

Great Limerick Athletes

No. 100—DANNY DUNNE of Ballingarry

(By SEAMUS O'CEALLAIGH)

PROMINENT IN GAELIC AFFAIRS IN U.S.A.

Danny continued for many years prominent in Gaelic affairs in the land of the Stars and Stripes, and in 1915 was a prominent member of the Limerick team that won many honours there. His team mates will be read with interest: P. J. Kiely (captain), Rathkeale; J. B. Ahearn (vice-captain), Tour-nafulla; M. Ahearn, James Ahearn, Tournafulla; B. Driscoll, P. Coughlan, Patrickswell; P. Barry, Ballyagran; Egan Clancy, W. McNamara, J. Ryan, Fedamore; J. Thompson, Thomas Downes, Limerick City; Larry Hartnett, Newcastle West; and A. Dunworth, Granagh. Substitutes were Keane, Herbertstown; Maloney, Monegay; Gibbons, Ballygran; Toomey, Croom; Leo, Bruff, and McCormack, Manister.

THE name of Ballingarry only appears once in the senior hurling honours roll of Limerick County and that over two score years ago, but the parish reared many good Gaels and the names of Jim Cottrell and Jack Reidy are imperishably associated with the first great All-Ireland hurling victory of Limerick.

And with the grand County Championship success of 1911 no name deserved higher mention than that of Danny Dunne, the man who was, in the main, responsible for the organisation and management of the club during its greatest days.

Danny left us a splendid record of his years at the helm in Ballingarry, and as his own career is bound up with the doings of his hurling colleagues during that period the story is as good a tribute as can be paid to his work. Here is what he wrote:

"Knowing but little of the hurling history of Ballingarry in the early days, I shall in passing make but a few remarks thereon, mainly derived from hearsay and local gossip.

CAPTAIN CON KEEFFE.

"About 1901 I saw Captain Con Keffe field a team against Granagh at Kilfinny and by a large margin the Ballingarry seventeen emerged victors. On that occasion I thought it was a good exhibition of the national code and all were delighted at the way the dashing captain played, also Thomas and P. Keating, Jim and Pat Grady, Jack ("Savage") Keffe, Jack Hourigan, and as my recollection does not serve me further, I shall not venture to make any more personal remarks other than to state that this victory stimulated the Ballingarry boys to greater deeds but shortly they lost the able services of their gallant captain, who sought a new home and friends neath the sheltering folds of the Stars and Stripes.

HARRY McDONNELL.

"Into the breach stepped Harry McDonnell of Fortwilliam, who in a short time had a well trained and sturdy seventeen ready for the fray. Matters went ahead in fine style under his command, victory after victory coming gloriously to the 'Garden Town.' Soon the County championship honours loomed up and Captain Harry got his men into trim. Kilfinny fell to his stroke at Bruree, after a fierce contest, and shortly afterwards, Monegay, then a dashing lot, bowed to defeat decisively at Reens Pike. That was a match worth witnessing. Strength and stamina were with Ballingarry; still the sturdy Westerners made them go the whole way. On this occasion Tom Keating, Paddy Nunan and Davy, and Jack Burke all played a fine game; Jerh. Cahill as full back was a stone-wall, also Tom Callaghan, Charley Connors, not forgetting the two Gradys, Maurice Hourigan; whilst Captain Harry excelled all his previous performances. In fact, each and everyone played excellently. It took a very strong and fast man to hold his own those times and the superior strength of Ballingarry's seventeen stood them well on this occasion. Jack Hourigan did a lot of "roughing" but it must be admitted the Monegay boys made it hot for them and as the vanquished it must be said they played to the full whistle as sportsmen.

COUNTY FINAL.

"Now the final of the County was the next on the sheet and after a good useful course of training Harry again turned out his men to face the music at the Markets Field against Cappamore. Although for the 1904 decider the date of playing was August 13th, 1905. As I was eye-witness I shall give a more definite account of this hard-fought contest in which our colours were lowered by the brawny stalwarts of Cappamore. The following did duty for Ballingarry on this sorrowful occasion: H. McDonnell, captain; Jerh. Cahill, Tom and Paddy Keating, Pat and Jim Grady, Davy and Pat Nunan, Charles O'Connor, Jack and Maurice Hourigan, Jack Kiely, Joe Fitzgerald, Stephen (Dan) O'Connell, Bill Hartigan, Jack Burke and Jack ("Savage") Keffe.

"Local hopes were high on this occasion but sorry to relate they were rudely shattered. The Ballingarry contingent surprised Limerick. Car after car poured in its human freight and on reckoning I find there were three long cars and about thirty side cars and traps with the result that the Cappamore backers were outnumbered three to one.

PLAY WAS CLOSE.

Play was close and at half time there was not much between the combatants. The determined mood of the Easterners showed itself early when by a wild rush headed by Hynes our goals were invaded and one of the uprights fell, Tom Keating being thrown against it and a goal scored after a minute's play. Then Ballingarry showed their strength on the field and on the line, and Cappamore calmed down but eventually by hard luck the Ballingarry boys had to submit beaten at full time, 3-7 to 1-5.

"Bill Hartigan played a wonderful game as right back. So did Jerh. Cahill and Tom Keating in the goal. Jim Grady did Yeoman service, also Paddy; and Jack Keily was unfortunate in not scoring several times but luck was not his way. Our forwards were not in it at any time; neither several of the centres, and taking everything into consideration the final should have been won. Thus, so early in life did I see the "foe" walking over the Ballingarry colours and, indeed, sad was the occasion to many a stalwart from the craggy slopes of Knockfierna.

"Hurling almost died out in Ballingarry after this.

A YOUNG SEVENTEEN.

"After a long spell of inactivity, the year 1910 saw a young seventeen line out at Knockaderry and beat a strong combination from Castlemahon by five goals. This revived the game again in our midst and on the next occasion at Castlemahon, a few months later, Monegay went under by nine goals. Such successes increased their efforts and the team was reconstituted and conducted on businesslike lines. Tom Keating was now elected captain and again was the championship the goal. Starting in the intermediate grade Croagh were met about February 1911, at Croom and beaten 8 goals 1 point. Next Ardpatrick were encountered at the Markets Field, April 30th, 1911, and again did our colours tumble at the last fence. However a good substantial objection won us a re-play, and on July 23rd, at the same venue we triumphed, 8-0 to 1-2. The following comprised the team that day—T. Keating (captain), Danny Dunne (goal), Jim and Pat Grady, P. Keating, P. Condon, Maurice and Mick Quaide, C. O'Connor, Maurice Hourigan, Jack Kiely, Jack Burke, Jack Donoghue, Jim Cottrell, D. Clancy and Jackie Hennessy (sub.). The prizes for this final were eighteen beautiful silver medals with gold centres, and were, I think, the first medals ever won by a Ballingarry combination.

AN EYE TO SENIOR HONOURS.

"Intermediate Champions' was a good title but we still in Ballingarry had an eye to senior honours. Consequently in the next draws our boys went into the arena at Adare against Croom, May 14th, 1911, when, after a fine contest, the score was: Ballingarry 4-2, Croom 3-2; and that despite the fact that our opponents had the services of Mick Feely, the Mangan brothers and Jack O'Shea, All-Ireland men and prominent ones too, on "Tyler's" renowned Castleconnell pick. Croom were sorely disappointed over the result but little did they think they were the first victims of a team that were to lower higher colours than theirs. May 28th, that is a fortnight later, saw their cross camans with Young Irelands, then holders of the senior title, and after a grand exhibition our colours still kept waving and at full time our team emerged victors by a two point margin."

Danny's narrative gives further details of the history of the Ballingarry team but space considerations forbid their inclusion in full.

EMIGRATED TO U.S.A.

Danny himself, great organiser, player and club official, left his native land about 1912 for America. As a well deserved recompense for his arduous services to his team, his club mates and friends presented him with a magnificent gold medal of Irish manufacture and a neatly inscribed purse, which, when handed to him, was not empty. Seldom had a truer Gael than Danny Dunne left the country. His loss was much deplored by the hurlers of his native town, and he carried with him across the Atlantic not only the good wishes of a host of immediate friends but also those of every Gael whose admiration he won by the prominent part he took in placing his team in the proud position of champions of the county.

October 1954