

THE spectacular sport of cycle racing captured the imagination of the Limerick sporting public in the early years of the athletic revival, and step by step with the uprise of great field and track figures we can trace the coming of many fine wheelmen, who contributed their share towards making cycle-racing a valuable and fascinating adjunct to the many sports meetings of the time, lending variety and balance to every programme.

One of the earliest names associated with cycling in this country is that of a Dublin solicitor—Louis Meldon—who is remembered in the history of the sport as the first man to ride a bicycle across the Alps. This was accomplished away back in the "seventies."

Meldon was also one of the pioneers of cycle racing in Ireland, and competed in the earliest meetings at Lansdowne Road, out of which emerged the first Irish title-holder, A. C. Rodgers, whose name is on the records for 1875—ten years before the first G.A.A. championship meeting was held.

PIONEER FIGURES.

There followed pioneer figures like A. H. Pring, W. P. Blood, A. Spring, R. Hassard, H. H. Law, T. W. Knox, A. M. Toomey, H. M. Wright, J. H. Graig, F. J. Levis, and E. S. McKay, to bridge the years until Stan MacAdam put Limerick "on the map" with a great twenty-five mile victory at Portadown on August 21st, 1883, in the good time of 1hr. 26m. 10s. Three days later, at Ballsbridge, McAdam won the ten miles All-Ireland title in 31m. 35s. And at the Phoenix Park, on September 12th, 1891, he won the fifty miles championship. His time: 2h. 50m. 8s.

In 1892 P. J. Kenna took up the winning All-Ireland trail for Sarsfield's County, his successes including the five miles championship at Tralee on June 8th (14m. 52 2/5s.); and the 25 miles at Ballsbridge on June 7th, 1893, his time being 1h. 12m. 26s. He "farmed" the fifty miles title, winning it three years running over the Phoenix Park course: September 3rd, 1892, 2h. 57m. 2s.; Sept. 2nd, 1893, 2h. 41m. 52s.; Sept. 1st, 1894, 2h. 33m. 32s.

Another well-known rider of the period was R. T. McCredy, who won championships across Channel in 1887 and 1890 that were world events in all but name. Harry Reynolds was the first Irishman to win a recognised world title, which he did at Copenhagen in 1896.

HOME OF GRASS TRACK CYCLING.

To return to the performances of our Limerick men, it is well to point out that Munster was the home of grass track cycling in the years under consideration, but road racing was also popular in Limerick, and many great events were decided over the Rosbrien and Ardacrusha "courses."

In recalling the career of J. J. Trehy, it is only natural that the names of several contemporaries should come into the picture, and in this connection I would like to take the opportunity of including these in the scope of this review, as the opportunity may not arise again, in this series, of paying our respects to them.

With this purpose in mind, I propose to work through an old scrapbook and pick out, in detail order, the performances of the various city wheelers of the first decade from the founding of the G.A.A.

By way of introduction, here is an extract from the Press report of the L.A.A. and B.C. meeting of June, 1884, six months before the G.A.A. saw light of day:

"The two miles bicycle handicap novices went to J. Butler, Limerick, with P. J. Darcy second and W. J. Murphy a close third. The three miles cycle brought out T. J. Lowry first, J. J. Trehy second and

(No. 50)—J. J. TREHY of Limerick City

(By SEAMUS O'CALLAIGH)

M. J. O'Mahony (Cork) third. Trehy made the pace for the first mile, followed by O'Mahony, with Lowry in the rear. At the beginning of the second mile, Lowry overhauled O'Mahony and, after a spirited contest, challenged Trehy, who gamely responded, leaving Lowry to the front by twelve yards. The race of the day was the three mile club handicap between the brothers 'Jim' and 'Mick' Trehy and Pat Mannix. The limit man was first away, and kept lead for several laps, when tackled by Michael Trehy, got Mannix cornered, and J. J. Trehy took the opportunity of the outside and faced the straight, passing his brother in a neck to neck struggle with Mannix, got home by three yards. It was a great race from start to finish, for it was often doubted if 'Mick' trained, who was the best man."

TREHY A GOOD FIRST.

The report of the same meeting for 1885 contained the following:—

"The one mile bicycle brought out J. J. Trehy a good first, and T. J. Lowry second. The two mile bicycle race had a hearty welcome from a large field of spectators, with T. Connell, first; T. J. Lowry second and M. Trehy, third; and the big event, 3 mile cycle, gave T. J. Lowry first place; J. J. Trehy a close second, and M. Trehy a good third. In this event the cheering for the three Limerick competitors was most enthusiastic."

Lowry made a clean sweep of the cycle events at the 1886 L.A.A. and B.C. meeting, winning the one mile cycle (novices) in 3 mins. 49 secs., M. Trehy being third; the one mile cycle open (3m. 24s.), three mile cycle (9m. 44s.) and two mile cycle (confined) in 7m. 31 2-5th s., S. McAdam filling second place in the latter three, with H. McGhie third.

At the County Kerry Amateur Sports, held on June 22nd, 1886, T. S. Lowry was second from scratch, in the one, two and three mile cycle events, and won the five mile cycling championship.

At the Waterford Bicycle Club Sports the following day, S. McAdam won three "firsts"—the four mile South of Ireland championship (13m. 30 2/5s.); the one mile cycle (3m. 4s.) and the three mile cycle (10m. 15s.).

McAdam and Lowry met in a one mile cycle event at North Tipperary G.A.A. Sports on August 9th, 1886, which the former won.

To complete the season, Lowry won the one and three mile cycle events at Cork C.C. sports on August 12th, and was second in the same races at Tralee Bicycle Club Sports the following day. The Limerick G.A.A. and I.C.A. organised a great three days sports carnival, which commenced on September 19th, and at which Lowry won the three mile cycle prize—J. J. Trehy being second.

SHONE IN ANOTHER SPHERE

Trehy shone in another sphere, at the third All-Ireland G.A.A. Athletic Championship meeting held at Tralee on 31st July and 1st August, 1887, winning the Irish jig and hornpipe competition, a distinction he also secured at Emly Sports a little later on in the season.

Limerick cycling successes recorded this year were: June 8th, L.A.A. and B.C. sports, ten mile cycle, S. McAdam; three mile cycle, S. McAdam; T. J. Lowry second; two mile cycle, T. J. Lowry. Sept. 11th, Limerick G.A.A. sports, three mile cycle, J. J. Trehy (from scr.).

We must pass on to 1888 to find the following: June 13th, Limerick

A.A. and B.C. sports, one mile cycle, S. McAdam (scr.); Blakney Gubbins (100 yds.) was second, with an exact similar return for the two and three miles. June 17th, Limerick Commercials sports, two mile cycle, E. Hartigan (25 yds.), won; J. Fitzgerald (scr.), second. Three mile cycle, M. Trehy (25 yds.) won; M. Ryan (70 yds.), second. Three mile cycle (confined), J. Fitzgerald won, E. Jenkins second.

August 18th, "Freeman's Journal" sports at Ballsbridge, Dublin, S. McAdam won the half and one mile cycle events.

The next year we meet: June 12th, L.A.A. and B.C. sports—One mile cycle, H. S. Laird (140 yds.) won; E. Hartigan (150 yds.), second. Three mile cycle, E. Gubbins (240 yds.), second. Two mile confined, E. Gubbins (140 yds.) won; H. S. Laird (280 yds.), second. September 15th, Limerick G.A.A. sports—One mile cycle, P. J. Kenna (25 yds.) won. Three mile cycle, P. J. Kenna (8 yds.) won; M. J. Ryan (135 yds.) second.

September 21st, Nenagh sports—One mile cycle, P. J. Kenna won from scratch.

LIMERICK DELEGATES TO G.A.A. CONGRESS.

Mick Trehy was elected, with F. B. Dinneen and Pat Hassett (Ahane), as Limerick delegates to the annual All-Ireland G.A.A. Congress of 1890, which elected another Limerickman, J. P. Troy, as Treasurer of the Central Council. Cycling successes this season were:—

May 15th—Fifteen Mile Cycle Road Handicap—P. J. Kenna (1h. 3m. 43s.) won; A. E. Murphy, second; D. O'Connell, third.

June 11th—L.A.A. & B.C. Sports. One Mile Cycle (Novices), high machine—J. J. Kenna, 3m. 49 4-5th s. Pneumatic machine, W. Walpole, second. (In this connection it is on record that Blakney Gubbins was the first man to ride a pneumatic machine in the Markets Field). One Mile Cycle—S. McAdam, second; three mile cycle, S. McAdam, 10m. 19s., won; E. Gubbins (100 yds.), second. Five Mile Cycle—S. McAdam (scr.), 17m. 43s., won; D. O'Connell (400 yds.), second.

September 7th, Limerick G.A.A. Sports—One Mile Cycle—P. J. Kenna (scr.), 3m. 10 4-5th secs. won. Two Mile Cycle—P. J. Kenna (scr.), 6m. 20s., won; D. O'Connell (250 yards), second. Three Mile Cycle—D. O'Connell (180 yds.) won; P. J. Kenna (scr.), second.

P. J. Kenna was again to the fore at the L.A.A. and B.C. meeting, held on June 10th, 1891, winning the three mile cycle event from scratch, with W. B. Smith (200 yds.) second; and the five Mile Cycle (17m. 14 4-5th s.), also from scratch. E. Gubbins won the Two Mile Cycle (confined), D. O'Connell being second.

Twelve months later, Kenna was again prominent, winning the five mile scratch and the two mile confined events but losing the one mile, to W. B. Smith. R. R. Parsons, who was second in the two mile, won the mile novices race, J. S. Matterson being second.

ACTIVE YEAR FOR LIMERICK CYCLING.

Our review ends in 1893, which was a particularly active year for Limerick cycling.

Road racing was a very popular sport in the city and district this season, and some important events and winners were:—

April 19th, Commercial Bicycle Club Twelve Mile Championship (over the Rosbrien course)—T. G. Kenna (47m. 10s.) won; T. G. Wilson (47m. 10 1/5s.) second; H. Kenneally, third. Also competed—E. Cole, W. Walpole and J. McIlroy.

May 3rd, L.A.A. and B.C.—Fifteen Mile Road Cycling Handicap—H. Kenneally (4m. 25s.) won; T. J. Wilson, second; R. R. Parsons, third. Also competed—E. Gubbins, W. B. Smith, P. J. Kenna, A. McMahon, W. Woodhouse, T. Mulqueen, J. J. Trehy, P. Flynn, G. Trousdell, C. V. Blundell and J. Pigott.

May 23rd, L.A.A. and B.C. ten mile road cycling handicap—W. Woodhouse (6m. 30s.) won; J. S. Matterson, second; J. Ray, third. Also competed—P. J. Kenna, R. R. Parsons, C. Sheehy, J. A. Ryan and J. R. Guest.

June 8th, at Ballsbridge, Dublin—P. J. Kenna won the 25 mile cycling championship of the world. Time 1h. 12m. 23 2/5 s. Twenty competed, including Zimmerman (New York), E. O'Callaghan (Cork) and A. Watson (London).

July 5th, Limerick A.A. and B.C. fifty mile road race at Ardacrusha—R. R. Parsons won; W. B. Smith, second; J. J. Trehy, third.

July 25th, twenty mile inter-club cycling contest at Blackwater L.A.A. and B.C. (P. J. Kenna, W. B. Smith, A. J. Ray, R. R. Parsons, W. Woodhouse and J. J. Trehy) beat Waterford B.C. by 32 points to 46.

OTHER LOCAL SUCCESSES AT SPORTS MEETINGS.

Successes at sports meetings this season included:

June 14th, L.A.A. and B.C. Sports—Three mile cycle, J. J. Wilson, second; E. Gubbins, third; five mile cycle (scratch) Barrington Cup—P. J. Kenna (16m. 4s.) won; H. E. Kenneally, second. Two mile roadster (confined)—P. J. Kenna, won; R. R. Parsons, second. One mile cycle (confined)

—A. J. Matterson, won; A. Egan, second. One mile cycle (scratch)—W. J. Woodhouse, won; J. McSweeney, second.

August 3rd, Nenagh Sports—Three mile cycle, T. Wilson, third. August 29th, Nenagh R.I.C. Sports—T. Wilson won the three and five mile cycle events.

September 14th, Adare Sports—Three mile cycle—T. G. Wilson (80 yards), 11m. 20 3/5s., won; R. R. Parsons (100 yards), second. Five mile cycle, W. B. Smith (100 yards) won; T. G. Wilson (130 yards), second.

Before closing this chapter in Limerick cycling history let us turn to a news item of 12th March, 1895, recording the death, at the early age of thirty years, of Stanhope McAdam. A well-known cyclist who joined the L.A.A. and B.C. in 1884, he won the ten miles Irish championship three years in succession at Portadown, held the twenty and twenty-five mile championships and the record for the former distance for two years, and made a world's record at Waterford on the occasion of the opening of the Goff Track. All his earlier victories were secured on the old solid-tired bicycle, but on the appearance of the pneumatic tyre he quickly adapted himself to the changed conditions and actually added the fifty miles championship to his long list of honours. He was Hon. Secretary of the L.A.A. and B.C. for several years and managed many famous athletic meetings.

AN APPRECIATION.

I will let the late P. J. Rea conclude this article with an appreciation of J. J. Trehy, which he wrote for me some years ago:

"In the middle eighties a bicycle nicknamed the 'Penny-farthing,' or the 'fifty-two inch machine,' was much in vogue, and to see a number of fine cyclists mounted for a three mile contest was worthy of the old Markets Field. The popular Jim Trehy faced at the L.A.A. and B.C. meet of 1887 or thereabouts such speed stalwarts as Louis McGee, Tom Lowry, Paddy McKenna, McGowan from Kerry and Curtin from Waterford, and when the pistol of Bruce Murray had performed its function it was a sight for the gods to see the steel troopers, with Jim Trehy a virtual scratchman, face the crowded and very enthusiastic gathering. He was a powerful man on the 'wheels,' and when the reserves came out Blake-ney Gubbins, Stanhope McAdam and Cromer for the five miles open, poor old 'Jim' would again be remounted to face all opposition. The longer the distance the stronger was the mount, as Trehy did not like short runs. And these distances were at almost every meeting encompassed by one of Ireland's foremost cyclists of the early nineties—J. J. Trehy. The advent of the G.A.A. introduced the 'safety'—a low-wheeled racing machine which certainly was a big improvement on the 'crock.' The good old veteran, Pat Mannix, also topped the 'fifty-two' for a race as well as Munster's old sport, 'Coley' O'Connell. J. J. Trehy was at his best in 1888 and 1889, for he was winning everywhere. He attended all the Cork meets at which he was 'scratch,' and yet successful. 'Jim' Trehy, with many of those that rode the old grass track with him, have passed from this valley of tears—may God be with them all."

No. 51—Con Fitzgerald, of Glin.