

The History of Newbridge Rugby Football Club

Founded 1996

Nickname - "The Bridge"

Rosetown, Athgarvan.



1. Formation

Newbridge RFC was formed after the amalgamation of neighbouring clubs, Curragh RFC and Old Kilcullen RFC, in June 1996. Through the 1990s, both of these clubs had struggled on the pitch, with recruiting players and new members and for financial support. They each required a new start.

Initial exploratory discussions started in May 1995 but these had fizzled out by August of that year. More serious discussions were resumed in November 1995 with the two clubs being represented by four executive members each :-

- > Curragh by Harry Quirke (President), Don O’Keeffe (Chairman), Con McNamara (a member of the original merger team) and Sean Hayes (a new member of the merger team)
- > Old Kilcullen by Ollie Delaney (President), Niall Kidd (Chairman), Rory O’Carroll (Secretary) and Kieran Murphy (Treasurer).

Following challenging discussions, negotiations and compromising an amalgamation agreement was reached. This was put to the respective memberships at separate AGMs during May and June of 1996. A trial merger of two years was initially agreed. The new club was called Newbridge RFC. The club’s first President was Pierce McCorley, Chairman was Bill Perrin and Captain was Martin Donnelly.

Newbridge RFC

"Triple Crown 1996"



Old Kilcullen RFC

Newbridge RFC
(original 1996 jersey)

Curragh RFC

At the end of this period further separate AGMs were held of the former clubs and after much debate the merger was finalised with a number of conditions that remained in place for the next five years. In an attempt to keep alive the heritage of the former clubs the name of the club was agreed as Newbridge Curragh Old Kilcullen RFC.

Then from season 2003/2004 the new club reverted to its original name of Newbridge RFC.

Initially Newbridge used the grounds of both former clubs, Green Road of the Curragh and Rosetown of Old Kilcullen. However this arrangement presented many logistical and financial challenges as well as making it very difficult to create a club identity with a "home".

A decision was taken during 2000 to focus the club’s activities at Rosetown, a site and clubhouse it totally owned, letting the Ministry of Defence take back the Green Road, which the Curragh had use of on a lease basis. However, as the Curragh had funded the building of the clubhouse, compensation for its loss was obtained for the new club. In addition, with permission, Newbridge still have access to the Green Road facilities.



Newbridge RFC 1st XV - club's first match against Co. Carlow RFC 1996

2. Playing History

As Old Kilcullen RFC were playing in Leinster League Division 3 and the Curragh had just been relegated from Division 2 the Leinster Branch decided that Newbridge RFC would commence its playing career in Division 3. Old Kilcullen founded in 1968 had played its first match against Co. Carlow RFC so it was agreed that the new club would also have its first match against Co. Carlow, who by 1996 were the top Junior club in Leinster. This match was played in the Green Road. In 2006 Newbridge again played against Carlow in a match to celebrate its 10th anniversary. This match was played in Rosetown. At this time Carlow were a senior club playing in the AIL.

Success came early for Newbridge winning the North Midlands Area Hosie Cup in its first season and gaining promotion to Division 2. The club's 3rd XV also won that season's Anderson Cup. However after the second season in Division 2, and no further success, the club lost a large number of players through retirement or moving to other clubs. By the end of its fourth season (99/00) the club was bottom of Division 2 and after 2 more seasons it was bottom of Division 3.

A major rebuilding operation had commenced with active player and coaching recruitment. Initially under coaches Kevin Behan and Peter Barrett supported by Director of Rugby Johnnie Molloy the club started to gain success. This was carried on by Bernard Jackman and Director of Rugby Colin Goode. Over subsequent years the club has continued to enjoy periods of success and challenge which are detailed here. Many players have pulled on the Newbridge jersey with pride and have played with passion and talent for the "Bridge".

3. Minis & Youths

Both Old Kilcullen and especially the Curragh had long traditions of Minis and Youths rugby including success in both North Midlands Area and Leinster competitions. Players from both clubs gained representative honours for Leinster and, in the case of the Curragh, Ireland. This tradition has been continued by Newbridge RFC.

Over the years the Minis has grown into a very strong section of the club with the involvement of very large numbers. Youths proves a more challenging area particularly at the older age levels. However for the future of rugby in Newbridge RFC this is an area that the club will continue to focus.

4. Honours Won

Year	Div	League Position,	Honours & Trophies Won
96/97	3	3rd (Promoted)	Hosie Cup ; Anderson Cup (J3)
98/99	2	U20 Gale Cup (Runner Up)	
99/00	2	14th (Relegated)	NMA U18 League (1st)
01/02	3	14th (0 pts)	
02/03	3	4th (26 pts)	Naas J1 Floodlit Cup
03/04	3	5th (26 pts)	
04/05	3	1st (Promoted)	Leinster League Div 3
05/06	2	Leinster League Div2	Seconds Winner
06/07	2	Lalor Cup J2	
07/08	2	1st (Promoted)	Leinster League Div 2 ; Spiers Cup (J3)
08/09	1	League divided A & B	
09/10	1B	1st (Promoted)	Leinster League Div 1B ; Hosie Cup (Runner Up) ; Dunne Cup (J4)
10/11	1A	Lalor Cup J2 (Runner Up)	
11/12	1A	4th	Provincial Towns Seconds Cup
12/13	1A	Hosie Cup ; Provincial Towns	Seconds Cup
13/14	1A	7th (Relegated)	Hosie Cup (Runner Up)
14/15	1B	7th (Relegated to Div 2A for 15/16)	

Note :-

1. North Midland Area Cup Competitions

- > NMA - North Midlands Area
- > J1 - Hosie Cup
- > J2 - Lalor Cup
- > J3 - Spiers Cup

2. Leinster Branch Cups

- > J3 - Anderson Cup
- > J4 - Dunne Cup

3. Naas Floodlit Cup

- > Final 2003 : Newbridge 11 pts v Cill Dara 10 pts.
This was a very significant victory in the rugby playing recovery of Newbridge RFC.



History of Curragh RFC

(Founded in 1925)

In May 1922 the National Army took over the long-standing British Military Camp at the Curragh. In 1925 a group of young officers from the new Army founded the Rugby Club. One of these founding officers was Major General Sean Collins Powell, a nephew of Michael Collins. The subsequent establishment of the Military College at the Camp resulted in an influx of Officer Cadets for the Army and the Air Corps. A number of these young men had come from rugby playing Colleges and this brought up the playing strength of the Club. The Club affiliated to the Leinster branch in 1927 and it participated in the Provincial Towns Cup for the first time in 1928.

The strength of the Army declined in the early thirties. This fact coupled with the posting of several key players out of the Curragh, had an adverse effect on the progress of the club. As a result the club became defunct and withdrew from competitions for a few years. When the Second World War broke out in 1939 the Government declared a National Emergency. This resulted in a huge influx of young men into the Army. As many of these new volunteers were rugby players it was decided to reorganise the club again.

Re-established in 1940, the club returned to Leinster Branch competition in the 1941/42 season. In that first season under the captaincy of Dick Bunworth the club won the coveted Provincial Towns Cup for the first time. The branch was so impressed that the Curragh was invited to play in senior competition in the following season. Thus, from 1942 to 1946 the club played in the Leinster Senior Cup. The captain of the first Senior Cup Team was Jack Coffey, who later in 1977 became President of the IRFU. The excursion into the senior grade was most successful and many fine victories were won. The junior side also did well during this period. They contested the Town's Cup Final on four occasions, a notable achievement.

When the War ended, the Army reverted to its peacetime establishment and many returned to civilian life. With the reduction in numbers the club pragmatically reverted to junior status again. In the late forties and early fifties it held its place among the leading junior sides in Leinster. However, it went into decline in the mid fifties and sadly it went out of rugby for the second time in 1958.

In the early nineteen sixties a revival began when the Curragh Training Camp won the All Army Rugby Championships of 1962 and 1963. It was apparent that the players were available, so the club was reformed. It was decided to return to the Provincial Rugby scene in the 1963/64 season. The position of the Curragh as one of the premier provincial clubs was quickly re-established. They reached the Towns Cup semi-final in 1963/64 and again in 1964/65. Then in season 1966/67, under the captaincy of Barry Studdert they were victorious in the Towns Cup. Also that season the Curragh were the first ever winner of the newly inaugurated Hosie Cup, a trophy they would win a total of eleven times.

From that time to the early 1990's the club went from strength to strength. Many Provincial finals have been contested down the years, and famous victories have been won and, of course, a few gallant defeats suffered. The club was always numbered among the top Provincial Clubs and as the Curragh Command they dominated Army Rugby. The Curragh was the only Provincial Club to reach the final of the Leinster Junior League, a competition that included the Junior (2nd XV) of all Leinster senior clubs. The Curragh contested the final in 1977/78 (v St. Marys) and 1983/84 (v Blackrock). In all, the Curragh has played in nine Towns Cup Finals, the last against Kilkenny in 1986.

In its formative years membership of the Curragh RFC was confined to members of the military forces. However, shortly after the club's re-formation in the 1960s many civilians were invited to join and their membership greatly enhanced the club in very many ways. Youth's rugby which took off in the club in the 1976/77 season – spear-headed initially by Donough O'Keeffe followed by Colm Mangan and later by Paddy Butler - also greatly enhanced the club's scope and membership.

Within military circles, the club was always regarded as a nursery of the game. Many of the personnel stationed at the Curragh Camp were introduced to the game through the club and all were encouraged to play.

On completion of their initial military training, many of these young men were posted throughout the Army and continued their rugby playing careers with other clubs. Whereas this constant movement caused the club many replacement headaches, it was always a source of interest and no little pride to see how our former players thrived with their new clubs. One such was our most famous "graduate" Ciaran Fitzgerald who captained two Irish Triple Crown winning teams as well as captaining a Lions tour to New Zealand.

In the mid 1990 years player and membership numbers were in decline and this was reflected in a decline in the fortunes of the club which by 1995/96 season found themselves at the bottom of Division 2 of the recently instigated Leinster League (for Junior Clubs). In June 1996 Curragh RFC merged with Old Kilcullen RFC to form Newbridge RFC.

Close ties have continue with the Defence Forces. The GoC is the club Patron and has kindly allowed the Club to play some matches at the Green Road, Curragh grounds including the use the Sports Centre dressing room facilities.



Curragh V Athy 2nds - Towns Cup Final Tullamore 1977

Curragh RFC - Trophies Won

Adult Rugby

* Leinster Branch, IRFU

- > Provincial Towns Cup - Seasons 1941/42 & 1966/67
- > Provincial Towns Seconds Cup - Seasons 1976/77, 1978/79

* North Midlands Area, Leinster Branch

- > Hosie Cup, 1st XV - Seasons 1966/67, 1967/68, 1969/70, 1970/71, 1972/73, 1973/74, 1976/77, 1982/83, 1983/84, 1984/85, 1993/94
- > Lawlor Cup, 2nd XV – Seasons 1980/81, 1982/83
- > Spiers Cup, 3rd XV – Seasons 1975/76, 1990/91

* 7 A-Side Tournaments won

- > Kilkenny - 1967
- > Birr - 1978

Youths Rugby

* Leinster Branch, IRFU

- > Harry Gale Cup (Under 19) - Seasons 1989/90, 1991/92
- > Culleton Cup (Under 17) - Seasons 1990/91, 1991/92
- > McAuley Cup (Under 16) - Seasons 1987/88, 1989/90, 1990/91
- > McGowan Cup (Under 14) - Season 1986/87

* North Midlands Area, Leinster Branch

- > Osborne Cup (Under 19) - Seasons 1986/87, 1991/92
- > Under 18 - Seasons 1988/89, 1989/90, 1990/91, 1991/92 (shared with Naas RFC)
- > Under 16 - Seasons 1987/88, 1988/89, 1989/90, 1990/91
- > Under 14 - Seasons 1985/86, 1986/87, 1987/88, 1988/89
- > Under 12 - Seasons 1984/85, 1986/87, 1992/93
- > Under 10 - Season 1987/88

Leinster Provincial Towns Cup Finals

The Curragh RFC won the Leinster Provincial Towns Cup on two occasions (1942 and 1967) and were losing finalists on 6 occasions (1944, 1945, 1947, 1975, 1978 and 1986).

Season	Winner	Winner Score	Runner Up	Runner Up Score	Curragh Captain	Venue
1941/42	Curragh	9	Dundalk	0	Dick Bunworth	Lansdowne Rd
1943/44	Skerries	17	Curragh 2nd XV	0	Cathal O'Shea	Lansdowne Rd
1944/45	Dundalk	17	Curragh 2nd XV	0	Louis Culliton	Donnybrook
1946/47	Dundalk	9 (ET)	Curragh	6 (ET)	Pat Sweeny	Donnybrook
1966/67	Curragh	6	Drogheda	3	Barry Studdert	Navan
1974/75	Roscrea	8	Curragh	7	Dan Rea	Edenderry
1977/78	Athy	14	Curragh	9	Donough O'Keefe	Dundalk
1985/86	Kilkenny	10	Curragh	0	John Cremin	Drogheda

Old Kilcullen RFC

(Founded in 1967)

Old Kilcullen RFC was founded in late 1967. Initially the new club played their matches in Brennan's "Upper Field" at Old Kilcullen, at the time used by Kilcullen GAA. Clubhouse facilities were provided in Brennan's nearby pub.

Old Kilcullen's first match was played against Co. Carlow on St Stephens Day 1967, Carlow winning by 19pts to 3. Allen Byrne was the Old Kilcullen captain whilst Ray McDonnell scored the first try in the club's history.



During that first season Old Kilcullen won 8 of their first 13 matches, drawing 2 others. The following season they reached the final of the 1968/69 Hosie Cup. In 1970 the club also won its first Towns Cup match. The following season, 1971, with the growth of player numbers a 2nd XV was started.

In 1971 eight acres at Rosetown, Athgarvan was purchased giving the club a permanent home. A building was erected near the gate to serve as changing rooms. Further land purchases along the road frontage in the early 1970s expanded the site to 91/2 acres. The first phase of the current clubhouse facility was built in 1976. In 1980 Fr. John Heffernan laid the foundation stone for the clubhouse extension and after some refurbishment this updated facility was opened in 1981. Then during the 1985/86 season the chimney in the clubhouse was built.

In 1981 Old Kilcullen hosted a training session for the touring Australian national team in Rosetown as they travelled from Cork to Dublin where they were due to play Ireland.

During Old Kilcullen's 30 year existence Leinster's Provincial Towns Cup was the main competition. However whilst some matches were won Old Kilcullen best performance was reaching the Quarter Final stages in 1978, 1990 and 1991. In the first year of the new Leinster League Old Kilcullen came within a minute of winning Division 3.

In June 1996 Old Kilcullen merged with the Curragh RFC to form Newbridge RFC.



Old Kilcullen v Trinity College 1968

Front: B.Berney, D.Brennan.

Middle: D.Hall, N.McDonnell, J.Barrett, B.O'Connell, T.Barrett, R.Hall, D.Byrne.

Back: V.Nolan, R.McDonnell, L.Dempsey, A.Byrne, D.Cox, T.Cox.

Club Coaches

1989 to 1992 ... Tom Brennan

1992 to 1993 ... Harry Harbison

1993 to 1994 ... Tommy Doyle

1994 to 1996 ... Aidan Feighan

Club Honours

1978/79 U17 Culliton Cup ; U17 NMA League ; U11 NMA League

1985/86 Seconds Town Plate (runner-up),

1987/88 U19 Gale Cup ; U12 NMA League

1988/89 U19 Gale Cup ; U19 NMA Osbourne Cup

1990/91 Seconds Town Plate

1991/92 U19 Gale Cup (runner-up) ;
U19 NMA Osbourne Cup (runner-up),

Leinster Junior Selection

Francois Pascanau (1969)

Dan Bell (1983)

Tom Berney (1990)

Kevin Behan (1990)

