

Great Limerick Athletes

No. 94—GARRETT HOWARD of Croom

(By SEAMUS O'CEALLAIGH)

SEARCH where you may, it would be difficult to find a hurler with a finer record than that to the name of Garrett Howard, the only Limerick man to win five All-Ireland Senior Hurling Championship medals, and boasting other claims to fame in that he represented Ireland in both hurling and shinty at two successive Tailteann Games; played for both Leinster and Munster in Railway Cup Finals; won National Hurling League trophies with Dublin and Limerick; figured on the successful side in eight provincial finals—four each in Leinster and Munster; and has a grand total of eight County senior hurling championship mementoes to his credit—five won with Garda in Dublin; two with the famous Tipperary Toomevara Greyhounds, and one—his first—won with his home club in Croom.

LONG LIST OF HONOURS.

It is difficult to know where to start in dealing with such a wonderful career, and Garrett packed so much into his near two decades of hurling stardom that it would take more space than is available to adequately cover the many stirring contests in which he figured with real distinction. His list of honours is so long that the Croom man can hardly remember them himself, but one game in which he shone stands out yet after more than a quarter of a century as one of the greatest hurling games ever fought on the historic Croke Park pitch.

It was for the 1927 Railway Cup Final—the first of the modern inter-provincials, and the contestants were Leinster and Munster. In the story of Croke Park there are days fresh to the minds of its patrons, but all of them take a back seat to the superb display of that memorable St. Patrick's Day, with its unparalleled enthusiasm and wild excitement. It was a struggle of which one can speak only in superlatives. The combined speed accuracy and vigour exhibited were truly marvellous, and in the closing stages it progressed rapidly to a crescendo of unforgettable hurling. Each individual player seemed to yield himself to some irresistible impulse that carried him to unapproachable heights of efficiency and exertion. It was truly an enthralling hurling exhibition won by Leinster in memorable fashion but with the glamour that must long surround this epic equally shared by the gallant Munstermen. The final tally—Leinster, 1-11; Munster, 2-6.

THE TEAMS.

The teams were:—

Leinster — Dr. Tommy Daly (goal), Ned Tobin, Paddy McInerney ("Fowler"), Garrett Howard, Mick Gill, Denny O'Neill, Eddie Fahy, Jim Walsh ("Builder"), Matty Power (Dublin), J. Byrne (Laois), Watty Dunphy, Eddie Doyle, Lory Meagher, John Roberts, Henry Meagher (Kilkenny).

Munster — Sean Og Murphy, Eudhie Coughlan, E. O'Connell ("Marie"), Mick Murphy, Jim Regan, Jim Hurley, P. Aherne ("Gah"), M. Aherne ("Balty") (Cork); Mick Murphy (goal), John Joe Kinnane, Micky Cross, Willie Gleeson (Limerick); Mick D'Arcy, Phil Cahill, Martin Kennedy (Tipperary).

Garrett, who hailed from the rich lands of Croom, proved himself one of the most versatile men in the game. A great defender with good hands, he was equally at home in the forward line and must have won more hurling gold medals than any other man of his era. And he often told me that whatever he knew about the game he learned it from the great Croom men of his young days—the Mangans, Feely, Shea, etc., and at the Christian Brothers' Schools, Adare. Possessed of sprinter's pace and infinite resourcefulness, his grand judgment and ashcraft were bywords in hurling circles during his long years service.

FIRST BIG SUCCESS.

His first big success came with Croom in the final of the 1919 County Senior Hurling Championship. This was played at the Markets' Field on Sunday, May 2nd, 1920, and resulted: Croom 1-1, Fedamore 1-0. The field conditions were very bad following heavy rains, but the game was an exciting one, fought in a most determined fashion, with every inch of ground stoutly contested.

Fedamore led at the interval 1-0 to 0-1. Garrett Howard had as team mates on that occasion Patrick Mangan (captain), J. McDonnell (goal), Ter Mangan, James Mangan, Tom Mangan, Michael Mullane, William Bourke, Jack O'Shea, F. Keating, Mick Feely, Ned Halvey, D. Maher, F. Neiland and W. Corkery.

The Croom man played in his first Munster Final—that for the 1920 championship—at Cork Athletic Grounds on April 2nd, 1922, which the Leesiders won, 3-4 to 0-5. Limerick revenged that defeat eight weeks later when in the 1921 Munster Final, played at Thurles, they overwhelmed Cork 5-2 to 1-2. A month later, Limerick qualified for the All-Ireland final, when they beat Galway, 6-0 to 2-2, at the Markets' Field.

BLUE RIBAND DECIDER.

The Blue Riband decider was not played until March 4th, 1923, when, at Croke Park, twenty thousand spectators paid £1,080 to see Limerick beat Dublin, 8-5 to 3-2.

Mr. Joseph O'Mara, of the O'Mara Opera Company, who was a native of Limerick, threw in the ball and the attendance included President Cosgrave and several Ministers at this first final played since British Occupation Forces left the Twenty-Six Counties. Mr. Willie Walsh, of Waterford, refereed and Mr. Dan McCarthy, T.D. President of the G.A.A., presented the Liam McCarthy Cup to Bob McConkey, the Limerick captain. The other members of the Shannonside fifteen were: Mick Murphy (goal), Willie Gleeson, Jimmy Humphries, Denny Lanigan, Dave Murnane, Willie Hough, Jack Keane, Willie Ryan, Garrett Howard, Paddy McInerney, Tom Mangan, Mick Mullane, Chris Ryan and Tom McGrath.

Garrett figured in another great Munster Final—that for the 1922 championship at Thurles on July 1st, 1923. It proved a game of thrills and one of the best tussles waged for the Southern crown, with a draw, at 2-2 apiece, a fitting result. The replay, on August 12th, attracted the greatest crowd that ever entered the old Markets' Field, the gate receipts being £1,370. After a dour struggle in which the pace was terrific and the casualty list high, Tipperary emerged triumphant, 4-2 to 1-4.

PLAYING WITH LEINSTER SIDES.

When Limerick regained the Munster title with a 2-3 to 1-0 victory over Tipperary at Cork Athletic Grounds on March 16th, 1924, Garrett was not playing, as he had left Limerick to join the Gardaí, but later that season we find him a member of the Dublin Kickhams selection that won Leinster championship honours and later defeated Galway, 5-3 to 2-6 for the All-Ireland crown. His team mates in that final were Dr. Tommy Daly, Joe Bannon, W. Small, T. Kelly, Mick Gill, Jim ("Builder") Walsh, Bob Mockler, P. Aylward, Bob Doherty, M. Holland, Denny O'Neill, Tom Barry, W. Banim, and T. Finlay.

He was on winning Dublin sides also in the Leinster Finals of 1925, 1927, and 1928, but only in 1927 did Eastern supremacy hold for the national decider. That season the Garda selection achieved a cherished ambition when they won, 4-8 to 1-3. The attendance, 23,824, then constituted a record and the gate receipts amounted to £2,350.

His first National League medal was won with Dublin in 1929, and he holds Dublin Senior Hurling Championship medals, which he won as a member of the Garda team in each of the five years for 1925 to 1929. During the same period he also won three Dublin Senior Hurling League trophies with Garda as well as several tournament awards.

IN INTERNATIONAL GAMES.

Before leaving his period of residence in Dublin, mention must be made of the fact that he played on the Irish International Hurling teams that defeated America in both Tailteanns—1924 and 1928, and was also included in the Irish teams that played Scotland at Shinty on the same occasions. The Ireland teams in the international hurling finals will be recalled with interest: 1924—Jimmy Humphries (captain), Willie Ryan, Willie Gleeson, Dave Murnane (Limerick), J. Kennedy, D. Ring (Cork), J. J. Hayes, J. D'Arcy, Mick

D'Arcy (Tipperary), T. Kelly (Laois), J. O'Mahony (goal), B. Gibbs, M. Derivan (Galway), Gar Gibbs, M. Derivan (Galway), Garrett Howard, Jim Walsh (Dublin), 1928—Dr. T. Daly (goal), Jim Walsh, Mick Gill, Matty Power, Garrett Howard (Dublin), Sean Og Murphy, Jim Regan, Eudhie Coughlan (Cork), Phil Cahill, Martin Kennedy (Tipperary), Mick King, Mick Derivan (Galway), John Joe Kinnane (Limerick), E. Tobin (Laois), T. Considine (Clare). Towards the end of 1924 Garrett was one of the Irish side that travelled to Glasgow to play Scotland in a return shinty game.

BACK IN MUNSTER.

Transferred to Portroe, Co. Tipperary, in early 1930, he turned out with Toomevara in the Co. Senior Hurling Championship and helped the famous Greyhounds with the Premier County titles for 1930 and 1931, besides assisting in the winning of several good tournaments in the same colours. Picked for the Tipperary team in 1931, he helped them win Thomond Tournament honours, and later that year figured on the side that lost to Cork in the Munster Championship.

Another notable achievement of this period was his tying with the late Sergt. Jack Gleeson, of Kilkishen, at Moneygall Sports in August, 1930, in the long puck competition with the remarkable distance of 111 yards 7 inches. The sports were conducted under G.A.A. rules and the distances were vouched by the late Paddy Hennessy, a prominent member of the North Tipperary Board. The day was perfectly calm and there was a big number of competitors.

Picked to play for Munster in the Railway Cup Final of 1931, he helped in the defeat of Leinster 1-12 to 2-6, having as colleagues in that victory: Tommy O'Meara (goal), Phil Purcell, Phil Cahill, Tommy Treacy, Martin Kennedy (Tipperary), Charlie Ware (Waterford), J. J. Doyle, T. Considine (Clare), P. ("Fox") Collins, Jim Hurley, Denny Barry, Murphy, Eudhie Coughlan, P. ("Gah") Aherne (Cork), Micky Cross (Limerick).

IN THE GREAT TEAM OF ALL THE TALENTS.

Back with his native Limerick as a "declaree" in 1933, he helped the great team of all the talents win the Munster title for the four years from 1933 to 1936, and took All-Ireland honours with them in 1934 and 1936. He won five National League titles with Limerick in the years from 1934 to 1938 and helped in securing four Thomond Tournament trophies during the same spell. He toured the United States with the Limerick hurling team in 1936.

Oftentimes figuring in Garda handball circles with distinction, Garrett was always one of the fittest men on a team. Also one of the cleanest players to grace a hurling field, he won the goodwill of all for his unassuming manner. Stationed in Carrick-on-Suir for thirteen years, he continued, after his retirement from the arena, to take a keen interest in all G.A.A. doings and was in regular demand as a referee for important local games. Transferred to Feakle a few years ago, he quickly made his mark in Clare Gaelic circles and is a popular referee there now, besides acting as selector and trainer of the county team.

AN APPRECIATION.

I will conclude this necessarily incomplete record of a brilliant hurling career with a short extract from an appreciation that appeared some time ago in the press: "Garrett Howard used to spend his spare time in Phoenix Park, beside the Depot, hitting a ball around with the caman that helped Limerick win two All-Ireland championship and many League victories. Last time I saw him he was solo practising—in slippers and with an old Limerick jersey over his broad shoulders. Holder of five All-Ireland medals, he was a great left half-back in his day—a marvelous hurler in Limerick's stonewall defence. He was one of the Dublin policemen who did everything possible to prevent the decline and disappearance of the Garda club from G.A.A. competitions and later had the good fortune to see a nephew of his, Garda Sean Howard, skipper a recently revived Garda hurling team in metropolitan club competitions." Sainthe, Garrett Howard. No. 95—Jack Fitzgibbon, of Knockacraig.