



Maria O'Neill-London

So, where are you living now and what are you up to?

I have moved around the South London suburbs and I can firmly say I know these South London villages and streets better than I ever expected after all the walking of the last 12 months. Working with Jacobs, managing the growth of our global sales team.

When did you play for the club and which teams were you on?

I started playing when the first ladies team was formed in Greystones back in 1997. Oliver Leonard and my mum, Cecilia O'Neill, were our first management team. I played with the team from then until our first year as a Senior team 2009 before I left to join the first Ladies Team of Ranelagh Gaels in 2010.

Did you have much or any success?

We were successful, eventually, though we had great fun trying to make it over the years. I'll never forget how close we came to winning championship in 2006 and 2007. One point losses are not forgotten easily! We won the Junior Championship in 2008. There were a few of us who had been there from the first team (Caroline Cawley and LesleyAnne Long I can recall off hand) and it was just brilliant to get our hands on the silverware that day in Aughrim.

Is there a particular match that stands out in your memory?

Each of those championship finals were great days. From the early days with one or two people on the sideline, to playing in Baltinglass, Newtown and Aughrim with a great crowd supporting makes for great memories.

What mentors stand out who had a big impact on you?

That's a tough question as over the years we had a few different trainers over the year and I remember each of their different styles of training and management. I'll have to go with the Ollie Leonard for getting us going all those years ago, and sticking with us even when we weren't the most successful on the pitch. And Seamus Ahern for sticking with us over the years, and being a huge part of our championship win.

Favourite team mate?

I'm going to pick a set of sisters, and there were many that I could put in here, but going to go with Lorna and Becca Fuscuardi. Having them in the half back line in front of me always made me happy. We definitely weren't the tallest team in the league, especially when Mide and Caoimhe had moved away, but they didn't let too much come my way. It made my job a lot easier in the corner. Thanks Ladies!

Have you played or been involved in Gaelic games at all since leaving the club?

I left Eire Og to join the first Ladies football team in Ranelagh Gaels in 2010. At the time it was a club with no home (other than Smyths in Ranelagh!) and just one men's team. It's got a juvenile section now, but still no pitch of their own yet. We won the Junior E Championship in our very first year, and I played with them when I was around, until I left Dublin in 2016. I got involved in the committee as well there for a few years too. When I moved to London in 2017 I joined Dulwich Harps. When moving to a new place, what better way to meet some new people! We play on Peckham Rye Common and are the most central club in London. Anyone considering a move over to London are more than welcome to join us. I keep thinking I am going to retire but I toggged out on Saturday for the first match of the season, still playing in corner back. I haven't hung up the boots just yet. I am the Club Treasurer now, though the funds are a lot less than what goes through the accounts back when I was doing the role in Eire Og.

Any possibility of returning to Greystones and maybe evening wearing the jersey or getting involved in some capacity again?

I'm sure I'll get involved in some way if I am back living in Greystones. I enjoy being part of the GAA community and the value of it when you move to new places shouldn't be underestimated. And of course, I'll keep buying the odd club lotto ticket too. one of these days I plan to get my hands on the jackpot.