKay, James K. Bracken, Joseph O'Ryan and Thomas St. George McCarthy. Michael Davitt, founder of the Land League, and Archbishop Croke of Cashel, sent letters of support. The function of the meeting was to establish a regulating body to codify and organise the national pastimes in an effort to make them the preferred sports of Irish people over the imported games of rugby, cricket, soccer, polo, etc. A master stroke on their part was the ban which prohibited players or spectators of foreign games to join the G.A.A. along with members of the British army and the R.I.C.. This rule made a very definite statement that the G.A.A. was for Irish Nationalists only. Inevitably, it was associated with the Fenian movement. The ban existed until 1971 when it was deemed to have outlived its usefulness except in northern Ireland where a ban continues to exist against members of the security forces to the present day.

Considering the humble beginnings of the association, as well as the unstable social and political situation of the 19th century, it is interesting that the G.A.A. has become the most popular sporting organisation in the country. While in the beginning the G.A.A. included an array of games and pastimes such as handball, wrestling, hammer throwing, rounders, leaping and more, it was the games of hurling and Gaelic football that have been developed over the last 113 years into symbols of Irish identity.

My interest in the G.A.A. is a result of where I grew up, on the Offaly-Tipperary border which is a stronghold of hurling and has been for generations. I intend in this study to examine the extent to which Irish culture and society has been affected by the G.A.A. and what contributed to the survival and development of the organisation over the last century. The main areas I will discuss are: the G.A.A. as a means of developing Irish identity, the nationalist aspect and the influence of the Catholic Church. Of course the G.A.A. was not without its problems and indeed has had to survive pressures and tensions both within the organisation and from external forces. I intend to discuss these with reference to various published sources along with interviews with interested parties having different perspectives on the G.A.A.. I hope to reach some conclusion as to what underlying factors characterise the G.A.A. as an important expression of Irish identity and what has led to the great success of the Association as an amateur sporting organisation.



**Fig.1 Hurling**

Described as 'the fastest field game on earth.'



## Identity

An important consideration when assessing the cultural significance of the Gaelic Athletic Association has to be its role as an expression of Irish identity. During the late 19th century, a time of the establishment of other organisations to represent Ireland's cultural richness and distinct identity, i.e. the Gaelic League, the Land Celtic Revival, it was inevitable that the native Irish games would be harnessed in some sort of organised form.

The native games I speak of, hurling and Gaelic football, had existed in Ireland since ancient times. References to versions of the games can be found in the ancient legends of the "Táin". The most famous Legendary exponent of the game of hurling is Cú Chulainn. His boyhood name was Setanta. The story goes that Setanta slew the hound of Culann by striking a sliotar (hurling ball) with his camán (hurley stick) which shot down the great animal's neck and choked him. As compensation for Culann's loss, Setanta offered to guard the house of Culann until a pup of the hound should be trained to do the job. Hence Setanta acquired the name Cú Chulainn (Hound of Culann).

The heroic nature of Cú Chulainn has an interesting side-aspect. One other hero to whom Cú Chulainn might be compared is the biblical David. Apart from David's more famous feat of killing the Mighty Goliath in single combat, he had previously shown his qualities by killing, bare handed, a lion in defence of his sheep. This compares with the incident in which Cú Chulainn kills, bare handed, the fierce hound of Culann, the smith. (Bergin 1929 pp.157-158 in O Maolfabhail 1973 p.60)

Some carvings on ninth century stone crosses around the country illustrate a figure holding a crooked object and a small round object. The figure is recognised as the biblical David holding shepherds equipment but we might be excused for assuming that the carvings include a camán and a ball. It is tempting to imagine a tenth-century story-teller being inspired by those carvings to add a suitable episode to the tale of Cú Chulainn. (O Maolfabhail 1973 p.60) This story emphasises the importance of Gaelic games to Irish people even in Celtic times.

Before the establishment of the G.A.A., the games were played according to unwritten rules which varied from area to area and even at different times of the year. There were basically two types of hurling, 1. Winter hurling - Camánacht and 2. Leinster Summer hurling. Both probably date from pre-Christian times. From writings there is evidence that since the 17th century interest in Camánacht seemed to wane while there was a greater interest in Summer hurling which probably evolved into the present day game. Notices in newspapers give evidence of this version of the game being played since the thirteenth century. Gaelic Football or its rough and tumble predecessor, cáid, is first referred to in the Statutes of Galway written in 1527. (Humphries 1996 p.5)

Early descriptions of the ancient games of Cáid, Camánacht and Leinster

Summer hurling bear a striking resemblance to early versions of Association Football's predecessor "Folk Football".

According to Eric Dunning and Norbert Elias, the ancestral forms of soccer: were played according to unwritten local rules which often differed markedly from each other. In fact, traditional football shaded into other folk-games which went by different names such as "hurling", "knappac", and "camp-ball". As the authors show, this is symptomatic of the fact that medieval folk-games generally were by no means as specialised as their modern counterparts have tended to become. Thus, elements of what we now call soccer, rugby, hockey, polo, wrestling, and boxing were often embodied in a single game. (Dunning/Ellias 1986 p. 86)

It is interesting that a game called hurling also existed in Britain and one wonders if it bore any relation to the Irish game.

Indeed, early versions of Gaelic Football resembled rugby and wrestling more than the modern Gaelic Football game. Hurling was little more organised than faction fighting and players often suffered fatal injuries during a game. When the Gaelic Athletic Association sprang to life in the latter part of the last century, however, it codified and promoted the games as a form of nationalistic self-expression.



**Fig. 2 Nationalists**

Michael Collins & Harry Boland stand on a hurling pitch.



Community  
versus society

Michael Peillon writes of the analysis of Irish ideological discourse. He suggested that the problem lay in a constant opposition of 'tradition against modernity' and 'community against society'. He discussed this conflict as an integral part of the work of Flann O'Brien, Frank O'Connor and Seán O'Faolain. With reference to O'Faolain's 'Midsummer Night Madness', Peillon writes:

O'Faolain is in tune with Ireland's dominant ideology and assigns values in a congruent way. At times, however, the author may assign a negative value to ideological elements that are customarily positively evaluated in Ireland. In this respect, religion, seen as an obstacle to political and sexual emancipation, become the target of heavy criticism. Nationalism, too, has become too inward-looking and xenophobic, with national ideals too often degenerated into chauvinism. The narrow outlook, gossip, hypocrisy, and conformism that pervade provincial life in Ireland also invite O'Faolain's condemnation.'  
(M. Peillon pp.50/51 )

As the G.A.A. established itself as a vital ingredient in the community over the last century it inevitably came under the influence of this conflict and struggled both between community and society and between tradition and modernity. Not until the 1970's did the G.A.A. abandon its ban on players and spectators of foreign sports, although a ban still exists in Northern Ireland against members of the security forces. Now with the prospect of a changing political situation and the pressures on the G.A.A. from soccer the tradition versus modernity and community versus society argument is cropping up again. Indeed this is a conflict that surfaces in all aspects of the G.A.A. including social, political and organisational.

G.A.A. versus  
Soccer

In Dublin the population is less settled than in rural areas, and so the social dynamic that is required for the G.A.A. to thrive is absent. There is a lack of the community spirit that you might find in a rural area where everyone knows their neighbour and the same families have lived there for generations. This develops into a strong sense of identification with a place. Often a family name becomes synonymous with a G.A.A. team, for example the Dooley Brothers of the Offaly hurling team in the nineties. From my own experience, the G.A.A. in rural Ireland is a family affair, with selectors, patrons and players following on from their fathers and grandfathers. It is a very tight community. If a local gets playing for the county, the county becomes a wider family. This sense of belonging is missing in the city.

Dublin is home to one million people, one - third of Ireland's population. Many of these are recent settlers from rural areas who were only drawn to the capital in



search of work or education. They often maintain a strong link to their home place, and so never develop a strong loyalty to Dublin. Many G.A.A. players and supporters, myself included, who live in Dublin, play for and support other teams.

The structure of the G.A.A. club in rural Ireland starts with the primary school and the minor club, which leads directly to the senior club. This very definite structure of the club ensures that players grow together as a part of the community, where parents and teachers get involved with the club. In the city, where children and their loyalties are scattered among different, larger schools, it follows that the G.A.A. club in the city cannot follow the same pattern as it does in the country. The community in the city isn't as tightly knit. Because of this it is more difficult to achieve the same community spirit as you might find in the country.

It is my opinion that in this kind of unsettled manufactured community soccer can be the saviour. The success in the late eighties of "Jack's Army" (the Irish soccer team) offered a life-line to these people who sought some sort of unifying bond. The notion of an infinite army of soccer followers who need not have any specific set of demographic rules appealed to the city folk. You do not have to live in a certain place to play for a certain club, you can follow whoever you choose, there are no obvious or dominant racial, denominational or political undertones. It is in general a much more accessible and accepting phenomenon. Naturally the success of the Irish team and the resulting growing interest from, especially, city folk encouraged the playing of soccer. Children now had new heroes, who along with glamorous and extensive media coverage, and non-discriminatory nature offered something else, something the G.A.A. could not achieve because of its traditional parochialism. They wore the green jersey. They offered a unifying identity. They respected the scattered, confused Irish masses with their cocktail of names and accents. Although beyond the jurisdiction of the G.A.A., they found a new way of expressing Irishness.

I think it took this really to bring it home to the G.A.A. that Ireland was changing. (Only since this has the issue of professionalism and sponsorship become a real issue) It all really comes down to the argument as to whether ideals inspired by nationalism have become obsolete.

I interviewed Seán Moran, G.A.A. correspondent with the *Irish Times*. Moran. He said that in a way Dublin is the opposite to other counties. He said that here there was a "weak club following but quiet a strong identification with the county team. People follow Dublin's county football team who have never attended a club match". He attributes this to the legacy of the famous Dublin team of the 1970s when, as he says 'the whole vernacular of English soccer support was taken in the city and transferred onto the Football team. He mentioned the wearing of the county jersey by supporters as being a custom initiated by "the Dubs" at that time. (Quinlan 9-1-1997)



For those without club or parish loyalties, who lack a community, English soccer teams, and the Dublin County team offer an undemanding outlet for their support. In other words they do not have to have any personal connection with the team or players to feel part of a community. What we see here is a manifestation of Tradition versus Modernity in conflict between traditional G.A.A. culture and the social pressures of the modern city.

The issue of the G.A.A.'s Rule 42 has come up for question in recent times. This rule prohibits the use of G.A.A. property for other sports. The rule is closely related to the original ban on the security forces and participants of foreign sports and has its function in the ideal that Irish people should play Irish games and Irish games only. Over the past few years there have been differences of opinion as to whether or not G.A.A. venues should be used by other sports like soccer, especially since Croke Park, Semple Stadium, and Páirc Uí Chaoimh have become popular venues for rock concerts and the G.A.A. have even allowed American Football to be played at Croke Park. It is fair to say that the main reason why the G.A.A. prohibits soccer and rugby is because they are so called 'English sports' and pose the greatest threat to the G.A.A. in terms of an Irish Ireland and in real terms as the only codes to seriously compete for popularity. There is a suspicion of foreign things which was central to the initial founding ideology at work here. The forces of modernity are here posing a challenge to the G.A.A. ideology.



**Fig.3 Tradition**

The G.A.A. of yesteryear. Croke Park is filled to the brim on All Ireland Day, 1956.

An example of the tension over Rule 42 was given to me by Seán Moran. A newly formed local soccer team approached Dingle G.A.A. club with a request to use their facilities. The club did not have a choice but to say no because they are forbidden to do so. This is a protection for the club because it is not in the interests of the Dingle Gaelic Football club to give their facility over to a soccer club which is then going to be using the same players and will create competition for the availability of young people in the area. It does not make sense for the G.A.A., especially in remote areas where there is a shortage of children to play the games, to create this obstacle for itself. He points out that there are other arguments against that for example, the P.R. value of Croke Park being used for soccer internationals might outweigh local issues like the above. Moran's own view of the rule is one of cynicism because of, as he says, "a lot of it relates to the kind of cultural purity and anti-Brit tendencies that underlie Rule 21 (the ban on members of the security forces in Northern Ireland from joining the G.A.A.)" (Quinlan 9-1-1997)

## The Playboy

The purpose of the establishment of an organisational body to regulate the playing of the National Pastimes was an attempt to harness and control the native pride and wildness that contributes to the stereotypical Irishman. The intention was to funnel all things 'distinctly Irish' into a united ideal of what Ireland should be. Hence the establishment of the G.A.A., the Gaelic League, the Irish Literacy revival and the Celtic revival all coincided with and contributed to a more effective political and revolutionary resurgence.

However, ironically, I feel much of the promotion and glorification of this richness of culture was contradicted by some aspects of the nationalist attitude. Many of the ideas, attractions and contradictions involved in the G.A.A. can be compared with the Ireland portrayed in Synge's *Playboy of The Western World*. The *Playboy* shows us the 'wild Ireland' that gave life to the national games. The distinctive grace, speed and sheer danger of the game of hurling owes greatly to a sort of passion that oozed from the liberated Christy Mahon. Like the games, he was lost and shy until his story (maybe his story equates with the promise of Irish freedom) allowed him to belong to a community. The games of hurling, football, and handball achieved their confidence when they were united and given a place in the story of a rising nation.

The contradiction occurs with the problems nationalist leaders like Pearse had



with the fundamental factors which made Synge's Irishness possible. The rejection of authority, the irreverence towards the might of the government and the church, the fascination with violence and the "unreserved sexuality of Synge's wild women of the west," all soured the popular ideal of an admittedly spirited and romantic, but devoutly reverent and proud virginal Ireland.

It was indeed a rejection of Synge's 'Wild West' that provoked the disturbance at Abbey in 1907. Much of the dissatisfaction among artists with the unofficial constraints imposed by the nationalist movement was voiced by Yeats in *September 1913* where he attacked the degeneration of nationalism into capitalism. Here there was direct reference to the controversy over Synge's play. The whole situation, for me, echoed what Christy Mahon experienced when he became frustrated with the contempt shown to him by the community who had previously made him a hero. I think it is significant that the expression of his heroism was through sport when he won all the races. This shows the importance of sport in the rural community where otherwise ordinary people can be elevated to the status of hero though their exploits on the playing field. It is this kind of parochial heroism, pride and rivalry that for so long has been the life blood of the G.A.A..

However, the parochialism which maintained the G.A.A. until now seems to be inhibiting its further development. Like Christy Mahon, the G.A.A. longs to "go romancing though a romping lifetime from this now to the dawning of the judgement day" (Synge 1907 Act 3). The frustration common to Christy and, I think, to the G.A.A. was summed up rather forcefully by Synge before he wrote the *Playboy*:  
there are sides of all that western life, the groggy-patriot-publican-general-shopsman who is married to the priest's half-sister and is second cousins once-removed of the dispensary doctor, that are horrible and awful. . . .  
.....I sometimes wish to God I hadn't a soul and then I could give myself up to putting these lads on the stage. God, wouldn't they hop  
(Synge, 1966 283 in Gibbons p15)

Well, put them up on the stage he did and they did hop. A more recent renewal of this idea is popular T.V. show *Father Ted*. It is interesting that the *Playboy* and *Father Ted* have both come about to coincide with a time of revolution in political and social values and ideals. This being reflected in the workings of the G.A.A.. Change is now upon us so we can come out of hiding and say what we have to, or maybe what we can get away with. It is interesting that the Clergy are the focus of this satirical view of Irish society considering their influence on Irish society in general and on the G.A.A. in particular. I will discuss this in the next chapter.

## The Church

Probably the single greatest influence on any organisation or socio-political question in Ireland has to be the Catholic Church. As with all other organisations, the G.A.A. sought the approval of the church because they wielded so much power and could dictate public opinion. The following is a passage by Michael Peillon from *Culture and Ideology in Ireland*.

Community versus society .....underlies all of the Church's ideological expressions. .... Brotherhood, solidarity, and altruism are the hallmarks of community, qualities whose achievement requires participation and personalised relationships. By contrast, society conjures up notions of selfishness, impersonality, callousness, and turmoil. One of the tasks the Church sets itself is to foster community against society." ..... This may be what is meant by the idea that the Church tries to act as the conscience of Ireland. (Peillon p.53)

During the late 19th century there was a great deal of suspicion among the Catholic clergy about the republican movement and the republican involvement in some of the newly founded nationalist organisations. The channelling of nationalistic aggression into areas of agrarian reform and cultural awakening relieved the anxiety of the clergy. They had far greater reservations, however, about the Gaelic Athletic Association, which had a weaker connection in those days with the farming community and the land question. This in itself allowed the priests a larger degree of freedom to criticise. "The G.A.A. is of crucial importance in proving the consistency of clerical antipathy to revolution and separatism. They played little part in its inauguration, although, the founders solicited their approval through a circular. Both Dr. Croke and the priests were patrons by invitation only." (O'Shea 1983 p.167)

The priests did not object to the sporting activities of the G.A.A. Instead their problem lay in the association rapidly becoming a Fenian front, which meant that for the first time since the 1860s Fenianism began to acquire an organised network. Many clubs adopted fenian mottos and names for example, 'The Lacken '67s' or the 'Allen Larkin and O'Brien Club'. These were the mildest indications of Fenian connections; increasing IRB control at the centre and at local level was the most significant.

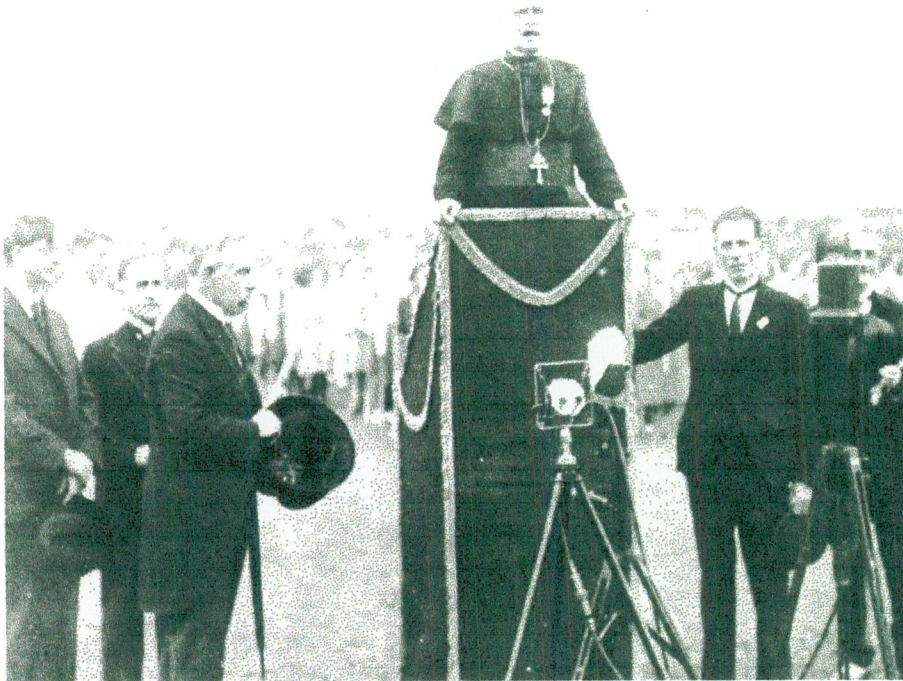
It was ironic that the Fenian executive of the G.A.A. actually proposed a policy of non-interference in politics, a tactic whose sole aim was to sever any connection the sporting organisation had with the National Land League. The priests easily divined this motive, and were decidedly sensitive to extensive Fenian infiltration of the association. (O'Shea 1983 p.169)

A confrontation occurred between clerical and republican interests in the G.A.A. at the National convention of 1887 in Thurles. The priests were verbally abused and physically jostled, the usual result of direct confrontation with the Fenians.

The priests' antipathy to the G.A.A. in 1890 received a further powerful stimulus with the Parnell crisis. The association became predominately Parnellite, partly in response to the leaders' call to the "hillside men". Some of the Parnell



leadership committees were controlled by the IRB. (O'Shea 1983 p.171-175) The result was a split in the association which almost paralysed it.



**Fig. 4 Church Involvement**

Cardinal MacRory at Croke Park in 1928. On extreme left stands Eamon de Valera former civil war leader who went on to dominate Irish politics until the 1970s.

## Politics

By 1895 the G.A.A. was on the verge of extinction after an attendance of only 15 at the 1894 Congress. Archbishop Croke successfully prompted the drafting of a new constitution prohibiting G.A.A. involvement in politics. Characteristically, the prelude to this had been open disagreement between Croke and Bishop Coffey of Kerry over the Fenian Sympathies of the G.A.A.. (de Burca 1984 p. 27)

However, despite this ruling, the G.A.A. could not abstain from having some political standpoints. Many argue that had the G.A.A. devoted itself to being a sporting organisation it would not have survived. The ban against members of the security forces and players of 'foreign games' was probably the most blatant political statement by the G.A.A.. Archbishop Croke illustrates his advocacy of non-militant nationalism with references to this question in his acceptance letter (to Michael Cusack) to be a patron of the G.A.A.. It reads:

One of the most painful, let me assure you, and at the same time, one of the most frequently recurring reflections that, as an Irishmen, I am compelled to make in connection with the present aspect of things in this country, is derived from the ugly and irritating fact that we are daily importing from England, not

only her manufactured goods, which we cannot help doing, since she has practically strangled our own manufacturing appliances, but, together with her fashions, her accents, her vicious literature, her music, her dances, and her manifold mannerisms, her games also, and her pastimes, to the utter discredit of our own grand national sports, and to the sore humiliation, as I believe, of every genuine son and daughter of the old land.

Ball-playing, hurling, football-kicking, according to Irish rules, casting, leaping in various ways, wrestling, handi-grips, top-pegging, leap-frog, rounders, tip-in-the-hat, and all such favourite exercises and amusements of men and boys may now be said to be not only dead and buried, but in several localities to be entirely forgotten and unknown. And what have we got in their stead? We have got such foreign and fantastic field sports as lawn tennis, polo, croquet, cricket, and the like- very excellent, I believe, and health-giving exercises in their way, still not racy of the soil, but rather alien, on the contrary, to it, as are indeed, for the most part, the men and women who first imported, and still continue to patronise them.

(Dr. Croke December 18, 1884 in de Burca 1984 p.18)

It is quite clear from this letter that Arch Bishop Croke if not militant was certainly anti-British. This attitude, which was probably that of the majority of the clergy, was founded on the grounds that the Catholic Church would be the social and political as well as the spiritual guidance of Ireland.

Even after the decision by the G.A.A. to abstain from involvement with the IRB, the republican movement and the G.A.A. were closely linked. Because of the shortage of arms, IRB members used hurley sticks for drilling and training. A recent reminder of this was in Neil Jordan's film *Michael Collins*, when Collins spoke to a crowd in a rural Irish town while protected by men who carried hurleys. Here the hurley is a symbol of Irishness. Maybe its use as a weapon is symbolic of the G.A.A. as a nationalist weapon. In Jordan's original draft of the screenplay for the film *Michael Collins* he considered having a hurling match being played on 'Bloody Sunday' instead of a gaelic football match because of the distinctive Irishness of the game. (Neil Jordan 1996) The actual event involved on 'Bloody Sunday' November 21, 1920 was a 'Black and Tans' invasion of Croke Park during a gaelic football match. They fired at will in reprisal after several British agents were shot dead that morning by Collins' squad. The result of the 'Black and Tans' spree was 14 dead and many injured. One of those killed was Michael Hogan, who was playing in goal for Tipperary that day. The famous Hogan Stand in Croke Park is named after him. Another interesting fact about Croke Park, the headquarters of the G.A.A., is that Hill 16 (a popular terrace which has recently been renovated) was so named because the original hill was built from rubble collected in Dublin after the 1916 Easter Rising.



In more recent times, the political situation has not had a major influence except in Northern Ireland, where political and sectarian tensions remain. In the south, the political situation has lost much of its relevance for players as the Association has become more of a solely sporting organisation.

.....In county Down, the club houses of the small hurling community on the Ards peninsula have been repeatedly burned out. Further north, in Belfast's St. Gall's club.....in the mid-1980s' two British soldiers apprehended by the mourners at a Republican funeral were dragged behind the stands at Casement Park on the Andersontown Road and killed.....The ground itself is named after a Republican hero, the British traitor Roger Casement.  
(Humphries 1996 pp.104/105)

I recently visited Crossmaglen Co. Armagh when I was researching my thesis. Since the early 1970s the local G.A.A. grounds have been occupied by the British Army, and Crossmaglen Rangers Gaelic Football Club now play overlooked by a large and intimidating helicopter base. The club and the British Army have been locked in a long-standing dispute over the issue. Joe Pilkington is the editor of the sports section in the local paper, *The Crossmaglen Examiner*, which has been referred to as *The Cross Examiner*, suggestive of a connotation that is only too real for some of the local community. I asked him did he, as a native of County Clare in the Republic, notice a difference in the G.A.A. north and south. He said, "around Crossmaglen, which is a predominately nationalist area the G.A.A. means a lot to the local community". He said that because of the British presence, and with it blatant intimidation, many people have become closely knit to the G.A.A. in an effort to overcome this intimidation. In his opinion, the intimidation has hardened peoples resolve and has made them more aware of identity. He claims that there is probably a greater sense of pride among players in the north because of the oppression they suffer, for example army presence at matches, helicopters flying low over the field and harassment of supporters have been common place. Once a helicopter landed on the pitch during a match. Pilkington mentioned that bombs have exploded nearby during games which is obviously not very encouraging for parents to allow their children to come and play there. (Quinlan 11-1 1997) Tom Humphries writes of the odd loyalist splinter-group which has denounced the G.A.A. as a "pan nationalist front of which all members are legitimate targets." (Humphries 1996 P. 117)

The irony of the Crossmaglen story lies in the fact that it was 'Con Short', a member of the local club who originally proposed the lifting of the ban at congress in 1971. Then shortly afterwards, the British army built their security base on the Crossmaglen Rangers Football grounds. Protests ensued over the erection of the base but to no avail. The problems however, have resulted in a greater club spirit. Participation by locals in club activities is stronger than in the Republic according to Joe Pilkington. He pointed out the huge support for cultural side aspects of the



G.A.A.. One of these is 'Scór' which is an Irish traditional music competition connected with the G.A.A.. In many areas throughout Ireland, Scór has lost much of its importance as a cultural event but in the South Armagh area it is still very strong. Another interesting fact is that most of the clubs in south Armagh run Irish language classes and Irish dancing classes. In Crossmaglen, there is a two week summer school in Irish every year.(Quinlan 11-1-1997) This all comes down to expression of identity in the face of suppression. It is evident from walking around the town that the G.A.A. does command much support, especially at the moment when they are preparing for the All Ireland Club Championship semi-finals having won the Ulster Championship. Children are wearing Crossmaglen Rangers track suits whereas if they were in Dublin they would probably be wearing a Manchester United shirt.

The extent to which the G.A.A. in Armagh exert their political views is evident in the Cathaoirleach Eoin O'Duفاigh's letter to the delegate in the booklet issued to those attending the Annual Convention of the Armagh County G.A.A. for 1996.

He writes: "It should also be a demand on the British government for the repatriation of Irish prisoners immediately. This should be done on humanitarian grounds as a meaningful gesture to the prisoners families and the peace process."(O'Duفاigh 1996) It is debatable whether or not Archbishop Croke would have been in favour of this kind of political outspokenness.

The issue of prisoners and the G.A.A. is an interesting one and was best illustrated during the hunger strikes of 1981. Within the prison system, republican prisoners used the G.A.A. as a means of identity and communication as well as to intimidate the prison officials. If they could not fight for Irish freedom on the outside they were determined to express their Irishness on the inside.

The hunger strikes of 1980 and 1981 were a difficult time for the G.A.A. in the North. It was drawn into the political situation because of their traditional allegiance to the nationalist cause. Many of the prisoners were members of the G.A.A. and so the G.A.A. had an obligation to support them. This manifested itself in fund-raising and supplying prisoners with jerseys. Whole nationalist communities pledged their support to the hunger strikers, and as I have already shown, the G.A.A. is an integral part of those communities.

During the late 1970s and early 1980s the playing of gaelic games was outlawed in Long Kesh prison. In so doing the authorities succeeded only in glamourising the games, which then went underground.

Like the Irish language, the games came to be seen as weapons of Irish self-expression, just as they had in the Fenian days in the late nineteenth century.....It seemed so natural that, when the prisoners were planning their great escape of 1983, the heavily symbolic date originally fixed for the break-out was that of the All Ireland football final of that year.

(Humphries 1996 pp.122/123)



While the official line would have been that the issue was a humanitarian one, republicanism was the real issue. This kind of nationalistic use of the G.A.A. is exactly what the clergy in the late 19th century were opposed to. However, the G.A.A. were careful not to cross the boundary between moral support and actual endorsement of the republican cause. This could have undermined its status as a sporting organisation. Possibly this traditional obligation of the G.A.A. is inhibiting its development as a sporting body, which I believe many of its members strive towards.

Tom Humphries tells us further on that the prison authorities have become much more lenient towards the playing of Gaelic games, especially since the intense heat went out of the political situation. Ironically prisoners and warders alike take a passing interest in both Gaelic games and English soccer achieving some sort of uneasy common ground.(Humphries 1996 p.123)

There is irony in the device by which the G.A.A. has achieved its sense of place which I have described in chapter two. "The county, a concept born as an English administrative convenience, became the defining mark of place in the Irish mind."(Humphries 1996 P.7)

The very different concerns of the G.A.A. in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland highlight the traditional versus the modern opinions on what the Association stands for. In the south, the main concern is sport and culture. In the North there is the added element of politics which dominates. It is interesting that the G.A.A., despite having official standpoints like non-interference in politics, will turn a blind eye to their members doing the opposite as in the prison issue.(Humphries 1996 p.105) The G.A.A. made it clear in their Centenary booklet in 1984 that the nationalistic motivation of the Association was not obsolete. Concern was expressed that there was an increasing lack of respect among Irish people for their heritage and the nation. While I do not think that the G.A.A. are in favour of militant republicanism, I believe their basic ideology would be sympathetic to nationalism.



## The Education System

Until recently the religious orders had complete control of the schools system in Ireland. The education system of the newly founded state was heavily influenced by the religious orders and the dominant political ideals. There was a general anti - British, nationalist ideology which underlay all facets of Irish life including politics, the Catholic Church and the education system. In the case of education children were encouraged to play Gaelic Games as opposed to "Foreign Games." The ban on players or spectators of foreign games from joining the G.A.A. in my opinion played a major part in convincing children that the G.A.A. was the best option.

Consequently, the G.A.A. had the run of the school timetable if not of the school-child's imagination. Gaelic games were pencilled in as part of the daily dosage of Catholic, nationalistic conservatism which would keep the country pure. Two hours of Gaelic games a week and soccer won't be a problem in the home, Madam. (Humphries, 1996, p. 56)

In this case I think there is a definite promotion of a particular cultural ideology without consideration for the opinions of the broader society. Tradition versus modernity caused problems here since it resulted in much of the broad modern society holding the clergy and with it the G.A.A. in contempt. No small indication of this is the lack of sympathy shown to the church since the uncovering of many of their members abusing their responsibilities in the recent paedophile cases. This brings us back to the irreverence to the church featured in Synge's *Playboy Of The Western World* and in *Father Ted*. In the immediate context the force feeding of Catholicism, Gaelic games and de Valera's Fianna Fáil achieved results in the forties and fifties, but with time and greater exposure to alternative social ideals, many Irish people became quite bitter with the rigidity of Irish society. By its nature the establishment is conservative and bound to tradition, so resistance is the automatic response. I believe, however, that change is necessary if development is to take place.

## Change and Development

The G.A.A. has survived since 1884 on the basis of its nationalist element and its success as a means whereby ordinary people in the towns and parishes of Ireland could express their sense of place and their pride in games and culture unique to them. The association did however encounter difficulties along the way. Adapting to these difficulties was vital to their development as a sporting organisation. With the social structure of Ireland changing rapidly since the 1950s this, most recent period, has been the one which I feel has posed most difficulty and need for change.

In 1971, the G.A.A. published the 'Report of the Commission on the G.A.A.'

This was the culmination of a massive amount of research into the social demographics of a modern Ireland and recommendation on how the G.A.A. should cope with these statistics. The report was concerned with the structure and organisation of the G.A.A.. Under the following headings : Structure, Finance Management, Grounds, Communications, Youth, Hurling, Discipline, Sponsorship, and a list of recommendations on the games which included hurling rules, football rules, handball, rounders, coaching, competitions and camogie.

There was also a section of 'Guides on Club Administration' which dealt with club constitution, annual general meeting, financial administration, committee procedure, duties of club officers, sub-committees, publicity and programme.(G.A.A. Commission 1971)

It has been the recommendation of this commission that has laid the foundation for the development of the G.A.A. as a competitive sporting organisation.

A further review of the G.A.A. took place during the run up to the Centenary Year of 1984. *A Century of Service* was published as a celebration of 100 years of hurling and football and their relationship to politics, religion, and culture. In the section 'The G.A.A. and the Future' there is a list of what the G.A.A. considered important issues affecting their development. Included as important areas for consideration were the following.

The growth of urban areas of the East coast has been at the expense of the remainder of the country. It has led to sprawling suburbia, most with little sense of identity, urban crime and lawlessness of an unacceptable level and a growing lack of respect for property and authority..... The G.A.A. club, which is based in a particular area can help give civic pride and unity to the urban area.



**Fig.5 Camogie**  
Ladies version of hurling.



Due to increasing unemployment, especially in urban areas, "there will be huge numbers of people with leisure time, not just at weekends but for much longer periods. The G.A.A. can play a very important role in giving people something to do in a sporting, a cultural and a special sense.

"According to the latest figures(1984) over 50 per cent of the population of the 26 counties is under the age of 25. This means that Ireland has a greater proportion of young people than any other country in Europe. This will continue for some time and will have major implications for the planners in educational, social, and all related fields."(Ó Maolmhichil, 1984, p.94)

Recent G.A.A. publications have indicated a response to the challenge of a youth market. Such magazines as *Gaelsport*, and *The Championship* have been consistent with the developments in marketing of the games by Guinness and Bank of Ireland.

This is, in a sense, a reconciliation between tradition and modernity. Further to this is the development in the area of satellite television coverage of Gaelic Games matches. The growth of media technology which was a concern of the Association in 1984, was on the agenda of Congress in 1996.(Smith, 1996, p.127) It is, encouraging that the G.A.A. are dealing with the issue in a positive way.

Along with these external forces, the G.A.A. has internal problems. Despite the threats of a changing society, many G.A.A. people consider themselves above these problems and are reluctant to change. Many patrons of the G.A.A. are suspicious of adapting to methods that might be looked on as being foreign methods, or more specifically English methods. This would be mainly in the area of sponsorship and professionalism. A further result of the neglect of traditional values in the eyes of the G.A.A. is the emphasis of modern society on materialism. (Ó Maolmhichil, 1984, p.94) The G.A.A. identifies this as a challenge to the broad cultural spectrum, and more specifically to themselves in the area of professionalism.

... does a profit-orientation pose a threat to the sports themselves, turning them into commercial spectacles which cease to be sports in any meaningful sense of that term? Is there a tendency for professional sports organisations to become highly formalised and bureaucratic organisations? What are the nature and the consequences of the career in sport? Does it, like education, represent an avenue whereby boys from the working classes can climb permanently to higher levels of wealth and social standing than might not otherwise be possible for them? Or does it lead simply to a temporary elevation with the consequence that they become highly dissatisfied once their short playing careers are over - perhaps because they are not qualified for occupations which would provide them with the financial means for obtaining a standard and a style of living commensurate with that to which they have become accustomed as players? And what about professional sportsmen who never make it to the top? What happens to them when their playing days are over?

(Dunning, 1971, p. xx)

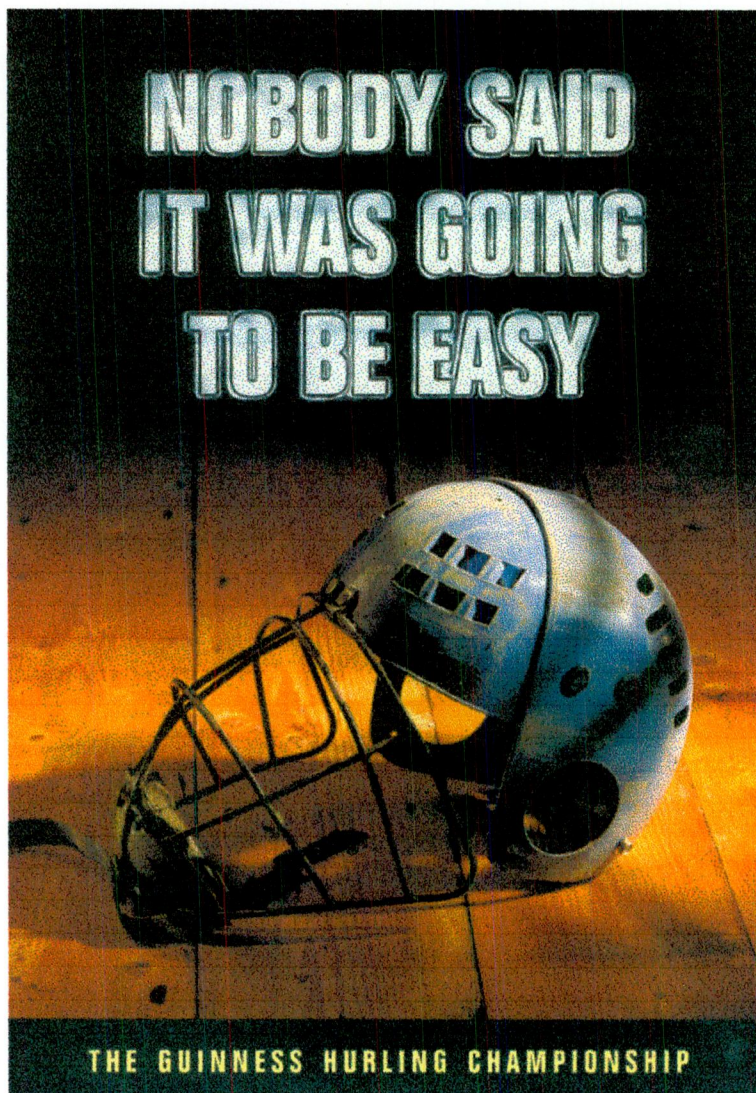
These are the problems posed by professionalism in sport according to Eric Dunning. The inspiration for his piece would have been the game of soccer but the main themes would be common to all sports including Gaelic Games. However, added

complications arise in the G.A.A. including the ideals that the organisation was founded on - their very definite declaration of Independence from all other sports organisations, with the political background and amateurism being important ingredients. Apart from the almost fundamentalist loyalty to the traditional G.A.A. expressed by many there are also many sub-loyalties to one or other of the games. Tom Humphries, for example, says that hurling is ghettoized in some counties. "The very fact of its frailty and neglect is a cause of tenderness in the sensibilities of the G.A.A." The game's roots and its complex knotting of history and tradition have been at the cause of its own neglect. There is a definite rivalry between Gaelic football people and hurling people. The differences between both codes are defined by the areas in which they are played. (Humphries, 1996 p.38)

Recently the differences between the games have become more evident and more publicised in the media. Hurling and football have become separated. This is mainly due to on one hand hurling being promoted as a mystical game of ancient skills played with almost poetic qualities (thanks to the recent Guinness Campaign and the eloquence of Liam Griffin, the Wexford manager) and on the other hand football reverting to a primitive rough and tumble grudge game (no thanks to the recent upsurge in on field violence).

Previous to Guinness becoming the official sponsor of the Hurling Championship, G.A.A. advertising was, to put it mildly, less than dramatic. Now Guinness have produced a high quality advertising campaign which is designed to glamourise hurling in a "macho" way. The television campaign is treated in an epic manner. It opens with images of players battling on a muddy field accompanied by a roaring crowd interspersed with clips of a muddy sliotar, a smashed hurley and a helmet falling on a wooden dressing-room floor to high pitched choral tones. The sequence then reaches a crescendo as the camera circles a man putting on his helmet before he does battle. A metal plate clangs to the ground with the words "Nobody said it was going to be easy" cast into it. It is as if the advertisement is the introductory sequence in a film where the hero prepares for war. He is having mental flashes of previous battles and remembers the pain, the excitement, the fear and the glory. The adrenaline pumps, his heart is pounding as he dons his armour and thinks of the challenge before him. There is no mention of the sponsor until the end when the logo appears. The product now is the game of hurling. Even though this advertisement brought hurling out into the limelight it was not without its critics, as Seán Moran told me, it suggested a violent image that the G.A.A. wanted to avoid. (Quinlan, 9-1-1997) On balance, I believe it worked. The G.A.A. has been given a complete marketing overhaul, which is a far cry from the days of players' endorsements of farm products. It is, I feel, a direct response to soccer marketing, such as the Nike and





**Fig.10 Guinness Ad.**

This is an example of the Guinness campaign in promoting the Hurling championship.

Adidas campaigns, and the popular "Eat Football, Sleep Football, Drink Coca Cola" campaign of the 1996 European Soccer Championships. Slogans such as "This man can break hearts at seventy yards," and "this man can level whole counties in one second flat" are examples of those used by Guinness to promote the hurling championship.

Another stroke of fortune for the G.A.A. and hurling has been the personalities and range of teams involved over the last few years. Wexford County hurling team won last year's All Ireland. The orchestrator of Wexford's success on and off the field was their flamboyant manager Liam Griffin. Never before has a hurling manager been given so much media coverage. He has appeared on Ireland's two biggest chat-shows,

the Late Late Show and Kenny Live and has amused and charmed the nation on behalf of hurling. He attempts to cram every last drop of the passion he obviously has for the game into every interview. He has described the game as having magical properties.

Gaelic football has received much bad press recently due to violence on the pitch. (The 1996 Gaelic Football All Ireland final between Mayo and Meath will be remembered for the on - pitch fight between players). This problem has been addressed in 'A Century of Service'. This was attributed by the G.A.A. to an overall lack of respect for authority in general in our society which was spilling onto the field. Their suggested solution in 1984 was that the association should make a special plan to all former inter-county players to get involved with a G.A.A. team. Especially in urban areas where they could exert an influence over younger players and deter them from a wayward path. (Ó Maolmhichil, 1984, p.94)

Obviously from the events of the 1996 all-Ireland football final the problem of on the field violence has, if anything increased. Early in the game it deteriorated into a huge punch-up resulting in two sendings off and later 15 suspensions due to video evidence. This kind of thing has become very publicised recently and has been highlighted as a problem in Gaelic football. A point was made in an Irish times editorial that:

In the overall context of Gaelic football, the All-Ireland final incidents may serve some real purpose if they force the association to have another look at the rules of the game and the standards of refereeing. The introduction of instantaneous video assistance during games, which could be relayed to referees by radio link, might also go some way to preventing violent play. The G.A.A. has proved that it can embrace change by building one of the most modern stadiums in Europe. Its games need as much thought and care.  
(Irish times, 23-10-1996)

In an interview with Seán Moran of the Irish Times I asked him if he agreed with the theory that on-field violence was a symptom of an increasingly lawless society. He acknowledged that it was an argument but for him it did not hold much water. He said that a Gaelic games referee was far more likely to have his authority undermined than a referee in any other code. Moran suggested that the problem is within the association and is deeper than reflecting a breakdown of authority in society in general. He said that the problem is not a new one, it has just been highlighted by increased media attention and comparison with greater respect for authority in other sports like soccer in particular and rugby. The problem is the questionable standard of refereeing in Gaelic football. A contributing problem is the vagueness of the rules in relation to physical contact. It is within the power of the G.A.A. to address this problem.

In the Irish Times of October 23, 1996, an editorial entitled 'Cosmetic Exercise' said that the fuss over the incident during the football final was deemed to be just



that, a “cosmetic exercise”. The players involved were given suspensions and a bit of bad press, but in real terms they were penalised very lightly as most of their suspensions will be up before they play next.(Irish Times, 23-10-1996) Although the G.A.A. did not handle this incident very well they seem to be more cautious about the image of hurling. Concern about the “macho” Guinness campaign indicates this. The apparent lack of attention given to the incident as a serious issue is emphasised in the ‘Cosmetic Exercise’ article as follows:

It is hardly reassuring that the first official comment from Croke Park after the recent replay came in a television interview 24 hours later when the association's president, Jack Boothman, remarked that “there is a latent violence in Irish society”, in attempting to explain the unsavoury incidents of the previous day. Although Mr. Boothman later went much further and condemned the incidents as savagery, the damage was already done to the association's image.(Irish Times, 23-10-1996)



**Fig.11 Ladies Football**

A major effort is being made by the G.A.A. to promote Ladies Football and Camogie.

## Pay for Play

The issue of professionalism is another consideration of the G.A.A. in view of changing social values. Compromise seems to have been made with the introduction of G.A.A. College Scholarships. Meath star Trevor Giles was the first Gaelic Football player to avail of the scheme at University College, Dublin. The U.C.D graduates committee have organised a successful G.A.A. scholarship scheme over the past few years as have some of the other Universities as the country. This involves financial assistance for quality players who are studying in the college as an incentive to play for the college team. The scheme is important in helping players to keep involved in

the games while pursuing a career at the same time. Possibly these scholarships may in time initiate some degree of professionalism in the G.A.A. in general.(Hussey, Dec. 1996, p.23)

Another area whereby players can gain financially is in the indorsement of products. Seán Moran believes this might be popular (providing that there be a percentage kick back to a team fund). He said that he envisages a limited professionalism in this way.(Quinlan, 9-1-1997) One player who has led the way in this area is Jason Sherlock. The cheeky 19 year old took the G.A.A. world by storm in the summer of 1995. He proved to be in ideal pop sports star. His flamboyance on the field of play was enough to grab attention in itself but was added to by his youth and physical appearance, tiny in stature with the facial features of his Vietnamese father. The hype that surrounded him was phenomenal. The media attention made him a hero for all Dubs. His face was on every newspaper and T.V. sports programme. Hill 16 rang out with cries of Jayo, Jayo, Jayo. He was the first Gaelic player to make a real impact in the area of product endorsement, his most major promotion being for 'Pennies'. Moran suggests that Jason Sherlock was very aware of the commercial possibilities and evaded through a technicality the G.A.A.'s rule concerning professionalism. The rule allows players to only endorse products associated with their own occupation so Sherlock, as a student on a soccer scholarship, managed to avoid the restrictions since his official occupation was sport. An added advantage for Jason Sherlock was the fact that he achieved his prominence in such a popular county as Dublin, because this meant his potential marketability was much greater than someone in a rural county.(Quinlan, 9-1-1997)

The ability to maintain this sort of marketability depends on prominence and exposure in your sport. The nature of Gaelic games does not allow this because of the structure of the league and Championship. The league takes place over the winter months and is low profile. It is considered to be a warm-up for the Championship which is on a knock out basis, so by the time teams get noticed and exposed to media attention there are only about four left in contention. So, unless a team makes it through to the All Ireland semi-finals, they fade into obscurity, as did Dublin in 1995 and with them the Legend of Jayo.

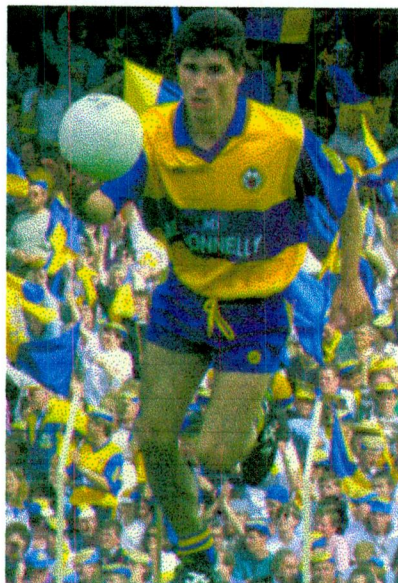
This problem is being addressed at the moment especially in hurling with the 1997 Leagues and championship being run simultaneously. Therefore the season will be presented as a coherent whole so players will not be left redundant in July if they do not have championship success. Seán Moran foresees something similar happening in Gaelic football in the not too distant future.(Quinlan, 9-1-1997)

In the opening letter of the Cathoirleach of the Armagh G.A.A. Eoin O'Duffaigh referred to the push by some people to introduce professionalism into the



games. He vehemently condemned this and aired his disgust at the suggestion that players should ask for payment for playing their national games. He went on to deny accusations that officials and county board delegates receive payment of any kind. There is indeed much argument among G.A.A. people as to whether some form of professionalism should be introduced or not.(O'Duffaigh, 1996)

Because of the pattern in other sports it is inevitable that financial rewards will be introduced. While the official G.A.A. standpoint is against it, in America where the G.A.A. is very strong among the Irish-American community, players from Ireland are paid regularly for playing for American teams. But also in Dublin where there are no parish rules, players have been enticed by financial deals. Moran warns of the danger of this. To be able to exploit properly your playing prowess, you have to be involved in a successful team. For players to migrate to successful teams means the local loyalty which has underpinned the games following for over 100 years will break down. A situation could arise "where maybe between half a dozen and ten counties could, between material resources and population resources, be able to corner the market in Gaelic football and less in hurling. They could attract all the best players."(Quinlan, 9-1-1997) The club, county identification that has maintained the Association's success so far could be destroyed and this could be extremely dangerous for the G.A.A.. The real issue is to find a balance between the traditional values that have served them for so long, and modern developments that might make the association more popular to the broader society. Both have their advantages and disadvantages.



**Fig.2 Gaelic Football**

The All Ireland Final is one of the most popular events in the Irish sporting calendar

## Conclusion

The G.A.A. is an organisation with members of all ages and occupations. I know from experience that as well as having various different backgrounds many of the members have varying opinions on what the G.A.A. should represent. For some the G.A.A. is important as a symbol of Irish nationalism, for others pride in their own club overrides all other aspects of the association. Others look on the G.A.A. merely as a sporting organisation and as a leisure facility. Some then do not look beyond the game that is played in their area as being important. In other words, for hurling people, only hurling matters. Because of this diversity among members the G.A.A. faces the challenge of encompassing and representing all its members.

This, together with the tensions and competition with other sporting organisations has created great problems for the G.A.A.. Over the last century the G.A.A. has encountered and overcome many obstacles. The fact that many of the problems were internal is not surprising considering the ideology of community versus society and tradition versus modernity. As I have shown, the constant opposition of these forces is responsible for much of the tensions in Irish society and in the G.A.A. The result is opposing opinions on practically everything based on the questioning of these values. As Ed Maloney, editor of the Northern Tribune said:

There is a very sour joke in Irish politics that whenever an organisation is set up the number one item on the agenda is the split and unfortunately history has proved that all too often. The problem is the ideological purity of Irish republicanism. People can never live up to the ideals set by their founding fathers way back in the misty past. (Maloney, *Southbank Show*, 27-11 1996)

Although the G.A.A. is not a political organisation, its founding ideals and the existing relevance of those ideals for some members would classify it as having political undertones. I believe that many of the tensions within the organisation can be traced back to the conflict between the ideals initiated by the nationalistic founding fathers and the so-called forward-thinking of those who want the G.A.A. to compete in the arena of soccer and other sports. For their own reasons all parties claim to have the best intentions of the association at heart. There is then the suspicion as to whether certain parties have just their personal interests at heart. The development of the association seems to be for the G.A.A. to find a balance between tradition and modernity.

I think that the G.A.A. are moving in the right direction in the areas of sponsorship, advertising, media coverage and the recent developments of the facilities at Croke Park. The result is a greater awareness among the general public of Gaelic Games. To ensure further development, the G.A.A. needs to attract the attention of young children, and to use the merits of the games to do so rather than political ideals. I think this is happening in many areas with training and youth development

The G.A.A. should not lose sight of the traditional values that have maintained



it thus far. I believe the "club" to be the nucleus of the organisation and that this should be emphasised. The importance of the G.A.A. club as a representation of a "sense of place" is invaluable. The intense rivalry between local teams is evidence that this pride of place is still alive and well. As a member of a small community in rural Ireland I am aware of the importance of the G.A.A. as a defining mark on the social structure of Ireland. The fact that people are identified by their allegiance to a team is testimony to the social significance of the G.A.A.. But again there is the contest of culture versus society. The culture is the small rural parish community who support their local G.A.A. religiously and pride themselves in their strong sense of place. This, however, seems to be at the expense of the broader society resulting in a gulf between the small rural community and the rest of the country which includes urban areas and even other small rural communities. In G.A.A. terms this translates in a lack of overall cohesion within the organisation.

On a cultural identity level the association plays a major role in the distinctiveness of the games. Apart from the politics, the very skills involved make them distinctly Irish. As far as nationalism is concerned, I think that the G.A.A. should be distinguished from their nationalist beginnings in the same way as many of today's political parties are. For example Fianna Fáil in 1997 bears little resemblance to De Valera's Irregular army of the civil war of 1921 - 1922. Similarly, while the founding principles of the G.A.A. are important and distinctive they must be treated in view of the circumstances of their time.

The cultural and traditional values of Ireland seem to over-ride social and modern challenges. This, I think, can result in inhibiting the development of a society and in turn the organisations that depend on that society. The G.A.A. needs to concentrate on promoting society and modernity to counter the imbalance while taking care not to undermine its strengths, for example the club, county structure. This will ensure that the organisation maintains its status as a means of identity while also developing as a competitive sporting organisation.



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