

No. 189—PAT RYAN of Pallas

PALLAS is one of the oldest strongholds of the G.A.A. in County Limerick—a district which has been rarely missing from the championship line-out, yet boasts all too few of the laurels gained in such competition.

Pallas, being situated in the Archdiocese of Cashel, early responded to the call that went out from the illustrious Dr. Croke when he became the first Patron of the great organisation of Irish athletic manhood.

In a short time three teams flourished in the joint parishes included in the district of Pallasgreen—New Pallas Football Club, Old Pallas Hurling Club and Knockane Football Club. Within

By SEAMUS O'CEALLAIGH

the confines of the parish areas soon arose powerful combinations composed of sterling Gaels and great athletes.

TWO WORLD BEATERS.

Two world beaters were included in the galaxy—Willie Real and Paddy Ryan, besides many other athletes who soon occupied positions of power and influence in the Gaelic sporting annals of Limerick.

Pallas worked their way to the county senior football final of 1897, but Limerick Commercials, who were All-Ireland champions at the time, beat them in a stirring contest at the Markets Field.

Five years later, when the parish again faced Limerick Commercials in the premier county decider in football, it was a point effort by the Knockane and Pallas Clubs. In a hectic game at the Markets Field Commercials won 2-2 to 1-4, but the losers disputed the issue and the Munster Council ordered a re-play.

So high did feeling run at the time that it was decided the second meeting should take place outside the county, and Clonmel was selected as the venue—the second occasion a Limerick final was played in another county—South Liberties and Kilfinane having fought the 1890 County Senior Hurling final at Rathluirc. Commercials won decisively on this occasion.

NEW GENERATION OF PALLAS GAELDOM.

Gaelic games in the area fell on

rough times for a period following this reverse, and one of the outstanding figures in the renaissance which got into real swing around 1910 was Pat Ryan, the subject of this sketch.

Many much talked of games were played by this new generation of Pallas Gaeldom, and one particular championship victory over Castlemahon is still recalled with particular relish. Pallas looked all set for junior championship honours that season but the Limerick County Board were passing through troubled times following the repercussions of their refusal to play Kilkenny, at Thurles, in the 1911 All-Ireland final, and some of the championships, after running much into arrears, were eventually abolished entirely.

Pallas, however, had the distinction of winning the only Intermediate Football Championship ever decided in Limerick. It was organised in connection with the 1911 championship year but it was April 27th, 1913, when the pair who had qualified for the final—Pallas and South Liberties—met at the Markets Field to decide the issue.

TOOK THREE MEETINGS TO FIND A WINNER.

A few Sundays earlier South Liberties had won the Intermediate Hurling title from Rathkeale after a marathon struggle, for it took three meetings to find a winner.

"Liberties made it a double when they beat Pallas footballers 1-0 to 0-1, after a terrific struggle, fought at a fast and exciting pace.

Big feature of that great game was a magnificent display of goal-keeping—both contestants being exceptionally served in this regard. Pat Ryan guarded the Pallas posts, and although beaten for one hotly contested major his manning of the Béarnia Bógáil was the subject of much favourable comment wherever the game was discussed.

Pallas later objected to the constitution of the South Liberties team which beat them in that final, and Pat Ryan was entrusted with the task of fighting the issue in the Council Chamber. The decisive debate was listed for a Munster Council meeting arranged for Limerick Junction and as no trains were available at the time Pat had to walk to and from the Junction.

SUCCESSFUL PLEADINGS.

However, his pleadings were on the right lines; the objection was upheld, and Pallas were awarded the championship—an event that caused much rejoicing in the parish as it was the first county crown they won.

Exactly twelve months to the very Sunday—April 26th, 1914, Pallas lined out for their first Senior Football Championship engagement but were pitted against what was then a powerful combination—Ballylanders, and despite a great display they were beaten by a narrow margin. That occasion produced another fine exhibition of net minding—Pat Ryan for Pallas and Mick Osborne (Ballylanders) rousing the crowd with some splendid saves.

Shortly afterwards Pallas turned to hurling and Pat Ryan was as earnest and enthusiastic in handling the caman as he proved in the sister code. A notable achievement of this fine combination was their winning of 1915 County Junior honours, defeating Castleconnell 3-2 to 2-1 in the semi-final at the Markets Field, and Granagh 2-4 to 2-1 in the final at Kilmallock.

Pat Ryan, besides being a great Gael and sportsman, was, like many other prominent G.A.A. men of his time, closely associated with the struggle for national independence.

RIGOURS OF LANDLORDISM.

Born in a Land League hut, his parents having suffered for the

leading part they took in the land agitation in their native parish, Pat early experienced the rigours of landlordism and was made fully aware of the part an oppressive government played in keeping the plain people of Ireland under subjection.

At a tender age, he was deprived of the help and guidance of his father and had to take charge of the farm. This heavy responsibility, however, did not distract his attention from the plight of the many who suffered for their principles, and from earliest manhood he interested himself in the political and social life around him, winning a place in the affections and respect of the people that he retained to the time of his untimely passing whilst still in the prime of life.

JOINED THE VOLUNTEERS.

When the Volunteers were established he was one of the first to answer the call, and he was immediately elected company commander of the local section. Pat was never one to believe in half measures, so he was to be found every night drilling his men at New Pallas Cross. He built up a great section, one of the smartest that attended some of the big national demonstrations as they kept step to the strains of the Nicker Fife and Drum Band.

Also keenly interested in dramatics, he was mainly instrumental in forming the Pallasgreen Dramatic Society, of which he was elected Chairman.

He threw himself heart and soul into every cause he took up, and was universally regarded as a friend to all who needed one. No trouble was too great; the request had only to be made, he regarded it as all in a day's work and would almost feel insulted if one ventured to thank him for a kindly turn.

NOTHING PETTY ABOUT HIM.

Big and noble in character, there was nothing petty about him. He lived for the pleasure of doing good to others and found a place in the hearts of his neighbours that has survived the passage of time. That, perhaps, is the greatest tribute one could pay the man.

2/1956