

Recent G.A.A. Publications 2017

By Seamus J. King

Two major club histories made their appearance in the county during 2017, *A History of the G.A.A. in the Parish of Kilcommon* and the long-awaited *Thurles Sarsfields G.A.A. Story – Volume 1*. There is a major contrast between the history and achievements of the two clubs but each shows how the G.A.A. can motivate and inspire its followers to bring honour and glory to the parish.

The title of the Kilcommon book is unusual to say the least: *Cuttin' or Atein the Bushes* has its origin in a tense moment in a senior hurling game between the Sean Treacys and a neighbouring club. 'During a passage when ash was clashing with ash, in the heat of a ferocious battle, the neighbouring club manager posed a question to nobody in particular: 'Were the Treacys cutting bushes in the days prior to the match?' To which Ned McLoughlin (Raider) replied: 'No! They were atein them and they are sore inside!'

Probably the title reflects something of the passion and intensity that Sean Treacys traditionally brought to the playing field, They were tough and unflinching and opposing teams had to man up or take a hammering when playing them.

Paddy Ryan (Coole) the author of this impressive book of over four hundred pages, concentrates on the Sean Treacy years, which began at a West board meeting in 1962, but the games of hurling and football had a life in the parish, which included Kilcommon, Hollyford and Rearcross, from the time of the foundation of the G.A.A. The first club was formed in Hollyford in 1886 and the founders, Jim Stapleton, James Lambe and Martin Lysaght, are remembered.

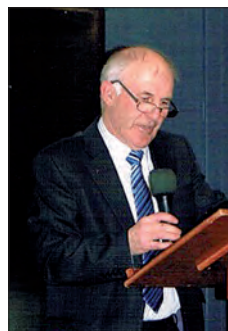
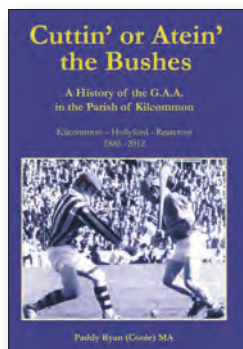
The parish was represented when the West division came into existence in 1930. The Dalcassians (Hollyford & Glengar) played in the first West championship. The name Sean Treacys (Hollyford, Glengar & Kilcommon) made its appearance in 1940 in the name of a minor team. During the years between 1930 and 1962 Sean Treacys often played in the North championship. The first senior team from the parish made a brief appearance in 1948.

The birth of Sean Treacys in April 1962 saw the unification of the existing clubs in the parish.

'Anecdotal evidence suggests that the idea of this new club was conceived by a few wise men over a number of pints of stout at a fair in Kilcommon.' It turned out to be a most successful unification of all the hurling talent in the parish. Success came rapidly with the first divisional senior hurling championship in 1968 and seven titles in all between then and 1982. Two finals were lost during the same period and Treacys withdrew from the 1971 championship because of a grievance with the board's handling of an investigation into their match with Cashel King Cormacs.

Paddy Ryan gives a comprehensive account not only of the senior championship but the fate of the club in all the other championships in which they affiliated. This makes his book a fine reference work because of the ease with which the story of any team's progress can be discovered. The account of each year's story is completed with information on the club's participation in tournaments and the involvement of club players in county teams.

The author has done the club a great service and the book will also be useful to other clubs in the county, who have played against Sean Treacy teams down the years.



Paddy Ryan (C), the author, at the launch of the Sean Treacy club history.

Published by Paddy Ryan and printed by Guardian Print, Nenagh, the book retails for €20.

Thurles Sarsfields G.A.A. Story, Volume 1, 1884-1959

The story of Gaelic Games in the town of Thurles as told by Liam Ó Donnchú in this volume has to be the major publishing event of the year. It is not only the history of a club but the history of the town where the G.A.A. was founded in 1884 and where the annual congresses of the association were held for the first four decades. It has more associations with the Gaelic Athletic Association than any other town in Ireland.

Apart from the importance of the town of Thurles in the story of the G.A.A., there is the story of the Sarsfields as the most successful club in the county. That success commenced with winning the first All-Ireland and it progressed to a succession of achievements against which the successes of other clubs pale into insignificance. Among these successes are 36 county senior hurling titles. Sarsfields men have captained ten county teams to All-Ireland senior hurling titles. The club man, Tony Wall, who launched the history on November 10, was the winner of the first Hurler of the Year, when that honour was presented for the first time in 1958. Two other club players, Jimmy Doyle and Lar Corbett, have received the honour since then. Club players have collected eleven All-Star awards, including the latest, when Tipperary captain, Padraic Maher, received his fifth recently.

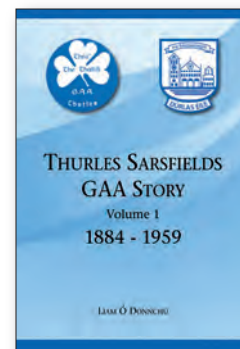
So, it is a great and important story that needed to be told and the strange thing is that it hasn't been told before now. However, it was worth waiting for as this magnificent volume testifies. Liam Ó Donnchú has done an outstanding job in producing an extremely well-researched and comprehensive account of the club's history. But it is more than a mere history of games, and of successes and failures. It is also about families, who have been involved in the club through generations, of sons and grandsons, who carry on a great tradition.

The story is superbly illustrated with some great images of the many players, teams and administrators, who played a part in the history of the G.A.A. in Thurles. The author has been painstaking in gathering these images and reproducing them in such quality. One of the finest pictures in the book is the Tipperary team, captained by Tom Semple, which travelled to Brussels in 1910 for the Pan-Celtic Congress. There are many more as well.

But, this is only half the story. As the title says, it is Volume 1, taking the story up to 1959, when Thurles Sarsfields had just completed their first five-in-a row. The author promised us at the launch that Volume 2 should be ready in two years' time.

In the meantime we have this magnificent volume to be going along with, which does justice to a great story and is a credit to the author. The book contains 550 pages.

Thurles Sarsfields GAA Story costs €25 and is available in Thurles at Bookworm, Lár na Páirce, Easons and Thurles Sarsfields Social Centre or online from www.bookworm.ie It can also be ordered by



Enjoying the launch of Thurles Sarsfields GAA Story Vol 1 were: (l to r) Michael Maher, Thurles Sarsfields Chairman; Liam Ó Donnchú and Tony Wall, who launched the book.

post (€10 extra) from: Liam Ó Donnchú, Ballymoreen, Littleton, Thurles, Co. Tipperary.

Other publications

Premier Legends by Noel Dundon

Noel Dundon has followed up his *Captains of the Premier Ship in 2014* with this publication. Entitled *Premier Legends*, the book is a series of stories about seventeen players, who contributed significantly to the fortunes of Tipperary hurling during their lifetimes. They range from Kieran Carey and Michael Maher of Hell's Kitchen fame through some of the outstanding hurlers of the 1960s period, such as Theo English, Donie Nealon and Larry Kiely, and on to Mick Roche and Declan Ryan. It's an eclectic mix and will give satisfaction to most followers of Tipperary hurling.

These stories bring the players to life and inform us of much that we may have forgotten. In doing this Noel has done the public a great service in providing a handy reference book on the lives of his selection. He is the first to admit that his list could have included as many more but we are grateful to him for those he has included. If I have a crib with the publication it would be that each account would have been completed with a list of the achievements of the players. This was provided for some but not all.

The book was launched by *Irish Independent* Sports Feature Writer, Vincent Hogan at St. Patrick's College, Thurles on December 2.

A Land of Men and Giants

Many readers will remember Wexford's All-Ireland winning hero, Tony Doran, who was a giant of the game of hurling throughout the 1960s, 1970s and into the 1980s. His intercounty years stretch from 1967-1984, during which he won 1 All-Ireland, 4 Leinster titles, 2 National Leagues and 1 All-Star.

His biography, *A Land of Men and Giants*, written in conjunction with author, Liam Hayes, has been published by Herobooks. It is the story told by Tony Doran of a life spent living and competing against legendary men and true giants of the game.

The blurb has this to say: 'it was a time when full-forwards were ordered to plunder goals. But Tony Doran also played against giants from Kilkenny, Tipperary and Cork, and so many other counties, at a time when the game of hurling tested the wits and the courage of every man on the field, Some of these men became giants.'

The Warrior's Code

The title of Jackie Tyrrell's autobiography, *The Warrior's Code*, is a very appropriate title. He was one of the most uncompromising of the Kilkenny backs during their great period of success and yet in the course of his book he reveals that the assured, confident, committed performer wasn't at all satisfied with his performances but was often full of self-doubt.

Many readers will have read excerpts from the book in the *Irish Independent* and it gives a good account of some of the ferocity of the contests for team places in Nowlan Park. Here they learned that nice players don't win matches but that success comes when your skill levels are infused with a kind of animal brutality. The result was a team that dominated the rucks and invariably it was a Kilkenny player that came out from there with the ball in his hand. The training made them show no mercy towards their own in training sessions and prepared them well for the enemy when they went into real contests. Brian Cody comes out of it all as a kind of ruthless dictator, a conductor driving on his players to beat the lard out of one another for the greater good of Kilkenny hurling and doing it all without any apparent emotion. I can't stop thinking of the Vikings! A powerful read!

The Warrior's Code, Jackie Tyrrell's autobiography (with Christy O'Connor) is published by Trinity Mirror Sports Media at £18.99.

The Gooch by Colm Cooper

Regarded as one of the great footballers of his time, Colm Cooper retired during the year and produced his autobiography, which was published by Transworld Publishers for €20. The holder of five All-Ireland medals and eight All-Stars, he was Kerry's stand-out forward for fifteen years. From a family steeped in Gaelic football, and a core

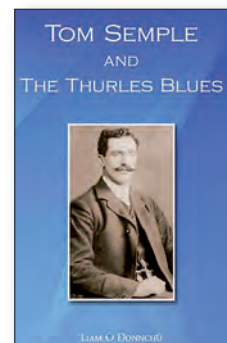
member of the Dr Crokes team, Colm was still in his teens when he first played for Kerry at senior level. Overcoming struggles with injury and personal tragedy, Cooper became one of the GAA's most recognizable and best-loved figures at a time of tumultuous change in the game. According to the publisher's blurb, this is the story of an ordinary man who became an extraordinary footballer.

Tom Semple and the Thurles Blues by Liam Ó Donnchú

Liam Ó Donnchú has had a busy year. His efforts to complete the Thurles Sarsfields Story were derailed in 2013, when he was asked by Tom Semple's son, Martin, to write a biography of his father, the man whose name is indelibly linked with the history of the G.A.A. in Thurles, particularly with the Thurles Blues, and since 1971 given wider recognition with the re-naming of Thurles Sportsfield as Semple Stadium.

This is more than a biography of a very impressive man, who was not only an outstanding hurler, but also a leader of men. It is also a detailed history of the Thurles Blues and their achievements, including pen pictures of the players, the early development of Thurles Sportsfield, Tipperary's involvement in the Pan Celtic Congress in Brussels in 1910 and much more. Together with the history of Thurles Sarsfields, Liam Ó Donnchú thrown a major light on the history of Thurles in the first half of the twentieth century for which everyone is in his debt.

Tom Semple and the Thurles Blue, which extends to over 400 pages in hardcover, was launched by Martin Semple in Thurles Sarsfields Centre on June 13 and retails at €30. It is available at Bookworm and Lár na Páirce, Thurles and from the author.



Atlas of the Irish Revolution by John Crowley, Donal Ó Driscoll and Mike Murphy (eds) and John Borgonovo (assoc. ed.). Published by Cork University Press, €59.

The last book I mention has little to do with the G.A.A. but an awful lot about who we are and how we got here. It is a publishing milestone that covers the history of Ireland from the post-Famine period (includes two great essays from Roscrea man, W. J. Smyth, Emeritus Professor of Geography, U.C.C.) right up to the post-Civil War period. It extends close to 1,000 pages and it is illustrated with hundreds of excellent and original maps, justifying the 'Atlas' part of the title, as well as a multitude of other images. There is a short chapter of five pages by Mike Murphy and the G.A.A. and revolution.

Under Crimblin Hill, Historical Journal of Dunkerrin Parish History Society, Volume I, 2018.

I can't finish without mentioning a new local historical journal, *Under Crimblin Hill*, which has just been published by the Dunkerrin Parish History Society, a bunch of real enthusiasts, but also professional in the quality of their production.

I have only glimpsed through it yet but what immediately caught my eye is an extensive article on one of the great hurlers from the parish, Jeremiah 'Darby' Collison 1889 – 1956 by Eugene Ryan. There's another article on Tim Corcoran, S.J., the noted educationalist and a third on the Life of Joseph Prosser, a native of the parish, who showed extraordinary courage in the Crimean War, for which he was awarded one of the first Victoria Crosses. There is much more besides in a volume that extends to nearly 150 pages. It's the first volume, and I can see many more coming down the track in future years. Congratulations to the editorial team and to all who contributed to this very fine first offering. I expect the book will be available in Nenagh, Roscrea and Thurles, as well as in the parish itself.

