

'High Prestige'

The Story of Clare's
All Ireland Hurling Champions of 1914

Dr. Tomás Mac Conmara



Produced as part of the 'Champions Once More' exhibition at Clare Museum

Munster Hurling Championship, 1915

We felt proud when our senior and junior hurlers annexed both All-Ireland Championships last season. It was the first time Clare accomplished such a feat, and in all circles of the G.A.A. there was great surprise. How did it happen that we triumphed so magnificently over Cork at Thurles, and so decisively over Leix at Dublin last year? How did we come to the front so suddenly? By scientific training. By the same methods we mean to keep this year the honours we have won. Our men are foregathering at Quin. There they will receive every care under the direction of a specially engaged trainer.

We are meeting Cork at Limerick on September 26th for the Final of the Munster Championship. We mean to win! We can win! To carry out our programme we must appeal for assistance to our sympathisers. The smallest subscription, which will help to bring to Clare another All-Ireland victory, will be thankfully received and duly acknowledged by any member of the Training Committee.

Rev. W. Scanlan, P.P., Tubber; Rev. J. McCready, C.C., Quin; Rev. W. O'Kennedy, The College, Ennis; Rev. J. Smith, C.C., Newmarket-on-Fergus; Rev. M. McKenna, C.C., Birr; Dr. Fitzgerald, Newmarket-on-Fergus; Dr. McDonagh, Quin; James O'Regan, Esq., Sixmilebridge; Peter E. Kenneally, Esq., J.P., Ennis; B. Calligan, Esq., J.P., Kilrush; P. J. O'Loughlin, Esq., Co.C., Ballyvaughan; D. Healy, Esq., Co.C., Bodyke; J. Shearin, Esq., D.C., Kilkishen; W. Maloney, Tulla; P. J. Floyd, P. J. MacSamara, M. Duggan, Scarriff; P. Power, J. Callaghan, Dublin; J. Spellissy, P. Kenny, Ennis.

STEPHEN CLUNE, }
FRED POWER, } Hon. Secs.

Clare GAA Notice 1915 - Produced after Clare had become the first county to win the All Ireland Senior and Junior Hurling Championships the previous year.

15 October 1914

'No Gael can afford to miss this game. In all likelihood it will mark a new departure for Irish hurling and should prove sensational in the extreme. A good hour of thrills is assured, sixty minutes of exhilarating hurling. Hurling is easily the most spectacular of games but such hurling as can be played by Clare and Leix will be a sight for the Gods. With special excursions at cheap rates from all parts of the country, he would be unwise who is found at home when the ball is thrown in for one of the greatest encounters ever staged'.¹

22 October 1914

'Hurling champions of Ireland! Such is Clare's proud boast after the final match which was played in Croke Memorial Park, Dublin in the presence of at least 15,000 spectators last Sunday. While it cannot be truthfully said that it was a first class match, still there were plenty of thrills and at every part of the contest, the boys from Clare mastered their doughty opponents from the Queen's county and the score eloquently speaks for the superiority in the victors. Clare's hard struggles for the past quarter of a century were thus rewarded and she takes her place for the first time on the roll of champions of the Irish National pastime'.²

¹ 'Clare V. Leix', *Clare Champion*, 15 October 1914, p.5.

² 'At Last', *Clare Journal*, 22 October 1914, p.3.



Hurley found at Michael Cusack's cottage in Carron
which is on display in Clare Museum

'Bring back once more to Clare the high prestige we once enjoyed'³

In January 1914 John Malone, upon retiring from his position as President of Clare GAA, encouraged delegates to the Clare GAA Convention 'to try and win something outside the county and not to have it said at the meeting of the Munster and Central Council that Clare was nowhere'.⁴ Malone appealed to those in attendance to 'come together and do something for the county and not be bickering among yourselves'.⁵

3 Clare Museum, CM2003.24 *GAA County Board Notice 1914*

4 Kieran Sheedy, *Feakle*, (Clare, 1990), p.210.

5 *Ibid*

The County Board were acutely aware that Clare, the home of the GAA's founder Michael Cusack, was not delivering the type of success that such tradition would demand. In 1896 and 1908, Tulla and O'Callaghan's Mills respectively had brought All Ireland success to the county in the club dominated Croke Cup. However, six barren years had frustrated the hurling community in the county in the lead up to 1914. This short publication traces the story of Clare's 1914 success at both junior and senior levels. It is associated with a temporary exhibition of artefacts relating to those campaigns, based on material housed at Clare Museum.

As the playing season of 1914 approached, the county board posted a notice in July, stating their dissatisfaction with the contemporary position the county's hurling team found themselves. In a strongly worded document the authors declared that owing to 'a want of proper training and combination, our representatives have greatly deteriorated until at the present day, we find ourselves in a very insignificant position'. It was affirmed that steps were needed 'to rehabilitate Clare to the conspicuous position, she once enjoyed'. It informed readers that a new committee comprised of 'some of the prominent men in the county', had been established and that this group wished to 'bring back once more to Clare the high prestige we once enjoyed'.⁶ To accomplish this they appealed for subscriptions in order to take the team to Lahinch where they could collectively train free from all 'disturbing distractions'.⁷ This declaration of intent seemed to represent a general determination in the county as preparation for the hurling championship of 1914 took on an unprecedented nature early in the year.

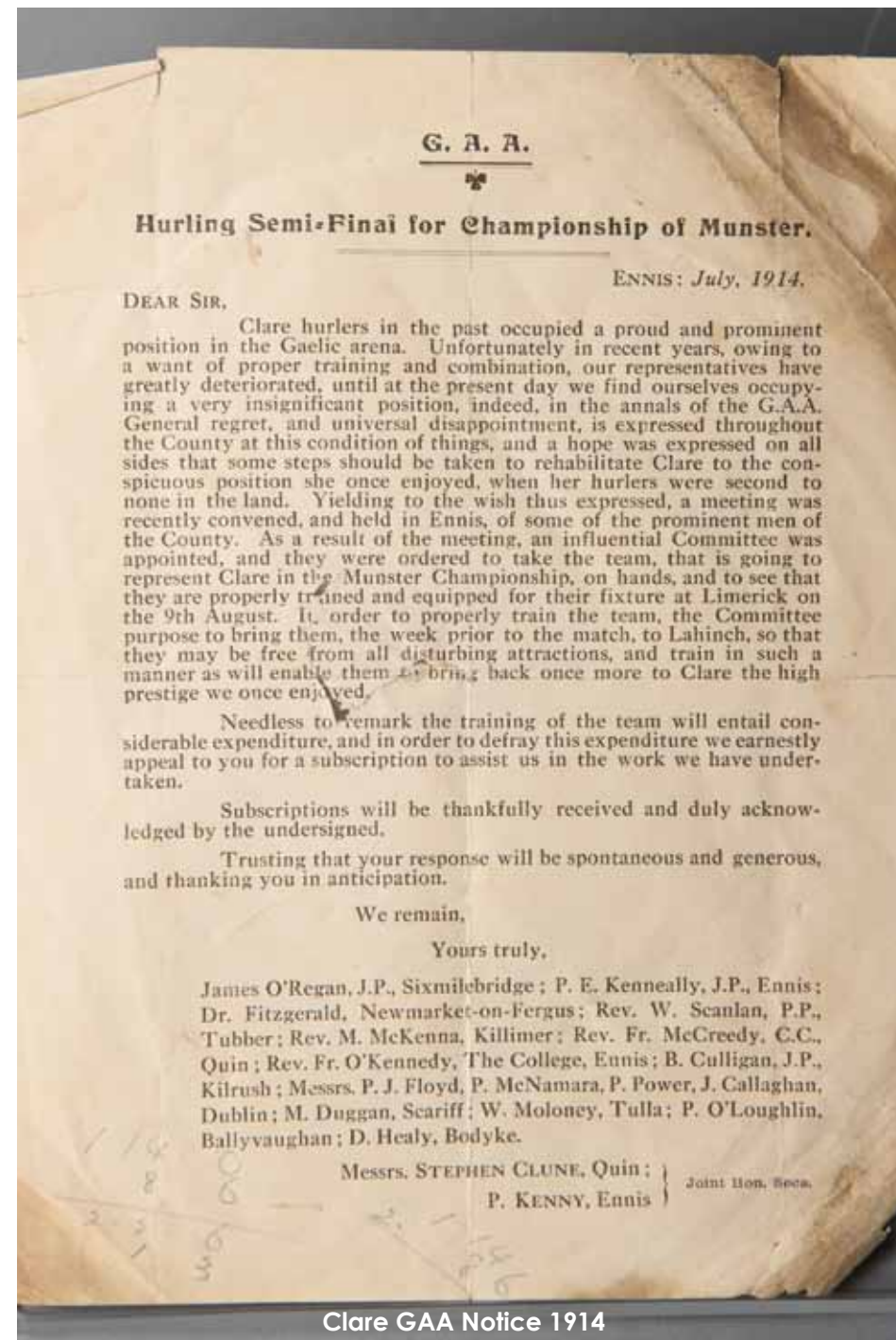
The actions of the County Board in publicly demanding an improvement in the lot the Clare hurlers, seemed to reflect a broader determination within Clare hurling circles. April 1914 had seen victory in the Thomond Feis against Tipperary, which generated a certain confidence in the county. After defeating Kerry in the first round of the Munster Championship on a scoreline of 7-3 – 4-1, the Clare team arrived at the Markets Field to play Limerick in the Munster semi-final. However, both the Clare and Limerick hurlers were astonished to find that the British army had occupied the field in order to mobilise for the First World War. Ironically, many of the Clare hurlers that day would later join the Irish Volunteers and go on to face members of the same British army on a different field of battle a number of years later in the Irish War of Independence.⁸

'the Clare and Limerick hurlers were astonished to find that the British Army had occupied the field in order to mobilise for the first world war'

⁶ Clare Museum CM2003.24 *GAA Notice, 1914*, the Secretary of the committee was Stephan Clune, who was also the Chairman of the County Board.

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Tomás Mac Conmara, 'Tip and Slashin' - Clare's Hurling Victories of 1914', in *Clare Association Yearbook*, (2006).



Clare GAA Notice 1914



1914 Munster Final Medal of Brendan Considine

‘As hard fought Munster Final as ever I saw’

The semi-final was reconvened and Clare went on to beat Limerick. The Munster final was played in Thurles between Clare and Cork in the grounds of what we now know as Semple Stadium. In what was described as ‘a thrilling hours hurling’ Clare emerged victorious by the narrowest of margins on a scoreline of 3-2 – 3-1. The man who refereed the Munster Hurling Final of 1914 was the Tipperary stalwart for whom the stadium was later named, Tom Semple. Semple, himself twice an All Ireland winner, conveyed the ferocity of the encounter when commenting after the game that ‘it was as hard fought Munster Final as ever I saw’.⁹ Further evidence of the game’s intensity was provided in the *Clare Journal* on 08 October 1914 when the paper reported that the Quin selection committee had in advance of the All Ireland Final, appealed for hurleys as ‘a reserve was absolutely essential given the large number broken during the match in Thurles’.¹⁰ Martin Cronin, writing on 24 December 1966 in “Ennis Long Ago”, a reminiscent column in the *Clare Champion*, told how the Ennis Brass Band, attending the 1914 Munster Final, had played ‘Death or Glory’ and at its conclusion in a prophetic tone played ‘Where Glory Leads’.

The Clare junior hurlers made it a historic double by winning the Munster Junior Final the same day, beating Cork on a score line of 4-1 to 3-1. In describing the ‘unbounded enthusiasm’ which followed the long awaited Clare victories in Thurles, one journalist proudly recorded that ‘Instead of being the Cinderella of Munster hurling, Clare had topped the ladder’.¹¹

The prolific poet and journeyman blacksmith Martin Kennedy from Belvoir, who composed many wonderful poems about various events in East Clare, didn’t let the Munster final success pass without creating a ballad in its honour. ‘1914 Munster Final’ is sung to the air of ‘The Garden Where The Praties Grow’ and contains eight verses. The ballad is printed in full on the next page.

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ *The Clare Journal*, 08 October, 1914

¹¹ ‘Munster Hurling Finals’, *Clare Champion*, 26 September, 1914, p. 3.

Munster Final 1914

As the Banner county hurlers, steamed away to Thurles,
You have seldom seen a finer lot of men,
And they passing every station, there was joy and animation,
To see if Clare or Cork was going to win.

The Banner county hurlers, reached the town of Thurles,
The cheers they were vibrating in the sky,
The final ultimatum was 'Up Clare and at em',
Bring the Munster championship or die'.

When the starting whistle sounded, Oh, the ball was quickly grounded,
The hurlers gathered round it, they rallied and they reeled,
You have seldom seen such slashin and scores of hurleys smashin,
No one could bet a tanner on the field.¹²

Now these fiery teams were prancing, on each other goals advancing,
Camáns brightly glancing in the air,
No Milesian or Dalcassian, ever done such tip and slashin,
As the hurlin' boys from Cork and County Clare¹³.

At last, the game was ended. Oh, so nobly defended,
And the referee attended with ability and care,
When he shouted out the score it was number three to four,
And he gave the bunch of palm to County Clare!

When Clare became victorious, oh, sure twas something glorious,
To see the gallant followers as they cheered them up and down,
And all the pretty girls took their hats from off their curls,
And they cheered them to the station of the town.

They then bid goodbye to the cailíns in the sly,
People say they hugged them here and hugged them there,
They shook hands with their opponents, oj, the spirited Corkonians,
And they steemed it once again to County Clare.

Now they're back in County Clare and there's music everywhere,
The boys are full of frolic and of fun,
The Banner County bred them, and Maria Reddin fed them,
And Amby Power led like a father with his son,
He led the gallant hurlers all the way to Thurles,
And the Munster Final Championship, they won.

Martin Kennedy

¹² The Tanner was a coin worth six pence in the old British currency and was also known as a 'six pennybit'

¹³ The Milesians were an ancient race of people who came to Ireland from the general area now known as the Basque Country, north of Spain and are reputed to be the ancestors of many Irish people. The Dalcassians were an old Irish clan based in ancient Thomond or modern day county Clare. Famous Dalcassians include Brian Ború, the High King of Ireland from 1002 – 1014.



Clare Training Committee 1914
 From Left: James O'Regan, Stephen Clune (Secretary),
 Amby Power (Captain), James O'Hehir (Trainer).

'They walked between Lisdoonvarna and Lahinch and back again'¹⁴

In the lead up to the All Ireland Final, the local press underlined the significance of Clare's bid for their first All Ireland title. A journalist in the *Clare Champion* noted the burning ambition within Clare to emulate its neighbouring counties. The revolutionary focus on scientific training was fore grounded, as confidence increased that Clare's first All Ireland victory was on the horizon. The approach in place was contrasted with previous efforts when 'In past championships, our representatives came directly from the plough and the spade to face the shouts of approval, or the reverse, from thousands of throats on the day of a match'.¹⁵ The committee which had earlier circulated appeals for subscriptions to a training fund again sought additional financial support, declaring 'to win we must train and training costs money ... We have never won it in the history of hurling. We mean to win this year!'¹⁶ However, in the weeks before the All Ireland final, concern was expressed with regard to the poor subscription to the training fund and it was decided to intensify efforts across the county. Nevertheless, it was also decided that 'the senior team should go into training on 05 October' at a venue to be decided by the sub-committee.¹⁷

¹⁴ *Clare Museum*, Brendan O'Regan archive.

¹⁵ 'The All Ireland Hurling Championship', *Clare Champion*, 03 October 1914, p.5

¹⁶ 'The All Ireland Hurling Championship', *Clare Champion*, 03 October 1914, p.5.

¹⁷ 'All Ireland Hurling Championship Final', *Clare Champion*, 10 October 1914, p.5

In early October, the team spent a number of days at an intensive training camp in Quin.¹⁸ They then travelled to north Clare where they spent almost two weeks preparing for the final in Lisdoonvarna and Lahinch. The training exploits of the team were becoming well known to the people of the county. 'Running, walking, hurling, gymnastics and massaging' was part of the 'gruelling training regime' undertaken prior to the final. With such efforts, it was affirmed that 'Clare is coming up out of the mire ... it is going to rise to the pinnacle of fame in the Gaelic world'.¹⁹ As mentioned, a special fundraising committee had been established in order to generate the necessary money to fund this innovation. Rev. Canon William O'Kennedy, the President of St. Flannan's College was a key member of that committee which oversaw the training arrangements.²⁰ Kennedy later rose to prominence within the Sinn Féin movement and was imprisoned during the Irish War of Independence in solitary confinement on Bere Island. James O'Regan, a former Chairman of Clare County Council and a successful businessman was also a central figure in the committee. He was also the father of Dr. Brendan O'Regan who pioneered the development of Shannon Airport. Brendan O'Regan recalled that his father was

'The Chairman of the committee that ran it. He took them to Lisdoonvarna and had them stay in Lisdoonvarna and things like that. One of the accounts I had ... I could hardly believe it. They walked between Lisdoonvarna and Lahinch and back again. That seems and incredible exercise, for training!'²¹

Newmarket native Jim Clancy, a member of the 1914 team, recalled the training regime in 1970 when he was interviewed for a special feature in the *Clare Champion* newspaper.

'In my time we trained very hard with lots of running and ball playing. In 1914 we were training in Lahinch for the first match of the Munster Championship under Jim O'Hehir, we had to tog out and walk to Liscannor and back each morning before breakfast.'²²

The training activity of the hurlers in north Clare did not go unnoticed by the local population. The press cautioned in advance of the final against the evident increase in fame of the county's hurlers.

'Our boys being so good looking, and of course such heroes in the eyes of the fair sex, attract quite a number of fair ladies to the vicinity of their training quarters every evening and as a result we have some 'tripping in the light fantastic toe' which is all very well in its own way, taken in moderation ... but it should not come off every night and on no account be prolonged after ten'²³.

¹⁸ 'The All Ireland Hurling Championship', *Clare Champion*, 03 October 1914, p. 5

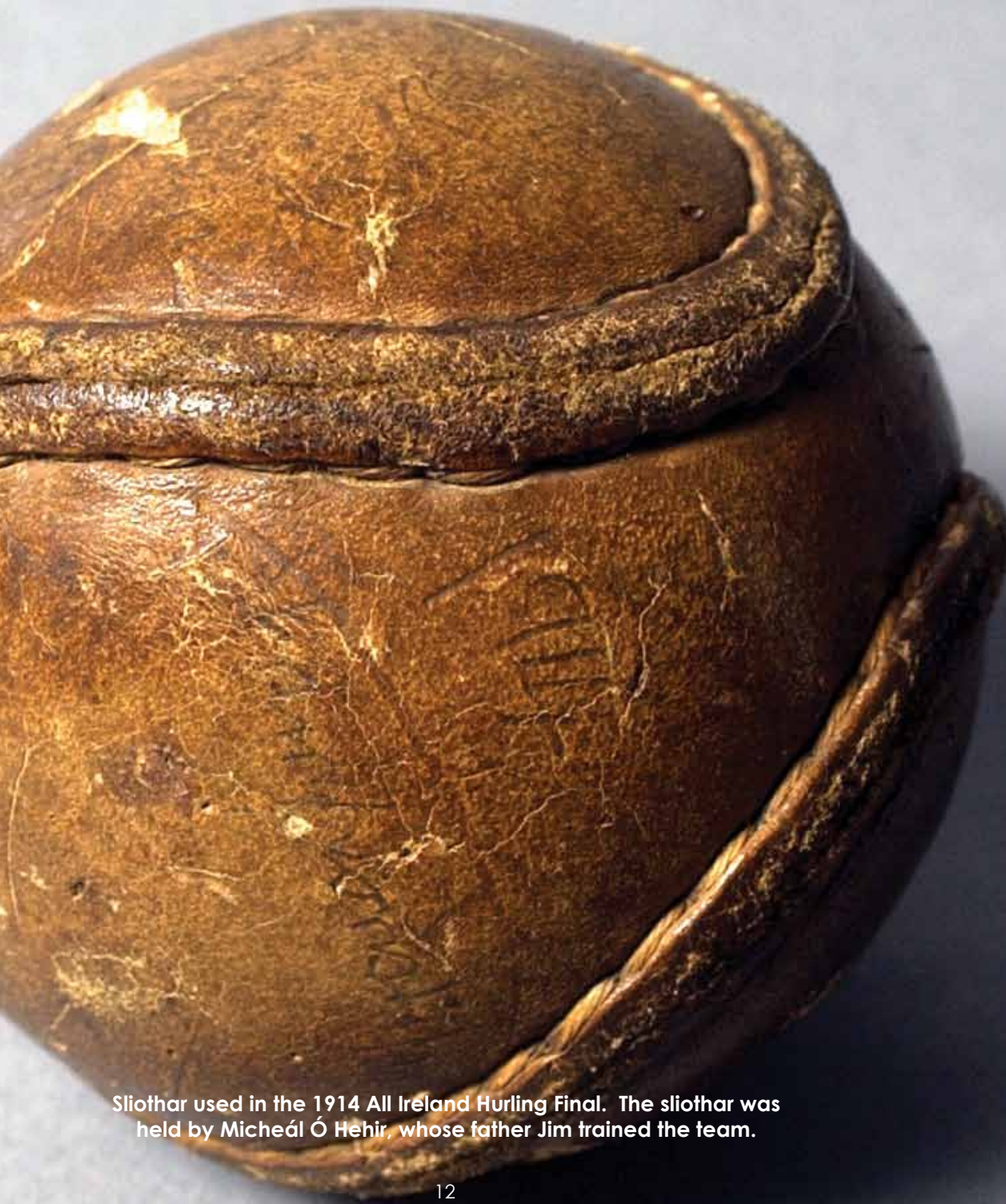
¹⁹ 'The All Ireland Hurling Final', *Clare Champion*, 10 October 1914, p. 3.

²⁰ 'Clare Hurlers', *Clare Champion*, 31 October 1914, p. 5.

²¹ Dr Brendan O'Regan Archive, (Copy held at Clare Museum)

²² 'Moohanes Jim Clancy looks back', *Clare Champion*, 18 July 1970, p. 17

²³ 'The All Ireland Hurling Final', *Clare Champion*, 10 October 1914, p. 3



Sliothar used in the 1914 All Ireland Hurling Final. The sliothar was held by Micheál Ó Hehir, whose father Jim trained the team.

News of Clare's intensity of training also reached the Laois camp where an anonymous letter was sent to the secretary of their County Committee, encouraging the county's players to 'leave off work and train' and affirmed that 'if ye do not, ye will be not only beaten, but disgraced.'²⁴ On 17 October, two days before it was time 'to place our best fifteen in the arena to do battle for All Ireland Hurling honours', the level of commitment to training was again highlighted. In recognising the growing confidence in the county, the writer cautioned against complacency and hoped that 'an end to that epic arc of destiny, the climax of the bouts of the hurling season' would result in a Clare victory.²⁵

'Most memorable contest of the century'

The All Ireland Final was anticipated with much excitement across the country. Special excursion trains were organised and supporters were encouraged that 'He would be unwise who is found at home when the ball is thrown in for one of the greatest encounters ever staged'.²⁶ The sliothar which was used in the match can now be seen on display at Clare Museum in the exhibition associated with this booklet.

The press predicted that the All Ireland Final would 'Mark a new departure for Irish Hurling'. On 12 October, 'Outlooker' a Gaelic expert, in his weekly column in the *Clare Champion* predicted that the 'most memorable contest of the century' was expected.²⁷ In their appraisal of the finalists, the press described the Laois team as 'Fast, clean and highly scientific with a strong flavour of dash and excellent combination'. They had beaten Wexford, Dublin and Kilkenny to win the Leinster Championship. Clare on the other hand were characterised as 'Strong, self reliant and vigorous in the extreme'.²⁸

24 Paul Rouse, 'How Leix Won the All-Ireland Hurling Championship of 1915', RTE Century Ireland Articles, <http://www.rte.ie/centuryireland/articles/how-leix-won-the-all-ireland-hurling-championship-of-1915> (accessed 21 October 2015)

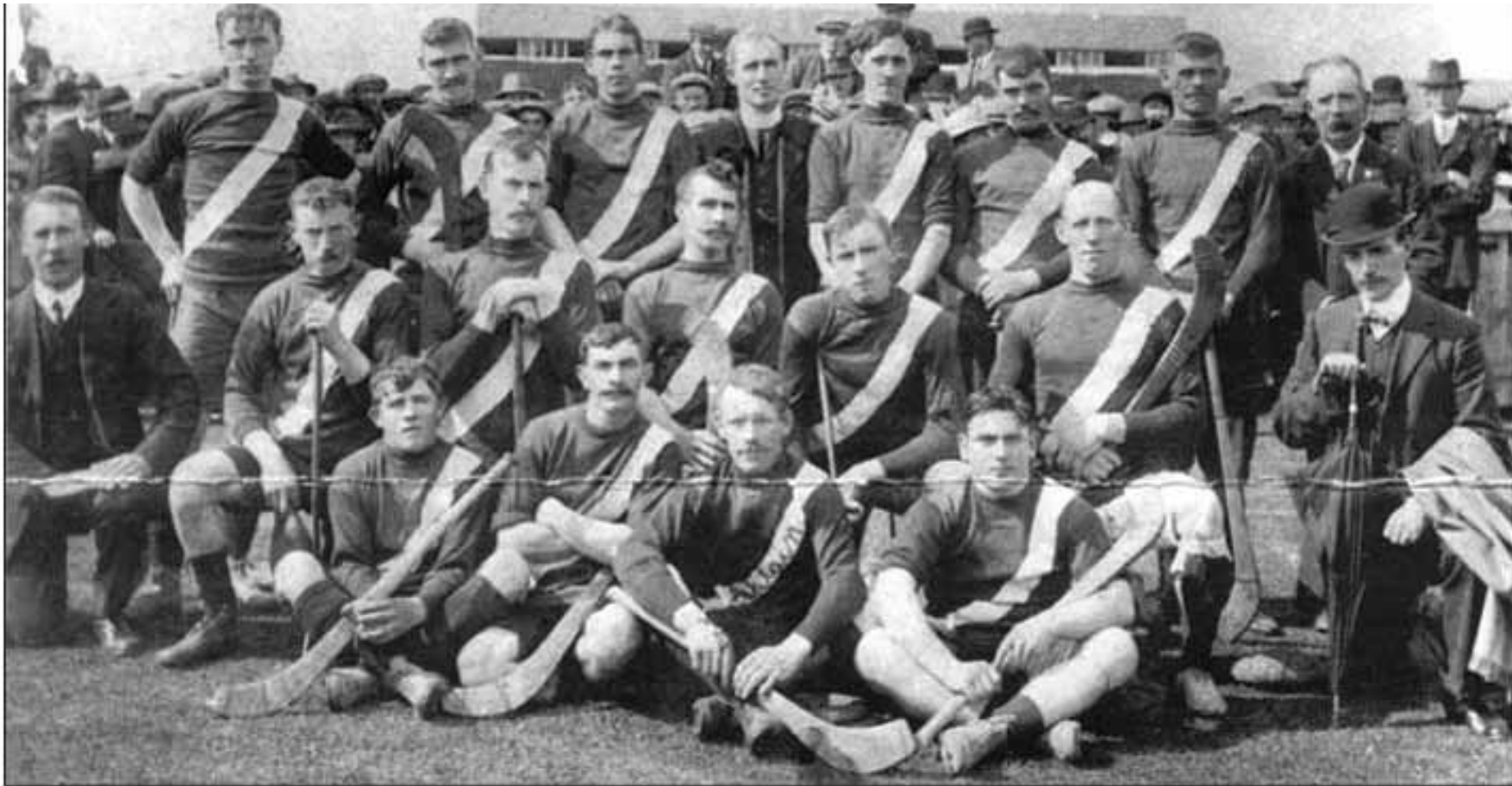
25 All Ireland Hurling Final', *Clare Champion*, 17 October 1914, p.1.

26 Sheedy, *Feakle*, p.212

27 'Outlooker', *Clare Champion*, 12 October, 1914

28 *Clare Journal*, 15th September, 1914

Leix (Laois) All Ireland Finalists 1914



Leix - Leinster SH Champions for the first time in 1914: (Back) Ned McEvoy, Joe Carroll, Jack Finlay, Fr. J. Kearney, Tim Hyland, Jimmy Jones, Jim Carroll. (Middle row) J. Moylan, Bill Lenihan, Bob O'Keeffe, Har Jones, Tom Finlay, J. Higgins, Paddy Lee. (Stationmaster, Ballybrophy) (Front) J. Hiney, Jack Daly, Jack Carroll (capt.), Fint Killeen.

Leix (Laois) All Ireland Hurling Finalists in 1914 – They went on to win their first All Ireland the following year, beating Cork in the final.

The illustration on the following page shows the Clare team as lined out in the All Ireland Final in October 1914. While the team is lined out as it was in the match day programme, the illustration has been altered to provide some brief biographical detail on the players named.

Croke Park, 18 October 1914

Clare 5-1 Leix (Laois) 1-0

Pa 'Fowler' McInerney
O'Callaghan's Mills

The only 1914 senior hurler to also play in 1932 All Ireland Final. McInerney was involved in the republican movement and won an All Ireland with Dublin where he worked as a Garda

2 William Considine Ennis <i>Known as 'The Dodger', became a legendary Ennis and Clare hurler</i>	3 John Shalloo O'Callaghan's Mills <i>A former who was also a winner of a Croke Cup Medal in 1908 with his native club O'Callaghan's Mills.</i>	4 Paddy McDermott Whitegate <i>A farmer, who although named to play, came on as a sub late in the game.</i>
5 Bob Doherty Newmarket <i>Later won All Irelands with Dublin in 1920 and 1924. Described as 'A go ahead hard hitting forward', who 'brilled the crowds at Croke Park'</i>	6 Amby Power (Capt.) Quin <i>Later a key figure in Clare GAA who became a Fine Gael Councillor. Was involved in 1932 All Ireland campaign</i>	7 John Fox Newmarket <i>Only Clare hurler to join the British Army during World War I. Returned safely and continued to hurl.</i>
8 Joe Power Quin <i>A brother of the captain and one of three Quin men on the Clare team</i>	9 Tom McGrath O'Callaghan's Mills <i>Croke Cup winner in 1908. Later became a leading IRA and Free State officer and Irish Army Colonel</i>	
10 Edward 'Ned' Grace O'Callaghan's Mills <i>Croke Cup winner in 1908. Later joined the IRA and worked in Ennis Mental Hospital</i>	11 Michael Flanagan Quin <i>Sent off for 'rough play' in the All Ireland Final, Flanagan was one of three Quin players to line out.</i>	12 Brendan Considine Ennis <i>One of the youngest hurlers to play in an All Ireland Final. Became a leading Clare hurler for decades. Won an All Ireland with Dublin in 1917.</i>
13 Martrin 'Handsome' Maloney Ennis <i>From a family of hutchers in Parnell Street Ennis, Maloney's gravestone in Drumcliffe acknowledges his part in the 1914 All Ireland</i>	14 Jim Clancy Newmarket <i>Clancy lived to be one of the last surviving members of the 1914 All Ireland winning team. He played with Clare until 1928</i>	15 James 'Sham' Spellissy Ennis <i>Member of a well known Ennis family, James's brother Jack was a member of the 1914 junior winning team. Also involved in republican movement</i>

AS LAID OUT IN THE MATCH PROGRAMME

Note: John 'Landger' Rodgers from Tulla, Paddy McDermott from Whitegate and Patrick 'Bucky' Moloney from Killanena were all introduced in the final. Paddy Kenny from Ennis Dalcassians and James Brady were also substitutes.

First Final in Croke Park

The Central Council of the GAA had purchased the Jones' Road grounds in 1913 for £3,500 from Frank Dineen and it was decided that this would be an appropriate site for the memorial to the Most Rev. Dr. Croke. This initiative was jeopardised when legal proceedings against the Central Council were taken by the Tipperary County Board who wanted the memorial to Archbishop Croke in Thurles. The matter was eventually resolved, Jones' Road became the memorial to the GAA's first patron and Clare, following their victory on 18 October attained the distinction of winning the first All Ireland Senior Hurling Final in Croke Park!

The Battle of Scapa Flow

On 18 October 1914, Clare and Laois supporters were excitedly making their way towards Jones' Road. Some were on foot and others were boarding the especially commissioned trams which ran from Nelson's Pillar to the game.²⁹ In Croke Park, their hurling heroes waited nervously for the moment of battle. At that exact time the Grand Fleet of the British Royal Navy was moving gradually towards Lough Swilly off the coast of Donegal. The two previous days had seen much excitement in Scapa Flow off the Orkney Islands in Scotland. The British Grand Fleet had been anchored there but had received reports that a German U Boat was making its way to attack it. After two days of intense activity, it was decided by John Rushworth Jellicoe, the admiral of the fleet, to move south towards Lough Swilly.³⁰ Such major international events did little to distract the Clare and Laois hurlers as they prepared for their own battle on the field of the newly named Croke Park. It should also be noted that the German U boat which created such tension and excitement at Scapa Flow, would not have been a reality without the invention of the submarine by Clareman John Philip Holland from Liscannor. Holland had died in America just two months previously on 12 August 1914 at the age of seventy-three. A detailed appreciation in the *Alaska Daily Empire* in America published two weeks later, described Holland as 'a man of peace' who believed that peace could only be brought about by 'bringing the weapons of war to their highest possible efficiency.'³¹

29 Nelson's Pillar was installed in what is now O'Connell Street in Dublin in 1808 to commemorate Horatio Nelson of the British Royal Navy and his defeat of Napoleon at Trafalgar. It was blown up in 1966 by the IRA and has now been replaced by the Spire of Dublin, installed in 2002

30 Royal Navy in World War I, History Hub Ulster, <http://historyhubulster.co.uk/royal-navy-world-war-i/> (accessed 06 August 2015)

31 *John P. Holland, An Appreciation, Alaska Daily Empire, 03 September 1914, p.5.*



1914 All Ireland Hurling Medal won by Ned Grace from O'Callaghan's Mills. Grace also won a Croke Cup with his club in 1908.

'Collecting boxes'

Patrons arriving at the game were informed that admission to the ground was 'by ticket only' and were warned against 'purchasing tickets from any persons not wearing official badges'.³² Five entrances had been opened as well as a special entrance for side-line seats. Members of the Faughs, Fianna, St. Laurence O'Toole and Purveyor GAA clubs streamed in from around Dublin to act as stewards. Outside the grounds, two distinct groups of women were shaking partially filled boxes of coins, attempting to

³² 'General Arrangements', Official Match Programme, Clare V. Leix, 18 October 1914.

use the occasion to collect funds for their respective causes. The increasing presence of women in overt political activity was a feature of Ireland in 1914. Women were critical to the development of both republican politics and suffrage (the right to vote in political elections) over the following years. Suffrage activists however had been to the foreground prior to the founding of Cumann na mBan in April 1914.³³ Naturally a crossover was inevitable. For example, Myrtle Hill has stated that 'the same names recurred within suffrage, pacifist, trade-union and nationalist or unionist societies'.³⁴ In 1916, Countess Markievicz also claimed 'that the three great movements in contemporary Ireland - the National Movement, the Women's Movement and the Labour Movement - were all fighting the same fight, for the extension of human liberty'.³⁵ Hanna Sheehy Skeffington affirmed that not being able to vote was 'critical in her activism'.³⁶ Many members of Cumann na mBan were involved in the suffrage campaign but the organisation's terms of reference caused problems for more labour orientated activists. The latter saw Cumann na mBan as an organisation created to advance 'the cause of Irish liberty and assisting the arming and equipping of Irishmen for the defence of Ireland'.³⁷ For example, Sheehy Skeffington disparagingly characterised the organisation as being an 'animated collecting box for men'.³⁸ For patrons of the 1914 All Ireland Final, both republican and suffrage ladies were present with 'collecting boxes'. Contemporary press reports informed that 'several ladies with collecting boxes in aid of the rifle fund of the Irish Volunteers reaped a rich harvest'. It was also noted however that a small few ladies who were there to solicit support for the 'Women's Suffrage Cause' were given a 'cold reception'.³⁹

For Clare and Laois supporters determined to get into the park and in position for the throw in, it is likely that both notions of suffrage and liberty were sacrificed at the altar of hurling, at least for a time. At 2.45pm, the crowd drew a collective breath, John Lalor from Kilkenny threw in the ball and the All Ireland Final of 1914 between Clare and Laois began.

³³ Cumann na mBan (Irishwomen's Council) was a republican organisation founded in April 1914. Over the revolutionary period, they acted as an auxiliary to the IRA and played a critical role in the War of Independence, a role which was not reflected in the historiography of the period.

³⁴ Myrtle Hill, *Women In Ireland – A Century of Change*, (Belfast, 2003), p.52.

³⁵ Countess Markievicz, cited in Myrtle Hill, *Women In Ireland*, p.52.

³⁶ Myrtle Hill, *Women in Ireland*, (Belfast, 2003). P.55.

³⁷ Margaret Ward, 'Suffrage First – Above all else! An Account of the Irish Suffrage Movement' in A. Smith (ed), *Irish Women's Studies Reader*, (Dublin, 1993), pp. 20-44

³⁸ Hanna Sheehy Skeffington, cited in Ward, 'Suffrage First – Above all else!', p.38

³⁹ Seamus J King, *The Little Book of Hurling*, (Dublin, 2014)



Picture courtesy of Clare County Express

Clare – All Ireland Hurling Champions 1914

Far back row from left. Dr. T Fitzgerald (Newmarket), JP McGuire (Lisdoonvarna), PE Kenneally (Ennis), Willie Redmond MP, John Rodgers (sub), Canon O'Kennedy (St. Flannan's College), Patrick McDermott, Whitegate (sub), Rev. JM McCreedy (Crusheen), Batt Culligan (Kilrush), Patrick 'Bucky' Moloney (sub), John Jones (Feakle). Third Row. Dr. H. McDonagh (Feakle), Tom McGrath, O'Callaghan's Mills, John Fox, Newmarket, Rob Doherty, Newmarket, Michael Flanagan, Quin, James 'Bawn' Clancy, Newmarket, Joe Power, Quin, Stephen Clune, (Secretary of training committee). Second row: James O'Regan (standing), Jim

Guerin, Newmarket, Patrick 'Fowler' McInerney, William 'Dodger' Considine, Ennis, Amby Power, Quin (Capt.), Martin 'Handsome' Moloney, Ennis, Edward Grace, O'Callaghan's Mills, John Shalloo, O'Callaghan's Mills. Front: Brendan Considine, Ennis, James 'Sham' Spellissy', Ennis.

The Clare senior team of 1914 sported a white jersey with green sash, while Laois togged in amber jerseys with black bars. The composition of the Clare hurling panel reflected the power bases in the county at the time with Ennis Dalcassians, O'Callaghan's Mills, Newmarket on Fergus and Quin providing the majority of players.

‘Up Clare’

The Clare hurlers ‘excelling in both science and dash and giving a display of marked superiority’, led by Captain Amby Power from Quin, brought home the Great Southern Trophy for the first time, defeating Laois on a score line of 5-1 to 1-0. Thousands watched as Clare emerged victorious. Old and young travelled to Dublin for the game. The Ennis Temperance Band and Newmarket Brass Band were amongst the thousands to travel to Dublin on one of the trains organised by the Ennis Station Master Mr. J. Doyle who was highly praised for his facilitation of the Clare hurling supporters.⁴⁰ One man who quietly made his way amongst the enthusiastic followers was ‘Scooper’ Meehan from Tulla. Twenty-five years earlier on 03 November 1889, Meehan had travelled to Dublin with his club Tulla, to represent the county in the third All Ireland Hurling Final held at Inchicore, losing to CJ Kickhams of Dublin on a score line of 5-1 to 1-6.⁴¹ The sports historian Ollie Byrnes interviewed Elizabeth Crimmins from Newmarket on Fergus who travelled to Dublin for the final. Keen to watch her local clubmen from Newmarket, Crimmins recalled of wing forward Rob Doherty, that he ‘used to thrill the crowds when he’d race along the wing. I remember the newspapers describing his dramatic sprints’. She also noted that ‘the Clare players received tremendous applause when they ran on the pitch’.⁴² The *Irish Independent* noted the day after the game that ‘Early in the contest, it was quiet apparent that the Clare team would prove more than a match for the Leinster champions who were outclassed, especially in the finer aspects of the game’.⁴³ The cup won by the Clare team, the Great Southern Trophy, was replaced in 1921 with the now famous Liam MacCarthy Cup. The latter cup is named after Liam MacCarthy, a London born republican and Gaelic games activist.

For several weeks after the All Ireland final, the local press was replete with reference to the famous victory including the passing of a resolution by the Ennis Board of Guardians, congratulating the team on their historic victory.⁴⁴ On 28 October 1914, ‘Nemo’ an anonymous contributor, penned a piece of poetry to celebrate the victory. On the opposite page is an abridged version of the poem published just two weeks after the final.

40 ‘GAA’, *Clare Champion*, 31 October, 1914, p.5

41 ‘GAA’, *Clare Champion*, 31 October, 1914, p.5

42 Seamus J King, *The Little Book of Hurling*, (Dublin, 2014)

43 Seamus J King, *The Little Book of Hurling*, (Dublin, 2014)

44 ‘Clare Hurlers’, *Clare Champion*, 31 October 1914, p.5.

The Banner County Still

For a contest to view in our national game,
From all parts of Ireland in thousands they came,
Little in its history was witnessed before,
Or hardly surpassed in the brave days of yore.

Croke Park was full crowded, rivals cheered for each team,
‘Up Clare’ and ‘Up Leix’, beyond power to restrain,
With the referee’s whistle the Banner County was still
Then the Dalcassians cheered both loud and shrill.

Here’s to the health of our gallant Clare boys,
We won in Croke Park Ireland’s blue ribbon prize,
For the Banner county they shed lustre and fame,
Now the whole Gaelic worlds rings with its name.

Enshrined in our heart as the heroes of old,
Whose powers in hurling in our history is told.



Picture courtesy of Clare County Express

Clare – All Ireland Junior Hurling Champions of 1914 Junior and Senior Hurling double

In the 1914 hurling season, Clare became the first county to win the senior and junior hurling championship double. The juniors defeated Tipperary and Cork to win the Munster championship and after beating Galway in the All Ireland Semi-Final, went on to play Laois in a delayed All Ireland final in April 1915. Inspired by their goalkeeper Tommy Daly, Clare went on to win the All Ireland comfortably on a score line of 6-5 to 1-1. The geographic spread of the junior hurling panel included six clubs and had a strong east Clare representation. The panel comprised players from Ennis Dalcassians, Clonlara, Scariff, Feakle, Tulla and Bodyke. The panel had changed greatly over the playing season. The team lodged in the Royal College Hotel in Dublin the night before final. Contemporary accounts noted that a huge crowd assembled to greet the team as they arrived at their hotel. Clare hurling supporters were in jubilant mood, being then the All Ireland senior champions.⁴⁵ The following day, 1,700 supporters from Clare and Laois watched the Banner county annex the junior crown and obtain the honour of becoming the first county to win junior and senior honours the same season. Information is limited regarding the junior campaign of 1914, with few match reports available. In 1949, in advance of the

⁴⁵ Ollie Byrnes, *Against the Wind, Memories of Clare Hurling*, (Cork, 1996), pp. 30-31.

All Ireland Junior hurling final, in which Clare were set play London, the *Clare Champion* reflected on the 1914 campaign.⁴⁶ The report informed that in the 1914 All Ireland junior final after a spirited start which saw an early goal for Laois, Edward Lucid from Ennis scored a goal for the Clare men. At half time, Clare led by 2-2 to 1-0. As the second half got underway, the Clare hurlers began to impose their superiority on the Laois men ‘and in the space of a few seconds were besieging the Leix goalposts’. Simon Minogue, a native of Dromore in Feakle scored at least two of Clare’s four second half goals before Laois ‘threw up the sponge’.⁴⁷ The team were under the charge of Tom Clohessy, Paddy Kenny and James Spellissy and were captained by Dan Minogue of Ennis Dalcassians ‘one of the most reliable backmen in the county’.⁴⁸ Poetry was also called on to mark the junior success.

*‘The Clare team won the double in 1914,
The were quick and fast to clear,
For they trained at M.J. Bakers,
Who supplied the best of beer’.*⁴⁹

⁴⁶ The Clare junior hurlers were defeated by London in the 1949 All Ireland Junior hurling final on a scoreline of 3-7 – 3-6.

⁴⁷ ‘Clare Hurlers 35 Years Ago’, *Clare Champion*, 12 September 1949, p.7.

⁴⁸ ‘Clare Hurlers 35 Years Ago’, *Clare Champion*, 12 September 1949, p.7.

⁴⁹ Ollie Byrnes, *Against the Wind, Memories of Clare Hurling*, (Cork, 1996), pp. 30-31



Kilkenny Jersey owned by Jack Spellissy,
a member of the 1914 Junior winning team

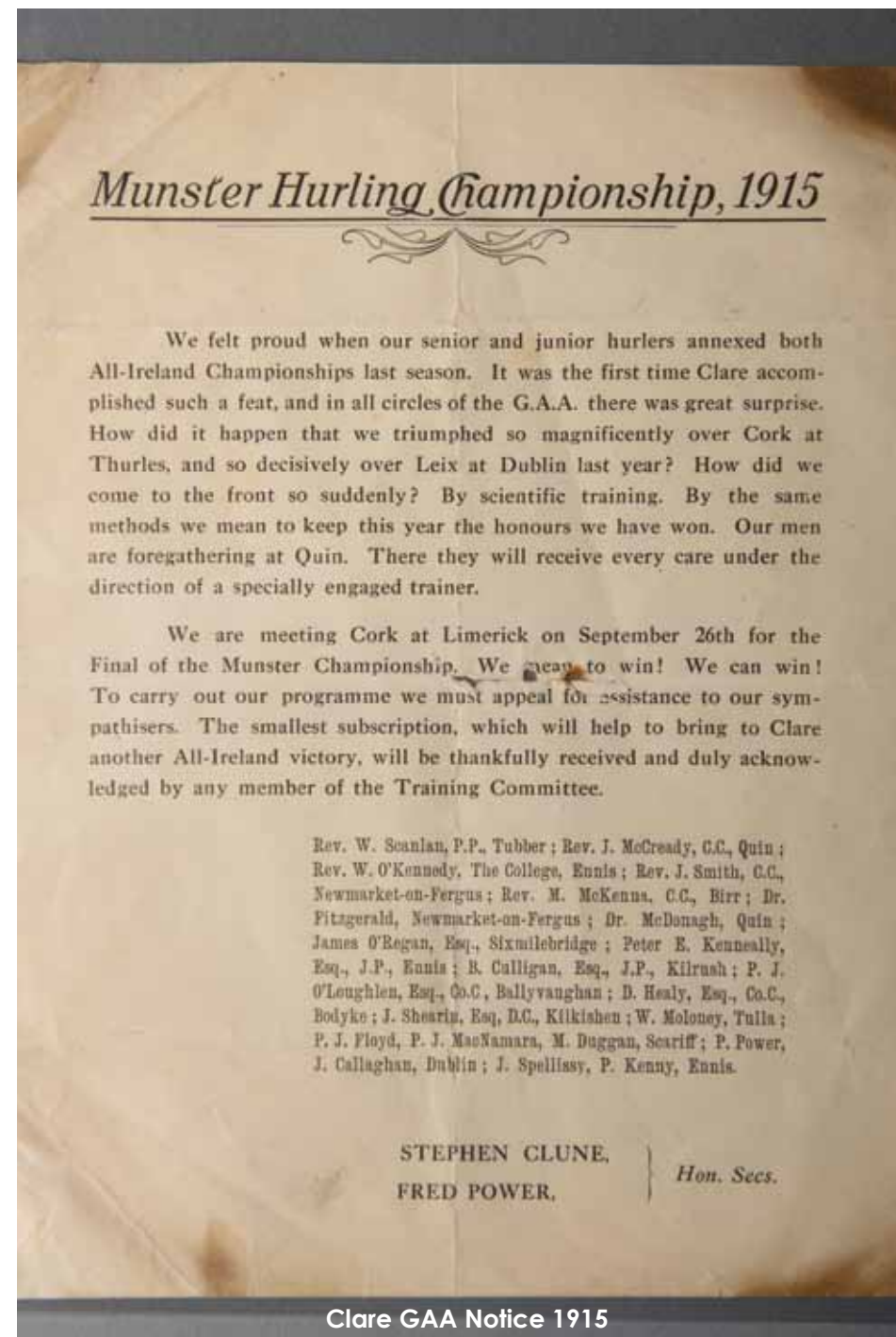
‘How did we come to the front so suddenly?’

A second GAA notice is among the collection at Clare Museum. The latter was produced by the County Board prior to the Munster Final of 1915, in which the Clare team were set to face Cork. Reflecting on the previous year’s success the notice declared ‘We felt proud that our senior and junior hurlers annexed both All Ireland Championships last season’. In posing the question, ‘How did we come to the front so suddenly?’ The unprecedented success was attributed explicitly to ‘scientific training’. It was also noted that with these methods, it was intended ‘to keep this year, the honours we have won’.⁵⁰ The notice appealed for subscriptions in order to help enable the best possible preparation for the Munster Final, planned for 26 September. Despite the above determination and ambition, the Clare hurlers were heavily defeated by Cork on a score line of 8-2 to 2-1. Clare had inflicted a similarly heavy defeat on Waterford in the semi-final before relinquishing their Munster and All Ireland crowns in September. In a reversal of 1914, Clare represented Munster in the All Ireland series where they defeated Galway. They had been nominated to play in the All Ireland series due to a delay in the Munster Semi final between Cork and Limerick. However, after their Munster Final victory over Clare, Cork went on to face Laois in the 1915 All Ireland Final, in which they were defeated.⁵¹

Since 1914, the All Ireland title has been won on three more occasions, 1995, 1997 and 2013. Hurling continues its relentless beat in county Clare and the pursuit of additional All Irelands remains as sincere an endeavour now as it was in 1914. While some of the science and detail may have changed, the impulse which brought Clare Gaels to the hurling pitch in early 1914 and returned them in 1915 is as strong today as it ever was. As a living, breathing aspect of our culture, the continuum that is hurling will persist and endure wherever Gaels take to the field.

⁵⁰ Clare Museum, CM 2003.25, Clare GAA Notice 1915

⁵¹ In October 2015, *Laois All Ireland 1915*, a book exploring the Laois win of 1915 was launched in Abbeyleix.



Remembering 1914

The memory of the 1914 hurlers is a peculiar phenomenon. In the one-hundred and eleven years between the foundation of the GAA in 1884 and Clare's second All Ireland win in 1995, only one panel of players from Clare had won All Ireland senior hurling medals. Such a concentration of success within a relatively small group of men meant a certain elevation of status for the hurlers involved. For descendants of both the junior and senior teams, the association with 1914 was an understandable source of pride. The latter is forcefully exemplified by the Maloney family of Parnell Street in Ennis. Their association with the All Ireland of 1914 was deemed significant enough to be immortalised in stone and ushered into posterity. At the old cemetery in Drumcliffe, their family grave proudly declares 'Martin Moloney 1914 Clare All Ireland Senior Hurling Champions'. However, it is the nature of hurling lore that each generation sees itself as radically different from the last and vice versa. Jack Hogan from Newmarket on Fergus played hurling for Clare in the 1940s. In an oral history interview with the author in 2011, Hogan was asked if the men of 1914 from his native Newmarket were looked up to by his contemporaries.

'They were in later years but somehow the style of hurling changed and the make of the hurley changed and that changed the whole game altogether. So they weren't really looked up to as the men they should have been. Oh a different game altogether, faster and everything. 'Twas all ground hurling in 1914 and they had hurleys with big long bosses on them.'⁵²

Jim Clancy, one of those Newmarket '1914 men' referred to by Jack, similarly affirmed in the 1970s that hurling had significantly reduced in quality and suggested that all of the 'passing, ducking and solo running would be highly dangerous' in 1914 because the men then would 'pull on the ball no matter where it was'. Despite differing intergenerational perspectives, the men of 1914 always held a certain aura within the hurling community of the county. In 2014, former Clare hurling captain Naoise Jordan from Whitegate unveiled a plaque to Clare's first All Ireland hurling win at Cusack Park, in Ennis. With increasing attention on the first Clare team to ascend to All Ireland glory, it is perhaps worth considering the man who in 1884 founded the GAA after ten hard years of effort and struggle and whose passion and drive ultimately created the platform for such Gaels to engage with their ancient game. While the county grounds is named in his honour, Michael Cusack remains peculiarly under-commemorated in his native county. The type of memorialisation that has seen Maurice Davin commemorated in Tipperary and Christy Ring immortalised in Cork is conspicuous in its absence in county Clare. This is a striking fact given the reality that wherever hurlers and footballers have assembled across the country for over 125 years in search of titles from Junior C to the All Ireland, they have done so firmly within the fold of Cusack's dream and vision.

52 Mac Conmara Collection, Interview with Jack Hogan, Newmarket, 11th of March, 2011



Memorial plaque to 1914 All Ireland at Cusack Park, Ennis

Sample Profiles of 1914 Hurlers

**The following is a profile of selected Clare hurlers
from both the senior and junior winning side**

Amby Power

Amby Power was born in Quin in 1887. Amby with his brothers Fred, Joe and Harry all played senior hurling for Clare. At club level, the Powers played with both Tulla and Quin at different times, as parish rules would only consolidate in later years. Power was on the O'Callaghan's Mill's dominated Croke Cup winning team in 1908, during which he scored three goals.⁵³ In 1932, when Clare won the Munster Final and lost out to Kilkenny in the All Ireland, Power was the manager. He later represented Fine Gael as a County Councillor in the 1950s and died in 1960.⁵⁴

Rob Doherty

Rob Doherty was from Mooghaun in Newmarket on Fergus and was one of four Newmarket men to win All Ireland Senior Hurling Medals in 1914. Doherty later won All Ireland Medals with Dublin in 1920 and 1924. He was described as 'A go ahead hard hitting forward' and according to reports on 1914 All Ireland Final, 'Thrilled the crowds at Croke Park'.⁵⁵

Pa 'Fowler' McInerney

Pa 'Fowler' McInerney played adult hurling for twenty eight years in his native Clare and in Dublin where he was a member of An Garda Síochána. He is also the only link between the 1914 and 1932 All Ireland Finals. McInerney made his first appearance for the Clare team during the 1913 championship and became a regular player over the next two decades. Pa's brother Tom was also a noted club and county hurler. McInerney enjoyed a successful career winning numerous county club championship winners' medals. McInerney passed away in 1987 at the age of ninety-eight.

Jim Clancy

Jim Clancy from Newmarket on Fergus along with Jack Rodgers from Tulla, was one of the last surviving members of the 1914 All Ireland winning team. Clancy played with Clare until 1928. He was interviewed in 1970 for a small feature in the *Clare Champion* in which he recalled the 1914 campaign and hurlers who he believed did not compare favourably to the hurlers of that time!⁵⁶

53 Ollie Byrnes, Clare Hurling Captains, p.29

54 Ibid p.31

55 Ibid p.33

56 'Moohanes Jim Clancy looks back', *Clare Champion*, 18 July 1970, p.17

Jim Guerin

Jim Guerin from Ballycar in Newmarket on Fergus scored three goals in the All Ireland Final of 1914. As outlined by Joe Ó Muircheartaigh of the *Clare People*, He was then just a year older than Clare's 2013 three goal hero Shane O'Donnell. Guerin's contribution greatly assisted Clare to win their first All Ireland title. In December 1918 Guerin died from the great flu, which killed over 20,000 Irish people between 1918 and 1920 and claimed the lives of millions globally.⁵⁷ When recalling the 1914 All Ireland campaign over fifty years later, Guerin's clubmate Jim Clancy affirmed that the Ballycar man was 'one of the best men of his time' and recalled that he proved himself when in early 1914 'he outplayed the great Tyler Mackey'.⁵⁸ John 'Tyler' Mackey was a Limerick senior hurler from Castleconnell who was later elected as a Councillor for the Labour Party. He was also the father of the legendary Limerick hurler Mick Mackey.

Brendan Considine

Brendan Considine was born in the Turnpike in Ennis in 1897. He along with his brothers William and Turlough, went on to become part of Clare sporting legend. At seventeen years of age in 1914, Brendan is thought to be the youngest ever winner of an All-Ireland senior hurling medal. Working with the Munster and Leinster Bank took him around the country where he played hurling for various counties. In this way he won a medal with Dublin when they won the All-Ireland Hurling Championship in 1917, and three years later he was yet again on the winning side when Cork won the Munster Championship of 1920. He also wore the Waterford colours before returning to play for the Banner County in 1928. Brendan's brothers William and Turlough, better known as 'Dodger' and 'Tull' respectively, also achieved great fame in the sporting field.

Pat Hannon

Pat 'The Bullet' Hannon from Scariff was a member of the All Ireland winning Junior Team of 1914. He graduated to the senior ranks in 1915 where he continued as a crucial player until he left the country for America during the Irish War of Independence. Pat married in Buffalo in New York State where he died in 1971. In 1949, he was described as 'a most reliable forward' and 'undoubtedly the hardest striker in the county'.⁵⁹

57 Guy Beiner, Patricia Marsh, Ida Milne, *Greatest killer of the twentieth century: the Great Flu of 1918-19 in Contemporary History*, Issue 2, Volume 17, March 2009, Ollie Byrnes, p.30,

58 'Moohanes Jim Clancy looks back', *Clare Champion*, 18 July 1970, p.17.

59 'Clare Hurlers 35 Years Ago', *Clare Champion*, 12 September 1949, p.7

Dr. Tommy Daly

Tommy Daly is one of the best known names in Clare hurling. A native of Tulla, Daly went on to prolific success as a hurler in both Clare and Dublin where he studied to become a medical doctor. Daly was the goalie for the victorious Clare junior hurling team who won the All Ireland in 1914. A contemporary newspaper preview of the final described Daly as 'just a little boy' but exclaimed that 'He is a marvel and when all seems lost he chips in and saves the situation'.⁶⁰ Dr. Daly Memorial Park, the grounds of Tulla GAA club was named after Tommy Daly in 1941, five years after he was killed in a road accident in 1936. The foreman of the jury who conducted an inquest into his death, asserted that Daly's passing had deprived Clare of 'a great Gael and a patriot and the GAA of an athlete who shed lustre on its annals'.⁶¹

Jack Spellissy

Jack Spellissy from Ennis was described in the lead up to the 1914 Junior Final (played in April 1915), as 'Always quite cool, his play is effective and the outstanding feature of it is that every stroke is turned to good advantage'.⁶² Jack's brother Seamus 'Sham' was a member of the senior winning team. Jack's Kilkenny jersey can be seen on display at Clare Museum. Spellissy had a particular standard of hurley which he demanded from makers. He created a pattern hurley which he would give to multiple hurley makers until the best one was made. Only then would he accept worthy to be used on the field of play.

Soldier Hurlers

The 1914 All Ireland campaign of the Clare hurlers developed against the backdrop of major international political events. Across the world, global superpowers readied themselves for the coming 'Great War', which would claim the lives of over nine million combatants. In Ireland, the emerging split between the National Volunteers and the more separatist Irish Volunteers would signal coming change. While early in the 1914 campaign, the National Volunteer Corp was noted at most hurling matches, as the ball was thrown in for the All Ireland Final, the split had become apparent, with collections for the separatist Irish Volunteers undertaken at the final.⁶³ In June of that year Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria was assassinated by a Serbian Nationalist

60 'Clare Hurlers 35 Years Ago', *Clare Champion*, 12 September 1949, p.7

61 'Great Gael's Tragic Death', *Clare Champion*, 19 September 1936, p.1.

62 'Clare Hurler's 35 Years Ago', *Clare Champion*, 1939

63 Sheedy, *Feakle*, p.211



Revolver used in Clare during the Irish War of Independence. Many of the Clare hurlers later joined the IRA and fought for Irish Freedom

named Gavrilo Princip while driving through Sarajevo. This incident precipitated a chain of events which would lead to the eventual outbreak of World War 1. John Redmond's Woodenbridge call to arms for that war in September 1914 led to a split in the Irish National Volunteer Force from which would emerge the National Volunteer Force and the Irish Volunteers. The latter, who opposed John Redmond's position, would go on to shape the Irish political landscape in the years following the 1916 Rising.

As young men, many of the Clare hurlers would face decisions in the following years with regard to what role if any they would play in Clare and Irish history. All of the hurlers would witness in their own lives the impact of the Great War, the Irish War of Independence and subsequent Irish Civil War. For some, life would continue amidst an ever changing world. For others, the call of John Redmond to the British war effort would fall on receptive ears. For a number of Clare hurlers however, Irish independence would instead make the most determined call with a number becoming leading figures in the Irish Republican Army (IRA).



Picture courtesy of Phil McGrath

Colonel Tom McGrath

Tom McGrath was born in Clounloun, O'Callaghan's Mills. In his early hurling life, McGrath won honours with his club O'Callaghan's Mills in 1904, 1905, 1906 and 1910.⁶⁴ One of four 'Mills' men to play for Clare in 1914, Tom went on to play for the county until 1927. McGrath became a leading figure in the IRA, where he was second in command to Micheál Brennan in the East Clare IRA Brigade during the Irish War of Independence. He later became an officer in the Free State army and later Colonel in the Irish Army. McGrath was also County Secretary of the GAA in Clare for a time during the revolutionary period. The position of County Secretary was later filled by Patrick Hennessy. As will be discussed later, Hennessy was later executed by the Free State forces in January 1923. In the Civil War, Tom's brother Patrick 'Thade', also a former hurler who joined the IRA, took the anti-treaty side against his brother.

⁶⁴ 'Clare Man Tom McGrath, Hurling Hero & Patriot', *Irish Herald*, January, 1978, p.9

'Clear the court'.

In 1918 Tom McGrath was one of a number of republicans who ran from Ennis courthouse, leaving a bewildered magistrate and RIC in their wake. The men had been in court due to their involvement in preventing timber being taken from Derrymore Mill in O'Callaghan's Mills, to be used as trench reinforcement in World War One. In an indication of the decreasing authority which the British establishment held, during the proceedings the Volunteers made a bold exit by jumping from their positions and simply running out of the courthouse. To aid their escape down O'Connell Street in the town, Tom's hurling teammate William 'Dodger' Considine used his physical prowess to pull a horse car across the street, preventing the RIC from making their pursuit. An ironic dimension of the event is that the timber mill in question was owned by the same James O'Regan, a Coal and Timber Merchant and Contractor for the British War Department, who was a leading member of the Clare GAA County Board in 1914.

Other rebel hurlers

James 'Sham' Spellissy, Ned Grace, Pa McNerney and Brendan Considine also joined the republican movement and participated in the struggle for Irish Independence during the revolutionary years of 1916-1923. A sister of Tommy Daly, who lined out in goal for the Clare junior winning team, was Adjutant of the Tulla Company (5th Battalion, East Clare Brigade) of Cumann na mBan. In addition, Arthur 'Attie' Gleeson from Bodyke, a member of the junior hurling team, was one of six Gleeson brothers and one sister Josie, who participated in the struggle for independence.⁶⁵ He had previously played with O'Callaghan's Mills when the parish rule was of a more relaxed nature.

*'during the proceedings
the Volunteers made a bold
exit by jumping from their
positions and simply running
out of the courthouse'*

⁶⁵ NAI, BMH, Witness Statement, Michael Gleeson, W.S. 1288, pp. 6-7

'Clean, strong, temperate hurley playing fellows'

John Fox

John Fox of Newmarket on Fergus who played wing back for Clare, was the only member of the Clare 1914 team who later went on to join the British Army and served in World War I. Fox's recruitment was seen as a major propaganda boost for British recruitment officers who as the historian McCarthy noted, sought to enlist 'clean, strong, temperate, hurley playing fellows' into their ranks for the Great War effort.⁶⁶ It is worth noting that Fox returned safely from the war (with shrapnel in his head) where upon leaving the British army, despite Rule 21, resumed his hurling career with Newmarket and continued to play throughout the twenties and thirties.

The service medals of Private William Cunningham of the Turnpike in Ennis are featured in the exhibition associated with this booklet. Private Cunningham was killed in action on the same weekend as the All-Ireland final in 1914. While many in Clare were celebrating the county's success, others like the Cunningham family were mourning the loss of a loved one.⁶⁷ Just over six years later in January 1921 at the height of the Irish War of Independence, May Cunningham, a young girl from Turnpike in Ennis, was shot through both legs (apparently by British forces) while carrying an oil can near the junction of O'Connell Street in the town.⁶⁸ This research indicates that May Cunningham is likely to be the younger sister of William and John who both died fighting for the same British forces. According to the 1901 and 1911 Census of Ireland, there was only one Cunningham family living in Turnpike in the town of Ennis and in 1911 and a 'Mary Cunningham' is listed as the six year old sister of William.⁶⁹ In the incident, which was characteristic of the

⁶⁶ Daniel McCarthy, *Ireland's Banner County, From the Fall of Parnell to the Great War*, County Clare, (Clare, 2002).

⁶⁷ William's brother Lance Sergeant John Cunningham of the 2nd Battalion, Royal Munster Fusiliers was also killed in action at Rue-de-Bois on 9th May 1915 during the Battle of Aubers Ridge, see Clare men and the First World War Exhibition,

http://www.clarelibrary.ie/eolas/claremuseum/projects/claremen_first_world_war_william_cunningham.htm (accessed 06 August 2015)

⁶⁸ 'Shooting in Jail St.', *Clare Champion*, 08 January 1921, p. 3.

⁶⁹ *Census of Ireland 1911*, Cunningham Family, http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/pages/1911/Clare/Ennis_No__4_Urban/Turnpike_Road/353887/ (accessed 24 August 2015)



Telegram from Eamon de Valera to his wife Sinéad following his victory for Sinn Féin in the East Clare by-election of 1917. The election was brought about by the death in France during World War I of Willie Redmond, who had held the seat for the Irish Parliamentary Party

precarious and violent nature of the War of Independence, May's right leg was broken by the bullet which then lodged in her left leg.⁷⁰ William Redmond, the Nationalist political leader and MP for East Clare is also featured in the exhibition. A native of Wexford, he was the Irish Parliamentary Party Member of Parliament for East Clare in 1914. Redmond's death in the Western Front (at the Battle of Messines) in June 1917 led to the East Clare by-election in July, which resulted in the beginning of the political career of Eamon de Valera, then a member of Sinn Féin. Redmond led the Clare hurlers out on the day of the senior final in 1914 and following their victory, hosted a banquet in their honour at Wynns Hotel on Abbey St. Dublin.⁷¹

⁷⁰ 'Shooting in Jail St.', *Clare Champion*, 08 January 1921, p.3.

⁷¹ Ronnie Bellew and Dermot Crowe, *Hell for Leather: A Journey Through Hurling in 100 Games*, (Dublin, 2014).



Volunteer Patrick Hennessy – Executed by Free State forces in January 1923

‘Execution of Clare GAA Secretary’

Vol. Patrick Hennessy

After losing the Thomond Feis Final of April 1914, a number of Clare hurlers led by Amby Power from Quin encouraged the holding of a tournament from which the best hurlers in Clare could be selected to represent the county for that year.⁷² Sixty players from east, mid and south Clare were trialled. The trials were of huge value to the county hurlers with both John Fox and Brendan Considine impressing selectors and forging their way onto the team. Amongst those who tried but were unsuccessful was a young Patrick Hennessy, who was later executed by the Free State forces in the Irish Civil War. Hennessy had been an active member of the Clooney Company, 1st Battalion in the Mid Clare IRA Brigade during the Irish War of Independence. In the Irish Civil War he took the anti-treaty side. When Hennessy was executed with his comrade Con McMahon on 20 January 1923, he was County Secretary of the Clare GAA county board.⁷³ Hennessy and McMahon had been court-martialled for carrying illegal arms and taking part in the destruction of Ardsollus railway station in Quin. It has since been strongly suggested that the men were framed and that arms and ammunition may have been planted on them by Free State forces. They were among eleven anti-treaty IRA men executed on 20 January and among thirty-four over the entire month. Clare was subsequently split into two county boards for a period but later returned to the existing system following the Civil War. Tom McGrath, a crucial player for Clare in 1914 took the Free State side in the Civil War. Like Hennessy, he had also held the position of County Secretary in Clare for a time.

Nationally, the Civil War was profoundly felt within the GAA with counties refusing to participate in competitions due to the continued detention of their members who had taken the anti-treaty side in the conflict. However, the GAA has been since recognised for its cohesive contribution to Irish society and helped to heal some of the bitter divisions generated by the Civil War.

⁷² The Thomond Feis was an annual hurling competition organised by the Munster Council of the GAA and played between four of the top inter-county teams in the province. It was first held 1913 and ended in 1956.

⁷³ Patrick's brother Mick Hennessy later went on to become a well known County Secretary of Clare GAA. He also founded the Clare camogie board in 1934.

Hidden Dimensions

‘Well known hurler drowned’

In June 1932 John Shalloo, a Croke Cup winner with his native O’Callaghan’s Mills in 1908 and full back on the Clare winning team of 1914 was tragically drowned in Kilgorey Lake. A native of Teerovannan, he was forty-six and a widower at the time of his death. The press reported that Shalloo was drowned while out bathing. A witness William O’Brien reported that the former All Ireland winner ‘undressed at the edge of the lake and jumped into the water. He swam a few strokes and that was the last seen of him until his dead body was recovered’. Both the medical doctor and Garda Sergeant who gave evidence expressed deep sympathy with the family and remarked that the ‘honourable and upright man had been a famous hurler in his earlier days’⁷⁴. The coroner, in expressing sympathy with his family lamented that ‘a man in the prime of his health, who left the shores of Kilgorey Lake and who in a few minutes landed on the shores of eternity’.⁷⁵

Expenses

The Clare team expenses for the All Ireland Final, submitted to the Central Council of the GAA, amounted in total to just over thirty six pounds. Costs included transportation to Dublin, lunch before departure at the Old Ground Hotel Ennis, char-a-bancs (open top buses) to convey the team to Wynn’s Hotel, where the players spent the night before the final and board for two nights.

Bob O’Keefe

The Bob O’Keefe Cup, which is the name given to the Leinster Senior Hurling Championship trophy, is named after a member of the Laois team who played Clare in the 1914 hurling final. O’Keefe was a native of Kilkenny who later went on to become President of the GAA in the 1930s.

Queen’s County - Leix - Laoighis - Laois

In 1914, what we now know as Laois was known as Leix or ‘Queen’s County’. Following the Irish War of Independence, the county’s Gaelic heritage was recovered when it was renamed Laoighis or Laois. After their defeat to Clare in 1914, the Laois hurlers regrouped and came back in the following year with greater determination and eventually won their one and only All Ireland Senior Hurling title, defeating the Munster Champions Cork in the final.

Jim Hehir

Jim Hehir trained the Clare team in 1914. Born in Lack, Ballynacally, Hehir was the father of legendary commentator Micheál O’Hehir. Hehir had four maxims for his

⁷⁴ ‘Well known Hurler drowned’, *Nenagh Guardian*, 25 June 1932, p.7

⁷⁵ ‘Drowning Fatality’, *Clare Champion*, 25 June, 1932, p.1



The protective goggles worn by John Joe ‘Goggles’ Doyle

players’ ‘Don’t overeat, don’t drink, don’t smoke and don’t lose sleep’. Hehir also has the unique distinction of training the Leitrim footballers to win Connaught title in 1927. Hehir was also involved when Clare won the Munster Final in 1932, losing to Kilkenny in the All Ireland Final. The protective goggles worn by John Joe ‘Goggles’ Doyle in that final can be seen as part of the exhibition at Clare Museum.

‘Paddy did not appear on the field’

Like Elizabeth Crimmins, Jack Hogan from Whitegate in east Clare travelled to Dublin for the final. Also like Crimmins, he was anxious to see his club representative on the Clare team. Patrick McDermott from Whitegate who was listed as playing left corner back in the match programme, which was published in the *Evening Telegraph* on the week prior to the final. McDermott is also mentioned in post match reports as having participated in the game, which led to some confusion on the matter. Although he did take part in earlier tournaments with the Clare team, McDermott did not actually line out in the All Ireland Final. In an interview conducted in the 1970s, Hogan explained his delight upon seeing his fellow parishioner on the match programme. Sitting in Croke Park as the game commenced, Hogan’s elation was somewhat diminished when ‘Paddy did not appear on the field’. McDermott’s place was taken by Jim Guerin from Newmarket who scored three goals in the final.



Biddy Early Oil Stock which is part of the exhibition at Clare Museum

The Curse of Biddy Early

After the 1914 campaign, it would be eighty-one years before Clare returned to the pinnacle of hurling. Repeated and determined efforts failed to reach the heights achieved by the heroes of 1914. Generations of hurlers gave everything to the ancient game but could not reach that summit. In 1932, John Joe 'Goggles' Doyle brought them close but fell to the power of Kilkenny in the All Ireland final. Over time, excuses were made, reasons suggested and explanations given as to why the Banner County were seemingly unable to emulate the men of 1914. In a county with a deep folklore, it is not surprising that the sporting and the supernatural would intersect on occasion. The notion that a curse had been placed on the Clare hurlers was suggested and found traction with a people who wanted to explain away a frustrating lack of success. Biddy Early, the famous wise women of Clare was placed at the centre of the blame. Early was born in Faha, east Clare in 1798 to a poor farming family. Throughout her life she developed a reputation for her healing and other magical powers. As a result she was opposed by the Catholic Church as well as the local landlords and authorities, which led to her being accused of witchcraft. Biddy is reputed to have placed a curse on the Clare hurlers which resulted in them not winning an All Ireland for over eight decades after 1914. However such attribution is unfair as Biddy died in 1874, ten years before the GAA was founded and forty years before Clare won their first All Ireland in 1914. In September 1995, a week after Clare won their second All Ireland hurling final, Billy Loughnane from Feakle wrote to the Irish Times in a bid to defend the honour of Biddy Early and to rubbish the notion of 'the curse of Biddy Early'. Loughnane described Biddy as 'an extraordinary woman who devoted her time to comforting and healing the sick'.⁷⁶ There is an alternative suggestion that the priest who said mass for the hurlers on the morning of the All Ireland Final placed a curse on the county after some of the players left early to get to Croke Park for the match. In fact, prior to the victory in 1914, the lack of success was also attributed to some supernatural origin. For example, following Clare's first Munster final win in September of that year, a reporter from the county declared with relief that 'The spell, that unlucky charm that hung like a millstone around our necks is broken.'⁷⁷

Nevertheless when whatever curse had bewitched the Clare hurlers was broken in 1995, connections with Biddy Early were traceable. In July of that year, at the homecoming celebrations following Clare's first victory in a Munster Final since 1932, the county's hurling manager spoke emotionally to an assembled crowd in Ennis declaring that 'For years the great hurling county of Clare has suffered defeat, often bitter and frustrating with so little courage. But today, all those memories were washed away and Clare thrilled to victory for the first time in sixty-three years'. The intense emotion of the entire hurling community of Clare was palpable and hopes

⁷⁶ 'Biddy's Curse', *The Irish Times*, 11 September 1995, p. 15.

⁷⁷ 'Up Clare', *Clare Champion*, 26 September, 1914, p.3.

were gradually emerging that the dream of a second All Ireland title was possible. A steely determination was evident in the voice of that manager, a native of Feakle. In that parish in 1874, a Roman Catholic priest Fr. Andrew Connellan anointed Bidy Early on her deathbed with the oil stock pictured in this booklet. Close to her cottage in Kilbarron, a man called Pat Loughnane, a friend of Bidy observed as Fr. Connellan emerged from the cottage. He knew then that his old friend and neighbour Bidy had passed into history and was already making her way towards legend. In the summer of 1995, when Clare hurlers were mobilised once more in a bid to reach the summit, the man who took the first step up that mountain and called on others to follow was the above mentioned Clare manager, Ger Loughnane, a relation of that same Pat Loughnane. Feakle, the same parish that was home to Bidy Early, the supposed basis of the curse, produced one of the principle men responsible for breaking it.



Clare Manager Ger Loughane after the Munster Final in July 1995



Michael Cusack from Carron (1847-1906) - Founder of the GAA

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Note: Brian Howley, a retired teacher and historian from Kilfenora has also written a detailed and carefully researched account of the 1914 campaign, which was published first in the *Clare Champion* in 1995, See 'Hurling, Politics, War – 1914 in Clare', in *Clare Champion*, 01 September 1995, p. xii. The piece was published again by the *Clare Champion* in 2014 to mark the 100th anniversary of the first All Ireland victory.

The *Clare Champion* carried a centenary edition on 31 October 2014 which featured articles focused on the 1914 hurling campaigns from Ollie Byrnes, Con Woods, Brian Howley and the author.

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For more information on Clare Museum visit www.clarelibrary.ie or visit the Clare Museum Facebook page.

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