

The Tipperaryman

And Limerick Recorder.

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GODFREY'S, TIPPERARY.

PAST AND PRESENT.

G.A.A. Games in the Early Days and Now.

The Gaelic Athletic Association was founded in 1884, and was a success from the start. Within twelve months from its inception it had rallied around it many of the better elements in Irish life. Its growth was so rapid that the governing bodies were unable to keep pace with it. At that time there was scarcely any functioning sub-committees, and where such did not exist the central body had to assume the office of controller, which added to an already overcrowded responsibility. This often made things unpleasant, as the particular attention required to be paid to the working of a young and overcrowded organisation could not be discharged in a manner satisfactory to all. However, with all the difficulties that had to be contended with, the work was done well and a solid foundation laid, with the result we see around us to-day.

The reader should bear in mind that the work connected with the Association worked for neither fee nor reward. The labourer for the love of our native pastime. Every one of them had to do a hard day's work, and devoted all their leisure moments to the building of the structure of the G.A.A. and their efforts were happily crowned with success. No matter how one may be prejudiced, it must be admitted that the structure, although shaky at first, and often threatened with collapse, is now a solid and permanent one. It is a native institution and a look on with pride.

The football and hurling matches of the early days of the G.A.A. were in most cases rough and ready affairs. It was won in practically all cases. There is accounted for by the fact that scarcely any rules existed for the guidance of clubs, and in different parts of the country different rules governed the game. Gradually the games were brought under a regular code. Standard rules were drafted, with the consequence that hurling and football jumped into popularity by leaps and bounds. Up to the birth of the G.A.A. Irish rural life was indeed monotonous. Our young men had nothing to do but to assemble at the cross-roads and indulge in card playing, pitch-and-toss, and kindred "games," which were anything but healthy leisure-time employment. The revival of our pastimes changed the picture. The young men became animate, clubs were formed, a spirit of healthy rivalry was created, and thousands used to assemble on a Sunday at football and hurling matches and athletic contests.

At first teams were composed of twenty-one players a side. This was the regulation number for years. It was then reduced to seventeen a side, and this remained the number until recent years, when a further reduction was made. Wrestling was permitted, also tripping and pushing. When two players collided they immediately got into handgrips, and the bout continued until one of the twain got a fall. The referee was judge, and if the participants felt inclined to continue after the first fall he interfered. The question may be asked—What became of the ball during the wrestling contest? You must remember there were still forty players who took no notice of the wrestling, but continued the game. I am sure many an old player gives a quiet smile now and again when he sees some of the fouls with which a team is penalised in present-day football and hurling. Wrestling is now abolished, as well as other objectionable "tactics" of early years.

In the early games no points were counted. It was all goals. A little later, for any ball going over the crossbar a point was allowed. No number of points equalled a goal. A team might score thirty points, but their opponents might have one goal to their credit and consequently win the match. After a while five points equalled a goal, and present three points. There was also a system of "hauled

points" in vogue. These scores were allowed for what now corresponds to a forty-five yards kick in football and a seventy-five yards puck in hurling. A forfeit point was allowed if a defending player last touched the ball before its going over the dead-ball line. If, instead of going over the dead-ball line, it went over the crossbar three forfeit points were allowed. Eventually these forfeit points were abolished, and now we have only goals and points without qualification. The number of players has now been reduced to fifteen a side. Hopping and dundling the ball and striking with the arm were common features in the early days, but very rare now. Hopping the ball with one hand is still permissible, but, at the speed the game is played and under the rules governing it, it is almost impossible for players to avail of it. The game is now practically confined to catching and kicking.

There were no enclosed playing pitches, with the result that spectators in their enthusiasm often caused great trouble. A good deal of free fighting was indulged in, and this was not confined to the spectators alone, for we find that in many cases the players engaged in melees. In a good many matches teams themselves controlled the game, and on the slightest pretext walked off the field and left the game unattended. The walking off stunt was usually indulged in when a team was getting the worst of matters, or had no prospect of winning. Replies were always granted, so that the team walking off had nothing to lose. This practice, which so much alarmed that the governing bodies had to take stern measures to suppress it, and we find the team leaving the field without finishing the game penalised by six months' suspension. The punishment had the desired effect. Every game is now played to a finish.

The referees in former days were also the cause of a good deal of trouble. They were usually chosen for their personal popularity. In a good many cases they were totally unfit for the position. Now we find none but capable men in charge of games—men who are masters of their business and whose decisions are obeyed without a murmur. Friction at a match is a thing of the past. Go to any match, no matter how important, and you will always find the best of sportsmanship prevailing and the keenest rivalry existing.

It was a common thing for captains of teams to be non-players. These ornamental officers were also a source of annoyance and trouble. They usually took up a position on the side line, and kept up the shouting. On the slightest dispute occurring they usually rushed on to the playing ground, accompanied by a number of followers. These disputes could have been very easily settled if the captain were on the field and had his men under control. One of the results of this interference was that a match might take a couple of hours to finish. The captain is now always found with his men on the field of play, and is usually selected for his capability in keeping his men together, getting them to train, and on the field rallying them at that critical moment when a game may be lost or won. His word is law, and the players obey him to the letter.

The G.A.A. had a stormy, eventful, and chequered career, but it has achieved solid and lasting work for Irish athletics, and those who worked year in and year out in the days of its adversity as well as in its prosperity have been well rewarded by its success.

I think I could not close this short article better than by giving a quotation from one of the late Canon Sheehan's works:—

"Right across the river is a splendid field of many acres called the 'Horseshoe Close,' and here during the last twelve months has been held every Sunday a tournament, or trial of strength, on Gaelic principles or rules, between football and hurling teams from every part of the surrounding country. It is a glorious and exhilarating sight, and like the little Irish boy who, when asked by the inspector not to drink, but to give an example by way of abstention, of the word 'splendid' promptly answered 'A fight', so it is

BOHERTRINNE RACES AND SPORTS.

Large Attendance and Good Sport.

Well-Contested Events.

Last Sunday "all roads led to Bohertrinne," a village situate about three miles from Tipperary, where the countryside and his wife, and not a few of the sporting fraternity from the town, were treated to an afternoon's sport of a first-class character. The programme embraced horse and pony racing, sack racing, cycling, etc., and in each event a full field came under the starter's orders.

In the morning the Clerk of the Weather had been on his worst behaviour, and until long after midday rain fell unceasingly, and the gloomy appearance of the hills around, and the haze that lingered for a time at the base of the Galtees, put everyone prophesying that "the day would be a bad one." We were not so ill-fated. About 2.30 p.m. the haze disappeared, the hills came in view again, and the sun shone. It was then that all the roads led to Bohertrinne. The remainder of the day was fairly good, a few showers only falling at intervals.

From every point of the compass youth and maiden turned up, with the result that about four o'clock the sports field was crowded, and the committee agreeably surprised and delighted at the extent of the attendance. For a few hours before they anticipated a bumper indeed on their praiseworthy efforts to originate sport and amusement.

The course was a fine one, laid out on a large level field, kindly given for the occasion by that veteran sportsman, Mr. Dan Carey. The committee desire to specially thank Mr. Carey for his kindness at a time when scarcity of grass, caused by an extremely long drought, might have restrained a less enthusiastic sportsman from providing the venue.

The equine events brought out good fields, and each race was well-contested. There was "a sort of Punches-town air" about the reunion, and it is doubtful if humorous, when running first past the post in the Derby, was accorded a more enthusiastic reception than some of the winners at Bohertrinne. The owner in each instance was loudly cheered, while Steve Donoghue, or Bullock, or E. M. Quirke might be jealous of the handshakes given the riders, who were affectionately hailed with "Powerful fellow!" "Great lad!" and other such appreciations of victory well won. We all cannot be Donoghues, still—

Here's a health to every sportsman,
Be he stable-man or lord;
If his heart be true I care not
What his pocket may afford;
And may he ever pleasantly
Each gallant sport pursue—
If he takes his honor fairly,
And his fences fairly, too.

Let me turn for a moment to the other events. The ladies' race was exceptionally well-contested, even though only two contestants faced the starter. Every inch of the 100 yards Miss Farrell (Solohead) and Miss Rafferty (Acreboy) fought with determination until the tape was reached, with two or three collisions or "shoulders" thrown in, doubtless to out the journey short. Miss Farrell won, and the result was greeted with salvo after salvo.

and asked to illustrate the words "Glorious" and "Inspiring." I promptly answer "A Gaelic tournament," for nothing since the old Isthmian and Olympic games has been seen to equal the energy and passion, the skill and science, the temper and self-control of a modern Irish game. To see those fine young fellows, full of strength and vitality, braving all weathers and testing every organ, nerve, and muscle in the pursuit of victory is certainly enough to make an old man young again.

"NAB."

of cheers. A "tug-of-war" between married and single men was the tit-bit of the afternoon. Eight "good men and true" on each side, and expectation reached its highest when the careworn veterans gripped the rope and modestly declared that they would pull their opponents to Solohead. And they were almost as good as their word. The married men scored first, and on the second occasion, to use parliamentary parlance, it was a regular "snap division." The whistle had scarcely gone when a sudden "snap" had all the single men on the ground, and only for the intervention of members of the crowd "the old fellows" would apparently have carried out their threat—or very nearly. They won the rubber all right.

So great was the success of the fixture, it has been already decided to hold another sports and football tournament before the season ends.

Great credit is due to Messrs. E. Crowe and T. P. Doherty, hon. secretaries, who had left nothing undone to ensure the success of the fixture, and on whose shoulders the major portion of the organising and work fell. The following composed the committee:—Messrs. C. F. Hanly, W. Coffey, C. Dwyer, P. Hanly, E. Carew, T. Hanly, M. Crosse, J. Duggan, T. Kearns, J. Swift, and M. O'Dwyer.

Details.—
Boys' Race (under 11 years)—Win. Ryan, 1; M. Ryan, 2; J. Fitzpatrick, 3. Win. Ryan took the lead half-way from home, and won by four yards.

Half-Mile Open Handicap.—Toney Doherty (Ballydonagan), 1; J. Ryan, 2; J. Hofferman, 3. Ten started. Doherty was fourth until the second lap, when he shot out and won by ten yards.

One Mile (Open)—M. Egan (Gurthdrum), 1; T. O'Doherty (Ballydonagan), 2; P. Barry, 3. Eight started. Doherty was handicapped thirty yards. Gorman made the running until the third lap, when Egan and Doherty came along and made a dead heat of it on the tape; a bad third.

Ladies' Race—Miss Farrell (Solohead), 1; Miss Rafferty (Acreboy), 2. Won by inches.

Sack Race.—R. Gleeson, 1; C. Dwyer, 2. Won easily.

Tug-of-War.—Married Men—Single Men. The former won easily.

Newtown Plate, for Ponies 15 hands and under; winner, £2; second, £1; catch-weights.—Mr. Rafferty's Solohead, 1; Mr. Ryan's pony, 2. Three started, the third (Mr. Brown's) dropping out before the finish.

Race for Ponies 12 hands and under. Mr. T. Hardy's, 1; Mr. J. Hanly's, 2; Mr. J. Carey's, 3. Five started. One displaced his rider. The winner made the running, and won in a canter. An objection lodged against the winner was overruled.

Solohead Plate, for horses the property of farmers (confined to Solohead) that have been worked during the summer; winner, £4; second, £1.—Won by Mr. Harding's horse.

In this race three started, but immediately matters got into a delightful state of confusion. It appears a non-qualified competitor was allowed to run after the three legitimate candidates had started. He soon joined issue with the others, and, two drawing out, the prize was awarded to Mr. Harding's horse, who continued the course. An objection lodged was overruled.

Flat Race for Ponies 14 hands and over.—Mr. Doherty's, 1; Mr. Crowe's, 2; Mr. Ryan's, 3. Eight started. Four did not persevere. Won by six lengths.

Gentle Bicycle Race.—M. Ryan (Rossmore), 1; A. Ryan (Thomastown), 2. Seven started. The race was run on the road from Bohertrinne Cross to Tipperary, and back again. Consistent to Tipperary two of the competitors came to grief, and only five finished. Time, 20 min.

Donkey Race.—Kilmartin (Cutteen) 1; Bolea (Bassonstown), 2. Five started. Won easily.

In the home racing events Mr. Pat. Ryan, son of Mr. T. Ryan, Ballykisteen, a promising young jockey, piloted two winners to victory.

"DR. HUK."

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Why Prisoners Were Released.

Lord Chamberlain—It is consistent with wisdom in a changing world to revise your decisions. (Laughter and cheers.) Mr. Chamberlain—It is consistent with wisdom in a changing world to revise your decisions. (Laughter.)

THE RELEASE OF HIGGINS AND EGAN.

Major Cohen asked the Prime Minister what was the reason for the release of two prisoners condemned to death by a military court in the martial law area in Ireland.

WHY MR. MCKEON WAS RELEASED.

Mr. Chamberlain—The Government occasionally take the liberty which other people enjoy of revising a decision in the light of fuller information or after further consideration. In this case no threat was received by the Government from any quarter whatever.

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known to Parliament and the country the proposals that the Government had made, and he was persuaded that it would be said of them when they were known, that while they had gone as far as was possible in the direction of proving the genuineness of this country's desire for a real and permanent reconciliation, they had inflexibly adhered to those points which the vital interests and safety of these islands required.

Lord Chamberlain—No, sir; nothing but I have said, and nothing that the Government have done, would justify any such supposition.

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COTTAGE GARDENING NOTES.

Summer Pruning of Dwarf Fruit Trees.

The advantages derived from summer pruning are many. By the removal of superfluous foliage, and the consequent increase of air and light, the existing fruit on the tree is benefited, and improves in quality. This especially applies to fruit borne towards the centre and lower part of the tree.

Ripened wood is more likely to produce a greater proportion of blossom buds than leaf buds next season, and this is the chief reason why summer pruning of dwarf fruit trees is recommended.

The month of August is suitable for summer pruning. It consists in shortening back the current year's growths by about six to nine inches according to the strength of the shoot.

Early Dessert Apples. The apple crop this year is fairly good, and certain varieties are bearing heavily. Of the early dessert kinds the Irish Peach is perhaps about the best of all.

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