

TEXT OF THE INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS DELIVERED BY: **MR MICHEÁL Ó MUIRCHEARTAIGH**, retired Gaelic Games Commentator, RTE, on 7 September 2012, on the occasion of the conferring of the Degree of Doctor of Arts, *honoris causa*, on **BRIAN CODY**

A Sheansailéir, a Uachtaráin Choláiste Ollscoile Chorcaí agus a mhuintir uilig an Choláiste;

Nil aon amhras ná gur cuí an t-ionad é inniu do Bhrian Mac Coda bheith suite i machnamh maon san Áras stairiúil seo agus é ar tí Céim Onóra Dochtúra a ghlacadh in Ollscoil Náisiúnta Chorcaí.

As a Kilkenny man immersed in hurling since birth, Brian Cody is well aware how the people of Cork appreciate the skills of the great game and thus I feel honoured in the presence of one of it's great practitioners and members of his family.

Brian was born in 1954, a year in which Cork completed a magnificent Three-in-a-Row of Hurling All-Irelands. By then, his own county had amassed thirteen All-Ireland titles which placed them third on the Roll of Honour, three behind Tipperary and six adrift of Cork, áit in a bhfuilimid bailithe inniu.

The saying goes that the 'Old Order Changeth and Giveth way to the New' and the hurling order has certainly tasted change since 1954.

As of now, Kilkenny stands at the head of the class with 33 titles, three clear of Cork and seven ahead of other fierce and respected rivals, Tipperary.

The astonishing fact about those twenty All-Irelands captured by the Noresiders since Brian entered this world is that he himself had a direct involvement in a dozen, four as a player and eight as Team Manager. Níl amhras ná gur ball de mhór gaiscígh ár linne é Brian atá linn anseo inniu. As the old bhéarsa says -

Sé mo Laoch mo Ghiolla Mear,

Sé mo Shéasar Giolla Mear,

It seems that he was fated to be successful and long apprenticeships that are common enough in life were never his lot. As a club player he holds county titles in all grades, Under 14, 16, Minor, Under 21 and Senior and in the only case where such was available

he added Leinster and All-Ireland titles at Senior level with his Club, James Stephens or the Village as it better known locally.

Successes on the wider scale came early also; he captained St Kieran's College to win the All-Ireland title of 1971 and a year later was captain of the County Minor side that went all the way to victory.

By 1973, still only 19 years of age, he was on the county Under 21 and Senior sides and played in his first senior All-Ireland final, losing to a great Limerick team.

1974 brought him All-Ireland medals at both levels, as a substitute on the Senior team and centreback for the Under 21's.

1975 proved to be a notable year for the county, capturing All-Irelands in the Minor, Under 21 and Senior grades. Brian was at left fullback on the Senior team and centrehalf on the Under 21 side when beating Cork in Dungarvan following one of the best games in the grade that I ever saw.

In 1976, Brian was a member of the National League winning team and completed the full haul of All-Ireland Intercounty titles when adding his first of two Club titles to those already in hand for Colleges, Minor, Under 21 and Senior.

What's more, the collection had been accumulated before he reached his 22nd birthday and brought about with the minimum of fuss from the individual himself, content and proud to be a member of the team.

His demeanour has not changed since his Under 14 days. He mans the sidelines these days with an outward calmness that allows departure only on rare occasions when his heart supplies the hint towards animation.

His playing career stretched into the Eighties and brought further honours at the highest level. The Spring of 1982 yielded the second of his All-Ireland Club triumphs, in early Summer he captained the National League winning team, and he was captain once more when taking the Liam McCarthy Cup in mid-Autumn.

A second Allstar Award was a fitting finale to that year that must hold great memories for him and hurling followers by the Nore. It was more or less the same the following

year when the Cats again won the double of League and Championship with the Village man supreme at fullback when claiming his fourth All-Ireland Senior medal.

Soon afterwards the Kilkenny tide began to ebb a little and when Brian's intercounty playing days ended, he continued to remain involved with the Village and of course his school St. Patrick's where he is now Principal.

It came as a surprise to many when he was appointed manager of the Kilkenny Senior Hurling team in 1999 and thus began a tenure that has been both successful and sparkling in the extreme. It took a dazzling late point from a very young Ben O'Connor of an emerging fine Cork side to give the Rebels victory over Kilkenny in the All-Ireland final of that year. Always a good student and teacher, I'm certain he learned a lot from Cork's winning formula that day.

Success in team management for himself was not far away at that point but few if any even dared to dream of the extent; 8 All-Irelands in 12 years incorporating a historic four in a row, and guiding the team to 11 finals --- comparable in every way with the record football achievements of Mick O'Dwyer, and now within 48 hours of managing the Kilkenny Senior Hurling team in an unprecedented 12th final in 14 years.

Only sometime in the future will the enormity of the mission be properly appreciated and I might add that he has also steered the Cats to six National League titles.

But in a way, such things matter little to the person being honoured here today. He always was a person who fully realised the role and value of sport in communities. To him, it helps in creating an uplifting spirit, it moulds a social structure that fosters togetherness, contributes hugely in character building and in the production of leaders. With that as a basic creed, Brian deems it an honour to be involved and I and countless others have often marvelled at the generosity of his role. There are no bounds to his willingness to lend a hand and travel to clubs and groups all over the country promoting sport, especially his beloved game of hurling – Scéal na h-Iomána.

Fear dána ag déanamh dána,  
Is dána an gníomh do ghní sé.

His philosophy is simple, commitment and loyalty to the cause and team, application of best endeavour, empathy with the players and an attitude to set forth to win every

match. In that I know he has a strong ally in his household Senate - his wife Elsie Walsh is herself a winner of All-Ireland Camogie medals with Wexford.

Comhgháirdeachas leat, A Bhriain agus libh mar chlann,  
Bain taitneamh as an gradam,  
Agus go maire sibh go léir céad le sláinte an bhric.