

No. 175—BILL KEANE of Hospital

LIVING in exile in Sioux City, Iowa, U.S.A. for fifty-three years is Bill Keane, who was born in Hospital on January 14th, 1879, seventy-seven years ago.

An athlete and footballer before leaving his native shores, Bill has maintained his interest in G.A.A. affairs through over half a century in a foreign clime and in a city where Irishmen are not plentiful — and Gaelic games almost unknown.

Bill's story of the early days of the Gaelic revival in Limerick will be read with interest, particularly by the old timers, who will recall many of the men and incidents mentioned in the narrative.

I will let the old veteran tell in his own words and way his recollections of those early days of long ago:—

EARLIEST GAELIC MEMORY

"My earliest Gaelic memory is of Kilfinane defeating Caherline and Cappamore for the Limerick Hurling Championship. I saw both these games, and they were really worth seeing. It was hurling at its best.

Then Kilfinane, with a picked team, defeated Tulla of Clare, Blackrock at Mallow and the Kilkenny Champions, Tuillaroan, at Tipperary. I was a personal friend of John Downes, the Kilfinane President, who at this time was working as plasterer at Hospital and Knocklong jobs, and Mike Woods of Hospital. Helped by a few of our suggestions John Downes picked the following team: J. Reidy and J. Cottrell (Ballingarry), P. Buskin (Croom), J. Hanley, N. Downes, D. Grimes, M. Ryan, P. Flynn, M. Finn, T. Brazil, T. Casey (Kilfinane), P. Mulcahy, P. Butler, J. Condon, J. Hynes (Cappamore); M. O'Neill, Jim Flood and Timmy Lloyd (Caherline).

GREAT FOOTBALLERS

Let us not forget football in Limerick County at that time. The Commercials were famous. They had Paddy Ryan, a great player and a fine man; Con Fitzgerald, the captain; Albie Quillinan and Larry Roche. Then there was Tommy Campion (Kilmallock), Denny Braner, Knocklong and Galbally, other Knocklong jads in Owen McCann, C. Hartly, Mick Hynan (the runner) and Paddy Lee. Then we had Mick Nash and John Ryan of Oola, Hogan, Guerin and Clifford of Kiltelly, also some outstanding players from Knockane Club — John Donovan, Mick Shinniers, John Nash, Con Hartly, Jim Dwyer, Jack and Mick Maher of Pallas. The Hospital boys could play good football too—Bill Curran, our captain, Tommy Ryan, Mick Woods, the Fitzgerald brothers, Mick Sullivan, Davy Mack, Jimmie O'Connell (a Newcastle West boy), W. Lynch, F. O'Mara, Eddie Davern, Bill Holloway (Emly) and Patsy Murray. Prominent hurlers around my section of the county included Bill Gammell of Knocklong, Jack Gould of Lough Cur and the Muldoons of Caherline.

At that time Limerick had some fine hurlers and footballers all over the county who never got a chance to play in the big games. The principal reason was transportation to the various venues. Only few clubs could afford to pay travelling expenses to outside players as in those days we all paid our own expenses when we played.

I played with Hospital, February 19th, 1899 at the Markets Field. It was our fourth meeting with Knockane to decide the football championship and we were beaten. "Spencer" Lyons was the referee. Other memorable games in which I participated at the time with Hospital included a match against Doon, at Dromkeen; another Knockane meeting, this time at Corkanree; an exciting tussle with Oola; and an unfinished game with Knockane, at Knocklong. We were ahead when Knockane left the field.

ON THE HOSPITAL TEAM

I was on the Hospital team

By SEAMUS O'CEALLAIGH

for three years until I was forced to seek employment and went to Pallas to work for my cousin, Pat Hayes, as a jaunting car driver. I could not get away from my work to play football, as it was work first and pleasure afterwards. I had no time for pleasure, as a hackney car driver had to work Sunday as well as Monday, so that ended my football days in Limerick until I left for America in March, 1903.

I played soccer in Sioux City with the Scottish team that was here for a few years. It took me some time to learn the game, although I knew some of the fundamentals from Davy Mack, an old army player, before I left Hospital.

In my time at Hospital we had some right good followers, particularly P. J. O'Sullivan, a good player himself in the nineties. He was the father of our team for years and showed us all about the game until he moved to Elton, where he still continues his good work for the G.A.A. I also recall figures like J. O'Neill, County Board member and referee; Tom Hayes, James Duggan, Paddy Real and son, John Hannon, Bob and Joe Kenny, Micky O'Halloran, Dick Murphy, Tommy Curtin, Paddy and Jim Gleeson, Pappy Lynch, murdered by the Black and Tans on the Fair Green at Hospital; Jim Carty and his son Eddie, Dan Hurley, Will and Mick Callaghan, also the Downes brothers, George and Dan, Matt, Jack and Bill Hayes, and the Hayes brothers, painters—Tommy, Mick and Bill. We too had some young Hospital girls, who were always interested in our team: May and Flossie Millea, Madge Hazel, Annie Callaghan, Annie and Madge Curran.

I think John Reidy was the best goalkeeper Limerick ever had in hurling whilst John Hynes was a great outfield player and on frees he had no peer.

I only know three here in Sioux City who came from Limerick in the last fifty years, also the late Right Rev. Edmond Heelan, D.D., of Knockaney Parish, who was Bishop of this Diocese until his death some years ago.

PADDY RYAN OF PALLAS.

Now to athletics. There is no question but Paddy Ryan is the world's greatest weight-thrower. I got acquainted with Paddy in 1900 when I was in Pallas and watched his practice with the blacksmith hammer in the Paddock near his home near the church. He was not yet twenty years of age. I said one time to him: "Paddy, you will be world's champion some day." He smiled, and my words came to pass.

Jim Mitchell I remember as a small boy with my aunt near Emly. Jim lived close, and, as I grew up, Jim was my idol. With the wooden handle Jim had no equal. But I was always glad the man that eventually beat him was a Limerick man—the great athlete, John Flanagan of Kilmallock.

I competed in a novice race at Kilmallock when John was home on a visit and he gave some exhibition throws. He was a powerful athlete. The Leahy brothers I saw compete many times — real athletes, and Mick Creed of Elton was a personal friend of mine. For his height Mick was a great athlete, also a good hurler. My cousin, John Collins of Elton, was equally good at the high jump, hop, step and jump and broad jump.

FAVOURITE EVENT ON THE TRACK

My favourite event on the track was the 440 and I was only once beaten in that event. I was a novice at the time and Jim Condon the cyclist got the verdict over me in a confined

race at Hospital. We dead-heated, I thought, but Jim got the race. He was a fine runner.

At Elton Novice Sports I beat O. D. Coll in the 100 yards and 440 yards and was second in the 220. I also won the mile and the long jump and was second in the hop, step and jump, and captured the all round prize, which was the makings of a frieze overcoat, and this I gave to my father.

At Bulgaden Novice Meeting I beat Herlihy of Bruree and Hayes of Knocklong in the 440. Hayes and I tied for first and I won on the run off. At Kilfinane I won the 440 and was second in the 220. I also won the 440 at Bruff.

I was entered for Kilmallock G.A.A. meeting but was ruled out by D. Power, the handicapper, for competing at Elton, which was not under the rules, although O. D. Coll and others were allowed compete. It was a mystery to me why I was ruled out, so that was the end of my days as an athlete.

ADVICE TO YOUNG LIMERICK MEN

I am indeed happy to see the young men of Limerick County following the good old G.A.A. games — both in athletics and hurling and football. In the good old Fair Green we used to jump and run, hurl and play football every evening and I owe the good health I have enjoyed during over fifty years in America to the sound foundations laid then.

To all young Limerick men I say, keep up the good old Irish games of hurling and football, jumping and running, and to those who may emigrate to America or any other foreign country don't forget the Church your mother worshipped in. So many I have met in my travels around this western country, who have forgotten that little church where mother used to pray. But I will say I never met a Limerick County man or woman who had lost their Faith, thank God. In early days out here it was rough. Churches were few and far between. It's not the case now. But with all the churches in every city now, some Irish men and women fail to find them.

I have never lost contact with Gaelic happenings in Ireland, thanks to the good old "Limerick Leader" and I would be glad to hear from Limerick Gaels no matter where they live. I'll gladly reply. My address is: 1014 Douglas Street, Sioux City, Iowa, U.S.A. May God bless you, the good Gaels of Limerick County."

BEST WISHES

Bill Keane has shared his treasured memories with us and we are grateful to him. And from Limerick Gaeldom I send him across the seas best wishes for many further years of happiness and health.

Thus shall memory often in dreams sublime,
Catch a glimpse of the days that are over;
Thus, sighing, look through the waves of time
For the long faded glories they cover.

3rd hard 1956

No. 224—Bill Keane Of Hospital

(CONTINUED)

I continue Bill Keane's story as he told it to me:

I played with Hospital on February 19, 1899, at the Markets field. It was our fourth meeting with Knockane to decide the Senior Football Championship and we were beaten 2-7 to 0-1—a remarkable upset of form considering the closeness of the previous games.

THE TEAMS.

The teams on the occasion were:
Hospital—James Nash (capt.), P. Ryan, T. Ryan, P. Gorman, J. Dwyer, M. Ryan, C. Hanley, J. Hanley, J. Maher, Michael Shanley, T. Humphreys, M. Maloney, J. Maloney, John Nash, Tom Ryan, Thomas Ryan.

Hospital—W. Curran (capt.), T. Ryan, Davy Mack, M. Woods, Bill Keane, T. Keefe, J. Fitzgerald, M. Fitzgerald, D. Fitzgerald, F. O'Meara, W. Holloway, W. O'Hara, P. Murray, J. O'Connell, E. Davern, W. Lynch, F. O'Donoghue.

"Spencer" Lyons was the referee. If our game did not come up to expectations, the spectators certainly had no reason to grumble at the fare served in the hurling match which followed. Cappamore and Caherline were the contestants and it was a terrific tussle all the way; Cappamore winning by the odd point of seventeen in an exciting finish.

Other memorable games in which I participated at the time with Hospital included a match against Doon, at Dromkeen; another Knockane meeting, this time at Corkanree; an exciting tussle with Oola, and an unfinished game with Knockane, at Knocklong. We were ahead when Knockane left the field.

I was on the Hospital team for three years until I was forced to seek employment and went to work for my cousin, Pat Hayes, as a haunting car driver. That more or less ended my football days in Limerick. I could not get away from my work to play, as it was work first and pleasure afterwards. I had little time for the latter, as a hackney car driver had to work Sunday as well as Monday.

WENT TO U.S.A.

I left for America in March, 1903, and when I reached Sioux City found to my dismay that Gaelic games were almost unheard of, and were certainly not played in that part of the United States.

Soccer enjoyed some popularity at the time in Sioux City, so I joined the Scottish team that was there for a few years. It took me a while to learn the game, although I knew some of the fundamentals from Davy Mack, an old British Army player, with whom I had played it a few times in Hospital. Limerickmen are very scarce in Sioux City, and I could count on the fingers of one hand those I met in over fifty years there. We

had for many years as Bishop of our Diocese the late Right Rev. Dr. Edmond Heelan, who was a native of Knockaney. I met a fine specimen of Irish manhood in Maurice Hayes, of Ballystean, not so many years ago, and he even brought his football boots, thinking he could play football here. Jim O'Shaughnessy, of Newcastle West, is another of the sons of Shannonside I met here—an old West Limerick Gael, and I also have a brother, P. J. Keane, here, who was, too, a follower of the Hospital team in the 'theties.

GREAT NAMES IN GAELIC AFFAIRS.

In my time in Hospital we had some right good supporters, notably P. J. O'Sullivan, who was a splendid player himself in the years before the turn of the century. He was the father of our team for years and showed us all about the game. When he moved to Elton his loss was keenly felt, but "P. J." continued his great work for Gaelic games in his new abode and as "Old Green Flag" was well-known to readers of the Limerick Leader some years ago, his frequent letters of advice and encouragement being of great assistance in the spread of Gaelic games. The now veteran Elton Gael is still, happily, with us—one of the few remaining links with unforgettable days in Hospital.

I also recall figures like J. O'Neill, County Board member and referee; Tom Hayes, James Duggan, Paddy Real and his son; John Hannon, Bob and Joe Kenny, Micky O'Halloran, Dick Murphy, Tommy Curtin, Paddy and Jim Gleeson, Pappy Lynch, murdered by the Black and Tans on the local Fair Green; Jim Canty and his son, Eddie; Dan Hurlley, Will and Mick Callaghan; also the Downes brothers, George and Dan; Matt, Jack and Bill Hayes; and the Hayes brothers, painters—Tommy, Mick and Bill. We, too, had some Young Hospital girls who were always interested in our team: May and Flossie Millea, Madge Hazel, Annie and Madge Curran and Annie Callaghan.

CLOSING YEARS OF LAST CENTURY.

The closing years of the century must have been the greatest in the seventy years of the G.A.A. in Sarsfield's County. I was very young when the County Board was re-established, following a period of inactivity resulting from the effects of the Parnell "Split," which almost tore Ireland asunder.

I well remember the enthusiasm aroused when Commercial's swept all before them to win the 1896 All-Ireland Senior Football crown. This was their second great success in this code, and their defeat of a powerful Dublin side in that final was a remarkable achievement. Gaelic games got little

notice in the newspapers then, but the weekly sporting papers would not hear of a Liffeside defeat and treated the Limerickmen with scant respect.

In the event, Limerick proved their superiority in no uncertain manner. Though not so clever at footwork as their opponents, they stubbornly contested every inch of the ground with consummate skill. Much the heavier team, they surprised all with their great speed, and a power-packed finish, fitting reward for the many months of preparation under that great trainer and captain—the late Con Fitzgerald.

GLORY SPELL.

I have already mentioned the magnificent Killnane dual All-Ireland hurling success of 1897 and in my recollections of that glory spell of three score years ago I feel that Con Fitzgerald and Albie Quillman were our outstanding footballers. I rate John Redy as the best cut baire Limerick hurling ever had, but I give John Hynes number one on the Killnane selection when Limerick won the All-Ireland. He was a good field player and on frees he had no equal. Jim Flood, R. Mulcahy, Pat Butler and John Condon all did yeoman work; and all the players excelled themselves, otherwise we would never have won that championship.

In the concluding article next week, Bill will deal mainly with athletic doings by the Shannon.