

# No. 176-MICK MACKEY of Ahane (Continued)

IN the opening round of the 1937 Munster Championship. Limerick, short of J. McCarthy, Mick and John Mackey, beat Clare, 5-5 to 4-1.

The Shannonsiders then encountered Waterford, at Clonmel. The game was played on July 4th, 1937, a date that will not be forgotten by Suirside, as it marked the commencement of a new era for Waterford hurling, when the county, after years of earnest endeavour, at last joined the ranks of the top-class hurling counties.

Best man of the thirty that day was John Keane, then a mere youth, who figured in many rare duels with Mick Mackey. To add that he more than held his own with the famous Limerickman is sufficient tribute to his great ability. The newspapers greeted his great display thus: "The fair-haired Mount Sion youth, who shone a few years ago as a minor, was the spanner in the Shannon-side scoring machine. Nimble and fast he was like a man on springs."

Charlie Ware hit a purple patch, crowning with a tremendous display a career of great achievement, whilst Johnnie Fanning, Mick Curley, Jimmie Mountain, Mick Hickey, Christy Moylan, Declan Goode, Willie Barron and Tom Greaney, were others that contributed their share to a great occasion.

## DRAMATIC FINISH.

Paddy Scanlan's name will be forever linked with the securing of Limerick's hardest won success, especially for the three rasping shots he cleared in that many seconds of one of the most dramatic finishes I remember in hurling. Dave Clohessy's swift opening point, his beautiful goal from McMahon's foot pass, and that last wonder goal almost with the final whistle, that turned what seemed certain defeat to a brilliant victory were unforgettable. In the tumult and the cheering, Limerick qualified for their fifth Munster final in a row, 3-4 to 3-2.

Limerick met their Waterloo in that final, played at Cork Athletic Grounds, and in which they were beaten by Tipperary, 6-3 to 4-3. The press reports described it as "one of the greatest hurling matches of recent years," and speaking of Mick Mackey said: "The Limerick captain has played many fine games when on a winning team, but yesterday he was magnificent in defeat."

For one great Limerick caman wielder, it was his last game, for Mickey Cross retired from hurling following this final—bringing to the side line a record of achievement that is not often surpassed.

Johnny Ryan was the star of the

## By SEAMUS O'CEALLAIGH

Tipperary half-back line, in which John Maher also shone. Jimmy Cooney and Jack Gleeson won the bulk of the midfield duels; whilst Jimmy Coffey, "Sweeper" Ryan, Tommy Doyle and Willie O'Donnell were great in attack.

The Premier County lads crowned a fine achievement that season by defeating Kilkenny for the Blue Riband, in the only final played outside of Croke Park since the Noreiders beat them at Cork, for the 1909 title. The venue for the 1937 All-Ireland decider was Killarney.

## NATIONAL LEAGUE CAMPAIGN.

That Limerick were far from a spent force was demonstrated in the subsequent National League campaign. Victories over Waterford (5-5 to 4-1), Cork 3-3 to 3-2), Clare (3-3 to 1-3), and Kilkenny (5-4 to 1-3) qualified them for the final, in which their opponents proved none other than All-Ireland champions, Tipperary.

The pair met at Thurles, on April 24th, 1938, and Limerick won comfortably, 5-2 to 1-1. "Recorder" in "Irish Independent" wrote of that game: "It adds to the merit of Limerick's victory that Tim Ryan, not yet recovered from a late illness turned out, while Mick Mackey, although suffering from a boil on his side did not spare himself during a trying hour."

The attendance at that game was 15,495, and gate receipts, £1,213 14s. 9d.—a record for a National Hurling League final.

The Limerick team on that occasion was: Paddy Scanlan, M. Power, T. McCarthy, M. Kennedy, P. O'Carroll, P. Clohessy, J. Power, T. Ryan, P. Walsh, J. Mackey, M. Mackey, P. Cregan, D. Givens, J. McCarthy, J. Roche.

This victory gave Shannonside its fifth League title in a row, an achievement that no other hurling county has succeeded in approaching.

## WON 58 OUT OF 65 GAMES.

Over the period from October 15th, 1933, when Limerick won its first game of the 1933/4 League campaign, to April 24th, 1938, when the fifth title was secured, the Shannonside hurlers played sixty-five games in Ireland, England and America, against all the great hurling counties. Of these, they won no less than fifty-eight, they drew four and only lost three. That is an achievement that will take some beating!

Six Limerick players figured on the Munster side that beat Leinster, 6-2 to 4-3, in the 1938 Railway Cup Final. They were: P. Scanlan, T. McCarthy, P. Clohessy, T. Ryan, Mick Mackey and John Mackey, who figured as full forward. Jimmy Coffey of Newport, now trainer of the Cappamore lads, also played, and Jack Lynch of Cork, came on as a sub. The "Irish Independent" said the following morning "There was hard hitting in the hurling final, and over vigorous exchanges, in which Ned Wade (Leinster) and Mick Mackey (Munster) filled a leading role, featured the closing stages."

Cork beat Limerick, 5-4 to 2-5, in the opening round of the 1938 Munster Championship, at Thurles, but were themselves beaten by Waterford, at Dungarvan, 5-2 to 1-3, in a drenching downpour. Tipperary beat Clare, at Limerick, but lost on an objection, the "Cooney" case arousing considerable controversy at the time. Waterford won Munster honours, but lost to Dublin in the All-Ireland final.

## THIRD MACKEY IN THE PICTURE.

A third Mackey came into the hurling picture in early 1939, Paddy, brother of Mick and John, who figured as full forward on the Munster team that beat Leinster, 5-6 to 2-4, in the All-Ireland Colleges final. Colleagues on that great Southern side included many who hit the hurling headlines in after years: Dr. Dick Stokes, Vin Baston, Tony Herbert, Harry Gouldsboro', and Kevin McGrath. Full-forward on the Leinster side was none other than the evergreen Nicky Rackard, then a student at St. Kieran's College, Kilkenny.

Paddy Mackey's untimely death

a few years later was a big loss to hurling.

Both John and Mick Mackey were members of the Limerick team that won Munster Junior Football honours in 1939. The brothers, with Jacky Power, starred in the defeat of Cork, at Dromcollogher, 4-6 to 2-9. John and Mick figured together at midfield in the All-Ireland semi-final, at Galway, in which Roscommon beat Limerick, 2-9 to 2-4, after a stirring struggle. A few years later the Western lads were hitting the All-Ireland senior football limelight in Croke Park and captured two All-Ireland crowns in brilliant fashion.

## THE 1939 MUNSTER FINAL.

With victories over Tipperary, 3-3 to 2-0, and Clare, 5-5 to 1-1, Limerick qualified for the 1939 Munster Final v. Cork. Played at Thurles, this meeting attracted 40,986 spectators ("Gate" £2,953), which was ten thousand more than the previous Munster best.

The press said of this match: "A game that will not be forgotten for many a day is but a poor description of a final that must rank as one of the greatest classics ever seen in the South, the issue hanging by a thread for sixty minutes, and one felt sorry that anybody won or lost a struggle that kept the record crowd on their toes for the hour. Level scoring and fluctuating fortunes never left a dull moment, and right up to the last second it was anybody's game. Limerick, holding a point lead, were being hailed as victors as the game entered the last lap, but to dash the Cup from their lips there was a dramatic Cork rally, and a great goal. For a moment there was a lull as the umpires consulted, but when the green flag was raised Cork were Munster champions once more, after eight years of waiting."

Limerick won the Oireachtas Trophy when they beat Kilkenny (All-Ireland champions), 4-4 to 2-5, later that season.

In the opening round of the 1940 Championship, Limerick were held to level scoring by Waterford, at Killarney, 4-2 to 3-5, but won the re-play, at Clonmel, 3-5 to 3-3.

In the Munster Final two meetings were also necessary. Cork and Limerick finished level, 3-6 to 4-3, the first day, but Limerick won a week later, 3-3 to 2-4. They were thrill-packed struggles.

Lining out for a vital championship game the third Sunday in succession, Limerick triumphed over Galway, at Ennis, 3-6 to 0-5, and the way was clear for another All-Ireland final, with Kilkenny once more providing the opposition.

For the second time, Mick Mackey captained an All-Ireland side when he led Limerick to victory, 3-7 to 1-7, before a crowd of 49,260, a great muster under war time conditions.

## THE WAY HE TOOK!

A press report of that game had this to say of the Limerick skipper: "Twelve stone seven of dynamic, devastating energy, Mick Mackey didn't bother to run rings round the Kilkenny defence. The straight line, shortest distance between any two points, was the way he took, with the ball magnetised to his hurley, brushing aside the opposition by sheer force of personality."

Limerick also won All-Ireland minor hurling honours that day, and the double success aroused remarkable enthusiasm.

The homecoming of the teams was a memorable event. Army lorries decorated with the Limerick colours carried the members of the teams at the head of a procession, escorted by six bands, through streets crowded with cheering people.

Very Rev. E. Canon Punch, P.P., Chairman of the County Board, thanking the populace for their reception of the players, said that the like of it had not been seen in the city for probably a hundred years.

The appearance of Mick Mackey, holding the All-Ireland Cup aloft, was greeted with unbounded enthusiasm. There was tremendous cheering as he addressed the huge gathering, saying they were glad to be able to live up to the high ideals of the G.A.A., and were exceedingly proud of their win over a great Kilkenny team.

Part 9

1956