

Limerickman sold 'Crocker' to GAA

FRANK DINEEN of Ballylanders, on the Cork/Limerick border, not only made history by selling the offices of Secretary and President of the GAA but is better known as the man who sold Croke Park to the GAA.

Only the oldest generation of Dublin Gaels can recall the process of evolution which converted a wild market garden into Croke Park — Ireland's national stadium.

In early GAA days Clontarf Park was the principal venue for hurling and football inter-county contests, and many thrilling games were witnessed here.

Meanwhile the area between the Canal and Clonliffe Road and St. James's Avenue and Jones's Road had been converted into the "City and Suburban Sports Ground" by the late Mr. Maurice Butterly. The low-lying land had been raised to road level by the dumping of rubbish, the heterogeneous character of which was long apparent at the surface.

It was projected as an all-sports enclosure, but there was not a great variety of pastimes pursued in Dublin then. All descriptions of football had been seen on its pitch, all sorts of entertainments took place in its pavilion now replaced by the Hogan stand, and eventually in 1895, it became the venue for the All-Ireland finals.

It had fallen into disrepair when Frank Dineen came along in 1908 and bought the property. He effected improvements and catered specially for Gaelic games and athletics.

Mr. Dineen leased a large quadrangle in the south-east corner of Belvedere College as a playing field for its students — a transaction that has determined the limit of operations on the far side of the ground and proved an unfortunate one for the G.A.A.

The Central Council bought the property from Mr. Dineen in December, 1913. The purchase money, including law costs, amounted to £3,541 8s. 3d., £1,641 8s. 5d. of which was paid in cash and a bill given to the bank for £2,000.

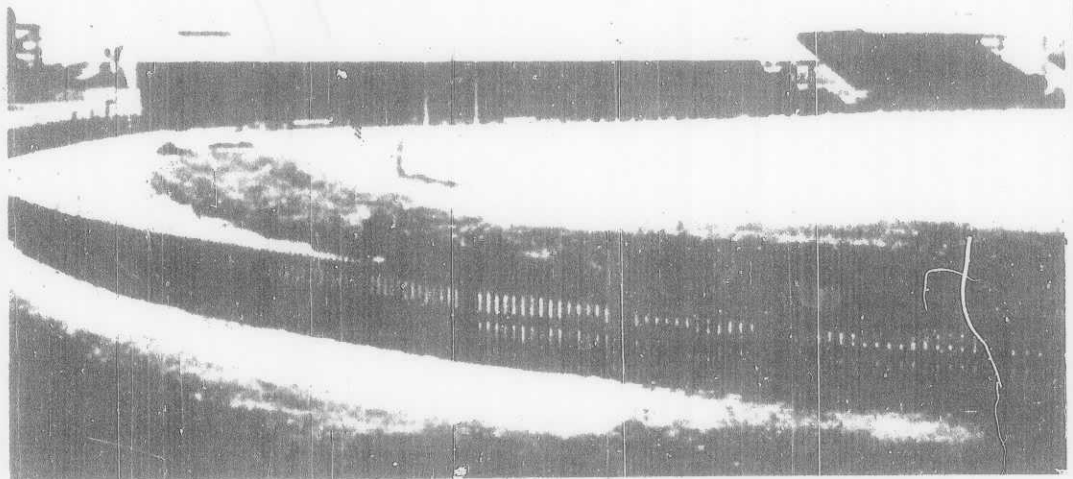
When the Gaelic Athletic Association took over the property they at once, and with unanimous approval, decided to dedicate it as the most fitting memorial of all to the first and greatest patron — the late Most Rev. Dr. T. W. Croke. Under this designation it is now known the world over as the headquarters of the G.A.A., and the arena of pulse stirring contests in hurling and Gaelic Football every year.

Attained

Frank B. Dineen was the son of the late Nicholas Dineen of Ballylanders, and had attained his fifty-fourth year at the time of his rather unexpected death in April, 1916. Born in Ballylanders, he was educated there and afterwards at Rockwell College. He returned to Ballylanders and remained there until he was thirty-six when removed to Dublin where the rest of his all-too-short days were spent.

Most people were familiar with Frank as a handicapper and race writer on all matters connected with sport. His delightful and informative articles and notes were a striking feature in the Freeman's Journal, Sport and Telegraph and there was no greater authority on the subjects on which he wrote.

Not very many, however, were aware of the fact that he was a classic performer as a sprinter in the early 'eighties; and remained for many years one of the select few certified as having run the 100 yards in the level ten seconds.



Croke Park, as it looked when Frank Dineen sold it to the G.A.A. for £3,500 in 1913. It was developed into a major stadium in 1924.

On August 2, 1880, we find first mention of him when he won the 100 yards at Kilfinane sports from Harding of Cork and was also prominent in the high jump. But blessed with a robust constitution, he retired from the track after a few seasons, yet won upwards of three hundred prizes. In 1882 he covered the 100 yards stretch in 10.2 seconds, which was then an Irish record. At Ballylanders sports he was second in the high jump, and tied with Highland Phelan in 100 yards. In 1884 he is reputed to have clocked 9.8 seconds in the "hundred".

On his retirement from the track he turned his attention to handicapping athletic events, to become the best known and most capable official then or since in the country. He handicapped all the principal meetings of a great era in Irish athletics, and knew all the grand athletes of that time intimately. Very interested in juvenile athletics, he is stated to have given all his prizes away at local sports.

Competed

He became associated with the Gaelic Athletic Association at an early stage in the existence of that organisation and competed at the first big athletic meeting, held at Blarney in 1885. At this time he was easily the best hundred yards man in Ireland, and an attempt was made by those opposed to the G.A.A. to get him not to run, but like the true man he was, he scorned such meddlesomeness and boldly stuck to his resolution to throw in his lot with the nationalist athletes of Ireland.

At Blarney he won the hundred in 10 three-fifths seconds, and the running high jump at 5 ft. 4½ inches and on June 3, 1885 at the Mardyke, Cork, he was second in the "hundred" to T. J. O'Mahony, "the Rosscarbery Steam Engine".

He competed at some other meetings under G.A.A. laws, but soon retired from athletics as a competitor and became handicapper of the Association. He also became a prominent member of the Central Council, and undoubtedly exercised a big influence in spreading the organisation outside the confines of the county and province in which it was established.

He refereed the famous contest in Dunjarriva in 1908 between the two athletic giants, T. F. Kiely and Martin Sheridan, when both men were in their

The focus of GAA attention is this weekend on the All-Ireland hurling semi-finals at Croke Park. It is not generally known that a Limerickman, Frank Dineen, sold the Jones Road property to the Association in 1913.

prime and had created several world's records at weight throwing.

When the split occurred in the ranks of the G.A.A. in 1887, Mr. Dineen sided with the physical force party against the constitutionalists, but in the later years of his life he was on terms of close friendship with the leaders of the Irish Party.

In his early days he was imprisoned as a "suspect" under the Coercion Act of 1881 and when the Ballylanders district was in the thick of the struggle against "Buckshot" Forster's efforts to strangle the Land League movement. He had Mass offered for the Invincibles in 1882 and was associated with Dillon O'Brien and Dr. Tanner in Mitchelstown in connection with the Shinnick and Lonergan case.

Frank Dineen succeeded Mr. P. J. Kelly as President of the G.A.A. in 1895 and filled the position until 1898, when he became the Secretary of the organisation, a position he occupied until September, 1901.

Elected first President of the Athletic Council he was largely responsible for the organisation of an Irish team to attend the sports in Rome in 1908 in honour of the Papal Jubilee. He resigned the Presidency of the Athletic Council the following year.

In 1906 he published the *Irish Athletic Record* — the first publication of the kind issued in this country. It contained Irish, British and American records, and was a very valuable compilation, involving a good deal of research. He planned a more ambitious work giving a lot of interesting details of the careers of all the great athletes of his day, but did not live to see the project through. When we appreciate the contacts he had and the big figures he met, we realise the grand addition such would have been, to Irish athletic lore.

Writing of him in *Sport* just following his death, "H.H." said:

"Strangely enough, very little seems to be known or remembered of Frank

Dineen's athletic performance. His career on the field was so brief as to be almost meteoric, but while he was there he dazzled the south of Ireland with his marvellous turn of speed. I have often thought that he could have made a world name for himself if he had only the push and the heart, but for a man of his fine physique he seemed unable to face crucial tests if challenged.

"It was in 1884 at Macroom that I first saw the Ballylanders youth. A well set up, slightly built, handsome lad, fully grown, he was reserved, if not indeed shy, and when he entered our dressing tent all eyes were turned on him, for a few races earlier in the season had heralded his doing and the day previous at Bandon, he was clocked for evens in the 'hundred'.

"He donned his green silk trunks and got on the scratch mark without speaking to anyone. We were a great team and were confident of showing him clean heels for we had many men of the 10.8 type or so, who, from a five yard mark, where I was stationed, amongst others, with the late Pat Looney (one of the "American Invasion" team of 1888, and himself a world's record holder for a few minutes at Limerick in the hop, step and jump, where his 49 ft. 10 ins. was beaten by Dan Shanahan's 50 ft. ½ in. — both performances being long unqualified) — to the eight and ten yards mark.

"It was a case of everyone for himself, of course, but before the echo of the piston died away the green trunks were level with us and with a dash that simply took away the little breath we had we were compelled to see him running away with the tape, five or more yards in front, hopelessly outpacing the whole bunch. And here again the watches said ten seconds.

"Both Macroom and Bandon tracks were in splendid condition and the advantage of fall of ground or of wind must have been very slight. In every case a record was never established or I think sought to be established.

"The following season Dineen met and defeated the 'Rosscarbery Steam Engine', the late T. J. O'Mahony, in Croke Park, a result which was reversed a little later in the year at Blarney. As a child of the G.A.A. it was but fitting he should be afterwards one of its principal officials".

Club Golf Cast

With Peter Sheehy coming in the first round Ireland at Lahin bridges in his 9; Tom Corridan, 1; Kavanagh and 1 the second round prospects of the final stakes. However, it was Brian and good matches to round, and De performance to sixteen. At the Jodie Flanagan, Kavanagh and over Declan O testing the semi Donal Derm fine performance in the Cork Sci Condon and 1 their own mo Lahinch, when Classic Fourball celebrations of victory.

Frank Sheehy news again, will place with 44 pt the back nine Memorial Tro.

The club sir Chris Ruddle F both with 41 1; Griffin, 4th in Con Flanagan, Larin, with weekly singl; Harold 41 pts., 39 pts in third

"The captain" was won by Ian fine score of 42 from Dan Hoj also had an ex pts., to take the McGann 39 pts with a round of Results of the tion on July 2 Lamb/Mick C Dick Stokes/P C. O'Brien/Jac

A club four over Saturday day of the Au

We wish to sympathy to Honorary men Declan, who c weekend. The Major of the h and will be ni friends. The provisions of through the si friend of the c came to Belis manager of R

He was an manager of 1 and came to I joined Castlet he initiated hi Cup and use getting Irish compete in w one of the mo cups in the sented Castle for many yea many victori playing with Barton Shiek Paddy Leadin

On his reti the Major m defied his i playing 18 h year. Castlet at his remova Courcy, foun O'Donovan i past preside trustee Loui contingent of

LADIE

Results — S O'Keefe, 28th 4-ball stablec mara and Ma Sheila O'Sull 41 pts., 40

Carmae/Pattis 39, 41 pts.; 4, Carmel Haal Tuesday 1 Stableford — 40 pts.; 2, Kil last nine fr

Time-sheet house for 1 Monday 7th day) and O 13th August.

Congratul McDonnell a mer Patricia winning the l ply for the se Greystones C

Club Golf Sh

The Reins scored 1110 played on 3 11m. This handicaps of

Limerick Golf Club

Eamon Dooley, winner of this year's Captain's Prize, was back in winning form again last Sunday when he took the Carrigrohane Cup with 40 points. Victory must have looked a remote prospect for Eamon when he turned with a meagre 16 points but from thereon he turned on the style to record a superb back nine of 24 points — one over par.

Con O'Meara pipped Noel Moore for second spot, each



Tom Downes (St. Patricks), who refereed the U-14A football final

