

No. 210—Jack Shea Of Patrickswell

(By SEAMUS O'CALLAIGH)

OOM, nestling on the banks of the Maigue, deserves to rank with Tularoan, Dungourney, Bohan and Tulla, as the birthplace of many brilliant hurlers, the star whose names we commemorate this week, although being the most of his hurling prowess in the popular colours of Patrickswell, his native parish.

The little village of Patrickswell, half-way house as it were for a weary traveller between Patrick and Croom in the old days before the production of the motor car, witnessed many a hectic hosting on the journey to home in days fast fading from memory, but only in recent times has a hand itself in providing a cue for the hurling and football games.

Patrickswell made a few inroads in the old days to the realm of active participation in county championship games in both the parish was content to allow by a good player cross the boundary and help neighbouring ones. We have numerous examples of such prowess aiding nearby formations and the parish is full in stories of well known ones who brought honour and glory to their colours.

PERSISTENCE HAD ITS REWARD

It is only in quite recent times that Patrickswell have come to front as a club of some importance in the Gaelic way of things, but the effort appears to have been mostly short lived, and no more was left in the championship ranks of any worthwhile achievements.

The present Club made its first notable mark in 1950, when its humble hurling team were run-up to St. Patrick's for County Championship honours. On two other occasions the youths from "Well" were beaten at the last gasp for this title, before the ambition was realised on October 3rd, 1955 when they beat the 5-3 to 2-3 at Merrion Grounds to take the first county crown to the parish.

Persistence had its reward on a memorable occasion, but the years of waiting were not either, because the very year—on November 6th, 1955, Patrickswell junior hurling surprised Gaeldom with a 2-2 to 0-5 in a famed Ballyaside to add the junior crown to the juvenile one of the previous year. The scene of that triumph at Kilmallock, to where the Patrickswell lads return next Sunday for another junior hurling season.

REASONS FOR GREAT RISE

When we seek the reasons for the rise to such a high rung in the Gaelic ladder an answer is hard to find. Side by side with the revival of the game in the parish came the movement to provide for the use of the youth of Patrickswell a proper playing field, which work and great enthusiasm went into the making of the Patrickswell pitch, as one of the best in the area, and if the grounds is occasionally "red" and being more earth than grass, it only an indication of the casual use made of it by the youth of the parish — the best possible construction of the need it has simply filled.

The tradition of the games in Patrickswell was built on personal rather than communal lines, and of the big figures who contributed much of the glamour and glory to the Gaelic story of the parish was Jack Shea, a great hurler over two score years ago, who planted the hurling urge that grew slowly but steadily, and only some of the fruition when Jack Shea, in Seaside, who could do a Patrickswell colour, was distinguished, and help in bringing the awaited hurling honours to the parish.

Croom, 1908 champions, were then by Castleconnell in the County final, following which he of the older members of the team retired. It was then Jack Shea made his appearance on the scene, which reached the semi-final of the 1910 championship, in which he was beaten by the eventual winners, Young Ireland, 5-4 to 1-0.

THE TEAMS

The teams on that occasion will be of interest: — Young Ireland — P. Scanlan (capt.), Tom Hayes (captain), J. McNamee, M. Halvey, J. Flanagan, J. McNamee, A. Kelly, C. McGill, Hayes, P. Murphy, J. Ryan, P. Grady, T. McMahon, J. McSweeney, J. Brennan. Croom — M. Toomey (goal), P. Moran (captain), M. Mangan, T.

Mangan, J. Mangan, J. Mullane, M. Mullane, T. Bourke, T. Hayes, E. Halvey, M. Feely, M. Bray, J. Lane, P. Lyons, J. Shea.

Promotion to the county team was not long delayed for Jack Shea, and on August 27th, 1911, at the Markets Field, Limerick, he played against a team of Irish-American hurlers drawn from Chicago and New York, who were touring Ireland at the time. Mr. G. O'Keefe, St. Patrick's, New York, threw in the ball, and a very interesting contest ended in favour of Limerick, the score being 5-1 to 3-1. Mr. Henry Boland of Dublin was the referee, the Limerick players being:— Mick Feely, captain; M. Mangan, E. Halvey, J. Shea, T. Twomey (Croom), J. Madden (Commercial), P. Flaherty (Rathkeale), P. Treacy, M. Harrington, M. Bourke, C. Scanlan, E. Clancy, S. Gleeson (Fedomore), J. O'Donnell (Bruff), T. Hayes, M. Hayes (South Liberties).

WON MUNSTER SENIOR MEDAL

On November 20th, 1911, at Cork Athletic Grounds, Jack won a Munster Senior Hurling Championship medal, when Limerick gained a sensational win over Tipperary in the provincial final. It was a great contest, with Tipperary ahead by 7 points ten minutes from time, with some spectators already leaving the field. Then Mick shot a wonderful goal from mid-field—a Limerick revival followed, scores came in rapid succession, and the Shannonside lads were three points ahead when the final whistle sounded, the score then reading: Limerick, 5-3; Tipperary, 4-3.

The successful players were:— J. Mackey (captain), J. Ryan (goal), P. Vaughan, J. Carroll, M. Sweeney, B. O'Connor (Castleconnell), C. Scanlan, S. Gleeson, E. Treacy, E. Clancy, M. Bourke, M. Harrington (Fedomore), J. Shea, M. Feely (Croom), T. Hayes (St. Liberties), P. Flaherty (Rathkeale), T. Hayes (Young Ireland).

On the last day of 1911, at Portlaoise, Limerick beat Galway in the semi-final of the All-Ireland Senior Hurling Championship and qualified to meet Kilkenny in the final, which was fixed for Cork Athletic Grounds on February 18th, 1912.

GAME NOT PLAYED

The latter game was not played. Following heavy rains the grounds were in a very bad condition, and the members of the Central Council present declared the pitch unplayable, and postponed the contest, later re-fixing it for Thurles on April 2nd. Limerick refused to play in the new venue, and appealed to the annual All-Ireland Congress, which by 53 votes to 17 upheld Thurles as the venue. Limerick persisted in their refusal, and on June 2nd the Central Council awarded Kilkenny a walk-over. Subsequently the Limerick hurling Board was suspended for failing to field a team. So Jack lost his chance of an All-Ireland medal—an opportunity that did not offer again during his lengthy spell in county colours.

Limerick were narrowly and unluckily beaten in the 1912 Munster Final played at Waterford on September 1st. In a low scoring game which proved one of the toughest ever staged for Southern hurling honours, the teams were level at 1-2 each at the change of ends. Limerick forged a point in front early in what proved a right stubbornly contested second half. The end was in sight and the Shannoniders were battling like demons for a further score, when a long Cork clearance was the signal for a sensational break-away, which yielded a goal, and Cork's victory, 2-2 to 1-3, very much against the run of the play.

That unlucky Limerick side were: J. Mackey, captain; J. Ryan, goal; B. Connors, P. Vaughan, J. Carroll (Castleconnell), E. Clancy, M. Harrington, E. Treacy, C. Scanlan, S. Gleeson (Fedomore), M. Feely, T. Mangan, J. Shea (Croom), J. O'Donnell (Bruff), T. Hayes (Young Ireland), T. Hayes (South Liberties), P. Flaherty (Rathkeale).

THREE MEDALS IN 1913 SEASON

Jack won three medals in the early portion of the 1913 season. His first came when he helped Croom secure the Murphy Cup for the second time; then he figured on the Limerick team which won Thomond Feis honours; and on July 27th he was a member of a team which beat Kilkenny 6-2 to 4-1, for the Cardinal Agliardi medal. This game was played at Jones' Road, Dublin, and was the

final of a big tournament organised in aid of the Father Matthew Hall, Cork. The Limerick players were: M. Feely, Captain; J. Shea, T. Mangan (Croom); J. Mackey, J. Ryan (goal), P. Vaughan, J. Carroll (Castleconnell); E. Treacy, S. Gleeson, E. Clancy, M. Harrington, T. Hayes (Grange); T. Hayes (Young Ireland), J. O'Donnell (Bruff), P. Flaherty (Rathkeale).

Fedomore were suspended from the G.A.A. following their refusal to play the 1915 County Hurling Final, and competed the following year under the auspices of the National Association of Gaelic Athletic Clubs, which was a rival body to the G.A.A., and won the All-Ireland Final of that association, beating Castlebridge (Wexford), 1-1 to 0-1.

The Fedomore success gained for the N.A.G.A.C. certain adherents in Limerick, including Croom, who created a surprise by defeating the "All-Ireland champions," Fedomore, 5-1 to 4-0.

THE 1917 ALL-IRELAND FINAL

The "All Ireland final" for 1917 was played on a county basis and a Limerick selection drew from a number of seceding clubs, beat Wexford 5-2 to 1-1, at the Markets Field. The winning fifteen were: T. Mangan, M. Mangan, P. Mangan, M. Mullane, J. Shea, M. Feely (Croom), J. Keane, J. Whelan, J. McNamara, D. O'Donnell (captain), M. Harrington (Fedomore), Tom Grady, P. Keogh (Ballybricken), D. Maher (South Liberties), J. Clune (Sarsheids).

That the G.A.A. was not affected by the break-away was demonstrated in rather telling manner when Limerick won Munster and All-Ireland senior hurling honours in 1918. It was little consolation to Jack Shea, and several other of the seceding players, when Croom beat South Liberties, 3-3 to 2-0, in the N.A.G.A.C. Gold Medal Tournament final. The breach was, however, healed shortly afterwards by the seceding clubs defying on renewing their allegiance to the G.A.A.

Croom won the 1919 senior hurling county final when they defeated Fedomore, 1-1 to 0, at the Markets Field on May 2, 1920, the victorious fifteen reading: Pat Mangan (capt.), J. McDonnell (goal), Ter Mangan, James Mangan, Tom Mangan, Michael Mullane, William Burke, Jack Shea, Garrett Howard, F. Keating, E. Halvey, D. Maher, F. Neiland, W. Corkery, Mick Feely.

JACK SHEA'S LAST APPEARANCE

Jack made his last appearance in county colours three weeks later, when he figured with the Limerick side which beat Cork, 3-1 to 1-2, at Cork, in a game in aid of the South Infirmary and Fever Hospital. The Shannonside players were: J. McDonnell (goal), M. Mullane, J. Shea, Ter Mangan, Tom Mangan, G. Howard (Croom), W. Ryan, J. Humphries (Cappamore), W. Gleeson, D. Mulhane (Fedomore), D. Lanigan, P. McInerney, R. McConkey, W. Hurley (Young Ireland), J. Keane (Castleconnell).

He was to know one final day of glory when he helped Croom to a surprise win over a strongly fancied Fedomore side in 1924 County decider. That Croom team was: Pat Mangan (capt.), Ter Mangan, Tom Mangan, J. McDonnell (goal), M. Mullane, M. Feely, J. Hayes, T. Ereen, W. Burke, J. Fitzgerald, F. Keating, M. O'Neill, G. Howard, J. Shea (capt.).

Jack again figured in the 1927 county final against the same opposition, but Fedomore won on this occasion, 5-4 to 1-1. The older veteran played a magnificent game for the losers.

Many close students of Limerick hurling over a lengthy period of years hold that Jack Shea was the best half-back Limerick ever had. Jack could give Tipperary's Hugh Shelly, rated a ten seconds man in the "hundred," a yard start and still beat him to a ball. A good hard honest hurler, it took a great man to beat him.

INTERESTING STORY

A story is told concerning a match in which Croom played Rathkeale. A youth who was coming to the fore as a hurling stylist in Rathkeale was nominated to play on Jack Shea. After a few minutes hurling it was obvious to the latter that his opponent was fighting shy of a clash with him. Then Jack said: "Sonny, come into me; I won't hurt you." And although he got a few hard "roofs" afterwards from the youth Jack was as good as his word. It was typical of the man.

"They'll think of Shea for many a day." Likewises, Ter Mangan, too. And three times there for Feely. The pride of Croom Abus."