

GREAT LIMERICK ATHLETES

No. 144—PADDY CLOHESSY Of Fedamore

BY SEAMUS O'CEALLAIGH.

THE name of Clohessy has been associated with Fedamore hurling since the first club was formed in the parish seventy years ago, and Patrick Clohessy was then one of the stalwart sons of Fedamore who put the team to the fore and helped in the winning of six challenge cups between 1885 and 1894, evidence enough of the proud place the game occupied there in early G.A.A. days.

I saw the four brothers—Paddy, Andy, Jack and Dave Clohessy—play on the same Fedamore team, and the quartette helped in bringing the last senior county title of the parish—away back in 1927, a great hurling year by Shanonside.

Paddy Clohessy was then a mere youth, yet he had a fine hurling record behind him. As a student of that great nursery—Limerick C.B.S.—he gave early promise of the prowess that was later to manifest itself so strikingly—and helped "Christians" win O'Mara and Keans Cups on a few occasions, besides figuring in a glorious battle for Dr. Harty Cup honours that was crowned with success.

HIS FIRST NATIONAL TROPHY.

Mastery in the colours of Limerick C.B.S. brought selection for his province, and he donned the Munster jersey to gain his first national trophy—an All-Ireland Colleges hurling medal.

There was no minor championship then, so he was denied participation in a competition that in later years provided for many coming players a worth-while introduction to the thrills and throbs of the arena.

Limerick's club championship hurling was in its hey-day as he emerged in his teens, one of the brightest hopes for later renown, and although still very young his play in the 1926 county junior championship series, which Fedamore won, was sufficient to attract the attention of the senior county selectors, and he found his place on one of Limerick's earliest National Hurling League fifteens.

FEDAMORE SENIORS BATTLE THEIR WAY TO THE FRONT.

Meanwhile, Fedamore seniors were battling their way to the top, and the performances of the young stripling received almost as much notice as the club itself, as it forged through possibly the most hard fought series ever waged for the county crown.

Fedamore opened that year of destiny in fine style by winning the St. Michael's Church Tournament Medals. Young Ireland proved their worth when disposing of the county title holders, Cloughaun, and their greatest rivals, in

dramatic fashion.

The great pair met in the eastern decider. Fedamore and Young Ireland undoubtedly hit the headlines that year. They figured in three memorable games that will ever stand out in the history of the Limerick championships. Croom was the venue for all three—Mick Neville the referee. The first day it was a draw—3-1 each; a month later the issue was still undecided at 3-2 apiece; the third meeting saw a record crowd brave sleet and rain to witness one of the toughest struggles of the Limerick arena, won by Fedamore by the narrowest of margins, narrower even than the score (3-2 to 2-4) can indicate, for the gallant city lads were sending over the equaliser as the long whistle sounded—a split second giving Fedamore one of their sweetest victories ever, and the opportunity of revenging the 1924 verdict over Croom, whom they beat in the county final, 5-4 to 1-1.

TWO FAMILIES PROVIDE SEVEN PLAYERS.

As already mentioned, the four Clohessy brothers helped in that great victory, ably assisted by a trio of cousins—the brothers Stephen, Willie and Dick Gleeson.

The hardest game I ever saw fought on any field was one in which Fedamore and Young Ireland figured. That occasion it was not a championship that was at stake—just the final of the local tournament at Hospital. Rivalry

between the pair had reached an all-time high pitch, following a hectic clash for the 1928 championship won by the city lads. Fedamore were bent on revenge—hurling fans knew there was little between the teams so the Hospital muster was a large and excited one. An "outside" referee, Joe Murphy, of Mitchelstown, had charge.

It was the fiercest fought game that I have witnessed. From start to stop no quarter was given or sought in a full-blooded contest that must take rank with the toughest struggles of the Gaelic arena. There was no room for spectacular hurling as players stood shoulder to shoulder and "drew" on everything. Personal courage was never less in question, and Young Ireland surely earned their laurels that evening.

THE PRIZE DIDN'T MATTER. The intrinsic value of the trophy was very little, indeed, but it was played for with an abandon rarely witnessed even in contests for Gaeldom's highest prize.

Paddy Clohessy learned his hurling in the crucible of club rivalry at its zenith, and he was well fitted for the toughest assignment even when pitted against the redoubtable Phil Cahill, his first day out in Munster Championship

array. The Holycross lad was Tipperary's marksman in chief, but he had sixty scoreless minutes from his first contact with Fedamore's pride.

The name of Paddy Clohessy was flashing into the hurling news headlines, and when he followed up his feat on Phil Cahill by holding "Tull" Considine in the Thomond Feis final, it was evident to all that Limerick had a rare find, indeed—a man who later became Ireland's premier stylist.

Called to the provincial colours in 1932, he hurled for Munster from that until 1940, when he retired from the inter-county arena—a great spell, surely.

WON EVERY HONOUR.

With Limerick he won every honour a hurler could wish for—three All-Ireland titles (1934, 1936 and 1940), five Munster Championship crowns (1933, 1934, 1935, 1936 and 1940), five National League medals (1934, 1935, 1936, 1937 and 1938), and seven Thomond Tournament souvenirs.

He visited London on four occasions for Bank Holiday fixtures, and participated in the great American tour with the Limerick team in 1936.

He filled the centre half-back position both for Limerick and Munster with remarkable hurling ability—his long association with the position in a glorious hurling decade being confirmation in itself of his greatness as a wielder of the camán.

Paddy met many great hurlers during his spell as pivot of the defence but I enjoyed none better than his clashes with the great Mick Mackey when the pair met in some of the hectic Ahane-Fedamore games for the Limerick crown.

IN THE 1940 FINAL.

And perhaps the last and most enduring memory is of his exchanges with the elusive Terry Leahy in the 1940 final. Flanked by Jim Langton and Jack Gargan, the Uringford lad tried everything he knew to swing the game in Kilkenny favour that afternoon. Time and again Paddy Clohessy hacked through fusilades of ash to break beautifully planned Kilkenny attacking movements. He jumped high into the air to intercept fast travelling shots, stooped low to break the close play; was here, there and everywhere in one of the most devastating displays a back could offer on any field.

He finished in a blaze of glory, for that was Paddy's last great offering to the hurling story of Limerick. He stepped off the stage to the plaudits of the All-Ireland multitude—a great hurler and Gael, who still gives everything he has to Gaeldom as an official of his Divisional Board and a County Selector.