

Jim Walsh Of Hospital

(CONCLUDED)

THE story of the G.A.A. in Hospital can be traced back 72 years, to 1887, when the first club was formed in the parish.

Jim Canty was the man responsible for the foundation and, with assistance from Georgie Downes, he got together the inaugural meeting, which attracted a large attendance and aroused much enthusiasm.

The officers appointed that evening were: Chairman, John Ryan, J.P.; Treasurer, J. Curtin; Secretary, W. Hayes; with Jim Canty as Club Captain and Georgie Downes the Vice-Captain.

Some years ago Jim Walsh—whose connection with the G.A.A. in the parish goes back a long way, despite some years spent out of the country—was able to dig up for me from old records a list of the members and players of that first Hospital G.A.A. Club. They were: J. Curran, T. Moore, M. Mitchell, M. D.; W. Curran, J. Davern, E. Davern, D. Ryan, P. Ryan, D. Downes, J. McCormick, A. Ryan, J. Connolly, P. O'Neill, M. O'Callaghan, T. Hayes, J. Roche, D. Nugent, E. Woods, J. O'Carroll, M. Murray, Tim Hayes, T. Murray, B. Murphy, M. Murphy, T. Murphy, P. Murphy, J. O'Connor, N. Coughlan, T. Meagher, J. O'Connell, T. O'Connell, M. Guare, D. Hurley, T. Lysaght, W. Dore, T. P. Burke, D. C. O'Connell, W. O'Connell, M. Reale and Dr. Curran.

VERY FEW MATCHES PLAYED.

The first effort at organisation did not meet with a lot of success and, despite much activity in the early months of 1887 in the training field, very few actual matches were played, with the result that a lot of the initial enthusiasm faded.

In 1888 a stronger bid was made to secure games and through the instrumentality of Thomas Reale—who was now President and whose nephew, Michael J. O'Sullivan, later occupied the same post in a most active period in the history of the G.A.A. in the parish; a number of attractive games with outside areas were arranged.

Patrick Moore was the Secretary this year, and with Jim Canty still in charge as Club Captain the players got down to serious practice in the old Fair Green. The attendance at the training sessions was exceptionally good and the standard of hurling rapidly improved, in preparation for the first game with an outside area.

This was against Carrigen, from the parish of Kiltelly, and the Hospital lads were very encouraged when they came through victorious.

They then entered a tournament in which the contestants included Bruff and Effin, which were reputed top-class teams at the period, and it was a fine performance by Hospital that they ran both very tight.

The team had another satisfying win when they travelled to Elton and came through with something to spare against Ballygoreen. Their next outing, which was to the same venue, found them matched against Knockaderry. This proved a thrill-packed game and very close, but through some dispute and gathering dusk the game remained unfinished.

FINE HURLING OF THE PRESIDENT.

A noted feature of those games was the fine hurling of the President, Thomas Reale. As goalkeeper, he gave an outstanding display in all the games and his

puck out was of surpassing distance, not being equalled by any other player in the county.

Jim Canty retired from the captaincy in 1889 and the position went to his understudy, Georgie Downes, who continued on similar lines.

This was a very successful year for the Hospital hurlers, and they followed a series of great wins over teams like Loughgur, Kiltelly and Grange with a resounding triumph in the Caherline Tournament, which they won out, defeating many highly-rated teams. The trophy for this was the famous "Tower Cup," which the club presented to one of their ablest supporters—John Ryan of Castlefarm.

Another notable advance in the parish this year was the formation of a Football Club, the captain of which was Denis O'Connell of Coolscart, who led the team to numerous victories, and was considered a stone-wall between the posts.

One remarkable contest in which Hospital footballers triumphed was against Bruff. Dan Downes was playing a great game in this, and although he got a badly split lip as the result of a collision with an opponent he pluckily played on to the end.

Back in Bruff a short time later, the Hospital lads were too strong for the Bouncers of Knocklong, but in a trip to Kilfinane they met their masters in a great tussle with a famed team from the Premier County—the Tipperary Anavale Rovers.

BIG ACHIEVEMENT OF FOOTBALLERS.

A big achievement of the footballers was to reach the semi-final of the County Senior Football Championship in the second year of their existence—1890. This was played at Caherconlish, and although the Hospital lads went down it was no disgrace to be beaten by the renowned Limerick Commercial, who a few years earlier had won the first All-Ireland Championship in Football—a title they were again to win in 1896.

The Hospital lads at this period called themselves the "Mounty Victory Hurling and Football Club." Jim Walsh explained the historic significance of that name.

During the period of the Land War the "Plan of Campaign," in O'Grady's estate, was carried through mainly on the initiative of Rev. Matthew Ryan. The British Government ordered his arrest and knowledge of this brought a huge throng of people to the town of Hospital. In the seething excitement, his reverence crossed the old hill of Hospital and made his escape from hundreds of military and police. Canon Power later addressed the great muster of people from Hospital hill top and blessed it as "Mount Victory Hill," from which the local club took its name.

Conscious of the fine traditions of the past and determined to keep the name of Hospital to the fore, as far as the G.A.A. was concerned, Jim Walsh bent all his energies towards that object.

President of the local club for many years and Vice-Chairman of the South Limerick Board for almost a decade, until his retirement in 1947, he saw the accomplishment of many worthwhile ventures.

A KEEN HANDBALLER.

A keen handball exponent always, he ably assisted the efforts at erecting a ballcourt in Hospital

and tried to encourage this great pastime by every means at his disposal.

The playing field for the parish move had his active support and he was one of those who played a big part in the work of popularising St. John's Park and making it a worthy parish field.

When the move back to the old pitch was mooted, and he saw in it a chance of greater benefit to the games, he supported the idea and was secretly happy, like many other veterans, that the old arena of such happy and nostalgic memories would again throb with the life and gaiety of the young Gaels at play.

His years as an official of the South Limerick Board were noteworthy ones, and saw that Division foremost in Ireland in its efforts to encourage clubs to provide proper playing fields and enclose them in simple but effective manner.

A simple, homely man, with an honest, open mind, he was a fine type of character, genial and likeable in company.

A WAY OF HIS OWN.

As an official, he had a way of his own. Quick to open a discussion and great in debate, he tinged his remarks with copious doses of real wit and humour, serving to make his contributions on any subject both pleasant and practical.