



Belinda Quinn, Kilmallock and Frank Crowley, Martinstown

(LL)



Carmel and John O'Donnell, Caherdavin, with Bernie Long, Ballysimon

(LL)



Pat Cauley, Rathkeale

(LL)

# Olympian John 'the finest among finest'

By DEIRDRE McGRATH

THE Herculean feats of County Limerick-born Olympic giant John Flanagan and former member of the New York Police Department will never be forgotten thanks to the erection of a bronze monument at Martinstown Church last weekend.

The life-size monument of the hammer thrower which stands on a limestone base was unveiled at a special ceremony by 1956 Olympic gold medalist for the 1500m in Melbourne Ronnie Delaney, who was joined on a platform by relatives of John Flanagan, Pallasgrean Olympic hero Paddy Ryan, Gregory Fried, executive chief surgeon of the New York City Police Department, mem-

bers of the John Flanagan Memorial Committee, councillors and TDs.

"It is a great honour to be asked to join the relatives of John Flanagan and the relatives of Paddy Ryan on stage. They were great Olympians. It is a great idea to commemorate John Flanagan through this piece of art. Art and the Olympics are synonymous," said Mr Delaney.

Mr Delaney said that people would stop at Martinstown to look at the art and learn more about this champion who had captured the imagination.

Quoting the central ethos of the Olympic spirit Mr Delaney said: "The important thing in the Olympics is not to win but to take part, the important thing in life is not to triumph, but to do well, not to conquer but to fight."

"I'm not sure that John Flanagan or Paddy Ryan would have gone along with the first part of that.

Remember that John Flanagan was a winner before he left Ireland. He had set many world records. He was a true sportsman. He went to the Olympics in Paris, St Louis and London to win. He didn't win simply—he had to deal with the psychology of having just two throws left."

He said that Mr Flanagan was a gentleman and one of the most interesting things about him—and Paddy Ryan—was that he chose to come back home to Ireland.

Mr Fried brought personal greetings from Mayor Giuliani, New York Police Commissioner, Bernard Kerrek and the highest ranking Irish officer in NYPD, Joseph P Dunne.

"We have looked in our records and have found John Flanagan there and we discovered he lied about his age to get in," said Mr Fried.

"He was a champion

among men. We called the New York Police the finest, and John Flanagan was the finest of the finest. He served the people well and at a very exciting time and a good time, just when the five boroughs of the Bronx, Brooklyn, Staton Island, Manhattan and Queens came together as one city," he said.

"John Flanagan typifies the warmth between Ireland and New York Police Department, the heritage is there," said Mr Fried.

Outgoing Cathaoirleach of Limerick County Council Cllr Kevin Sheahan said that John Flanagan proved sport was local and also international.

"Your local councillors here in Kilmallock Paddy McAuliffe, Jim Houlihan, Eddie Creighton and John Gallahue brought this project to our notice and Limerick County Council wanted to be associated with this event

and have agreed to make a generous contribution," said Cllr Sheahan.

He congratulated Harry Greensmith on the launch of his book John Flanagan, His Life and Times at Ballinvreena on Saturday night and Fr Gerald McNamara who was instrumental in obtaining a piece of ground in the carpark of Martinstown Church.

The echairman of the John Flanagan Memorial Project, Patsy McGrath, paid tribute to Limerick County Council for their support, Bantry-based sculptor Jean Rynhart, and Thomas Hanly, Emly, who etched the inscription which reads: John Flanagan, Olympic Champion 1900, 1904, 1908, World Champion 16lb hammer.

Also among the gathering were Deputies Michael Collins, and Dan Neville, JP McManus, Harry Greensmith and RTE sports broadcaster Tony O'Donoghue.



Ronnie Delaney, who took gold in Melbourne in 1956 in the 1500m, unveils the memorial statue to John Flanagan

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