

# Granagh & Ballingarry GAA

**Jimmy Stapleton** has given a lifetime of service to club and county

Granagh native Jimmy Stapleton has given a lifetime of service to the GAA as a player, administrator and coach to both his club division and county. Jimmy Stapleton's name has been synonymous with the GAA in Granagh-Ballingarry, West Limerick and at inter-county level in a career that has seen him play for his home clubs Granagh and Granagh-Ballingarry, Western Gaels and his county.

When his playing career ended, the father of seven sons, all of whom lined out at different times for Granagh-Ballingarry, turned his hand very successfully to coaching in hurling, football and camogie and to administration at club and divisional level.

Jimmy started his hurling career with Granagh in the mid-1950s with the local minor hurling team and those who saw him play quickly identified him as a player with special talent. That talent was developed over the years as he left his mark on the playing fields of Limerick and beyond. It was an era of 'hard' hurling often on tight pitches when strong defenders thought quickly and acted quickly, something Jimmy could do better than most. When Granagh and Ballingarry amalgamated he played a big part in the winning of two West Junior A Hurling Championship titles in 1957 and 58, narrowly losing to Pallasgreen in the 58 County Final. Jimmy's class shone through and when the West Junior hurling clubs came together to form Western Gaels he was selected as half-forward and gave many exhibitions on the way to winning two County Senior Hurling Championships titles in 1961-62. He was very versatile and could play in any position because he could read the game, pounce on a break-in ball and score from any angle. In 1962, when playing against Patricks-well he scored six points from play. Later that year in a game against Kilmallock, the first half was close so Jimmy dropped back to join his brother Pierce (RIP) and Kevin Long (RIP) in the half-back line. Very little passed them in the second half and the Gaels ran out easy winners. A song about that great team includes the line 'Jim Stapleton was our hero who could swing them over the bar'. 1969 was an unlucky year for Jimmy as he was part of the Granagh side on their own that lost the West Junior A Hurling Championship final to Knocka-derry and the Limerick team that lost to Cork in the Munster Junior Hurling championship final.

Undeterred he didn't give up and helped Granagh reach the West Junior A Hurling Championship final in 1973 only to lose to Monagea by a goal. Determined to see Granagh win a West Junior A hurling title on their own, he gave it another year and was in the full back line when the boys in black and white held out bravely against great rivals Knock-aderry in 1974 to take the title. A fitting end to a great hurling career. He will always be a hero in Granagh and throughout West Limerick. Jimmy was selected to captain Limerick in a league game in Enniscorthy against Wexford in 1962 but was unable to play due to injury. When his playing career ended, he quickly took to coaching, first at underage level with Granagh-Ballingarry and guided the under 12 to West and county honours in 1985. He also guided the under 14, 15 and 16 hurlers and footballers to various titles. The natural progression was to the minor team and again West and county success came their way in 1988 and 89. The adult club of Granagh-Ballingarry soon came calling and Jimmy responded with the late Gerry Molyneaux as trainer. They guided the club to win the West and County Junior A Hurling Championship honours in 1998. Jimmy has also given long and dedicated service to his county as a member of different backroom teams starting with the county U14 team that won the prestigious Tony Forrestal Hurling Tournament in 1984. Now Granagh-Ballingarry parish priest Fr. Tommy Carroll was the manager and Stapleton was a selector of a team that included Ciaran Carey and Pat Heffernan among others who went on to star for Limerick at senior level. He also acted as a selector with Limerick minors for two years when PJ O'Grady was manager and later as under 21 selector under the then manager Bill Reidy. Health issues forced him to pull out but a return to some backroom teams was inevitable and it came via intermediate hurling manager, the late Frank Costello. It was the start of a long association with the county intermediate hurling team that was to continue for twelve years, six as a selector with Frank Costello before taking over from him as manager for another three. On deciding to step down he was prevailed upon by new intermediate hurling manager, the late Gerry Molyneaux, to stay on for another spell as selector, which he did for three years during which time Limerick won the Munster Intermediate Hurling championship in 2008 defeating Tipperary in the final with Denis O'Connor of Granagh-Ballingarry giving a man-of-the-match per-

formance before losing the All-Ireland final to Kilkenny, when Limerick were hit with a huge blow when they were forced to line out minus Denis O'Connor due to injury.

**Camogie**

Jimmy Stapleton also has a long association with camogie and first became involved in 1979. During his time with the club he helped the girls to twelve underage, one junior and one Senior County Championship titles.

**Administration**

Jimmy Stapleton served as treasurer and chairman of the Granagh club before being appointed joint treasurer of the West Board in 1980-81 with Jim Quaid and served on the boards disciplinary committee where he was to serve for fourteen years and is now the boards Life President.

**Life-Long Service Awards**

Jimmy received Lifelong Service Awards from both the West Limerick GAA Board and Granagh-Ballingarry GAA Club in 2015.

**Sons**

Jimmy's seven sons Kieran, Seamus, Peter, Niall, David, Stephen and Noel lined out for Granagh-Ballingarry but never played on the same team, the nearest was six at the one time. Seamus like his father had the honour of playing intermediate hurling for Limerick and also played in a number of tournament games for the senior team. Jimmy Stapleton will always be considered a hurling hero in Granagh-Ballingarry and throughout west and county Limerick.

**Mike O'Brien**

(1936-2000)

The memory of Mike O'Brien lives on in Granagh to this day. He was one of the old stock, born, lived and died in Coolruss, Granagh. These early times were hard with entertainment and money scarce. Country men took up hurling, athletics or hunting with dogs as their pass times. Mike took up hurling and for all his hurling career was an automatic choice on the Granagh hurling team. He was a very skilful hurler with a unique ability to read the game. This made him stand out a key-members on any team he played with. He was an outstanding member of the amalgamated Granagh-Ballingarry team of the 1950s. This team won back to back West Junior A hurling championships battles in 1957 and 1958 losing the 1958 County Final to Pallasgreen. He was on automatic choice as a defender on the great West Limerick Senior Hurling combination, Western Gaels. This great team won back to back County Senior Hurling Championship titles in 1961 and

1962 but lost their chance of 3-in-a-row due to rules technicality. There were two Mick O'Briens on the Western Gaels team, described in the ballad there was 'Mike O'Brien from Feenagh and Mike the Granagh Star'. He played inter-county with Limerick in the 1960s but without much success. He continued hurling with Granagh until he retired in the mid-1970s and was a selector when they won West and County Junior A Hurling Championship honours in 1976. Mike had a van in the early days, a great asset then, and he was extremely in helping the club transport players a practice he continued all his life. He was also a great asset to the camogie side of Granagh Ballingarry affairs giving support at all times guiding them to many county championship titles. He was very proud of the fact that his three daughters, Bernie, Breda and Eileen, were on the Granagh Ballingarry side that won Munster and All Ireland Club Senior Camogie Championship honours and sons Eddie and Ollie were on the Granagh Ballingarry side that won West and County Junior A Hurling Championship honours in 1998. His support was appreciated to such an extent that to this day the club still organise and annual camogie cup match in his honour. He was a true GAA man. He died in 2000 and is buried in Granagh cemetery. Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam dílis.

**Lottery**

***There was no winner of the €10,500 jackpot in the Granagh Ballingarry GAA Club lottery on Saturday 14th November.***

***The lucky dips of €20 each went to Stephen Stapleton, Peter Healy, Joe Condrón and Darragh O'Donovan.***

***The next draw is on Saturday 21st November for a jackpot of €10.600. We thank all our punters for their continued support.***

**Sympathy**

Granagh Ballingarry GAA Club officials and players and members extend sympathy to the Fox and Hennessy families on the death of Roy Fox. To the Hannon and Houlihan family on the death of Peg and the Lucy family Croom on the death of Dr. Mick Lucy. Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam.

**John Lynch  
Secretary**