

History of Croke Park

Today Croke Park is home and headquarters to the Gaelic Athletic Association. Each year thousands of GAA fans follow their team to Croke Park, however few are aware that the history of the stadium dates back to 1864 and that the stadium has been known by five different names.

On April 16th 1864 a plot of land was leased to Mr. Maurice Butterley and became known as **‘Butterley’s Field’**. In 1894 a company called the City and Suburban Racecourse and Amusements Grounds Ltd. purchased Butterley’s Field and began leasing it out for sports meetings, whippet racing and gaelic games. Butterley’s Field then became known as the **City and Suburban Racecourse**.

By 1908 the City and Suburban Racecourse was up for sale and on December 17th Frank Brazil Dineen bought the grounds for £3,250. Frank was a former President of the GAA and intended that in time the GAA would purchase the grounds from him. The GAA had made a profit of £1,273 in 1907 and felt that to buy the grounds would put the Association severely in debt. Once purchased Frank set about making changes to the grounds, the pitch was re-laid, terracing was erected and the name was changed to **Jones Road Sports Ground**.

In 1913 the GAA organised a Croke Memorial Tournament to raise funds for a monument to the GAA’s first patron, Archbishop Thomas Croke. The final of this tournament was played on March 4th 1913 between Kerry and Louth in Croke Park in front of a then record attendance of 26,000. The game ended in a draw and the replay was set for June 29th. For the replay the gates were closed after 32,000 spectators had been admitted but thousands more swarmed in over the walls. The two teams were level at half-time but Kerry eventually defeated Louth 2-4 to 0-5.

All attendance records for a GAA match were smashed and the GAA had made £2,365 profit. The tournament was a huge success and the GAA could now afford to erect a monument in Croke’s memory and also purchase a new central GAA sports ground. Later that year the GAA purchased Jones Road Sports Ground and re-named it **Croke Memorial Park**. The name Croke Memorial Park was quickly shortened to **Croke Park** and the stadium became the GAA’s national grounds and administrative headquarters.

Since 1913 Croke Park has undergone significant changes. A new terrace area at the northern end of the ground was created in 1917 using the rubble from O’Connell Street in Dublin, which had been destroyed during the 1916 Rising. This terrace became known as Hill 16. In 1924 a new stand was built along the Jones Road side of the stadium and named the Hogan Stand, in honour of Michael Hogan from Tipperary who had been shot during Bloody Sunday 1920. A new Cusack Stand was completed in 1938. At the Canal End new terracing was built in 1949, the Nally Stand was built in 1952 and the ‘old’ Hogan Stand was replaced in 1959. Thereafter development of the stadium slowed.

In the 1980’s a grand plan for the entire redevelopment of Croke Park was announced. This redevelopment was staged in four phases, a phase for each stand, starting in 1993 with a new Cusack Stand and culminating in 2005 with a new Hill 16. The redevelopment was completed in just 12 years with no disruptions to any All-Ireland finals.

Today Croke Park is one of the largest stadiums in Europe and is truly one of the most historic stadiums in the world.



Archbishop Croke

What’s in a name?

During its long history GAA headquarters has been known by many different names: Butterley’s Field, The City and Suburban Racecourse, Jones Road Sports Ground, Croke Memorial Park and finally Croke Park. Once the GAA purchased the stadium in 1913 it was decided to name it in honour of Archbishop Thomas William Croke of Cashel. In 1884 Archbishop Croke was invited to become the first patron of the GAA, an invitation he happily accepted. Archbishop Croke supported the GAA and its games until his death, often providing prizes for competitions.

At the GAA Museum

Experience a Croke Park behind-the-scenes guided tour.

Follow the Stadium’s history on the Croke Park Timeline exhibition.

Curriculum Links

History. Strand – Local Studies. Strand Unit – Games and Pastimes in the Past.

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