

# Harp that <sup>By 15</sup> once ... gets the red card

JEROME REILLY

It may still feature on the Euro coin but the harp, the official symbol of Ireland since medieval times, has been removed from the country's most precious sporting award — the All-Ireland medal.

In a move that went largely unnoticed by GAA fans around the country Croke Park redesigned the medal just in time for last year's All-Ireland senior finals.

Now the harp which once adorned the medals has been replaced by the new heritage crest of the GAA.

The first recipients were the senior hurlers of Kilkenny followed by the footballers of Tyrone.

The move to scrap the harp has outraged Billy Maguire, the President of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, whose family have a long association with the GAA.

"The GAA should never have done this — the harp is the symbol of Ireland and the sacred seal of the state — what's worse they are covering it up now."

Mr Maguire, from Askeaton, Co Limerick, says the "GAA were the backbone of the War of Independence" and removing the harp was "a betrayal of the association's ideals."

The current design of Ireland's coat of arms is based on the Brian Boru harp of the 14th Century, which can be

found in the museum of Trinity College in the heart of Dublin.

The Great Seal of the Irish Free State (*Séala Mor do Shaorstát Éireann*) which features the harp was used to seal official documents of the Irish Free State by the Governor-General.

The Great Seal is currently on public display at the National Museum of Ireland at Collins Barracks, Dublin.

The Harp, with minimal changes from the Great Seal of the Irish Free State is also engraved on the official seal of the President of Ireland.

Croke Park say they are delighted with the new redesign of the All-Ireland medal.

"The original identity of the GAA stemmed from the first All-Ireland medal, crafted around 1910, it drew its inspiration from the Irish High Cross.

"On the new heritage crest the name, GAA, sits at the heart. The date, 1884 is a reminder of the foundation of the GAA and also of the founding fathers.

"The words, *Cumann Lúthchleas Gael* remain, etched within the cross to record the contribution made to the preservation of Irish, which is the oldest written vernacular language in Europe.

"The cross itself remains an iconic symbol of Ireland," the GAA said in a statement.

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September 4: All-Ireland Medal

Re-designed

Thursday, September 4.