



Jim Carney

This Sporting Life

Memories of Corofin's third County crown – 40 years ago

THIS YEAR marks the 40th anniversary of Corofin's third County Senior Football Championship title, which was won on September 11th 1977 in a surprisingly one-sided final against Moycullen, at Pearse Stadium.

It was a very important day in the history of the Corofin club, for while Gaelic football was played in an organised way in the area as far back as 1887 the Galway SFC roll of honour showed Corofin on only two titles before 1977.

After a specially arranged match between Corofin and Belclare, played in Anbally (behind Varden's Pub, now Maloney's) on Easter Sunday 1925, the impetus grew for a united effort which bore fruit seven years later with 3-5 to 1-3 victory over Tuam Stars at Parkmore, Tuam. That 1932 Championship triumph was inspired mainly by the legendary Paddy ("Staff") Stephens's great powers of motivation and a Man of the Match display in the final by Dermot Mitchell, winner of an All-Ireland SFC medal with Galway in 1934.

Corofin's second title was won in 1946 in a low-scoring county final, again at Parkmore, Tuam: a four-point win over the defending champions, Ballinasloe, on a cold, wet, windy November day, 1-3 to 0-2.

So, the 1977 title-winning team captained by Maurice Burke, and with Jimmy Comer manager and Cathal Furey trainer, would be ending a 'famine' that lasted 31 years.

It's remarkable to think that Corofin jumped so spectacularly from three county titles to 18. The club's golden era – 1991 to the present time – has produced 15 titles. In that time too, Corofin twice won the All-Ireland Club Championship and had seven victories in the Connacht Club Championship, along with three All-Ireland club seven-a-side titles, three county junior titles, 15 U-21 (A) titles, 14 MFC (A) titles and two All-Ireland Féile (U-14) titles. Ladies Gaelic football

achievements in all grades are also of outstanding merit.

In 1977, Corofin played four games to win the Frank Fox Cup. They had a big win over Fr Griffin's first time out, 2-15 to 0-6; a tight contest with neighbours Caherlistrane, 0-12 to 0-10, a hard-earned semi-final win over Dunmore MacHales, 1-12 to 2-6, and the county final was little more than a lap of honour: Corofin 1-9 Moycullen 0-3.

The crucial result was the defeat of Dunmore in the semi-final at Tuam Stadium. The MacHales had knocked out Killererin and they led Corofin by two points at half-time, 2-2 to 0-6. Corofin rose to the occasion in the second half with their goal, by Francis Niland from a pass by Jimmy Duggan, the score that booked their ticket to the county final.

Moycullen had shocked Tuam Stars in their semi-final, 1-8 to 1-6, after earlier knocking out Monivea-Abbey, 2-8 to 1-5, and Annaghdown, 0-8 to 1-4, but Corofin were vastly superior in the final.

Jimmy Duggan's early goal finished the game as a contest and Moycullen did not score in the second half although playing with the wind.

Corofin captain Maurice Burke was a 1970 All-Ireland MFC and 72 All-Ireland U-21 winner, and he played in the 1973 All-Ireland SFC final won by Cork. Three young players who starred for Corofin in the 1977 SFC campaign, Leo Higgins and brothers Oliver and Gerry Burke, won All-Ireland minor medals in 1976.

A very important medal was added to Jimmy Duggan's collection, after playing for the county since 1966, the year he won Hogan Cup, Connacht SFC and All-Ireland SFC medals.

The President of the GAA, Con Murphy, a Cork man, was a guest of Galway Football Board at the county final and he joined Board chairman Tom Cunningham and the donor of the new Frank Fox Cup, Eddie O'Connell, for the



1977 COUNTY S.F. CHAMPIONS, COROFIN. At back, from left: Brian Noone (R.I.P.), Francis Niland, Pádraig Glynn, Frank Furey, Eugene McCartan, Pat Steede, Jimmy Duggan, Gerry Burke, Leo Higgins, Pat Curley. In front: Jimmy Bane, Joe Leonard, Ger Hanley, Frank Morris, Maurice Burke, capt., Joe Stephens, Jim Burke, Oliver Burke, Jimmy Sice. This picture was taken before a league game; in the County Championship final, Martin Murphy played at left full-back.



DOWN MEMORY LANE to 2002, at the Corofin GAA Social honouring their Silver Jubilee heroes, the team of 1977. At back, from left: Joe Stephens, Ollie Burke, Jimmy Comer (manager), Pat Curley, Ger Keane, Leo Higgins, Noel Higgins, Pat Burke, Frank Niland, Mrs Mary Furey (for Cathal) and Martin Keane. Middle row: Frank Furey, Pat McHugh, Pádraig Glynn, Frank Morris, Eugene McCartan, Jimmy Duggan, Gerry Burke, Tom Murphy, Pat Steede, Jim Burke, Liam Mannion (selector) and Ger Murphy. In front: Teresa Glynn (for Gerry Hanley), Jimmy Sice, Joe Leonard, Danny Ludden, Brian Noone, Maurice Burke, capt.; Jimmy Bane, Hugh Broderick, John Joe Forde and Mrs Eileen Costello-Conneely (for Joe Costello, R.I.P.).

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presentation ceremony.

Maurice Burke told me that while the final was easier than they expected, they had to put in huge effort to get past Caherlistrane and Dunmore, which left them battle-hardened for the decider.

"Jimmy Comer had us well up for it and we had enjoyed

Cathal Furey's training which included sessions on weights, long before it became common. Cathal was ahead of his time as a trainer," Maurice added. "It was an honour for me to be appointed captain."

COROFIN TEAM IN THE COUNTY FINAL: Pat Steede;

Frank Morris, Eugene McCartan, Martin Murphy; Jim Burke, Frank Furey, Joe Stephens; Leo Higgins (0-2), Pádraig Glynn; Ollie Burke (0-1), Jimmy Duggan (1-0), Gerry Hanley (freetaker, 0-4); Maurice Burke (captain), Gerry Burke (0-1), Frank Niland (0-1). Sub., Joe Leonard, for Murphy, inj.

MOYCULLEN: Niall Sweeney; Ml. Darcy, Pádraic

Hurney, Brendan Faherty; Bobby McDonagh, Martin Sullivan, Larry Bohan; Tom McLoughlin, Tom Scully; Pádraic O'Dea (captain), Murt Davoren, Michael Lee; Tom Bohan (0-1), Seán Gavin, Joe McLoughlin (0-2, one free). Subs used: Brendan Darcy, JJ Faherty.

REFEREE: Pat Feerick (Milltown).