

No. 117—PAT N. TREACY of Ardpatrik

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ARDPATRICK has many claims to a place in Irish history, and in recalling the name of Pat N. Treacy we revive the memory of a man who had the proud distinction of being first secretary of a Gaelic football club eighteen months before the actual foundation of the G.A.A. and later was honoured with the captaincy of the Commercial team that won the first All-Ireland senior football crown—a unique distinction when we remember that Pat was a non-player on the occasion.

Pat N. Treacy was one of the actual founders of the far-famed Commercial Club. His co-workers in the task of establishing this great organisation in the City of Sarsfield were Dan H. Ryan, who could be regarded as the inspiration behind the idea and the leading light in the early efforts that eventually led to the establishment of this virile club long before the moves to bring the G.A.A. into existence came under public notice; Maurice Fitzgibbon, a great oarsman with the Shannon Rowing Club, a footballer and athlete of note; John McNamara, another prominent figure on Limerick athletic fields at the time, and Tom O'Connor, who captained the pre-G.A.A. teams fielded by the Commercial.

Pat N. Treacy was member of the staff of Messrs. Cannock and Co., Ltd., to which firm Dan H. Ryan was also attached at the time. When first launched Commercial was what might be called a private club in that its members were all drawn from the big drapery houses. John McNamara was the first President, Dan Ryan was Chairman and Organiser-in-Chief, Pat Treacy shouldered the secretarial work, and Tom O'Connor was, as already mentioned, the captain.

THEIR BIG HEADACHE.

Trying to find some team to play against was the big headache that confronted the committee of the Commercial in the pioneering days. They trained earnestly and soon attracted attention, introducing a new game to what was then a very strong rugby centre. Eventually the Limerick butchers got together a team that proved a powerful body of men and they shared with Commercial the honour of playing the first Gaelic football match of modern times in Limerick—also possibly the first line out of a football side in Munster under what were later to be the Gaelic rules.

The venue for this historic "challenge" was the old Ballinacurra Race Course, kindly given for the occasion by the late Mr. Hogan, who proved a good friend to the new Association and was always willing to do what he could to help the spread of the games.

The year of this exciting new adventure into the realms of sport, as it undoubtedly looked to the people of Limerick, was 1883, and all we know about the match is that it ended in a win for the Commercial, who were more expert at the finer points of the game, a circumstance that helped them overcome their heftier opponents. It is a pity that no account of this game has been preserved, for it would undoubtedly prove interesting reading now.

Anyway, the match appears to have quickened interest in the new code of football. Commercial continued as pioneers and their original mentors were encouraged to extend the scope of their activities and interest others in the attractiveness of the game.

TEAM FORMED IN MEELICK.

Mainly through the instrumentality of John McNamara, a team was formed in Meelick and the giants from the Shannon were the next to play the Commercial, the latter again proving victorious. A great bond of friendship developed between the pair and in after years a number of the Meelick men of that historic first outing figured with the Cratloe side that helped so much to fit Commercial for their All-Ireland essays in after days of glorious memory.

Into the picture almost with the founding of the G.A.A. came another

great side that has made thrilling hurling and football history in years that bridge almost the entire span of the G.A.A. I refer, of course, to St. Patrick's, against whom the Commercial played their third match. "Saints" lined out a splendid side under Captain Gough, who proved himself a real Gael, and the venue this time was Canal fields, Commercial gaining a hard-earned victory.

KEEN RIVALRY.

Rivalry between Commercial and St. Patrick's got going that memorable evening by the Canal and it had its full flowering in later years at Corkanree. And "Saints" afterwards proved the value of perseverance when they were the first side to break the winning sequence of the mighty Commercial, slipping into the county honours list of 1890 and 1891, gaining both from the old glory lads of Commercial, with a point on each occasion as the winning margin, the criterion of the great deciders they proved.

The G.A.A. was well under way in 1885, the first summer following the foundation meeting in November, 1885, and the Commercial committee decided the time was opportune to call a meeting of the sports loving people of the city. The venue was McNamara's Boot Warehouse in William Street, and the move meant a big addition to the membership of the Club. Footballers and athletes in profusion donned the now familiar colours, and from that fine gathering the foundations of later greatness were securely laid.

OTHER TEAMS SPRING UP.

Dan Ryan was now captain and threw all his energies into putting Commercial really on the Gaelic football map. The value of the early start that pre-dated the G.A.A. was now realised and soon matches were in full swing with the other teams springing up all over the city—the Limerick Butchers and St. Patrick's, already under notice with other stalwart "twenty-ones" from St. John's, St. Michael's, Shamrocks and Treaty Stones.

By the early months of 1886 teams had sprung up everywhere, and Commercial fixed up games all over the country, meeting many fine sides and winning as they went.

Thus encouraged, they ventured further afield, and on Good Friday, 1886, played another great side of early G.A.A. days—the "Lees" of Cork. The Limerick lads were again successful after a stubborn fight. For their next outing they had a delightful trip to Kilrush by special steamer, to play and beat the local side.

Pat N. Treacy as secretary, had the task of arranging and carrying through the manifold activities of the growing Club. In fact the playing strength of the Club had extended to such proportions by this that for their next engagement it was agreed to field two sides, the opposition to be provided by Bansa and the Tipperary "Rosannes."

FIRST SPECIAL TRAIN FOR GAELIC MATCH.

For this trip it was decided that a special train should be arranged and Pat opened negotiations with the proprietors of the old Waterford and Limerick Railway. A guarantee, however, was demanded for this first special train ever run for a Gaelic match, and Dan Ryan and Maurice Fitzgibbon immediately accepted responsibility and acted as personal guarantors.

The excursion was a great success and Commercial won a double victory against two fine teams. Further successes followed in quick succession—the "victims" including the famous Bohercrowe team, after a fast game at Lime-rick Junction; the "Lees" in a return game at Cork; and Kilmacduane at Kilrush.

Not content with promoting football, Commercial also took a hand in the athletic revival and organised a monster sports carnival for the Markets Field in mid-

September 1886. It continued for three days, the opening one being devoted to athletics; hurling and football holding the stage on the second day, and the final day featuring a number of band contests.

This huge event, a tribute to the great organising ability of the Club Secretary and his willing band of helpers, was an outstanding success and further enhanced the still growing reputation of the Commercial.

DEPARTURE OF CAPTAIN.

The year 1887 dawned and the high hopes of the Commercial were raised with the announcement of the first All-Ireland Championships in hurling and football. But just as they were preparing to enter the fray, a big blow fell in the departure of the captain, D. H. Ryan, who left for a position in the metropolis. Dan's loss was a great one, but eyes quickly turned to Pat Treacy, and although a non-player at the time he was elected captain, a position he filled with the same enterprise and enthusiasm as had featured his work as Secretary.

When Commercial were fixed to meet St. Michael's in the County football final at Croom, they had the hurling final between Murroe and South Liberties also on the programme. Great interest centred in the fixture and it was decided to arrange a special train from the City to Croom. The old G.S. & W.R. authorities refused at first, but Pat persisted, and after great pressure and a guarantee he succeeded. It was probably the greatest day ever in local G.A.A. history, for six trains ran to Croom, so high did feeling run and so strong had the G.A.A. grown.

FIRST STAGE ON ROAD TO ALL-IRELAND HONOURS.

After a vigorous match of close, tough football, the Commercial emerged champions, the first stage on the road to All-Ireland honours. They traversed the remainder of the journey in stirring style beating Dowdstown (Meath) in Lord De French's Park, 3-2 to 0-2 before a great crowd (gate, £210). In the second round at Clontarf Park (gate £300) they drew with Kilkenny (Kilmacow), 1-1 each, but in the re-play, at Bansa, the Limerickmen were victorious. In the semi-final, played at Bohermore, near Tipperary, they beat Templemore (Tipperary), 1-2 to 0-4, and went on to meet Dundalk Young Ireland in the All-Ireland final, played at Clonaskeagh, Dublin, on April, 29th, 1888, and which they won, 1-4 to 0-3.

There was no Sam Maguire Cup on that historic occasion, no press photographers, and little of the glamour now associated with this great event in Irish sports history—the All-Ireland senior football final. But to Limerick Commercial, and their gallant captain—Pat N. Treacy, of Ardpatrik—long since gone to his eternal reward—it was a happy culmination to years of unstinted endeavour in the cause of Gaelic pastimes.