

Kildare has a proud history in Scór as GAA competition marks 50 years



Ardcloough Leinster Léiriú Stáitse champions who are taking part in the Scór na nÓg final in Castlebar on 16 February

By Conor Forrest

WHEN many of us think of the GAA, hurling, football, camogie – and perhaps handball or rounders – might spring to mind. But there are other aspects to the organisation that has become an intrinsic part of everyday Irish life, including the promotion of Irish culture and the Irish language.

Scór falls under that remit, an annual competition that provides an outlet for people to take part in a variety of Irish past-times in a fun and memorable way. Eight events or disciplines cover all aspects of Irish culture – figure/céilí dancing, solo singing, ballad groups, recitation/scéalaíocht, léiriú stáitse (stage presentation), instrumental music, set dancing and table quiz. It's a great platform for talented performers who might not otherwise have the opportunity to showcase their capabilities, particularly for the younger generation who benefit from a boost in confidence and experience.

"The original idea was that part of the GAA's remit is to support language and culture," explained Paul Delahunty, PRO for Kildare Scór.

The competition is divided into two main age levels – Scór na nÓg for those under the age of 17, which gives young people a great opportunity to shine in

the spotlight, and Scór Sinsir for anyone above that age (Scór na bPáisti caters specifically for primary school students). All clubs should have an Irish Language and Cultural Officer whose job it is to organise the competition.

Although the rules or styles vary between events, Paul noted that in general there should be an Irish theme and acts shouldn't belittle Ireland or its culture, pastimes, heritage, language or anything of that nature. Sectarianism is a non-runner and acts competing in Scór na nÓg cannot represent drunkenness or similar behaviour on stage.

"It's meant to be a positive

"You're trying to build more than just a football club or a hurling club, you're trying to build a GAA club, a community"

image of Ireland and what it has to offer," said Paul. "It is meant to be family-friendly."

In Kildare, clubs are invited to submit acts in each of the eight events, and particularly strong or active clubs may be able to run an internal competition to see who goes forward to represent the club. These acts will compete in the county final with the winners moving on to represent Kildare in the Leinster semi-final and, if successful

there, the Leinster final. Provincial champions will then have the chance to represent their club, county and province at the All-Ireland finals.

It's not much different when compared to their sporting counterparts – the only exception is the table quiz category, where winners go straight through to the All-Ireland final.

Having been established by the GAA in 1969 this year marks Scór's 50th anniversary, with a push being made to enhance its profile across the county and country.

As Paul explains, the competition is a bit like hurling in that some areas and clubs have a strong tradition while others don't, but having one or two committed people on hand can help a club do very well. He has yet to meet anyone, he noted, who didn't have fun or enjoy their experience with Scór.

During those five decades, many Kildare clubs have won not just Leinster but All-Ireland titles in the competition, and two Kildare clubs will be representing the county at the junior All-Ireland final next month. Ardcloough recently captured the Leinster Léiriú Stáitse crown (a hard-fought category which hasn't seen too many Leinster winners for Kildare) in the Wexford Opera House and will join county quiz champions Milltown in the

Scór na nÓg final in Castlebar on 16 February. The Kildare Sinsir finals, meanwhile, will be held in Allenwood GAA on Sunday 24 February, with the All-Ireland finals earmarked for Saturday 13 April.

"Kildare has a good tradition in Scór now, a lot better than a lot of counties in fairness," Paul said.

"Most clubs at some stage will have taken part."

Although its not known as one of the more glamorous or marquee events for the GAA, Scór is no less important. Standards are high across the categories and the winners are All-Ireland champions in their own right – they're presented with medals by the President of the GAA, no

different to the All-Ireland football or hurling final winners.

One of the competition's key strengths is that it offers a chance for people who may not be athletic to become involved with and make a contribution to their local GAA club, building links and memories.

A Scór participant might reflect fondly on their time in the competition and in later years become involved in club administration, or encourage their kids to take part in the sport (or indeed in Scór).

"You're trying to build more than just a football club or a hurling club, you're trying to build a GAA club, a community," Paul said. "That's the focus we have."



The winning quiz team from Milltown GAA who will represent Co Kildare in the Scór na nÓg All Ireland finals on 16 February in The Travellers Rest, Castlebar

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