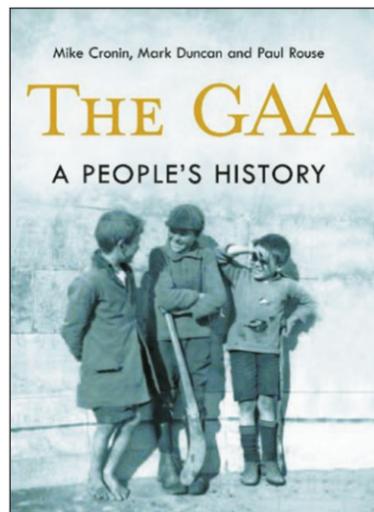


GAELIC GAMES IN LIFE OF THE PEOPLE

125 years of Irish history as seen through prism of GAA

The story of how the GAA has carved out a unique place in the heart of Irish life is the subject of a new book. **Suzanne McGonagle reports**



THE fascination with the Gaelic Athletic Association among people across Ireland never ceases to dwindle.

Dozens of books have been written about events on the pitch but now fans of the sport can see how events off the field unfolded during the 125-year history of the GAA.

The GAA: A People's History, published by the Collins Press, looks at how Gaelic games have "shaped the lives of generations of Irish people at home and abroad".

Previously unseen photographs and original historical documents are some of the fascinating features of the publication, which tells the story of the GAA from the ordinary people's perspective.

The book's authors Mike Cronin, Mark Duncan and Paul Rouse are all directors of the GAA Oral History Project, which is the largest sports history project of its kind.

Their book aims to record the rich,

"There has been so much written about the GAA over the years but this book is completely different as we are talking about the everyday experiences of people involved in the GAA"

Mark Duncan

diverse and complex history of the GAA through the words of local people in every parish of Ireland and among Irish communities overseas.

Starting from how the GAA was first established in 1884, the book also looks at how the Troubles in the north exerted pressures on the GAA while another chapter examines how the clergy have had a special place in the game.

Joint author Mark Duncan said the book revealed how the GAA holds a place in the lives of many Irish people.

"There has been so much written about the GAA over the years but this book is completely different as



■ **WINNING TRADITION:** Norman Ross fills the Sam Maguire Cup at the Royal Hotel on Valentia island as Kerry's All-Ireland celebrations continue into October 1959. Island native Mick O'Connell captained the winning team

PICTURE: Kennelly Archive

we are talking about the everyday experiences of people involved in the GAA," he said.

"There are previously unseen photographs and historical documents which are unique in themselves.

"It is the sort of book that you can dip in and out of or read right through.

"The reason we have been able to do it is that we have all been involved in the GAA Oral History Project at the Boston College Ireland.

"We are all directors of the project

and have been out and about in schools and places so we have been able to sample what the thoughts of ordinary people have been.

"We have three years still to run in this project but this book is a starting point for us.

"Everyone has an opinion on the GAA. We want this to be documented.

"The book shows how the GAA impacted on people's everyday experiences.

"You can tell the history of Ireland

through the GAA and this is what we are trying to do."

Mr Duncan said the book had received a very positive response.

"The response has been great. A lot of people are struck by the quality and reproduction of the photographs and historical documents. It's a beautifully produced book," he said.

"Most of the photos haven't been seen before.

"When people will look at the book, their own experience will be reflected in what has been written."



■ **BETWEEN WARS:** Boys in Dublin play at soldiers using hurling sticks as mock guns on April 15 1922. In December of that year with the civil war in full stride, the GAA's Central Council agreed to use its influence to bring the pro and anti-Treaty sides together and help bring an end to hostilities. The association's efforts failed and the civil war continued until May 1923

PICTURE: Fitzelle Collection: Album 135, National Library of Ireland



■ **FROM ABBEY ROAD TO JONES ROAD:** The fortunes of ladies' football were transformed with the introduction of live television coverage of games. This photo was taken to promote TG4's coverage of the 2008 All-Ireland finals at Dublin's Croke Park. Pictured are the competing counties' senior and intermediate captains – Angela Walsh of Cork, Niamh Kindlon of Monaghan, Angela McDermott of Tipperary and Louise Henchey of Clare

PICTURE: Brendan Moran/Sportsfile

GAELIC GAMES IN LIFE OF THE PEOPLE



■ **SOFT SEATS AND GREAT VIEWS:** Left, members of the clergy get priority treatment on the sidelines of the opening of Fitzgerald Stadium in Killarny in 1936. The ground was officially opened by Dr John M Harty, Archbishop of Cashel and patron of the GAA, and blessed by Dr Michael O'Brien, Bishop of Kerry

PICTURE: *Irish Independent* Collection, National Library of Ireland



■ **HAVING A BALL:** Long-skirted camogie players in a photograph included in the book *The GAA: A People's History*



■ **TECHNOLOGY:** Players and guests of the Kerymen's Association in Dublin gather around a TV set to watch highlights of the All-Ireland football final on September 24 1962. The photograph was taken following a reception and dinner at the International Hotel in Bray, Co Wicklow. Included in the picture are Finola O'Donoghue of Killamey, Sheila Geaney of Castleisland, Seanie Burrows of Tralee, Paddy Looney of Killamey, Kerry minor team player Paudie O'Donoghue of Duagh and Mr and Mrs Niall Sheehy of Tralee

PICTURE: *The Kerryman*



■ **SOCIAL LIFE:** A scene from a GAA club in Belfast pictured in the book

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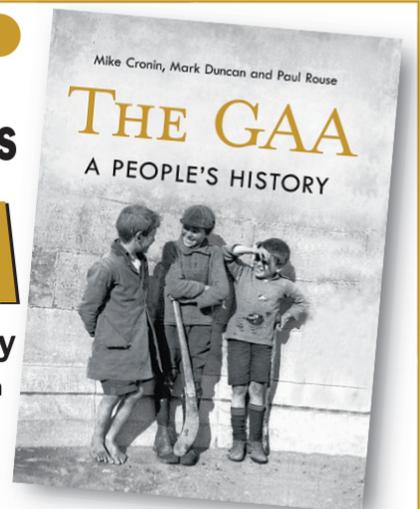
WIN ONE OF TEN COPIES

The GAA

A People's History

Mike Cronin, Mark Duncan and Paul Rouse

Commissioned by the GAA to celebrate GAA 125



Ireland without the GAA is unimaginable. As the Association moves past its 125th anniversary, this is the story of how it carved for itself a unique place at the heart of Irish life. It outlines how Gaelic games and the social world, which revolves around the Association, has shaped the lives of generations of Irish people at home and abroad. From parades and ballads to epic journeys across land and sea, this history of the GAA is as much about what happened off the field as what happened on it. Lavishly illustrated with previously unseen photographs and original historical documents, it sets the GAA experience in the context of an island in the midst of significant change. Political revolution, social upheaval and a shifting cultural landscape are all reflected in the story of the GAA. It documents the successes and failures, the controversies, the diversity, the

passion and the sheer fascination of life with the GAA. This book is about how generations of Irish people have spent their time in the hours between work and sleep, in thrall to their games and the Association that organises them.

Price: £26.99 in all good book shops.

For your chance to win simply send your answer to the following question on a postcard to Peoples History Competition, The Irish News, PO Box 473, Belfast BT1 2NS Closing date for entries is Friday 9th October

Q) What anniversary is the GAA celebrating this year?

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