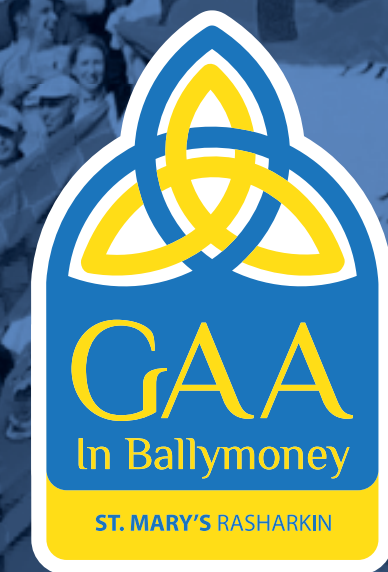




# ST MARY'S RASHARKIN



## St. Olcan's

1909 – 1916 and 1930 – 1932

The first club in the village of Rasharkin was St. Olcan's. It was founded in 1909 by Anthony McMullan, John McAuley and Frank McCotter and their debut match was against Tír na nÓg, Loughgiel. The following year, St. Olcan's entered the North Antrim Hurling League, and later the Football League. In 1916, after only seven years, St. Olcan's folded. The team remained dormant until 1930 when renewed interest prompted a brief revival, only for the club to close two years later.

## St. Mary's

1943 – present

St Mary's G.A.C. was formed on the 17th March 1943 by Stephen McAuley and Tony McLernon. The first chairman, Pat Hendrie, was the only link to St. Olcan's. The club colours became blue and yellow - the only coloured jerseys left in stock at the shop!

## Football

The footballers won the club's first trophy, the McCotter Cup, in 1945. By 1957, the team had won the Junior League and later set a club record with a run of 30 games unbeaten. A year later, they claimed the Antrim Junior Football Championship and were promoted to Senior level.

St. Mary's made an immediate impact in their first season at Senior level, making their debut appearance at Casement Park and reaching the County Championship final. Their opposition were St. John's, Belfast who became a bogey team in the competition for St. Mary's - they met them seven seasons in a row (four finals and three semi-finals) and lost on each occasion. In 1967, St. Mary's were beaten in the Senior County Championship semi-finals by Patrick Pearse's, Belfast; this would be the last time they reached this stage in the competition for forty years.

Since then, the footballers have moved between Divisions 1 and 2 of the County League, with successes in the South West Championship and Intermediate Championships in 1978 & 2010.

## Hurling

In 1943, St. Mary's organised their first fixture as a club – a hurling game against Glenbush, Co. Antrim. In 1945 they reached the South West Antrim final. As football became the focus at St. Mary's, the hurling team gradually declined. In the 1970s, it was re-introduced and in 1977 they won the Guardian Cup. The hurlers made steady progress and in 1991 won the Junior Championship, earning the chance to play at Intermediate level for the first time. In 2009 they won Division 3 of the County League to gain promotion and a second Junior County title.



Anthony McMullan (left) and Fr. Randal McCudden were instrumental in the early days of St Olcan's. 22 year old McMullan was one of the driving forces behind the club.



St Mary's footballers in their first full season, 1944. This side would go on to win the new club's first trophy, the McCotter Cup, the following season.



Between 1959-1965 St Mary's were one of the leading football sides in Antrim. Although unable to capture the elusive County Championship, they won promotion from Division Two of the league and multiple South West Antrim Championships.



Johnny McAleese and Thomas Doherty celebrate winning the Intermediate Football Championship in 2010 after defeating Dunloy in a replay.



Hurling was reintroduced to St Mary's in the 1970s. They won the Guardian Cup in four out of five seasons between 1977-1981 but were unable to replicate this form in the County Championship.



The club celebrated 100 years since the foundation of St Olcan's with a rematch of their first league game against Loughgiel



St Mary's opened their new pitch on the 31st July 1983 with a series of challenge games. The new grounds are the only ones to have hosted a Senior Antrim County Football final other than Casement Park.



For many years, the club organised a carnival each year which was one of the highlights of the season. Athletics, children's events and entertainment were held as well as hurling and football games.



Jamesie McLernon captained St Mary's to their first piece of silverware in 1945. He was a driving force behind the club and held a number of roles, including 25 years as Secretary and President. In August 2000 the newly opened pitch was named in his honour.



## Ballymoney G.A.C.

In 1965, St. Mary's, Rasharkin Reserves suffered a shock defeat in the McCotter Cup against a newly formed club from Ballymoney, playing in their debut game. The Coleraine Chronicle reported that the standard of play "would have shown up many a senior match". In 1968, the Ballymoney club closed and the most talented players from the team moved to St Mary's, including Oliver Muldoon who later played for Derry at County level.

