

Great Limerick Athletes

No. 86—PAT MULCAHY of Cappamore

(By SEAMUS O CEALLAIGH)

STILL taking a keen interest in the games of the Gael and the doings of his native Cappamore on the hurling field, is seventy-seven years old Pat Mulcahy, one of the men that helped Kilfinane and Limerick to the great All-Ireland success of 1897, the first that Limerick achieved with the caman, coupling it with a thrilling Croke Cup success that gave Shannonside one of the first hurling "doubles" in Gaelic history.

Born in the parish of Cappamore in the year 1877, Pat Mulcahy grew up with the G.A.A. and was hurling with his schoolmates at a very tender age. To the fore with Cappamore school in the numerous contests of his day, his skill with the caman was soon evident and whilst still attending school it is on record that he was invited to play with Murroe, whilst he also figured for Boher in a stirring match against Kilfinane, which was played at Herbertstown.

FULLY CONSCIOUS OF HONOUR.

Trophies were few and far between in those pioneer hurling days, but that took nothing from the appreciation of victory and the many wielders of the caman in those grand old days that the veterans speak of so wistfully, were fully conscious of the honour in winning a clean, hard game and valued highly their selection as members of the team.

In addition to Pat Mulcahy, the Cappamore of that time boasted top class hurlers in his brother John, Pat Butler, John Hynes, Johnny Condon, Denis Connolly, and their grand little goalkeeper, Johnny (Tony) Conroy.

The only big win Pat Mulcahy had with Cappamore was in the Murphy Cup final of 1897, when they overwhelmed Croom, at the Markets Field, the score telling its own story: Cappamore, 6-16; Croom, 0-1. This game was played on October 30th, 1898.

Near miss for the Cappamore lads was in the Senior Hurling Championship final that same season when they lost to Kilfinane by a solitary point in a thrill packed decider, one of the most exciting tussles ever played at the Markets Field. The tally at the end of sixty hectic minutes read: Kilfinane, 4-9; Cappamore, 4-8. And when we remember that Kilfinane later won both the All-Ireland Blue Riband and the Croke Cup, we realise how near Cappamore were to inscribing their name on the roll of fame.

FIGURED WITH DISTINCTION.

Of course, Pat Mulcahy, John Hynes and Pat Butler, all members of the Cappamore team, had a full part in the victories achieved by the Kilfinane selection and figured with distinction, particularly in the memorable games against Blackrock to decide Munster supremacy, and in the later struggles with Tullaroan, striving to bring Kilkenney into the All-Ireland limelight, a success that crowned Black and Amber endeavour in ample measure during their unforgettable decade from 1904 to 1913.

Pat Mulcahy had left Cappamore before the parish realised its great ambition of putting its name on the county senior hurling roll of honour, but the renown denied him at home he secured in generous portion in the county of his adoption.

His first Dublin successes were gained on the athletic track. He competed at several meetings, usually contesting the 100 yards and the 220 yards flat and won several prizes, including a silver cup. He also pulled tug-o-war, heavy team and light team, of Guinness's Brewery, and holds four medals for this sport.

Later on he devoted most of his time to hurling and he helped Commercials to win five Dublin County Championship titles. In addition, he figured with the same club through four Senior League campaigns in which they were victorious a splendid achievement considering the keen competition in Dublin then and the many great players participating in the Metropolitan games.

WAS MEMBER OF DUBLIN TEAM.

A member of the Dublin team for a considerable time, he helped them win Leinster Championship laurels in 1902 and 1906. And he had the unique distinction of playing in the two All-Ireland hurling finals that were decided in Tipperary Town, then a favourite venue for the big games of the

Gaelic arena. He won the 1897 final with Limerick there, and had a great personal triumph in the drawn game between Dublin and Cork for the 1902 Blue Riband, when he scored five of the Liffey-side points, the game ending in a draw, 1-5 apiece. Cork won the replay, but Pat was missing on that occasion, being laid up for a long period with a blood-poisoned leg.

Some of his team mates on the Dublin side were well-known figures, who left their mark on Gaelic history. They included the captain Dan McCormack; athlete, handball and hurling enthusiast, Andy Harty; the great Jack Grace, who narrowly missed adding a hurling medal to his fine collection of football All-Ireland souvenirs; the Callaghans and the Gleasons. The 1902 Cork team was captained by the one and only Jim Kelleher of Dungourney, still regarded by many old time hurling fans as the greatest hurler of all time, and included names that were household ones in hurling circles—Jim Royane, Jerry Desmond, Billy O'Neill, "Daw" McGrath, "Bachus" Leahy, "Rooker" Keffe, Tom Coughlan and Willie Parfrey. And the Tipperary side they met in 1906 had stalwarts like Tom Semple, Hugh Shelly, Paddy Brolan, Bob Mockler, P. Maher and J. O'Keeffe.

A GAME TO REMEMBER.

A game that Pat will remember was the meeting with London- Irish at Wexford Park in the All-Ireland Senior Hurling semi-final, which Dublin won, for he suffered a broken arm during the course of that hour.

He still holds that the greatest game of his career was the All-Ireland final against Tullaroan, which Kilfinane won in dramatic fashion. Pat opened the Limerick scoring in that desperate encounter and contributed in no small way to the success of the side. That unforgettable day was November 20th, 1898.

Eight months later the Croke Cup final brought the same teams together at Thurles, the date, July 9th, 1899. Pat treasures that meeting as the most memorable down the years of his membership of the G.A.A. With Pat McGrath as referee, the players were presented before the contest to Most Rev. Dr. Croke, by Mr. F. B. Dinneen, The Archbishop also threw in the ball, Limerick leaving no doubt his time concerning their superiority. And the old veteran can still roll off the names of the Limerickmen that day: Denis Grimes (captain), James Hanley ("Sean Og"), M. Finn, P. Flynn, M. Flynn, M. Casey, P. O'Brien, Jim Flood, Tim Lloyd, John Hynes, Pat Mulcahy, Sean Condon, Pat Butler, Pat Buskin, T. Brazil, M. Downes, and Danny Riordan.

Pat Mulcahy prides in the fact that his nephew, John Mulcahy, is to the fore in Limerick hurling ranks, whilst another nephew, a brother of John's, Dan Mulcahy, who Captains the Treaty Gaels team now also won many honours in football and hurling with Dublin's oldest Club—the C. J. Kickham's.

NO MOTOR CARS FOR THEM!

The old veteran in the course of some reminiscences told how he had to walk from Cappamore to the New Bridge, a distance of about two miles, every morning, and work hard from eight o'clock until six that evening, and then walk at a good steady pace home again. He walked five and six miles many a time to play a match, and walked home again afterwards. This walking, he maintains, kept him fit all the time.

"We had no motor cars to drive us in those days," he said. "The Cappamore team always went to a far away venue on Tom Ryan (Luke's) long car, pulled by four horses. I think the charge at the time was 1/6 per man from Cappamore to Limerick. When picked for the Limerick team we used to walk to Dromkeen and go into Limerick by train, where all would meet and go by rail to the venue. The Dublin County and Club teams always went by train in my active days."

The best players he met in the course of his career were "Fox" Maher (Kilkenny), Bob Mockler and Tom Hayes, of Dublin. "I think I have never seen," he said, "any two players to command centre field like Bob Mockler and Tom Hayes. They were the best pair I ever saw. As regards goalkeepers, I remember some great ones down the years—Scanlan of

Limerick, Duggan of Galway, Darmody of Kilkenny, and I would say that Reddan of Tipperary and Matthews of Dublin, are to-day able to hold their own with any I have ever seen."

MEMORIES RECALLED.

Amongst his other memories Pat recalls having scored two points direct from side line pucks when playing with Dublin in a Leinster final. Kilkenny objected to these scores, claiming that the ball should have been "burned" or touched on its way over. As there was no rule to that effect Kilkenny lost the objection and Pat won his second Leinster Championship medal. And he has the distinction of being the first ever to score a touch puck direct in Croke Park, Tommy Murphy, of Three Castles, Kilkenny, being the second man to do this.

He also tells of a Monster Tournament held in Nenagh on one occasion. Clubs from different counties were invited to compete for a prize of seventeen bicycles. Commercials, Young Irelands, Faughs of Dublin, Young Irelands, of Limerick, were amongst those who entered. His team, Commercials, had two great wins which carried them to the final. But Pat says, "there was never any final and we never got a bike or heard any more about it." On another occasion Alfie Byrne, when Lord Mayor of Dublin, donated two sets of medals, hurling and football, proceeds from the gate at matches to go to the Building Fund of Ringsend Chapel. Some great games were played in this competition, Commercials winning the medals.

Pat Mulcahy told me that except for hurling he had little other sporting interests. However, he later took to birds and dog breeding as a hobby. It transpired afterwards that this hobby got more than interesting, as he won twenty-four cups in all for birds and dogs. Some of these trophies he won at Crystal Palace, Bradford City and in Liverpool. He bred two Irish Terriers that became Irish champions.

HIS OPINION OF PRESENT-DAY PLAYERS.

When asked his opinion of present day players, Pat said that they were too fond of "picking" the ball. "There's not enough of ground play," he continued, "and I hold there is nothing as effective as a good hard pull away on the ball. There is far too much loose play nowadays. And the game itself is not half as exciting as when I was a boy. I miss the good long drives that were such a feature of the olden arena. And remember, the ball to-day is three ounces lighter. And then there are altogether too many stoppages and, in particular, too many pretended injuries."

Pat Mulcahy worked as a labouring boy in Cappamore. When he went to Dublin he got a job in Guinness's Brewery, and became foreman in the engineering department. He retired on pension after thirty-three years service just nineteen years ago.

"I follow the fortunes of the Cappamore boys, and I must say the old parish is to the fore," said Pat with pride. "The Cappamore team of my time (1896 and 1897) I would class as the best club team in all Ireland, and I would say that my brother, John Mulcahy, was the greatest full forward of that period in the country."

And as I parted from this grand old Gael his closing words were: "I also keep in touch with our Limerickmen's Association here, and in particular Treaty Gaels. For their first year they have performed very creditably. I am enjoying health and energy, thank God, as I did when I was thirty. I go for my morning walk in the Park and never miss it. I would say I walk two or three miles of the Park every morning."

Sainte, Pat Mulcahy!
No. 87—Charlie Holland of Limerick City.