

(By Seamus O'Ceallaigh)

MICK Mullins was one of those earnest workers who helped to bring football to a district and helped to keep it there afterwards.

He tells the tale himself, and it should prove an inspiration to those who feel they could do similar work in other districts.

Here is his story:

Thirty-one years ago, a group of lads attending Kilbehenny School, myself included in the number, procured a football. In and out of the farmers' fields adjoining the school we were soon constantly chasing the leather, and soon a share of us had a good knowledge of the rudiments of the Gaelic code.

We had the idea of getting a team together and naturally looked about for some existing combination who would be likely to give us a game for a try-out. I said to the other lads one day that we should play Ballyporeen. They agreed, and we were not long about arranging a fixture.

That was alright, but we had to agree to travel to Ballyporeen, and the question arose: How were we going to get there? The match was fixed for August 24th, 1924.

WALKED FIVE IRISH MILES.

After discussing the matter from all angles, and making a few soundings here and there, we eventually came to the conclusion that there was nothing left for us to do but to walk it, if we were going to play the match.

And walk it we did! Five Irish miles! But we never felt the journey, what, with our "band" in front—Joe Duffy and his accordion, and the excitement of the coming contest!

After the match we had some refreshments, and were soon back on the road again for our homeward tramp. And from that day Kilbehenny have been making their name on the football fields of Munster.

REACHED COUNTY FINAL AT FIRST ATTEMPT.

I next played with Ballygibbin against Aragen, at the Mountain Barracks in 1925. I will never forget that match! Of course, I was only sixteen years of age at the time, and there was a big, strong chap playing with Aragen, by name, Mick Allen. Anyway, during the game he gave me a shoulder and I wasn't the better of it for a week. But from that day onwards I gained confidence, for I thought to myself that when I recovered from the shaking I could stand a lot.

We kept pegging away in Kilbehenny and in 1929 we entered a club, and affiliated to the South Limerick Board. Our name went into the hat for the Junior Football Championship.

We were successful beyond our wildest dreams, and must have created something in the nature of a record by taking the southern title at the first attempt.

Another achievement that will go down in the record books was the fact that we played Castle-mahon three times in that year's county final. We drew the first day at Hospital—June 1st, 1930—2-1 apiece. A fortnight later, at the same venue, we again finished level: Kilbehenny, 2-3; Castle-mahon, 1-6. The third meeting was at Limerick Gaelic Grounds, on August 3rd, where we were beaten, 1-5 to 1-2. But the reverse had a more serious aspect for us: we were suspended for twelve months!

EFFORTS CROWNED WITH SUCCESS.

We were reinstated in time to participate in the 1931 championship, and once again proved supreme in the south. We duly reached the county final, where

our opponents were Cloughaun. The game was played at Croom on September 18th, 1932, and we won in sparkling style, 1-2 to nil.

That victory meant promotion to senior ranks for the 1932 championship, and we surprised everyone, including some of our most ardent supporters, by qualifying to play Abbeyfeale in the senior county final. Once more we journeyed to Croom—twelve months to the exact Sunday after we had won our junior title. I captained that team but we were beaten by the western lads, 4-2 to two points.

TRAVELLED FAR AND WIDE.
After that, I participated in many games in widely scattered areas, and have pleasant memories indeed of most of them.

I took part with Ballyporeen in the Tipperary senior championship for three campaigns; figured in the Cantwell Cup competition, wearing the same colours; besides turning out for Mitchelstown in a number of games for the Cork County junior football championship.

I was included in the Glanworth team that played Mallow, at Kilavullen, in the North Cork junior football final. We were leading two points with time almost up, when one of the Glanworth backs, playing alongside me, slapped the ball out of my hand and kicked it back right into his own goal, to give Mallow a great victory. But sure such things happen when players really get excited.

HOW I CAME TO PLAY INTER-COUNTY.

I was in Limerick one Saturday at a County Board meeting when poor Charley Holland, God rest his soul, came over to me and said: "Mullins, if you don't stop playing with outside clubs, we will suspend you, and your club as well, so you had better admit everything and get reinstated, if you want your place on the Limerick team."

That was May, 1934, and I agreed to his proposition. A few weeks later I was on the Limerick team and remained member until 1938. That first year was a memorable one. We beat Waterford, in Clonmel, and Cork, at Dromcollogher, but we lost to Kerry at Listowel, in the last minutes of lost time. What a heartbreak!

WON ANOTHER TITLE WITH GALTEE ROVERS.

I captained the Galtee Rovers team that won the South Limerick championships in 1942, and went on to take County honours, defeating Sarsfields, 1-5 to 0-2, at Knockane on March 21st, 1943.

I captained South Limerick's first senior football team, but we were defeated by Knockane.

I was also captain of the Fermoy District L.D.F. team that was defeated by Kanturk District, at Blarney, on April 2nd, 1944. I will never forget that day in the Castle Grounds. We had a good team, eleven of them members of the Galtee Rovers Club, plus Tom O'Brien, then Creamery Manager in Mitchelstown, with Paddy Cronin and Kevin Barry, of Fermoy.

The game was only ten minutes in progress, on a slippery sod, with the ball greasy, when one of our best players, Dave Russell, met with an unfortunate accident, that finished his football career—a big loss to Galtee Rovers.

During all the years of my active football career, I never missed a game, championships, tournaments or friendly, in which my club was engaged. I met some grand footballers during those happy days—Stanley Hollis, Tommy Cúlhané, Eddie McCarthy, Dave Doherty, Moss Colbert, Mick and John Mackey, Timmy Ryan, Ned Courtney, Owen Carney, Dick

Quinn, Paddy Lonergan, Denny Fitzgerald, Paddy Doyle and hosts of others—all fine fellows.

I was sorry, indeed, when I eventually had to leave the arena, but I still take a keen interest in the game, and some time ago presented the South Limerick Board with a cup for one of their competitions.

The club we started thirty-one years ago is still going strong, and the young lads of to-day now have in Kilbehenny a grand field—the Colonel John O'Mahony Memorial Park—on which to play our native games.