

# Thomas Hayes Of Doon

(By "CAMAN")

**S**HORTLY after the foundation of the G.A.A. Doon answered the call of Gaelic games and formed a football team in the parish, which figured in many famous contests. They played great combinations from Limerick and Tipperary and always ran them tight, but were denied the laurels of victory on a few occasions, when their prowess deserved such reward.

Their greatest achievement was the holding of the renowned Limerick Commercials to a draw in the County Senior Football Championship just three weeks before that great combination won for Limerick the first All-Ireland senior football title in the annals of the G.A.A.

The Doon uprising was part of a general upsurge towards Gaelic games which gripped every parish in East Limerick within a few years of the founding of the Gaelic Athletic Association. Pre-eminent amongst this galaxy of clubs were the Doon footballers, who had an enviable record of successes during the score and a half years they held sway in their area.

## A BIG FIGURE.

One of the big figures in the formation of the Club, and captain during the best years of its existence was Thomas Hayes, who played a real captain's part in bringing the Club to the proud position of being one of the best in the County, and that despite many obstacles, not the least being the fact that the parish was a border one with Tipperary claiming some prominent players who, in other circumstances, might have thrown in their lot with the Club.

This nearness to Tipperary had, of course, its advantages, too, and there is some suggestion that in the early days they actually competed in the championships of both counties—under different titles of course. Players were not as well known then as in later years, and there was no penalty for "crossing the border" during that memorable and carefree period when the G.A.A. was young.

## BORDERED ON GREATNESS FOR MANY SEASONS.

The victories of the Doon lads over the leading teams of both Limerick and Tipperary entitle them to ranking with the mightiest teams of the time. They bordered on greatness for many seasons and were feared and respected wherever they went.

Their most memorable campaign was that for the 1888 County Limerick senior football crown. In their opening tie they beat their neighbours and very keen rivals, Pallasgreen, and they then faced another great East Limerick combination of the time—Newtown, whom they also overcame but only after a right tough encounter.

To the city they had to journey for their next engagement, which was against St. Patrick's, then one of the leading football combinations to be found anywhere. It was a sterling struggle between two very determined sides, which Doon won with a pair of points to spare at the end of a hectic hour.

## A MORE DIFFICULT HURDLE.

That hurdle crossed, Doon found even a more difficult one facing them. St. Michael's had created a sensation by defeating the famous Commercials in the 1887 final, only to lose the verdict in the Council chamber because of the presence of a few rugby players in their line out. They had to re-play the match with an all Gaelic team and it was from these that Commercials gained the win which put them on the road to All-Ireland renown.

When Doon were drawn against a St. Michael's combination which made no secret of their determination of again qualifying to face Commercials the prospects looked none too bright. Doon, however, responded to the challenge in sterling fashion and St. Michael's were overcome after a tremendous tussle to create one of the big surprises of the period.

## THE FAMOUS COMMERCIALS.

Next on the list were the famous Commercials—one of the most feared teams in the land, and for good reason. They had won the Limerick title for 1887, and with their own twenty-one players exclusively had tackled the pride of Ireland in the first great race for national honours.

Their first All-Ireland match was against Dowdstown (Meath) in Lord De French's Park, where Commercials won 3-2 to 0-2. On this occasion Malachi O'Brien, one of the best football midfielders of all time, kicked a goal from centre-field, and was invited to lunch with Lord de French.

In the second round, at Clonturk Park, Dublin, Commercials and Kilmacow (Kilkenny) drew at 1-10

each, but in the re-play at Bansha, Commercials were comfortable winners.

In the semi-final, played at Bohermore, near Tipperary, on March 11th, 1888, Commercials beat Templemore (Tipperary) by 1-8 to 0-4 on a re-play, the first game being disputed and ordered to be re-fixed.

## MAGNIFICENT GAME.

Just four weeks later Doon travelled to Limerick City to meet the self same Commercials team, flushed with victories over the cream of Irish football counties, and preparing for their part in the first All-Ireland Football Final, which was fixed for April 29th, 1888.

The game between Doon and the Commercials was a magnificent one, fought with speed and determination. The teams were neck and neck all the time and a draw was hailed on all sides as a very fair result.

Commercials had won the All-Ireland crown by the date of the re-play, for they beat Dundalk Young Irelands of Louth, 1-4 to 0-3, at Clonaskeagh, Dublin, on April 29th.

The second meeting of Doon and Commercials took place at Loughgur, where the Doon lads were beaten by what was then known as a forfeit point, but which would under present rules be only a "fifty."

This decision was hotly disputed by the Doon team, who claimed the match and the championship, too, as some of their scores were disallowed.

## THE TEAMS.

The teams on that occasion will be recalled with interest:

Doon: Thomas Hayes, captain; P. Hogan, P. Ryan, J. Carey, W. Kennedy, J. Kennedy, M. Maher, J. Sweeney, M. Hayes, B. Hayes, D. Connors, P. Martin, C. Hayes, E. Russell, T. Fitzgerald, M. Darcy, P. Bourke, T. Collins, M. Kennedy, Jeremiah Hayes, P. Lonergan, P. Coffey, P. Lande, J. O'Dea, M. Ryan.

Commercials—D. Corbett, T. Fitzgibbon, W. Gunning, R. Breen, J. Hyland, T. McNamara, W. J. Spain, P. J. Corbett, M. Slattery, J. R. Kennedy, M. Casey, J. Mulqueen, Malachi O'Brien, P. Kelly, T. Kennedy, P. Keating, W. Cleary, R. Normoyle, P. Reeves, T. Keating, T. McMahon. This was the same team as won the All-Ireland.

Another memorable encounter in which Doon figured was with Abbeyfeale, at Croom, in the late summer of 1891, a Press report of the period described the Doon lads as "a fine set of strong-limbed, hard-faced, fearless looking men, who seemed as if they might have found it hard to return to a place so near Tipperary, if they failed to snatch victory from the men from the mountains."

## IMMENSE CROWD.

There was an immense crowd present when the Abbeyfeale Brass Band led the teams around the pitch to the air of Brian Boru's march. The game, however, was little over a quarter hour in progress when trouble developed and the game had to be abandoned following a scene which old timers say they never saw repeated on a football field since. Pandemonium reigned that evening and ruined what gave promise of a thrill-thronged football game between the extremes of Limerick—the men from the Kerry border and the lads from the Tipperary boundary.

Doon made their mark on Tipperary football fields also, and with pride the old timers speak of victories over leading Premier County teams, notably Annacarty, Knockavilla, Golden, Kilfeacle, and the famed "Rosannas."

During the five years in which Doon were at the zenith of their football power they played one hundred and six matches altogether and were only beaten on one occasion—in the disputed game with the Commercials at Loughgur.