

John Murphy Memorial Park
Official Opening Day
21st May 2011



“Ask not what your town can do for you but what you can do for your town”.

John Coughlan attributed this adaptation of a famous John F. Kennedy quote to the late John Murphy in a tribute that he wrote for him in The Great Island Community News in January 2004, not long after his death. The spirit of these sentiments were never more truly displayed than on the occasion of the Official Opening of John Murphy Memorial Park at the Carrignafoy Community College grounds on Saturday 21st May 2011. The superb new AstroTurf pitch and the beautifully appointed grass playing areas were dedicated to the memory of John Murphy in a humorous, moving and respectful opening ceremony conducted at the College library. The facility which has been up and running since September of 2010 is a joint venture between the Community College and Springfield Ramblers Schoolboys Football Club and has proved to be an outstanding success. John Murphy, in his capacity as a teacher in the college and a lifetime member and officer of the Springfield Football Club would have been proud of the achievements of the Springfield Ramblers club and the Community College in the execution of the project and would have agreed that it would indeed have been an example of the spirit of community that JFK had invoked in that quote.

On a windswept and rainy day the carefully planned ceremony had to be relocated indoors to the College library. The club extends its sincere apologies to all those who were unable to gain access to the ceremony as the great numbers who turned up exceeded the expectations of the committee and due to the confines of the school were unable to hear the speeches. The running order had to be altered due to the inclement weather. But the weather failed to spoil the parade as the opening ceremony with special guests former Ireland International Ray Houghton and CEO of the FAI John Delaney was a fitting tribute to the memory of John Murphy or ‘Murph’ as he was known to the Springfield clan through the years. MC for the ceremony, club treasurer Kieran O’Callaghan provided a brilliant commentary on the proceedings with witty anecdotes preceding the introduction of each guest speaker.

Cathal Rasmussen chairman of the Springfield Ramblers club extended a warm welcome to all present especially the special guests Mayor of Cobh Finbarr O’Driscoll, Joan Russell CEO County Cork VEC, John Delaney CEO FAI, Tony Fitzgerald Vice President of the FAI, Frank Donovan (Principal Cobh Community College) Tony Kenneally Chairman of the Cork Schoolboys League, Ray Houghton, Father Michael Leamy Administrator Cobh Parish and Father Robin Morrissey, school chaplain.

Cathal briefly outlined the history of the Springfield Ramblers club since the amalgamation of the Cobh Ramblers Schoolboys Club and the Springfield Schoolboys Club. Trying to provide for two schoolboys clubs in Cobh had proved to be an impossible task, stretching the resources of the clubs from the point of view of player numbers, coaching staff and training and playing facilities. To the credit of the officers of

both clubs the clubs decided to amalgamate to consolidate the state of schoolboys' football in Cobh. The Springfield Ramblers Schoolboys Club was formed from this amalgamation.

Cathal paid special tribute the County Cork VEC especially Joan Russell and Frank Donovan who came on board early in the project and were very supportive and accommodating in its progression. He thanked the engineer Ger Neff for his professionalism, the staff of Thornton's Sports for the installation of the project, Mc Sherry's Electrical for the state of the art lighting system and Tossie Hayes of Hayes Cabins for the new dressing rooms. Cathal also briefly outlined the financial aspect of the project and sincerely thanked Cobh Credit Union for their belief in the project and in the club in undertaking the project. Special thanks were attributed to Tiernan O'Rourke for preparing the business plan and to solicitor Charlie Daly for his legal advice on the project and his continuing support for the club.

Cathal continued to thank all the coaching staff of the club who continue to give of their time on a voluntary basis and who made great efforts in preparing the grounds for the ceremony. He thanked the parents for all their support throughout the season and of course for their financial help in running the club. He paid tribute to the ground staff that has maintained the pitch at the VEC grounds through the years, Ollie Geasley, Mick O'Donnell and Martin Carroll. He thanked Niall Abbott and Frank Collins who co-ordinate the pitch management with the staff. Frank Collins made a presentation to Ollie Geasley on the occasion of his retirement.

Cathal thanked the committee of Springfield Ramblers, Kieran O'Callaghan, Niall Abbott, Frank Collins, Wim VanWijnen, John Coughlan, Willie O'Hanlon, Maeve Griffin, Veronica Foley & Anthony O'Donovan for their help in making the project a success and their continuing efforts in the running of club affairs. He reiterated that the tasks undertaken on behalf of the club by these individuals are purely voluntary and performed in their own spare time. He also thanked the other sporting organisations of the town who had congratulated the club on their recent successes.

The chairman then spoke about the successes the club has had on the field of play this season. He reminded the club members how at the club awards ceremony last year he challenged the club to strive for success in the future and that this year those challenges had been met. The Under 12 Premier League side became the first team from the newly formed club to win a league title and the Under 16 Premier League side made history by becoming the first schoolboys' team from Cobh in any code to win a National competition when they beat Belvedere of Dublin to win the Barry Cup. He congratulated the players who are representing the club on Cork representative teams and paid special tribute to Jason Abbott and Cathal O'Hanlon who have represented Ireland at Under 16 and Under 14 level respectively.

Cathal then spoke about John Murphy. He said that John was a great coach, mentor, teacher and a friend of many of the people present at the ceremony, how his commitment to schoolboy football was second to none and that the community lost a great person when he died. He went on to say how John went above and beyond the call of duty when he was a coach with the club and did many deeds without recognition for many children in the town. John, he said was a coach before his years in that many of his ideas were new and different but ultimately ideas that later became the norm with all clubs. He expressed the delight of the club members that the grounds and facilities are now going to be named after John and that he was delighted to welcome the Murphy and Ellard family to the celebration. He also welcomed Claire O'Brien wife of the late Pat O'Brien former president of the FAI and a member of Springfield. Cathal said that Claire had remarked to him recently that Pat would have being delighted with the naming of the grounds after John as they were great friends and both loved football.

Cathal then thanked the sponsors of the club. The club has been very lucky to have the backing of businesses in the town for the funding of playing gear and other expenses. He thanked Derek Corcoran of Fanatics

Sports, Ray and Maura Keating of Londis Newtown, Cobh Credit Union, Supermacs, Ray Mills, Supervalu Cobh, Cobh Ramblers Supporters Club and Andrew Carley. He also thanked Danny Murphy of Centra Cobh for providing the wonderful food for the ceremony and Nigel Kelleher of Pepsi and Ned Donovan for providing the drinks for the children. He then announced a new sponsorship deal for the playing kit for the coming season. He thanked Gerry Harrington of Cobh Tyre Market, Tossie Hayes of Hayes Cabins, Cobh Credit Union and Derek Corcoran of Fanatics for the new strip which was on display at the ceremony.

Cathal finished by expressing his pride in being chairman of the club on this auspicious occasion, surrounded by a group of dedicated players, parents, coaches, teachers, committee and friends. He said that the club would look forward and build on the successes to date and persevere with any future developments.

Cobh Mayor Finbarr O'Driscoll gave an inspiring speech in which he praised the spirit and courage of the committee of the club in undertaking a project such as this to improve the lot of the children of the community. Speaking in Irish he stressed how important it was to encourage the youth of society, "Mol an Og 's tiocfaidh said", he said, "Praise the youth and they'll prosper".

Joan Russell then spoke about how at the inception of the project that she and her staff had had no reservations in recommending the project to the board of the VEC when she had seen at first hand the professionalism and commitment of the Springfield Ramblers representatives in their blueprint for the project and how it would benefit both the school and the club. She paid tribute to Frank Donovan and his staff in their dedication to delivering the project. She spoke of how she knew John Murphy from the times when he would visit the staff room of the college during her time as principal of the school and how he was always a source of sound advice. She concluded by saying that due to the success of this project in Cobh that she was looking forward to repeating this accomplishment at other schools in the Co. Cork VEC.

Frank Donovan then took the podium and thanked the Springfield Ramblers Club for their commitment and professionalism in the execution of the project. He thanked his own staff for their support in the communications with the club and the VEC. He paid tribute to Martin Carroll for his help in preparing the grounds for the day. He spoke fondly about John Murphy or Jack as he knew him. He recalled being a pupil of John's and how kind and supportive he was to him as he himself started out in his teaching career. He said there was no more a fitting tribute to John than to have the facility being used by the school and the club to be named in his memory.

Eddie Ellard junior then spoke about his uncle John Murphy and how as a coach and committee member of the Springfield Club throughout his life that it was always a dream of his that the club would have its own All Weather playing surface and how proud he would have been to see the efforts of the new club come to fruition with the opening of the new pitch.

Special guest John Delaney then addressed the audience. He spoke about the fact that in his capacity as CEO of the FAI that he receives invitations to countless functions by clubs from all around the country every year. He said that he was always delighted to take up these invitations whenever possible to lend his support to the many clubs undertaking projects such as John Murphy Memorial Park. He recalled that after one such function he returned home at about 4am one Saturday morning. He was awoken early by his young son whom he had promised that he would take to soccer training that morning. He remembered how it had been a struggle to rise and go with his son but that the effort had been made worthwhile when his son scored his first goal that morning. He would never forget the joy on his son's face as he ran to his father and leaped into his arms. John remarked that if he had not made the effort to go with his son to training that morning that he would never seen that first goal and the joy it had brought. He pleaded with all the parents present to make the effort to take their children to training and not just to drop them off but to encourage them and to lend assistance to the coaches and the club wherever possible. John ribbed Ray Houghton about the fact that

when he had met Queen Elisabeth at a function earlier in the week that she had remarked that she was still 'miffed ' about that goal in 1988 and had not forgiven Ray for it.

Very special guest Ray Houghton was then called upon to make presentations to the victorious Under 12 & Under 16 Premier League captains and teams. He presented the Under 12 League trophy to Adam O'Sullivan and the Barry Cup to Tony O'Donovan. Ray was indeed the star of the show as he walked to the pitches in the pouring rain to greet the young players as they played training matches. He stopped and spoke with the coaches and asked the kids who their favourite teams were. Ray was very patient after the ceremony was over as he signed autographs for young and old and stood in for countless photographs over the course of the afternoon.

When the speeches were finished everyone then adjourned to the school canteen to partake in the tasty refreshments laid on by Danny Murphy. The club is especially grateful to committee members Maeve Griffin and Veronica Foley for their organisation of the refreshments for the day and to the other ladies who helped them in the canteen. The club also extends its thanks to the professionalism of Michael Halpin who was acting official photographer for the day.

After the refreshments it was time to brave the rain for the unveiling of the Memorial Plaque which was performed by Josie Ellard, Ray Houghton & John Delaney. Josie then cut the ribbon to signify the official opening of John Murphy Memorial Park AstroTurf pitch. This brought the official proceedings of the day to a close.

The Springfield Ramblers club extends its thanks to all the boys and girls, their parents, coaches, committee, invited guests and the public who came along to the event and made it such a great success. We again express our apologies to those who missed the formalities due to the rescheduling of events due to the inclement weather. The club now looks forward to continued success on the field of play and to the successful preparation and execution of the next phase in the club's development whatever that may be.

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