

## **TRIBUTE TO HILLTOWN CRASH VICTIMS**

(Contributed)

The small rural community of Hilltown was stunned and saddened by the tragic deaths of two of its young residents in the early hours of Thursday morning last (31<sup>st</sup> January 1991).

Teenie Devlin and Mark Mooney, already planning a future together, died together in a tragic car accident. The sense of shock and sadness was not confined to the village of Hilltown or to the Parish of Clonduff: it reverberated throughout County Down and Ulster.

The two grew up together in the village, their environment determining the pattern of their lives.

Teenie, like most young girls in Hilltown, liked Camogie and for ten years she was a regular on the team whenever her beloved Clonduff played in County Down.

Her talents were not confined to the playing fields, because she was a jovial girl with a mischievous smile, who regularly took part in local concerts. She frequently represented the Club in Novelty Acts in the CCD competitions and with Jacqueline McGreevy and Elizabeth Maginn, represented the Club in the All Ireland Finals of 1978 and in 1985 with Rosaleen McCartney, Eileen McCusker, Jacqueline McGreevy and Eileen Hamill.

I held Mark as a baby and watched him grow through childhood to boyhood, to youth, to manhood. Like his contemporaries in Clonduff he was kicking a ball almost before he could walk, and when he donned his bellowed yellow jersey for his first Under 12 game it was to be first of many honours.

That winning smile, which was his hallmark, gave way to a sterner look on the playing fields – a look which mirrored the courage and determination which always marked his performances.

He played for his club at all levels from U12 to Senior, collecting County U16 and Minor medals on the way. In his seventh year at St Colman's College, having played at all levels, his Everest came in May 1986 when, with his Clonduff colleagues Cathal Murray and Mark Matthews, he was a member of the Violet Hill team which won the All Ireland Colleges title, the Hogan Cup. Three months later, he won an Ulster Minor Football Championship with Down. He later went on to play for the Gaelic team at Queen's University. Also his talents had been recognised by the County selectors and he wore the red and black jersey for the U16, Minor (U18) and U21 teams.

A knee injury cut short a promising career, but the courage, tenacity and determination which marked his display on the field drove him to the specialists table and only a week ago he had an operation as he fought his way back to fitness.

On Saturday the funeral cortege for the two young people was one of the largest ever seen in Clonduff.

Team mates from the football and Camogie teams formed a guard of honour as colleagues and friends carried their coffins, side-by-side, to Ballymaghery. They were draped in the colours of Clonduff Camogie and Football teams, Violet Hill, Queens University and Down jerseys.

The life which Teenie and Mark had planned together has been cruelly snatched away. The Devlin and Mooney families can console themselves knowing that it is true – 'The Good Die Young'. Mark and Teenie were good – and young!

Go ndéana Dia Trocaire ar an anam dillís!

### **Council's Sympathy**

At Monday's meeting of Newry and Mourne Council, Mr Pat Maginn proposed that letters of condolences be sent to the Mooney and Devlin families who had been so tragically bereaved.

Endorsing the decision, Mr Ciarán Mussen, who was related to one of the victims, expressed his sympathy to the families. The deaths of the two young people had brought great sadness to the community in Hilltown, he said.