

The remarkable story of Limerick athlete Jim Hogan

Born as Jim Cregan, in Athlacca, he changed his name by deed poll to run for England

By John O'Shaughnessy

"AN Irishman won a gold medal when the European Championships wound up in Budapest yesterday, but he was the wrong one, so to speak. Jim Hogan, the improbable Irishman, carried the colours of his adopted country to a resounding success in the marathon. It was the ultimate in irony"

So wrote sportswriter Tom Cryan, in the Irish Independent, in 1966.

He was referring to Limerick-born Jim Cregan, who hailed from a poor farming background and who by deed poll on his arrival in England to secure work, changed his name to Jim Hogan.

'The Irishman Who Ran for England', published by Currach Press, documents the amazing story of of Ireland's most colourful and least known successful athlete.

Operating outside the boundaries of officialdom, he cruised to victory in the 1966 marathon at the Budapest European Championships wearing an English vest. He clocked a time of 2hrs, 20mins, 4 seconds for the 26 miles

Why the best long-distance runner of his generation was obliged to declare for England is an extraordinary story.

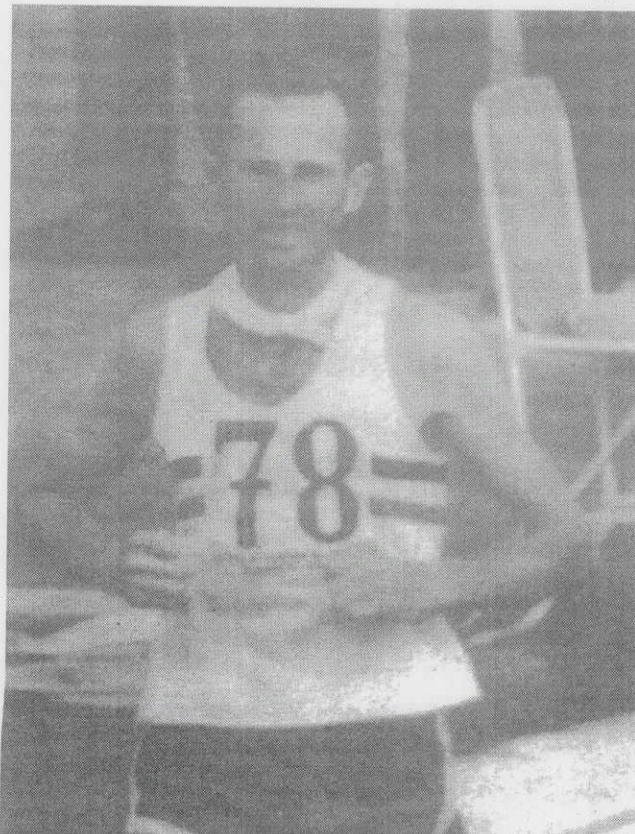
Said Jim, now living in Knocklong: "At a time of great poverty in Ireland a hobby like running was seen as an indulgence when there was always work to be done to keep food on the table".

He eventually went to England.

In the book, he is critical of what he alleges was a class distinction which riddled Irish society and was fed up with the lack of opportunity.

In 1963, he quit his insurance job after his boss wouldn't allow him to train for the British AAA 6-mile championship, where he eventually came second.

That year, he got a job as groundsman with the London parks council. He was selected for the Irish team for the Tokyo Olympics, and after a disappointing performance in the 10,000



Jim Hogan winning the marathon in Budapest

metres, he tried to redeem himself by entering the marathon.

Jim Hogan ran the race of his life up to 23 kilometres shadowing the redoubtable Ethiopian, Abbe Bikila.

However, forced to drop out at the last hurdle, he wound up exhausted in hospital and remains critical of the support offered to him.

When the European Championships came around, he had enough of the meanness of the Irish officials and it was while running for Britain that he finally fulfilled his potential.

"At the medal ceremony (in Budapest), I stood for the British national anthem, as the Union Jack was raised. It was a proud moment for me, a moment I'll treasure forever. And why wouldn't I? I'd no problem doing it. I stood there as a British subject.

Bleach Lough protesters appeal

MEMBERS of the Kildimo/Pallaskenry Bleach Lough retention committee are appealing for donations to help cover their spiralling legal costs in their efforts to retain their "spring water supply".

The group has been involved in a long standing legal battle with Limerick County Council, who are "forcing" them "to switch over to a water supply from one of the most polluted rivers in Ireland - the Deel".

Claiming that the Deel water has to be treated with maximum chemicals to make it drinkable, Mr Foley said that it is a basic human right to have access to clean water.

The committee is now thousands of euro in debt.

The account number for donations to the Bleach Lough Water Retention account in AIB is - 39084058 and sort code 93-52-47 or their Bank of Ireland account - 87661804 and sort code 90-43-17.