# Baptisms at Star of the Sea



Ari McVicar - parents Christopher and Orla (nee Trolan) and sisters Eve and Isla



niel-John Connor – parents Daniel and Carina, and sister Grace



James Gibney – parents Anthony and Charlene (nee Trolan) and sister Ava



a Grimes - parents John Paul and Francine (nee McAuley)



Clara Gilmore - parents Gareth and Helen



Evelyn Gibson – parents Christopher and Noeleen





Merciful Like
the Father

This is the logo of the Year of Mercy.
It is an icon on the theme of mercy
showing Jesus carrying a man

showing Jesus carrying a man LIKE (representing humanity) to safety. It calls to mind the image of the Good Shepherd seeking and finding the lost sheep (Lk 15:1-7) and also the story of the Good Samaritan: "He lifted him onto his own mount and took him to an inn and looked after him." (Lk 10:29-37) The logo represents the Risen Christ, Son of the Merciful Father, marked by the 'wounds of love' evident on his hands and feet, carrying Adam on his shoulders to salvation. Adam represents humanity. We cannot earn salvation because none of us are without sin (1 Jn 1:8-10). So Jesus comes to pick us up, dust us off, raise us up and carry the burden of our guilt and shame for us. Jesus, who

is mercy itself, carries Adam from a dark blue background to progressively lighter blue

foregrounds – Jesus leads humanity from darkness to the light. The two black beams that Jesus walks on, suggesting the beams of the cross, have now become the way of the cross - the path to salvation.

The two figures at times seem to fuse, obviously so in the merging of the eyes. This feature is significant as it symbolises the incarnation:

Jesus shares in our humanity so that we can more clearly see the Merciful Father through his eyes, and one day gaze with Jesus - "through him, with him and in him" –upon the Face of the Father for all eternity.

May our celebration of the Anniversary of the Incarnation give us the eyes of faith to see "what hope his call holds for us" (Eph 1:18). Be not afraid! Happy Christmas.

Fr Austin

# The Bird of Dawning

Some say that ever 'gainst the season comes,

Wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated,

The bird of dawning singeth all night long:

And then, they say, no stir abroad;

The nights are wholesome; then no planets strike,

No fairy takes, or witch hath power to charm,

So hallow'd and so gracious is that time.

William Shakespeare Hamlet Act 1

### **Seasons Blessings**

This is the start of an important year in the history of our parish. It is exactly one hundred years since work commenced on the building of St Mary's Star of the Sea. A book outlining the history of the parish has been published and launched recently. The book highlights many aspects of parish

life down the years and features parish personalities, organisations as well as well important events. It's a great read and makes an ideal Christmas present, especially for parishioners now living away from home.

We thank all contributors to this issue of Stella Maris, and please continue to keep the material flowing. We especially want to thank the pupils of St Colum's school who did the art work for the front cover of this Christmas edition of Stella Maris. We can be reached through the parish office, email: secretary@ portstewartparish.co.uk, telephone 70832534. Or contact me direct 70833042. Please note that my email address has changed and is now: farrenpt@outlook.com. Eugene is always available

Outside the Chapel Gates to pick up on the latest happenings.

Eugene, Aaron, Adrian and I wish each and everyone a very happy Christmas, and best wishes for 2016.

Season's blessings to all.

Patricia Farren

### ST. MARY'S STAR OF THE SEA, PORTSTEWART CHRISTMAS SERVICES 2015

Wednesday 23 December	Reconciliation 7.30 pm
Thursday 24 December Christmas Eve	Carols 8.30 pm Mass at 9.00 pm
Friday 25 December Christmas Day	Mass 9.00 am Mass 11.00 am
Saturday 26 December	Mass 12.00 noon
	Sunday Vigil Mass 6.00pm
Sunday 27 December	Mass 9.00 am 11.00am
28 December – 1 January	Mass 12.00 noon
Saturday 2 January	Mass 9.30 am
	Sunday Vigil Mass 6.00pm
	Mass 9.00 am
Sunday 3 January	11.30am Travelling Ecumenical Service starting at the Methodist Church

# Centenary History of St Mary's Star of the Sea

To mark the approach of the Centenary of St Mary's Star of the Sea church, on 9th July1916, a history of the parish was launched in the Parish Centre on 25th November.

Fr Austin welcomed the large crowd of parishioners and members of other churches to the launch including Rev Stephen Fielding from Agherton parish. He spoke of 'the excellent crosscommunity relations which have always been part of life in Portstewart,' and how people from all sections of the community contributed to the building and funding of the church a hundred years ago. He thanked the members of the editorial team, Maurice Mc Aleese, Margaret Campbell, Seán Farren and Roisin Mc Caughan for their time and painstaking efforts to produce the book and all who contributed articles and information. He thanked Aaron Doherty and all who provided photographs.

Sean Farren, representing the editorial team, thanked Father Austin for his encouragement and gave a comprehensive account of the book's contents. He paid special tribute to local historian and author, Maurice Mc Aleese, for his very significant contribution to the project at all stages

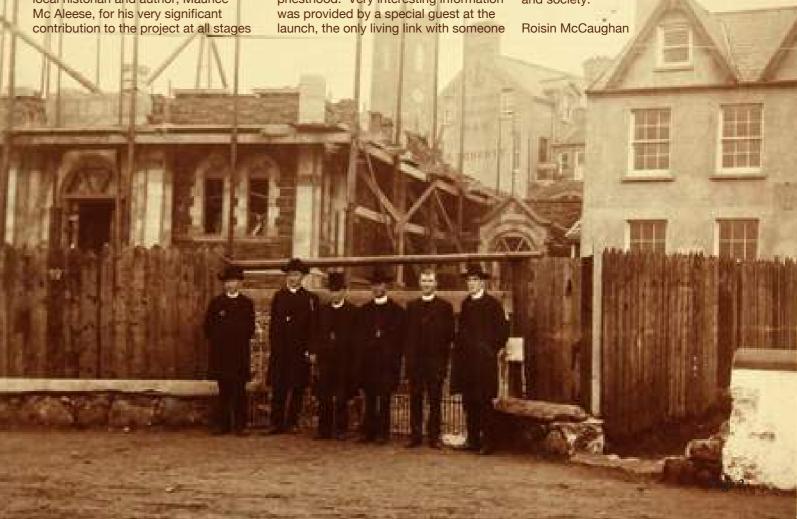
and for his meticulous research and expertise. He also thanked Father Gregory Cormican, P.P. St Malachy's, Coleraine for allowing the team access to the 'Chronicari Parociali' of that parish as Portstewart came under its jurisdiction from 1895 to 1954. Special thanks was conveyed to Bishop Noel Treanor for his 'inspirational and challenging Foreword,' and to Bishop Anthony Farquhar for sharing his memories of his time in Portstewart.

The book spans more than one hundred years from the days when people from Portstewart had to travel to Portrush in a jaunting car to attend Mass to the present day. It covers the erection of the 'Tin Chapel' at Heathmount in 1895, followed by the church at The Crescent in 1916. Included in the book is very interesting information uncovered on John Glenn, a prominent businessman from Coleraine, who left a generous legacy to St Malachy's parish, a portion of which went towards the building of Star of the Sea church. Further chapters tell of other benefactors, clerics who served in the parish and natives who were ordained o the priesthood. Very interesting information was provided by a special guest at the

who actually worked on the church, Mrs Denise Sloan whose grandfather, Daniel Reid, was clerk of works. The arrival of the Dominicans, material on St Colum's school, parish organisations feature within the chapters.

The book was officially launched by Father Martin O'Hagan, of the well known singing trio 'The Priests,' who gave an entertaining account of his personal links to Portstewart. Addressing those present he said: 'You are part of that mosaic of personalities that has crafted the parish into what it is to-day. You are the bearers of the story which speaks volumes to future generations. You are all members of the crew who rely heavily on your captain, Christ. People will be delighted and inspired by this beautiful book." Then Fr Martin concluded with a delightful rendition of 'Santa Lucia.'

In the words of Father Austin in his introduction: 'This book goes beyond the superficial snapshot and describes the people who have worshipped in Star of the Sea in the past one hundred years and their contribution to Church and society.'



# The Story of the Fourth Wise Man

Only two of the four Gospels have an account of the Nativity of Jesus – Matthew and Luke – and only Matthew 's Gospel incorporates the story of the "Wise men from the East" who came with gifts, seeking the infant King of the Jews. Matthew's Gospel is written for Jewish Christians and emphasises the way in which the life and actions of Jesus fulfil the Old Testament prophecies. This visit of 'wise men' is probably an echo of Psalm 72 (verse 11): "The Kings of Sheba and Saba will offer gifts and all Kings will do him homage".

Tradition soon filled out more details of the story. There were three wise men (presumably because of the three gifts – gold for riches, incense for reverence and myrrh for anointing) and they were soon given names – the western churches naming them as Caspar, Melchior and Balthazar, with the last always being pictured as black-skinned. Their remains were supposed to have been brought back to the west and to rest today in Germany in Cologne Cathedral.

In 1895 an American writer Henry van Dyke wrote a short story about a fourth wise man who should have accompanied the three. He gave him the name Artaban and his efforts to find the King of the Jews and offer him gifts of precious jewels makes, I hope, a lovely and unusual Christmas story.

The four were kings in their own right and keen astrologers, looking out for changes in the stars in the sky. Having seen a new star rising in the sky, they decided to return to their kingdoms to prepare a caravan to cross the deserts and find the

infant King. They set a date and place to meet and each would bring gifts for him. Artaban returned to his kingdom. He selected from his treasury three of his finest stones. There was a sapphire "as blue as the night sky", a ruby "redder than a ray of sunshine" and a pearl "as pure as the peak of a snow mountain". These were gifts, Artaban felt sure, that were fit for a King!

Artaban selected his fastest horse for the journey which would take many days. As he neared the rendezvous, he was overjoyed to think that soon the star would show them where to find the infant King. Suddenly he noticed a bundle of rags by the roadside, He debated whether he should waste precious time investigating or press on in this the last day for the meeting. His mind was made up when he saw a movement in the rags. It was an old man, close to death from lack of food and water. Artaban began to nurse him back to health, a task which took many hours.

When Artaban at last felt able to leave the old man, he explained his journey to him. "Do not look for the infant King of Israel in Jerusalem" he told Artaban. "Look rather in Bethlehem for this is what is prophesied".

Artaban realised that he had lost too many hours tending the old man. Sure enough, when he arrived at the meeting place, there was a message from his fellow Kings. "We could delay no longer. You must make your own way to Jerusalem". Artaban knew that he could not make the dangerous journey across the deserts alone. "What I must do is to return to my kingdom.

I will sell my sapphire and use the money to buy camels, provisions and guards, and set out in the spring to search for the infant king in Bethlehem for I still have two precious stones to present to him". In fact, almost a year passed before Artaban was able to go to Bethlehem on his search. There he found rumours of the birth of an infant, of a visit of Eastern Kings who disappeared soon after, of the disappearance of the family, perhaps moving to Egypt. No-one seemed to know. More worryingly, there was a rumour that King Herod had sent troops to the area of Bethlehem to seize animals as tribute and the men-folk had taken their flocks to the mountains. Artaban found lodgings with a young mother who proudly introduced him to her healthy eighteen month old baby son.

In the night, panie spread everywhere. Herod's soldiers were searching out every male child under two years old and killing them. The terrified mother begged for help from Artaban. He stood in the doorway blocking the soldiers and demanded to see their captain. Producing the wonderful ruby, he pressed it into the captain's hand, saying "There is no infant in this house. Take this and let me sleep in peace". The captain readily agreed.

"Now I have only one gift remaining for my King" said Artaban "and I have had to tell a lie to another man". But the young Jewish mother blessed him in a traditional prayer. "Because you have saved the life of my only child, may the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you. May the Lord lift up his face to you and give you peace".

For more than thirty years, Artaban continued his search for the King of the Jews without success. He was growing old and sick and he knew his end was close. As he rested in a doorway in Jerusalem, he became conscious of crowds moving towards the outskirts of the city. A passerby answered his question about what was happening. "They are going to see three crucifixions – two notorious robbers and the man Jesus who called himself King of the Jews". Hope stirred in Artaban; perhaps this was the end of his search. He ought to go and offer the precious pearl, his last gift, to ransom and save this Jesus.

But as he struggled to his feet, he heard shouting. A young woman was being dragged through the street by soldiers. Her father could no longer pay his debts. "Save me for pity's sake, sir", she implored Artaban, "for I am to be sold into slavery or worse". Artaban did not hesitate. "Take this pearl," he said to the soldiers, "and pay off all her debts and free her at once".

Artaban lay back into the doorway, close to death. "I have failed in my quest and now I am dying. I have no longer any gifts to offer to this King whom I never succeeded in finding". Then Artaban heard a voice from heaven. "Truly I say to you: As long as you did this to the least of my sisters and brothers, you did it to me". And the fourth wise man realised that he had found his King at last.

Terry O'Keeffe

# Outside the Chapel Gates

The secret of staying young is to live honestly, eat slowly and lie about

As the years go by, I keep on losing weight but it keeps on finding me.

With Eugene Kelly

### Refugee **Appeal**

The response to the parish's appeal to help the refugees flooding into Europe from the middle east was absolutely amazing. The generosity of the people of Portstewart Parish never ceases to amaze me. The clothing and money collected will be used where it is most needed and will be distributed by people from SVP and Trocaire working on the ground in centres across the continent. With the advent of refugees arriving in the North West shortly I'm sure that when that time comes we will show again the generosity of spirit that exists in our parish.

# Dominican

The recently formed SVP conference in Dominican College is currently working hand in hand with the local conferences across the Triangle area to help alleviate the poverty that exists in

the area. The school as a whole have made a sizeable cash donation to our Conference in Portstewart for this purpose. They have also made donations for your continuing of toys and hampers support. in support of the

Christmas appeal. These will be distributed to those in need in the local area. Thank you to all the staff and pupils in the College



# Lunch

Over 70 of our Senior Citizens attended the annual Christmas lunch held in Cromore Halt. The fare was excellent and the ensuing entertainment by the **Brassnecks contributed to** a very enjoyable afternoon. Many thanks to the local SVP conference for sponsoring and organising the event.

### Senior Citizen Centenary Book Launch







Rev Stephen Fielding, Fr Martin O'Hagan and Fr Austin

From outside the chapel gates have a very peaceful Christmas.

### **Golden Memories**

There are some memories that time does not erase, so let me roll back the clock to that memorable day when Aunt Kate came home for a visit. Born in 1898, three years after my father, Kate was no spring chicken when she entered

An old photograph keeps the memories alive. There I am, in a cotton dress, fresh from the dressmaker's hands. In the picture the sun lights up my world, a landscape that stretches no further than the fields around the farmstead where I was born. A line of washing forms a backdrop. Hens wander through the snapshot. A well remembered gooseberry bush lurks in one corner of the garden, a barrel of water in the

My parents sat down to take it in when the letter arrived with word of her planned visit. From then on, it was all go. Buckets of lime arrived for whitewashing, gallons of paint for gates and corrugated roofs. Doors, and window frames, and the upended cart in the yard did not escape the paintbrush, nor the flagstones the sweeping brush.

Indoors was a hive of activity. Nothing was safe from the scrubbing brush. Tablecloths and lace curtains were washed and starched, linoleum waxed, the hall floor brought up with Cardinal red polish. Turps and linseed oil did a fine job in the parlour. The sparkle of spring was all over the place those far off June days.

The clean-up ended on the eve of her arrival when my sister Frances and I were dispatched to gather flowers to add that final touch. We climbed the rusty gate to a derelict house and plucked pink roses from the bush that still blossomed against its gable wall. Back home a vase was taken out, filled with roses and set on top of a wireless that did not work - it was wartime, after all - but still took pride of place on the deep ledge of the kitchen window.

That morning cows were milked early, and pigs and chickens silenced with foodstuff. Red and green iellies in large sugar bowls sat in a cross breeze on a stone wall outside the kitchen door, drawing us children in droves to sneak our fingers in for licks, until the jellies began to wobble. We licked cream off spoons and sneaked red cherries from the trifle. High on sugar and excitement my brother Vincent climbed an apple tree just to show off, drawing my father round the gable to find out where the cheering was coming

And then she arrived, her long black skirts sweeping the floor, her head and shoulders enclosed in a tent of solid white, starched linen. An enormous silver crucifix hung from her neck, and a rosary, with beads as large as marbles, from her waist. Black laced-up boots peeped out from under her skirts. We children pulled back in terror, forming a line with

an eve to the back door. Until she produced from inside her habit a cardboard boot-box filled to the brim with the most sumptuous sweets our eyes had ever seen. From that moment on we were totally won over.

Later that morning she followed my father outside to walk the land, asking after Polly, the old mare, and cows she remembered by name. Livestock prices and crops were discussed while drains were inspected. Tired of the talk, we dashed back to the house to top up on chocolate from the box lying open on the dresser. We ran back to circle them again while my father pointed out various homesteads and talked of the dead, and those gone to England or America. Later on, neighbours dropped in, and relations came for dinner, which was served in the parlour, with the children happy to be have unsupervised access to the boot-box of sweets on the kitchen dresser.

Thirty years later, Sister Mary Visitation of the Holy Faith order, as was my aunt's name in religion, wholeheartedly embraced the changes brought about by Vatican II. However, she did not discard the wimple until she had a niece apply a dye to some protruding locks. 'Foxie red,' she explained, was her colour when she was a girl.

'And what do you think of the mini-skirts?' she kept on asking me until, finally, I copped on that she kept glancing down at her own calf length, box-pleated skirt.

'Oh, they suit you, Aunt Kate,' I told her, 'they really, really

Not until she was an old lady sitting in the shade of a willow tree in her convent garden in Dublin, a matter of months before her death in 1980, did I learn of her decision to enter religious life. 'Back then,' she explained, 'because I was the last left at home, I was told by relatives that I was keeping your father from marrying. Two matches were laid on for me, but I wouldn't look at either of them. You see, the only man I ever wanted to marry didn't want me, so I made my mind up to enter. The first evening I arrived here I threw myself at the feet of that statue of the Blessed Virgin inside the convent door, and cried my heart out. Never stopped for days. It was the love of my sisters here that brought me round. At the end of the week I was over it. I pulled myself together and contented myself, and hardly thought about things again. And now when I see you all, and your own lovely little children, and your lovely mother, God help her, didn't I do the right thing? Didn't I?'

Patricia Farren







# **Guys and Dolls**

Last month, Dominican College staged an emotional tribute to Rosaleen Corrigan, the former Vice Principal and Head of Drama, by reprising the stage production of Guys and Dolls, a show previously directed by Rosaleen in the

1982-83 school year.

The performance of the 2015 Dominican school production of "Guvs and Dolls" went down a treat with a packed school assembly hall audience who took to their feet at the end of the show to



applaud a clearly delighted cast and

First night nerves were long gone as principals and cast grew in confidence - vocally and physically - and they took to the stage in a packed assembly hall full of staff past and present, parents, pupils past and present, and members of the wider Dominican Community. Rosaleen's three children, Mark, Neil and Brianna, returned to school to see the show produced in recognition of Rosaleen and her enduring legacy. The Corrigan family nominated Chest, Heart and Stroke, as the charity to benefit from a contribution from the show. They also donated a special award in Rosaleen's memory, which on Friday night, Principal Ms Ronan, presented to the entire two hundred strong cast and crew of "Guys and Dolls" in recognition of the phenomenal school team effort involved in producing a show that will live long in the memory of all who saw it. The school would like to thank all those who supported the 2015 Production of "Guys and Dolls" and all those who came to see the show.

Kevin Ramsey

# Thinking Anew

For those who like 'Thought for the Day', Gordon Linney's collection from his Irish Times 'Thinking Anew' column will provide a memorable and provocative set of 'thoughts'. The Rev Gordon Linney, once a Church of Ireland curate in Portstewart and later Archdeacon of Dublin, has the great gift of encapsulating key aspects of the Christian message in clear and succinct language. Like all good authors and presenters of 'Thought for the Day' he does so in short articles that at once grab the reader's interest and provoke a response. Sub-titled 'Faith in a world of change and doubt,' Gordon challenges us with situations and ideas from everyday life and asks how would we and how should we respond. Take, for instance, the piece 'Who Cares' prompted by the death of a homeless man who was crushed to death when the wheelie bin in which he had sought shelter was emptied into a disposal facility. Gordon poses challenging questions about our responses to the homeless we encounter on the streets of our cities and towns. He challenges us by asking how we regard those we encounter begging on our streets. Do we pretend not to notice, do we salve our consciences reflecting that

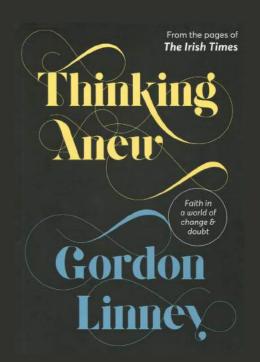
they will be cared for by those who distribute blankets and hot meals, or do we search our pockets for some loose change to drop into the out-stretched 'begging bowl'. Then he reminds us of the prayer of St Francis, 'For it is in giving that we receive; it is by losing that we find; it is by forgiving that we are forgiven; and it by dying that we rise Sean Farren again to eternal life'.

Writing about events in one's life that make it difficult to hold onto one's faith, Gordon tells us about a well known priest from Scotland, named David, whom he met at an ecumenical service in Dublin. The priest was a victim of a cancer that had left him with only months to live. Gordon quotes him as saying, 'The future is bleak and I am getting used to people looking at me as a dying man'. But David goes on to claim that 'God never promises to protect us from our problems, only to help us in them. If we leave God out of the picture, those same difficulties might so strip away our sense of security that we feel vulnerable and afraid. On the other hand those same difficulties could drive us back to God and so strengthen our faith'. David died some few months later, aged fifty-two.

These are but two examples of the everyday topics that Gordon Linney

writes about and injects his own deep faith into making some sense of the daily challenges faced by people of

Gordon Linney's collection entitled Thinking Anew, is published by Columba Press.



# **Year of Mercy**

A number of years ago the Missionaries of Charity, founded by Blessed Mother Teresa, opened a House of Prayer in Sligo. The first time I visited their chapel I was struck by the large crucifix behind the altar and the words painted in bold on the wall alongside it: I THIRST. For Mother Teresa that cry of Jesus on the cross sums up why the Missionaries of Charity exist: "to guench the thirst of Jesus for souls, for love, for kindness and compassion." Those words are taken from Mother Teresa's book: Where There is Love, There is God. If we truly believe that then we are all called to be Missionaries of Charity, reaching out to those who thirst today for recognition, security, justice and community - love in action. I've seen God's love in action through the work of Habitat for Humanity, a Christian self-build housing charity that builds simple, affordable homes for the poorest of the poor. Habitat has become a world leader in addressing the issues of poverty housing, serving a family in need every 4 minutes. Since 2005 Habitat NI's partnership with Habitat Ethiopia has delivered significant impacts for vulnerable communities, including people with leprosy. Through Habitat they've become integrated into communities where fear and suspicion have been replaced by love and acceptance. One

of the homeowners, a lady called Fadi, told us: "When I get my new Habitat house it will be like walking through the gates of heaven."

That's what love can do through the generosity of people who respond to Christ's mercy plea: "I was thirsty and you gave me to drink. Whatever you do for the least of my brothers and sisters you do to me." (Matthew 25). In this Year of Mercy may we all become Missionaries of Mercy, people of the cross who thirst with Christ for His Kingdom to come.

Fr Raymond McCullagh



Page 8. Page 7.

## Weddings at Star of the Sea







Shauna Brolly and James McCready - 28/08/15



# Another 'Season of Sunday's' for Eoghan Rua GAC

Another 'Season of Sunday's has all but come to an end for Eoghan Rua GAC Coleraine. A busy season both on and off the field of play has seen a number of highlights. The on-field highlight has been the success of our senior **hurlers** in winning the Ulster Junior championship, a first for the club and a first Provincial title for any Derry club. Our hurlers have gone on to win through to the All-Ireland semi-final beating Fullen Gaels over in Birmingham, now looking forward to playing Sylane of Galway in late January next year.

Our senior footballers just came up short in the Derry championship final losing narrowly to Slaughtneil. It was another first for our senior ladies footballers as they

competed for the first time in the Derry league/championship.

The club continues to provide a sporting outlet for hundreds of boys and girls from Under-8s through to Under-18s in football, hurling, camogie and ladies football. Our success has been the continuing development of gaelic games providing opportunities for a healthy. balanced lifestyle for so many of our young people in this area.

While doing that a number of our youth teams have achieved success in their different codes

Our Under-14 footballers had a fantastic season winning the Derry 'B' championship, the Derry 'B' league, the Derry Feile 'B' competition and reached the All-Ireland Feile 'B' semi-final losing narrowly to the eventual champions.

Our Under-18 footballers just missed out, losing in the final of the Derry 'B' championship. We have a very good group of young hurlers coming through with our Under-12s winning the Derry 'C' blitz while the Under-13 hurlers won Derry Division 3 title.

While the competitive season is all but over activity is ongoing at the club with our Under-age players participating indoors in coaching sessions. Also Irish language classes are back at the club every Wednesday evening over the winter/spring months.

Kevin Mullan



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