



Gala Camogie Summer

Supplement



Hitting
the
Sliotar
a
Mile
High!

From the Heart
Catherine O'Hara

Antrim's Emma Connolly and Emma McMullan with Derry's Karen Kielt and Meabh Boyle at the Ulster Camogie Finals Launch 2009 in Pairc Esler



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There was only one team for these Camogie fans in 2008!

Hello Hurling and Camogie Fans,

To coincide with the start of the Camogie championship we have put together this Camogie Supplement. Limerick and Wexford launch this year's senior championship at Hospital on Saturday at 2.30pm while Champions Cork and Dublin meet at Páirc Ui Rinn at 3.15pm.

Joan O'Flynn will guide the Camogie Association over the next three years. The organisation is in a state of transition at the moment with an enthusiastic staff in Croke Park and more and more players taking up the game every month. As well as covering the Gala Launch of the championship we are including an wide-ranging interview with Ulster Chairperson Catherine O'Hara. Promotion of the game through all the different media outlets is vital for the expansion of any game. Match coverage, photographs, sponsorship launches, fundraising etc are as important as training the teams. We will do as much as we can to help promote the national games of Hurling and Camogie and to keep the games at the top of the national sporting agenda.

Until the next issue (issue 8) best wishes from the team at Hurling World.

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Gala Year for Camogie Players!



Camogie President, Joan O'Flynn with players from the counties at the Launch of the Gala Camogie Championships in Croke Park

The 2009 Gala All Ireland Camogie Championships were launched last week in Croke Park by President Joan O'Flynn, Denise Lord, Customer Service Manager of Gala, and the captains of the 27 counties competing in this year's Championships at senior, intermediate and junior level.

The Gala All Ireland Senior Championship will be the most hotly contested in recent years with eight teams now competing for the O'Duffy Cup. Clare have joined the senior ranks this year following their success in the Gala All Ireland Junior Final in 2008 when

they beat Offaly in a thrilling final in Croke Park. Recognising the awesome contributions of the players involved Gala has introduced an award for the Senior Camogie Player who delivers the most outstanding performance of the season, as voted for by the public - the Gala Performance Award. The player will win the Gala Performance Award trophy and a 5 star luxury weekend break.

Newly-appointed President of the Camogie Association, Joan O'Flynn, said at the launch:

"This year's Championships have been ten years in the making as 2009 marks the

transition from a 12-a side to a 15-a side game. In the last decade there is no doubt the inter-county game has been transformed and the standard has increased to new levels. I welcome too the Gala award which is an excellent addition to our senior championships as it recognises the individual and is not based on an entire team's performance. It enhances Gala's outstanding support for Camogie."

"Attending matches is one of the most important ways of giving recognition to our players and increasing attendances is



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Joan O'Flynn, President of the Camogie Association and Denise Lord, Gala Customer Service Manager with Galway's Aisling Connolly, Tipperary's Geraldine Kinane, Kilkenny's Ann Dalton and Dublin's Louise O'Hara at the Gala Camogie Championship Launch

something we can improve on. In this context, the support of national and local media is much appreciated. Web broadcasting by RTE of some of our senior championships games is an innovative aspect of this year's Gala All Ireland series, while the Sunday Game will show highlights of our weekly senior matches.

"Our relationship with the GAA is also crucial. This year we look forward to staging a number of our championship games in county grounds around the country and, of course, to All Ireland finals day here on September 13th in Croke Park."

Reigning champions Cork will be hoping to move a step closer to the top of the roll of

honour by retaining the crown they won last year for the 23rd time. However, there will be several teams waiting to relieve them of the O'Duffy Cup including last season's runners-up Galway and 2007 winners Wexford who made a significant statement already this season by winning the National League Division One and Two titles. Tipperary is another county looking to add to their five titles accumulated in the early 00's. Newcomers to this year's Senior Championship, Clare, will be out to make a good impression while Dublin will be looking to make an impact in their opening clash away to Cork. Kilkenny too come in search of



Conal Baldwin (son of Down manager, Jim from Killeel) at the Gala Camogie Championship Launch in Croke park.

silverware having built on massive underage successes while Limerick are seeking to get back to All Ireland glory having secured the intermediate title two years ago.

Gala, the Championship's title sponsors are celebrating four years of involvement with the Camogie Association and have pledged their support until 2010.

The Gala All-Ireland championship action begins on Saturday June 20th. At senior level All Ireland champions Cork entertaining Dublin, while Wexford travel to play Limerick. On the same day 12 teams will compete in the junior championship of which Offaly and Antrim are vying to get back to centre stage. Derry will be hoping to impress in the intermediate grade.

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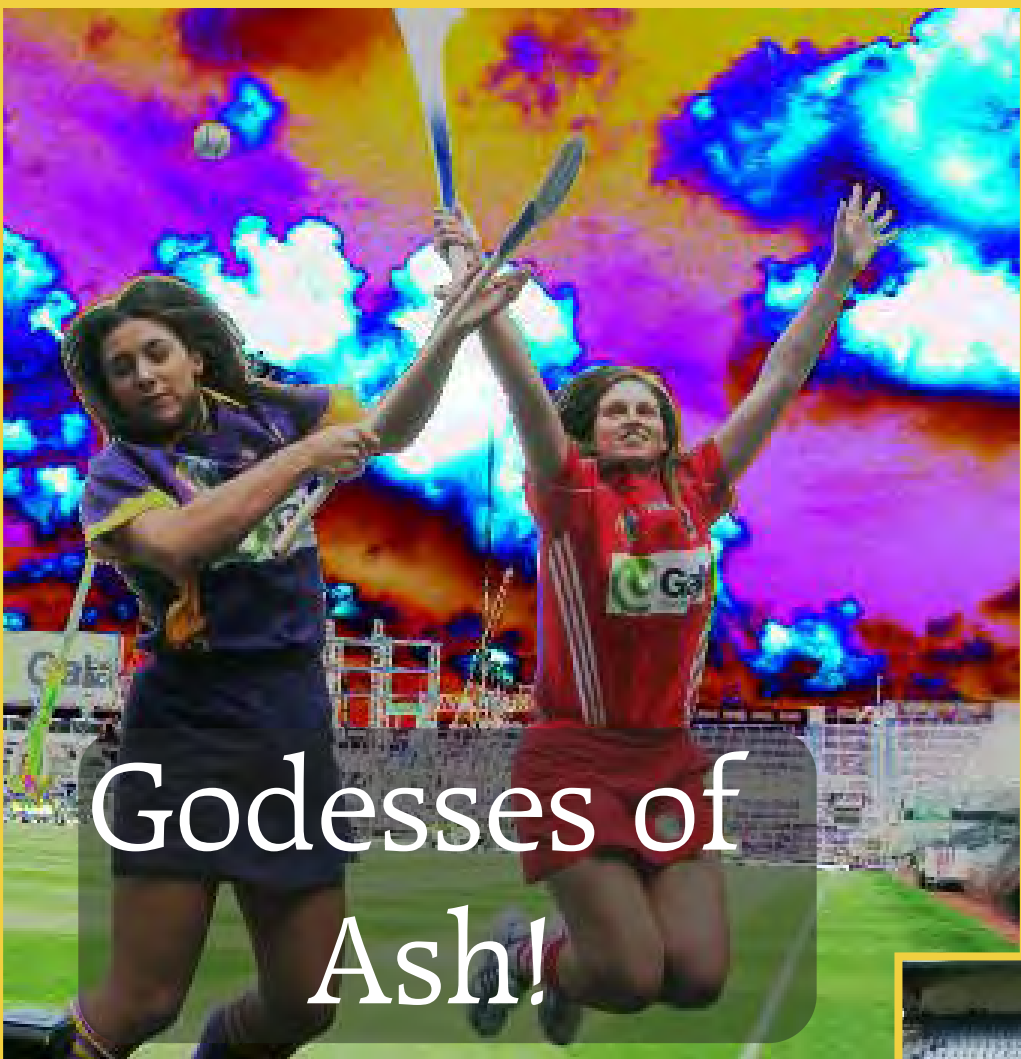
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Godesses of Ash!



The race is on for the O'Duffy Cup!



Managers day off:
Galway's Liam Donoghue, Limerick's Phelim Macken
and Tipperary's Fr Peter Brennan at the Gala Launch.



Dublin player Louise O'Hara



Ann Dalton, Geraldine Kinane,
Louise O'Hara and Aisling Connolly.

Catherine O'Hara

Catherine O'Hara, chairperson of the Ulster Camogie Council gave a wide-ranging interview to Hurling World on the state of Camogie and her hopes for its future.

Where is Camogie now?

Camogie is in a really good place because women in Ireland are in a better position than at any time in their history. Many women lead in both the public and private business sector, in education, in industry, they have a growing voice in politics among other places. Sport is a reflection of all that and more.

The biggest strength of our Association is that, like the GAA we are community lead and community driven. However we cannot afford to be complacent and we are looking at every aspect of the game on and off the field from the top down, bottom up and everything in between.

As an official Association we are over one hundred years old. Sometimes old traditional practices get tired and a bit dated. That's all being looked at. The restructuring of Camogie has been ongoing by the Association and it's going to take 10 years to take it to where it needs to be.

The game on the field is fantastic. Massive strides have been made in recent years in areas of player development with access to improved coaching, training and refereeing. A much bigger input into schools and teacher training, with increased funding for development officers dedicated to the growth and improvement of every aspect of the game of Camogie.

In Ulster under our own unique brand of 'Integration' every course ran by the Ulster

GAA Council is open to all Camogie members. We are invited to sit on many of the sub committees and that is an invaluable learning curve for everyone.

Are there are more than 500 clubs!

Yes that is another reflection of the input of the Development personnel, being able to apply the full time hours needed. However you have to question the health of some of the clubs and how well they are actually delivering on the ground. Have they the capability to attract a young family within modern game expectations and can it compete with other modern sports that are coming into the country. These are hard questions that we need to answer... honestly, if we are to put in place plans to help our overburdened administrators, coaches and mentors at the grass roots level.

If we are able to attract and keep new members, the next generation of mums and dads will bring their children to a well structured, well organized club. Here is where help must be ongoing. Timeless dedication deserves timeless back up. Big show case finals in Croke Park will not be sustainable if we take our collective eye off the club ball. Members very quickly walk away from failing clubs.

This is where the help is now needed, to build on all the great work done on the field, by having as our 'funding partners' demand...



Catherine O'Hara

'fit for purpose' officers, with a clear understanding of 'best practice' off the field.

This is all very positive stuff. It will take a lot of drive and vision to deliver, but we are not short of that in Ulster!

What's your opinion on voluntary versus paid officials?

There is a massive gulf beginning to appear between the paid people who do their jobs fantastically and the thousands of brilliant volunteers...the experts on the ground who sometimes feel marginalized and maybe undervalued. Again it's a case of better communication and consultation. Don't get

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me wrong, they appreciate all the necessary help needed to run a modern game ...so long as the tail doesn't end up wagging the dog. The people we have are the sport and we should never lose sight of that.

You now have got the issues in the newspapers about managers and players and pay and you have to weigh it all up. The expectations of top players and others are huge. Camogie is no different.

Volunteers are the foundation on which to build. I am one. We need to be listened too and consulted. Again good communication at all levels is fundamental to understanding and buying into the 'bigger picture.' Retraining and upskilling of all our members is ongoing and the club should buy into all that is on offer.

The modern volunteers are well educated and highly motivated. From toilet cleaners to barristers we have got them all. They all bring with them unique traits and skills and we need to recognize and tap into all that they offer. It's like a big jigsaw. Its all the little bits which need to fit a little better together. Good communication is key to everything.

What do you think of the relationship between clubs and county boards?

All our units work extremely hard. Their dedication is inspiring. But I feel our units work individually, when they all should knit together to cover all the bases.

Sometimes Clubs just don't understand why County Boards are there. They say 'those people,' the County Boards refer to Provincial Councils as 'that lot', and the Provincial Councils say 'that crowd' in Dublin. That all needs to be addressed. It stops club and county development, it stops Provincial Councils from running at an optimum level.

Everyone seems to feel that somebody is actually putting them down further up. Again communication can be poor.

They are crushed and increasingly disillusioned by all the red tape and ever increasing legalities. We need to uplift our members and put some fun back into it all.

Messages sometimes fail to make their way up or down the lines and as a result everything becomes blurred. Even the reason why we exist or who we are actually serving. All the dots need to be joined up and then we will all see a clearer picture and a reason for being. Everything needs redefined. I feel we are at a cross roads and there is a lot of misunderstanding out there.

Should Antrim be more successful?

As an Antrim person looking at the hurling, football and camogie, I wish with all my heart that we were at the top of the who's who pile of Gaelic giants. From a Camogie point of view, a lot of attention has been focused on development and it is beginning to reap the rewards of over six years of hard work. I hope that they keep pushing on. Antrim were once a Senior County and that's where they are aiming for.

However success needs the full support of everyone regardless of what code it is. The family of Gaelic games in Antrim need to plan together. I am sure the results would be very positive for all concerned.

Antrim are a County that has a city, a population head count way ahead of many of the most successful hurling, football and Camogie counties. Belfast should be able to find a team on it's own to win an All Ireland. We are a great county with massive potential and wonderful volunteers. Again good

FESTIVAL OF CAMOGIE

ULSTER CAMOGIE CHAMPIONSHIP FINALS 2009

PAIRC ESLER, NEWRY, SATURDAY 4TH JULY

Senior
ANTRIM v DERRY
 3.30pm

Junior
TYRONE v MONAGHAN
 1.15pm

Over 40's
ULSTER v DUBLIN
 12 o'clock

OTHER EVENTS
 FACE PAINTING
 BALLOONS
 VARIETY SHOW
 MINI GAMES
 AND MORE

Admission: Adults €10 - children under 14 FREE - GW/club fees €5

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Karen Kielt, Down Secretary Sean Óg McAteer, Meabh Boyle, Ulster GAA Provincial Director Danny Murphy, Emma Connolly, Mayor of Newry and Mourne Colman Burns, Julie Lagan, Ulster Camogie Chairperson Catherine O'Hara, Eileen McElroy, and Emma McMullan at the Ulster Finals launch.

training practices and a joined up vision for all codes would be the way forward.

What do you think of the state of hurling in the province?

We seem to be lost in the same old rhetoric and as a consequence the game is suffering. Football is thriving, Hurling is marginalized just as hurling is marginalized across the country. I am not sure what the answer is, but it begins in the homes of Gaelic people, the clubs and the schools and what vision the children are spoon fed by influential people that surround them.

Will the peace process change things?

We had a reason to hang onto our culture and we did it through our sport, it was pure survival. We would have walked past guns and dodged bullets to do it to prove a point. The preservation of our identity was hard fought for but now that fight is over and I hope for good. Other challenges are out there to overcome and growing apathy is one of them. The sport needs to stand up for itself. A game everyone wants to play....because it's a great game, well run and fun to be part of.

What's the state of Camogie in the province?

Given our history we should be way behind the south but were not. We are quite innovative in the way we think. A lot of work is being earmarked by the Ulster GAA Council working with the Ulster Camogie Council, which takes Camogie to a very healthy place. We benefit in the schools and in the Clubs. Ultimately the top athletes should elevate to County level. The new Strategic Plan for Ulster Camogie will complement all that is going on within the family of Gaelic Games in Ulster and will refocus it's efforts on helping strengthen our collective hand at club level.

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At the minute we only have eight of our nine Counties affiliated to Ulster Council and that will need to be addressed. We have a number of schools in Fermanagh who are actively playing Camogie and Hurling. But it has to be embraced by the Fermanagh County Board and more could and should be done in Counties like Donegal.

Hurling is the true Irish game and it is the longest one running. The GAA have a lot to do to offer the game equally. If that happens the knock on effect for Camogie will be better.

What's your opinion on men and women supporting one another?

I think the Ulster GAA and the women's codes are aware of the good mix that women and men can bring together. Modern men and modern women together have nothing to fear - that kind of an archaic attitude is well on it's way out.

Are there any weak areas in the system?

The area that needs assistance is administration. The 'off the field team' needs to be fit for purpose just as the 'on the field team' does. Once we get that right a youth forum would be the next thing - you have to hear the voices of the people you represent. In fact the youth have a lot more ideas and vision than we have. Mix that with experience and the wisdom that only years can bring and you could get a very dynamic think tank.

What do you think is the problem with administration?

I think it's a bit like a manager who has a good team and wants to close the door and keep it closed. Eventually it stagnates and dies. That's just poor management.

Administration sometimes operates an unintentional closed-door system, despite the democratic electoral system. We need to open it all up and make it more inviting. At the minute who wants to be an administrator...a bit like refereeing.

I am a firm believer in a management committee system operating at all levels. Selection, with specific task allocation within specific time frames will attract many more people in through the administration door to offer their expertise and help. It would also reduce the overwhelming burden suffered by all our Councils, Committees and Boards.

What is the greatest challenge facing the Association?

The times we live in are our greatest challenge and equally our biggest opportunity to become the best in the sporting business.

Changes in society, in education, in working and leisure practices open up a raft of opportunity to the forward thinking planners among us.

There is a lot on offer out there, Tennis and basketball, soccer and more. There is plenty of competition so we know have to fight our corner. We sometimes have to sit back and see how to get people to accept what we are offering. We need to re-engage with all our members. I think that's just down to good working practices and ongoing modernization.

Having said that, in Ulster, Danny Murphy and Tom Daly realize that. They are running the very first accredited administrators course in January and it will involve all codes. We train our referees, our coaches and our players so we should train the back-up, off the field. Like it or not, we are in the business of sport



Monaghan Captain Eileen McElroy and Tyrone's Captain Julie Lagan

now. We might not be paid but we have to execute our roles like professionals.

What's the state of County Camogie here at present?

My own County is doing well. We beat one of the top Minor teams, Galway last year. That has not happened in over a generation. The Under16-A team almost beat the Kilkenny 4-in-a-row All Ireland Champions, limping out of Antrim with a one-point victory. That has come on the back of 6 years of development, when nobody wanted to play for Antrim. We then fought for an open draw system because within our Province we didn't have the Tipp's and the Galway's.

Derry, Down and Tyrone have won All-Irelands in league and Championship. The Underage teams in Derry are strong along with Down. Armagh are coming on, again due to better planning and good input in schools, and that should produce results up the line in Armagh.

Our schools are amazing. Ulster teams are winning titles every year and this year competed at the final stages at almost every level. That indicates a very healthy future for both club and County.

Good leadership at all levels can and often will stimulate the changes necessary for success.

Is finance an issue?

Money drives everything. The Association in Ulster runs on a shoestring. The money that could forge development at all levels is in the turnstiles. Getting pitches is still an issue. The Ulster GAA along with County GAA Boards need to continue the good work and sit down with us early in the season and allocate suitable venues for all our showcase matches.

These matches are a shop window for our game and we need to be able to market and sell the game. The fundamental use of a pitch is crucial.

If you look at the GAA games attendance today, about a fifth of those are women. If you have a crowd at your matches especially showcase matches like an Ulster Final the media will follow. The double-headers with the Ulster GAA have been very beneficial for us. This is an area that we should and will make more use of.

We are a generation behind educating young girls to go to a match. That has to change. This is one key area that Provincial Councils and County Boards need to lead.

What's the most important thing the players are looking for?

As part of a route and branch review of the Association the Atlantic Sports Management Company undertook a survey on behalf of the Camogie Association, which will probably lead to a special Congress in November, the comments in the survey (in addition to the usual that we had the best game in the world) was that the players wanted recognition like their counterparts the lads. Well that will happen but for others to follow we must respect ourselves first. Ulster camogie has its top showcase finals in a few weeks.

If players registered in Ulster supported the Ulster finals and half brought even two friends or family to the Ulster Camogie Championship Finals in Pairc Esler on July 4th, we would fill the stadium. The spin offs in areas of sponsorship, finance, media and development would be huge.

Our Association is like a sleeping giant. I look forward to the day it finally wakes up.



Mayor of Newry and Mourne Colman Burns and Chairperson of the Ulster Camogie Council Catherine O'Hara and Derry's Karen Kielt.

Will there ever be a lady President of the Association?

The GAA ran a forum in the Europa Hotel for the 125 celebrations. They dedicated a work shop to the contribution of women to the growth and success of the GAA. The question was posed to a mixed audience of varying ages. It was amazing to see that all the younger men and women stood up together when asked if they thought the GAA would have a female President in their lifetime. Yes, I think the GAA will elect a woman to lead them. If we can have Mary McAleese as President Of Ireland then the GAA will follow. I hope I am around to see that too.

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Who will take the O'Duffy Cup from the Rebels?

Grade	Cup	Counties
Senior	O'Duffy Cup	Cork, Clare, Dublin, Galway, Limerick, Kilkenny, Tipperary, Wexford.
Intermediate	Jack McGrath Cup	Cork, Derry, Galway, Kilkenny, Tipperary, Wexford, Clare.
Junior A	New Ireland Cup	Antrim, Down, Dublin, Laois, Waterford, Meath, Offaly.
Junior B	Nancy Murray Cup	Roscommon, Carlow, Kildare, Armagh, Tyrone, Westmeath.
Junior C	Máire Ní Chinnéide Cup	Donegal, Monaghan, Mayo, Louth, Cavan, Wicklow.



Hitting the sliotar a mile high!



The Camogie teams of Denver in red, Milwaukee in blue and St Louis in green at a tournament in Denver.

Photos and source: Tyler McNally PRO Denver Gaels.

When Dubliner Shay Dunne started a GAA Club in the Mile High City of Denver in 1996 little did he realize the effect it might have not alone on Irish Exiles but also on Americans in the area with some green blood in the veins or anyone with a leaning towards Celtic Culture. Within 4 years the Denver Gaels had won the Junior B football Championships in Chicago at the North American County Finals (NACB).

The club now has 150 members and has Ladies Gaelic Football, Hurling and Camogie. There are four hurling teams sponsored by local pubs playing every week in the pub league and in 2007 they were crowned junior C American Champions.

"It started out as a football club" PRO Tyler McNally explained "But in the last few years for some strange reason hurling and camogie has really taken off. We always take part in the American Championships.

"The club is very much a social unit. We take part in the Denver St Patrick's Day Parade and many other Celtic Festivals around the south western states. So far this year we have taken part in the Rio Grande Celtic Festival in Albuquerque, New Mexico and we are off to the Irish festival in Fort Collins this weekend".

Next month at the 15th Annual Colorado Irish Festival the Gaels will host National teams including the Seattle Gaels hurling team and women's Gaelic football team, the Columbia Red Branch hurling team from Portland, Oregon, and the Chicago Wolfe Tones men's Gaelic football team. Aside from serving as high-en-



ergy festival entertainment, these exhibition matches also double as training for national championship competition hosted in Boston over Labor Day Weekend.



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Camogie in Europe



Until recently, camogie in Europe has often been shunned as the 'strange game that women play wearing helmets'. Women across Europe would train with the men's hurling teams where possible, but there was no separate competition for camogie. For the first time in 2007 a group of women from across the continent came together to form the European Camogie Team, and in August of that year travelled to county Mayo in Ireland to compete in the All Ireland Junior Camogie Blitz. This competition was a great starting point for European camogie as the women who had played returned to their respective clubs in Europe with the aim of developing the sport further.

In 2008, for the first time ever in the history of European GAA, a European Camogie

League was established. Two camogie teams from Belgium and Luxembourg competed in three tournament rounds in Luxembourg, Den Haag and Brussels. Luxembourg claimed the camogie championship in 2008, placing Belgium in the runners up position.

The foundations that were set by the 2008 competition have clearly been built upon in 2009, as the league is the most successful that it has been to date, with four teams – Belgium, Zurich, Luxembourg and Paris – all competing in the competition. Three tournaments, hosted by Paris, Luxembourg and Belgium have taken place thus far, with the most recent being hosted out in Leuven, Belgium on 13 June. Hopefully

enough girls will travel to Zurich in July for the final round of the camogie competition. Luxembourg appear to be the favourites to win again this year – however – Zurich (currently in second place) may well take the trophy at their home tournament next month.

What is probably the most encouraging aspect of European camogie is that so many non-Irish players have taken an interest in the sport. Zurich's team, captained by a young Swiss lady, have no Irish players on their team whatsoever. Belgium also has a mixture of nationalities on their growing team. Of course there are always the odd players who are very talented, often over in Europe for just a 6 month period. Last year Luxembourg had one of Cork's finest camogie players, Anna Geary playing with their team in the competition. This year again they have a few very good players who are over in Luxembourg as part of their University studies. It is also encouraging to have such experienced players participating in the tournaments in Europe - even if they are only with teams for a brief period of time, they are able to pass on valuable knowledge and skills to their fellow team mates staying on in Europe.

News of the sport being played in Europe has obviously travelled back to Ireland also and clubs have been able to build up links with Irish teams. In 2008 a guest team from Ireland travelled over to play in the camogie tournament hosted in Brussels by Belgium GAA in July which successfully promoted greater awareness amongst players from Ireland of the fact that camogie is now being played competitively in Europe.

Hopefully interest in the sport across Europe will continue to grow in the coming years. It is certainly encouraging that so many more girls are competing in the competition this year and hopefully one day there will be a similar number of teams playing camogie as there are playing ladies gaelic football in Europe.



Above Left: Brussels Camogie team - Back row: Deirdre Ní Chearbhail, Caoimhe Ní Shuilleabháin, Maria Brosnan, Laura Whiskerd, Sylvia McCarthy, Rachel Leane, Margaret Francois. Front row: Jane Brennan, Becky Mattes, Jess O'Flynn.
Above: Open plan transport!

words; Laura Whiskerd
Photos: Stephanie Dunn