

MICK MACKEY was just fourteen years old when the present Ahane Club was established, at a meeting held on November 22nd, 1926.

He was too young then to play on the team but was often to be seen on the practice ground at Knocksentry. Not until September 1928, however, was Mick first asked to wear the club colours.

It was a memorable occasion, as it marked the opening of one of the first Gaelic Grounds, with the exception of Croke Park, to be completely owned by the G.A.A.

The Ennis Road field was a rough and ready affair as Mick saw it that evening—little different from many of the badly enclosed, ill equipped pitches that then did duty in any of the parishes lucky to have even such an amenity. As his father and grandfather often did in the old days, it was a case of "togging off" by the side of a ditch for Mick and his team mates.

Two junior hurling games served to open the new grounds. In the first, South Liberties proved victors over young Ireland, and Ahane got on the winning road when they gained the verdict over Fedamore.

A PROUD DAY.

It was a proud day for Mick Mackey, as he had long hoped for a place on the team, and felt highly pleased that he had helped in gaining a win that was eagerly sought in Ahane and which marked a turning point in the fortunes of the team.

He still recalls the occasion with particular affection, and tells how Pat O'Reilly, now Chairman of the County Board, was Ahane goalkeeper, whilst Paddy Scanlan and Timmy Ryan made an excellent midfield partnership.

Ahane had their toughest game that season in the next round, and only survived the Bohernmore challenge by a solitary point, 2-1 to 2-0. Opposing Mick Mackey on that occasion, as centre halfback for the losers, was Paddy Keogn, a veteran with a great hurling record, whose son, Jim, helped Limerick win Munster honours last year.

On June 16th, 1929, first championship honours came to Ahane and Mick Mackey, when Kilmeedy were defeated, 5-1 to 2-2, in the 1928 County junior hurling final.

When Ahane beat Cappamore, 1-8 to 1-2, in the Intermediate Championship of 1929, they defeated almost the identical team that contested the 1929 County senior hurling final with Croom later that season.

FAMOUS PARTNERSHIP.

The famous partnership between John and Mick Mackey was introduced on August 4th, 1929, when they helped to defeat Patrickswell in the County Minor Hurling Championship.

The following Sunday they wore the County jersey for the first time, when they were on the Limerick side that played Waterford minors, at Dungarvan.

R. Lyddy, now a member of the Corporation, captained the Limerick team that day, the other members being: P. Condon, M. Cregan, P. O'Shaughnessy, T. Kelly, M. Buckley, J. Ryan, D. Kirby, D. Hurley, J. Mackey, M. Mackey, J. J. Egan, P. McMahon, T. Flavin, M. Hickey.

The Waterford lads won—and went on to take the All-Ireland title, the team including Jacky and Declan Goode, J. Curley, D. Wyse, P. Lannon and F. Pinkert—the latter pair afterwards colleagues of Mick Mackey, as members of the Munster Council G.A.A.

Limerick minor hurling honours come to Ahane on August 3rd, 1930, when they beat Doon, at Cappamore, after a gruelling struggle.

When the intermediate championships were abolished in 1930, Ahane were allowed return to junior ranks, and with successes over Mungret, Ballybrown, Young Ireland, St. Patricks, Caherline, Templeglantine and Brurea, won

By SEAMUS O'CEALLAIGH

HIS FIRST SENIOR MATCH.

Mick's first senior match was against Claughnaun, in a challenge game at the Markets Field, the only occasion he played at that venue, scene of some of his father's greatest triumphs. His opponent was Micky Cross, then at the peak of a great hurling career.

His first championship outing in premier ranks was against Treaty. Played at Cappamore, the Ahane lads won 7-5 to 2-2. An objection threatened to deprive them of victory, but a replay was agreed upon, and this was fixed for the Ennis Road Grounds—the date, August 17th, 1930.

Torrential rain fell all through that game, and All-Ireland hurler Denny Lanigan, who refereed, equipped himself with a huge umbrella, making an unusual sight as he moved up and down the pitch.

Ahane won, and met Claughnaun in the next round at Cappamore, to draw, 3-1 each. They won the replay, at Croom, 6-5 to 1-1—a fine achievement, as Claughnaun included some great hurling figures—J. J. Kinnane and M. Cross, both of whom had represented Ireland against America at the Tailteann Games; Dan Troy, playing his last game after a dozen glorious hurling years, Joe ("Twager") O'Grady and Tom McGrath.

Heavy rains caused the postponement of the divisional final against Young Ireland, but the refixture encountered somewhat similar conditions, and the start was delayed by torrential rain, with intermittent thunder peals and vivid lightning.

A THRILLING GAME.

It proved a thrilling game, full of life, dash and scientific hurling, which Young Ireland won, 5-4 to 5-2, thus inflicting the first championship defeat on Ahane since they struck their winning vein in September, 1928.

That Young Ireland side was probably the greatest ever to represent the famous Club, including as it did, Jim Houlihan and the Mullane brothers of the Clare County team; Tommy O'Brien, who won the first National Hurling League title with Cork; Paddy Kenneally (Cork), Sean Kelly, Jim Fitzgerald, John O'Dowd, the O'Sheas, Jack Cusack, Gerry Markham, Paddy O'Shaughnessy and Bill O'Donoghue, later one of Ireland's best hurling referees.

Mick was a member of the Limerick Junior hurling team that drew with Tipperary 4-7 all, in the Munster Championship of 1930, played at Clonmel. "We were unlucky that day," Mick recalls, "and our forwards missed some great openings."

Tipperary won the re-play, at Limerick, 5-4 to 2-5, and went on to take All-Ireland honours, collecting the Triple Crown, as the minors and seniors also won, the only county ever to accomplish this feat. The Limerick players that day were:—J. Ryan (goal), J. Kirby, J. Fitzgerald, E. O'Brien, J. Kennedy, M. Mackey, W. O'Neill, J. Shanny, W. Ryan, M. Costelloe, Tim Ryan, Martin Ryan, M. Russell, M. Quinlivan, M. Danaher.

WENT AS SPECTATOR BUT PLAYED.

Mick Mackey went as a spectator to Limerick Gaelic Grounds on November 16th, 1930, to see Limerick play Kilkenny in the National Hurling League. The Shannonsiders were short, and he was induced to play, wearing a senior Co. jersey for the first time. Kilkenny included most of the players that afterwards figured in the three great games with Cork for the 1931 All-Ireland title, and won 3-4 to 0-3.

Mick recalls his colleagues of that occasion: Bob McConkey, Micky Fitzgibbon, Tommy O'Brien (Young Ireland); Willie Gleeson, Paddy Clohosey, Tom Shinnery (Fedamore); Chris Ryan, T. Slattery (Dallacree); Tom McCarthy (Kil-

finane), Willie Hannon (Kilmallock), Micky Cross (Claughnaun), Timmy Ryan (Ahane), Ned Cregan (Newcastle West) and Mick Hough (Dublin Young Irelands)—a native of Monegal.

One of his first tournament medals was that secured at Abington, with victories over Ballybricken and Cappamore. The Tournament was organised to aid the Benedictine Fathers of Glenstal Castle, who had some time earlier bought the ancestral home of the Barringtons, for conversion to a monastery.

One of the sweetest Ahane successes of the early club-days was the defeat of the reigning champions, Young Ireland, in the opening round of the 1931 County senior hurling championship. They followed up with victories over Hospital, Treaty and Croom, to win the first of fifteen senior finals in which Mick figured.

Paddy Scanlan captained that winning Ahane team, the other members of which were: D. O'Malley, M. McDonagh, P. Hilliard, J. Mackey, M. Mackey, Anthony Mackey, Tim Ryan, J. Ryan, M. Ryan, E. O'Brien, M. Hickey, P. Joyce, E. McDonagh, M. Quinlan.

The Limerick championship won, Ahane then set about asserting their superiority in the club tournament games which were such a feature of the Munster year at the period.

In the Newport Tournament, for a silver cup and set of gold medals, presented by Very Rev. Father Condon, P.P., Ahane beat Templederry, drew with Newport in the final, but lost the replay, 19 points to 13.

Mick Mackey, speaking of the games, agreed they were right tough ones—hard fought, with no quarter given or looked for. The replay with Newport was a particularly strenuous affair—a battle royal between close neighbours. "Newport had a great team then," Mick said, "but Clonoulty beat them in the Tipperary title race."

When Ahane beat a strong West Limerick selection at the Newcastle West Feis, 5-7 to 3-6, Mick was playing in an unusual position—right half-back.

Ahane figured prominently in the first big effort to raise funds for the development of the Limerick Gaelic Grounds, the organisation of Aonach Kincoira—a joint venture under G.A.A. and Gaelic League auspices that attracted a total attendance of 17,324, with receipts £1,361 17s. 6d.

THE FINAL.

The hurling final for the Aonach trophies resulted in a heavy reverse for Ahane, Newmarket-on-Fergus beating them 7-3 to 2-7.

That defeat was avenged in decisive fashion a little later. Ahane showed brilliant form in beating Toomevara, 2-3 to 1-4, at Ennis Show Grounds in the Maghera Church Tournament semi-final. The Tipperary lads were at the height of their fame and included noted hurlers like Tom O'Meara, Martin Kennedy, Garrett Howard and Jack Gleeson.

Newmarket-on-Fergus opposed them in the final, played at Limerick Gaelic Grounds, which Ahane won, 5-4 to 1-2. That was the first great Ahane tournament success.

Next week I hope to deal with Limerick's rise to inter-county greatness, and the part Mick Mackey played in same.

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