

## Success at Last

The championship of 1910 finally brought success to the parish on the football field. Having accounted for Tullogher along the way they faced Lismatigue in the county final played in Hugginstown under the auspices of Newmarket Football Club. Lismatigue were by far the heavier team, but what Kells lacked in strength they made up for it in skill and combination. Lismatigue scored first, a point, but Kells were soon into their stride against the hill and wind. Keanes, Fitzgeralds, Saunders and Hoyne distinguished themselves on several occasions. Both teams worked very hard to score, but the back division proved too reliable on both sides. At half-time the score was Lismatigue, 0-1, Kells, 0-0.

Kells opened the second half with a vigorous attack in which a Hogan pass to Somers led to a good goal. It was to prove a match winner. Kells held on well with Hoyne, Hawe, Keane and Saunders giving fine displays. Lismatigue's solitary point was too little. Kells had two more points from M. Bride and Matty Fitzgerald and were soon county champions, winning by 1-2 to 0-2.

The Kells team was: R. Keane (capt.), M. Keane, M. Bride, J. Hogan, J. Murphy, G. Comerford, P. Hawe, W. Saunders, H. Shirley, J. Somers, Matty Fitzgerald, Michael Fitzgerald, W. Hoyne, J. Lavelle and J. O'Brien (goal).

In the final of the senior championship of 1910 played in Tullaroan on 7 May 1911 the Miners with Dara Donovan, Paddy O'Neill, Jim Glendon, Davy Hoyne and John Fitzpatrick beat Knocktopher by 0-3 to 0-2. Knocktopher objected to Hoyne, however, and the controversy dragged on for a long time. In the end Knocktopher were awarded the game and the title.

## Dunnamaggin's hurling debut

The year 1910 also saw the debut in the championship of a Dunnamaggin hurling team, due in no small measure to the work of Pat Walsh who was to die tragically in 1921. It was in a tournament hosted by Dunnamaggin which featured a first round junior hurling tie between Piltown and James Stephens, a challenge between Kells and Newmarket and a friendly hurling match between Dunnamaggin and Sevenhouses. The hurling match was probably in preparation for Dunnamaggin's first round junior hurling championship game against Lodgepark (Freshford) in Kilkenny scheduled for 26 June. There is no indication that they survived the first round.

Athletics continued to be popular in the area. Kells sports committee which included Harry Meighan and J. Kelly organized the annual sports meeting which was usually the first sports meeting of the season in Kilkenny. GAA activity was not the only facet of the sporting life of the parish. Kilkenny Hounds had been meeting regularly for years in and about the parish. There was open coursing in Blackbog, and in 1911 the club opened a coursing park in Blackbog.

Having won the junior football championship of 1910 Kells had to play in the senior championship of 1911 but were well-beaten by Knocktopher, 6-3 to 0-0. Knocktopher went on to meet Coolagh in the second round which was played in Dunnamaggin under the auspices of

Dunnamaggin Hurling Club. When the appointed referee did not show Paddy O'Neill of Ballintee took over the whistle, and "right well he did", according to the Kilkenny Journal, which continued: "Judging from the manner in which he conducted last Sunday's game he seemed to have all the qualities that go to make a perfect referee. He was quick in detecting the slightest breach of the rules that occurred; he was firm in his decisions and his impartiality was voiced with admiration both by players and spectators. If ever the much talked of Society of referees be formed in the County Mr Paddy O'Neill will be a great find. He is equal to any inter-county knight of the whistle and certainly has a more minute knowledge of the rules than most pretenders". Dunnamaggin hurlers reached the second round of the junior hurling championship that year only to be beaten by near neighbours Sevenhouses.

### The Championship of 1913

Because the overrun of the 1911 championship, and for other reasons, the championship of 1912 was late starting. It was so late that the county committee in a meeting of 7 September adopted a motion to abolish the 1912 championship and proceed to the 1913 draws. These were made on 28 September.

Championship games were held in Dunnamaggin on 12 October between James Stephens and Kilmanagh, Callan and Dicksboro. Pat Walsh of Dunnamaggin was the referee. In a friendly on the same occasion Dunnamaggin Glory Rovers played a football challenge against Croan. The venue was a "very suitable" field "unhesitatingly" placed at the disposition of the tournament promoters by Paddy O'Neill.

Back in Junior ranks the following year Kells beat the Rower in Paulstown. The Rower objected that Kells had four players from the previous year's senior team and were awarded the game. Kilmoganny junior footballers played Tullogher before a large crowd in Thomastown in November. Their time keeping was not great nor was their performance, for they went down by 2-3 to 0-0. Dunnamaggin junior hurlers fared no better, losing to Kilmacow in the first round by 9-2 to 0-0. Before 1913 even began all the teams in the parish were out of that year's football and hurling championships.

The initiation of southern championships in hurling and football meant that teams had far less to travel and probably explains the appearance, if brief, of new teams in the area not long afterwards - Tinvaun, Baurascoob, Croan and Castlehale. The Croan Gaels were particularly active in organizing tournaments. That year the side posts were abolished and teams were reduced to fifteen a-side.

With the various championships gone all that was left was the occasional tournament or friendly. Dunnamaggin played two friendlies against their neighbours Croan in January 1913. The first game had to be abandoned because the ball burst. This was due, the special correspondent of the People reported, to the "ferocity" with which the game was played. They met again two weeks later in nearby Ballintee. The Croan footballers were accompanied to Paddy Neill's field by their own James Treacy fife and drum band. Kells played Kilmoganny and Lukeswell in tournaments held in Croan later in the year.

January 1914 saw two unusual combinations take to the hurling fields in a challenge. The opposing teams were Baurascoob and Castlehale. The venue was Raheen. Both teams had only been recently formed, but the People reporter noted that both showed "promise that in the near future they would prove themselves a force to be reckoned with". Defences were on top, however, and the match ended as the "shades of eve" were fast thickening in a scoreless draw. It was agreed to replay the game in Ballintee. Mr. M. Moore of Tinvaun Hurling Club had charge of the whistle and his decisions on all points of the game were unquestioned.

In the football championship Kells faced Newmarket on 12 April. The game was refereed by Paddy O'Neill of Ballintee. The arrangements were in the hands of the Dunnamaggin Hurling Club. Kells won a well-contested game by 1-3 to 0-3. For Kells the Keanes, Hanrahan, Renehan, O'Shea, Horgan and McBride were best. The Kells team was: J. O'Brien, (captain), P. McBride (goal), M. O'Gorman, E. O'Gorman, M. Keane, J. Keane, T. Keane, P. O'Shea, T. Hanrahan, J. Renehan, J.J. O'Brien, M. McBride, J. Horgan, P. Hoyne and P. Millea. Kells easily beat Lukeswell in the second round at Newmarket on 7 June (7-9 to 0-0).

Kells also fielded a hurling team that month for the first time in the championship. Croan was the scene of their first round match against Ballyhale, and Pat Walsh of Dunnamaggin was the referee. Croan football club arranged "a splendid programme of both hurling and football contests" for the occasion. Apart from the championship game there was also a friendly football match between Dunnamaggin and Lukeswell and a "camogie hurling match between Ahenny and Windgap". In their publicity the Croan club noted that the camogie game was "the first match of its kind held in the centre of South Kilkenny". It urged all the ladies of the different districts to attend "and follow the example by starting camogie teams in their districts". In the hurling match Kells were well-beaten by Ballyhale by 3-1 to 1-0.

In the Summer of 1915, the Irish Volunteer movement, founded in reponse to Carson's Ulster Volunteer Force, took Kilkenny by storm. Volunteer corps were established in Dunnamaggin (10 June), Kilmoganny (21 June) and Kells (22 June). Sundays were often taken up with drilling, rifle training, and route marches to neighbouring villages. Since the Volunteers probably included all the men of the Gaelic teams their activity could not but affect local competitions and prolong the time needed to complete them.

After a long delay due to a dispute between Tullogher and Mullinavat Kells faced Tullogher in Mullinavat but lost by 1-7 to 2-1. Kells objected to the illegal composition of the Tullogher team and a reply was agreed. Kells won the replay but lost the southern final to Harristown.

### Junior Champions Again

While football continued to be the stronger sport in the parish with Kells, Dunnamaggin and Kilmoganny fielding football teams, hurling was gradually gaining ground, even if it was still not very competitive. On 30 May Kells were well-beaten by Mullinavat in the first round of the junior hurling championship Dunnamaggin won their first round tie against Mooncoin n.2 at Piltown but progressed no further.

The football championship proved more rewarding. In the first round Kells beat Kilmacow in Knocktopher in a good game by 3-4 to 3-1. Hugginstown were no match for Kells in the second round (0-14 to 0-0). The Kells Pipers were on hand to celebrate the victory. |Footballers from the parish took part in the Knocktopher tournament organized to raise funds for the Carrickshock memorial, Kells playing Cappa and Kilmoganny playing Chapel Hill.

Kilmoganny hosted the hurling match game between Graigue and Piltown on 16 May which Piltown won by 2-0 to 0-0. Graigue later put in an objection on the grounds that the pitch in Kilmoganny was not the proper width and that the lines were not properly marked. The referee and the officials of Kilmoganny club stated by letter that the pitch was in a satisfactory state. The objection was overruled.

In the southern junior final Kells met Glenmore who had beaten Mangan in the previous round and had survived an objection. The game was fixed for 16 July in Kilkenny. The previous Sunday Kells played Mullinahone in a tournament in Callan in which three Kilkenny teams were matched against three from Tipperary.

In the first half of the southern final there was a heavy shower which made the pitch greasy and the ball "baggy". Glenmore opened the scoring with a point but Kells scored two goals later in the half and led at half time by 2-0 to 0-1. Glenmore scored a goal half-way through the second half and Kells missed a couple of frees. Five minutes from time the Glenmore men reduced the lead to the minimum, but Kells who failed to register a score in the second half held on in a nail biting finish to win by 2-0 to 1-2. The Kells team was James O'Brien (capt.), John Fitzpatrick, John Keane, John Walshe, Joe Rice, Joe Renehan, Michael Keane, Richard Keane, Denis Keane, Patrick Hoyne, Michael Bride, Edward Gorman, Michael Gorman, James Hogan, Patrick Millea.

On 9 January 1916 Kells beat Cappa in Thomastown, but Thomastown objected on the grounds that Kells fielded an illegal player, John Corr, who, it was said had played with Burnchurch in the previous year's victory over Harristown and was thus ineligible. Cappa did not pursue the objection and Kells went on to play the final which was fixed for St. James's Park, Kilkenny, on 13 August 1916. The opposition was provided by Blanchfieldspark, Gowran. In further preparation for the county final Kells played Conahy in a tournament in Foulkstown on 6 August. This game excited great interest as Conahy felt they had been treated unfairly in the county championship and their conquerors were meeting Kells in the final.

In the final Blanchfieldspark opened the scoring and had got two points before their opponents registered a score. Kells then took up the running and got through for a goal. No further score was registered before half time. Blanchfieldspark made desperate efforts to equalise in the second-half but to no avail. Kells won by two points, 1-1 to 0-2. It was to be the last county championship for the parish for very many years.

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