

## No. 171—PAT DUNDON of Mount Pleasant

(By Seamus O'Ceallaigh)

**B**ETWEEN fifty and sixty years ago—and even before then—the district of Mount Pleasant and its surroundings produced as many first-class hurlers and athletes as any other district of similar size did.

The great Mount Pleasant "Liberators," which were formed in 1890, won fame on many a field and defeated all the leading West Limerick sides of their day, in the many tournaments that were such regular features then.

All the members of this gallant combination deserve recalling: Larry McNamara, captain; Charlie Cullinan, Tom Kelly, Mick Conway, Paddy Fitzsimons, Jim Fitzgerald, Tom Stack, Jim Green, Jim Fitzsimons, Jim Mangan, John Wall, Ned Dundon, Bill Dundon, John Dundon, Jim Griffin, Tom Frost, Paddy Enright, Jim O'Brien, Paddy O'Connell, Mike Farrell, Tom Farrell, Tom Sheehy, goalkeeper; Mick Sheehy, Jim Sheehy, Jack Ryan, Paddy Kennedy, Paddy O'Brien and Dan Aherne.

### ROUGH AND TOUGH.

Hurling was rough and tough in those distant days and honours were not so easily achieved then. Those hard working men of Mount Pleasant never attained any great heights on the playing fields, but they did what any team with a mark of self-respect should do — by going out for the honour of their parish, and that despite very backward conditions.

Few of their players were over-skilled at the game, but they were men of steel, having honour and determination — the stuff from which real hurlers are made. These, together with many other factors, were rather vital in those days, and evidently the Mount Pleasant men lacked none of them, by the vigorous and epic displays they gave against superior odds. The old timers admired the big men of that era, and many still hold that there is more glory and pride in courage like this, than in a glass-case full of trophies.

### USEFUL ATHLETES.

Perhaps few other teams anywhere included such a number of useful athletes as this gallant Mount Pleasant side did. Their skipper, Larry McNamara, was a great oarsman; Paddy Fitzsimons, a noted walkist; Tom Stack, a magnificent high jumper; while Jim Sheehy and Paddy O'Brien were good at weight-throwing. From the southern portion of the district came Paddy O'Connell, who was one of the best all round athletes then in the country, and Jim O'Brien, a useful sprinter.

In the late 'eighties and early 'nineties the annual sports meeting held at Craggs, above Mount Pleasant, was the big feature of the parish, and was mainly pat-

ronised by local competitors and others from the surrounding districts. Cash prizes were given at first, but in later years such commodities as tobacco and cigarettes were at stake, and sometimes a half barrel of stout, as a novel prize for all the winners and runners-up.

### GOOD LONG DISTANCE RUNNER.

One of the foremost long distance runners in West Limerick at this period was Tom Casey of Newbridge. He was in first class athletics for about a dozen years. Not alone did Tom take the honours at all the parish sports but he also acquitted himself very well at some of the bigger meetings, notably Limerick, Tralee and Listowel.

Prominent amongst the athletes who graced the parish sports meetings in the late decades of the last century were Michael and Jim Keating of Shanagolden. The former was good at the half-mile, while the latter was a useful sprinter.

Amongst others who shone at this period were Jim O'Brien of Craggs, who was good at the sprints; Jim Sheehy, Mount Pleasant, a useful weight-thrower, together with Jim Corbett, Foynes, and the subject of this sketch, Pat Dundon, both of whom specialised in the long jump event.

Pat Dundon, who was the oldest of eight brothers, was born at the Court Castle, Aughinish Island, near Mount Pleasant, about the year 1850. This island gave no less than five hurlers to the "Liberators" selection, including three other Dundon brothers — John, Bill and Ned—the latter one of the finest wing-backs in West Limerick.

### FINE PERFORMANCES.

Pat Dundon had passed his best by the time the founding of the Gaelic Athletic Association brought the great wave of athletic activity that swept Ireland like a prairie fire. In the limited opportunities of his hey-day he put up some fine performances, and was considered one of the best men in the long jump the district ever reared. Records of those early days are unfortunately not available, and we have only to rely on the well authenticated parish gossip of the time to piece together the doings of the big figures of an era when Irish athletes were just coming back into their own—an era that prepared the road for the big revival that was to come with the G.A.A., and all sound thinkers on this subject are agreed that it was the great work of pioneers like Pat Dundon that made possible the big performances of after years.

### KEEN ANGLER AND FOWLER.

Pat Dundon was also a keen angler, but he was particularly noted for his wonderful marksmanship with a gun. He always kept some excellent gun dogs. The mud flats along the Shannon bank—between the Deel Estuary and Aughinish Island in particular—are usually abounding in all kinds of game, and the Dundons, with many others from the vicinity, devoted much time to the dog and gun.

### KEEN ANGLER AND FOWLER.

Pat Dundon was famous as a storyteller and had a wonderful knowledge of folklore and local history. He was also very well versed in many other subjects and was a brilliant conversationalist. Pat was, indeed, a great soul, with a most fascinating personality, and was a highly interesting character to those who knew him intimately. He was undoubtedly a boon companion, and to this day one can hear of many humorous incidents regarding him, related by some of those who had the privilege of his friendship.

### GOOD OARSMEN.

As Mount Pleasant is a Shannonside district, it housed many boatmen, and boating was a good trade in those far-off days. It was only fitting then that the district should produce some useful oarsmen.

The Dundons, who were men of fine physique, were brilliant oarsmen and won several prizes for this very fine craft. The regattas

held at the little port town of Foynes during those years were really great features, and on one such occasion five of the Dundon brothers — Pat, John, Bill, Ned and Mick— won the team prize in a canoe race. Amongst other Mount Pleasant families who were skilled at rowing were the O'Connors and McNamaras, all real rugged sons of the sea.

### ANOTHER GALAXY.

When some of the afore-mentioned athletes had made their exit from the active arena, another galaxy of efficient contestants stepped into the limelight. These included a trio of brilliant high jumpers: Paddy O'Connell of Mount Pleasant, Paddy Corbett, Foynes, and Jack O'Brien of Croaghane, Shanagolden.

Paddy O'Connell, who was one of the best all-round performers then in the country, took the honours wherever he went. Paddy was also famous for wielding the caman. He was altogether a fine sportsman, and won the admiration of everybody who witnessed his brilliant performances on the athletic field.

His colleague, Jack O'Brien, was also a useful weight-thrower, while his brothers, Paddy and Mick, also specialised in this event.

Most of those athletes were little known outside the boundaries of their own district, though they were every bit as efficient as their more renowned contemporaries, while their performances under such backward conditions were most creditable and certainly deserve to be remembered.

### FOR THE GLORY OF THE SPORT.

These men had no love for prize-hunting at all—they merely competed for the honour of their townlands and parishes, and for the glory of the sport they loved. They were simple peasant athletes, real specimens of true Irish manhood, boasting all the qualities that go to make up manly men, quite content with the honours they achieved within their own localities, and the respect and esteem in which they were proudly held by their neighbours.

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