

England in 1900 for work and he changed his surname to Hogan.

"I heard of the great athlete from Athlaca in County Limerick who was so graceful on foot that he didn't need to wear running spikes when competing on the cinder tracks around the world," the world renowned physical therapist Gerard Hartmann told mourners at Jim's funeral Mass.

"We were told that he was as light as a whippet, poetry in motion and a thoroughbred on the track, cross country and roads."

To honour his great athletic career, Jim's great friend, and legendary British distance runner, David

up a world gold medal Jim won in 1983 at the age of 50.

To celebrate a fulfilled life that Jim shared with his dear wife Mary, now deceased, his book *The Irishman who Ran for England* was placed on the wooden table beside two mementos from Jim's other great love in life, horseracing - his binoculars and "daily bible" *The Racing Post*.

Jim and his wife Mary settled in the Knocklong area in 1996. Jim's fond friend, Fr Willie Hennessy, who was the chief celebrant at his funeral Mass said their home, "was a place of welcome".

It was where he heard all about Jim's passion for horses, racing, training and breeding. Among those to

the newcomers that would arrive - being honest, they all looked the same to me," smiled Fr Hennessy as chuckles went out around the church, "but I couldn't say that to Jim - God only knows what he might say to me," he followed up.

The parish priest of Knocklong was assisted on the altar by Fr Tony Mullins, Athlaca, Canon Willie Fitzmaurice, Croom, Fr Tony Bluett, Ardpatrik, Fr Joe Cussen, Martinstown/Bulgaden and Fr Joe Kennedy, Kilmallock.

Mourners heard how Jim loved a good sing-song and could hold a steady note. "He loved to be called on to sing a song - the trouble was, once

asked to sing again."

Of all the things he achieved throughout his life, the greatest thing he said he ever did, mourners heard, was marry Mary. "She was not only his wife, but his companion and best friend. He loved her dearly - it was a great loss to Jim when she died."

Jim will be no stranger to God - he was a man of deep faith and would never miss Sunday Mass in Knocklong, kneeling over at the side, saying his prayers.

Gerard Hartmann - who has treated many of the world's elite sport stars - remembered him as "a great loyal friend". He recalled how Jim would hop up on

and not stay in the chasing group two minutes behind to secure a silver or bronze medal, his response was: "I was going for gold, I wasn't running for a cowardly silver".

He was a pioneer and a man who preferred to step away from the table still feeling "a little peckish".

Among those who couldn't attend the Mass but passed on their sympathies were Olympian Ronnie Delaney. "Once an Olympian, always an Olympian," read Mr Hartmann of Mr Delaney's tribute. Representatives from the Olympic Council of Ireland who were in attendance heard how Jim was one of "nature's

horse racing community" who travelled to Cheltenham each year until very recently.

Jim's sister, Teresa, paid tribute to all the medical staff who looked after her dear brother in his twilight years.

Jim who was laid to rest in Knocklong cemetery is survived by his brother Mickey Joe Cregan, sisters Mary, Margaret, Elizabeth, Johannah, Teresa, Hanora and Frances, extended family and friends.

Jim ran his race his way until he closed his eyes for the final time in the early hours of Saturday morning in his warm bed at University Hospital Limerick. May he rest in peace.

# Limerick athlete inducted into US hall of fame

DONAL O'REGAN

A COUNTY Limerick man has been given the rare honour of being inducted into the famous United States of America Track and Field (USATF) Hall of Fame.

In 1920, Paddy Ryan, from Pallasgreen, won an Olympic gold medal in the hammer by more than 15 feet - the largest margin of victory in any Olympics. It could have been his third or fourth gold medal.

Mr Ryan, who was born in 1883, moved to Boston in 1910. His citizenship had not been confirmed in time for the 1912 games. The 1916 Olympics were cancelled due to World War 1. Mr Ryan joined the US Armed Forces and served in France. But at 37 years of age Mr Ryan won gold in Belgium in 1920 and silver in the 56-pound weight throw. He also held a world record for 25 years and an American one for forty years.

In 1924, Mr Ryan returned home to the family farm in Pallasgreen, raised his family and remained there until his death in 1964.



Johanna Killian, daughter of Olympic champion Paddy Ryan, inset, accompanied by husband John and daughter Christine at the USATF awards in California

The hall of fame award was accepted by his daughter Johanna and granddaughter Christine Killian, who travelled from New York for the ceremony in Anaheim, California,

It was a proud moment for the

mother and daughter and all of Mr Ryan's relations at home and abroad. He had five daughters - Mary Weatherhead, living in Pallasgreen; Catherine O'Grady, Kiltteely; Christina O'Donovan, London and Bernie O'Dwyer, Cashel. Dublin

hurler Ryan O'Dwyer is Mr Ryan's youngest grandchild.

Johanna remembers having lots of questions for her father about his athletic career, and his time living in the United States.

"I was so inspired by his motivation, that in 1961, I emigrated to America. In the evenings, when I came home from national school, I spent a lot of time helping him in his vegetable garden which he methodically tended to.

"In the fall he would dig potatoes all day and when I would come home from school I would spend hours picking up those potatoes for him. Then in the spring I would help him plant cabbage and other vegetables.

"All the while I asked him lots of questions as this was a great opportunity to be alone with him. I think he enjoyed reminiscing. When I came to America, every time my mother wrote to me there was a letter from my father enclosed.

"He never bragged about himself. He was a very humble, honest man.

He never thought of himself as number one in the world. What he did, he did it well, and that was enough for him," said Johanna.

Mr Ryan was one of five to be inducted for 2014 and joins the likes of Michael Johnson, Carl Lewis and Jesse Owens in the USATF Hall of Fame.

Johanna was presented with a beautiful ring with the USATF insignia. During the induction ceremony, the history of the athlete was shown on video and at the end the family member was called up on stage to accept the award and give an acceptance speech.

A statue to Mr Ryan stands proudly in Pallasgreen since 2004.

"Even though my granddaughters are very young, whenever they are in Pallasgreen, they have to see the statue of Granddad Ryan and they feel very proud of him.

"I'm sure that when they grow up and learn more about their famous great-grandfather, they will know why they are very proud of him," said Johanna.

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