

Pat Walsh

In the early days of the GAA football was the dominant sport in Dunnamaggin parish just as it was in most of county Kilkenny. The first hurling game played hereabouts was the county final of 1890 which was hosted by Kells Football Club. When Callan played Raheen in Kilmoganny in February 1897 the Journal reporter described it as "a new game at Kilmoganny". As an eleven year old Pat Walsh probably went to see the match.

Born on 4 May 1887, Pat was the son of Matthew Walsh who hailed originally from Newmarket and Mary O'Neill the daughter of a local publican. He attended Baursoob school, Kells N.S. and Callan C.B.S. He is described in his obituary as the founder of Dunnamaggin hurling club.

Pat played hurling and football with the Glory Rovers and most likely played on the first hurling team that represented Dunnamaggin. He would have been twenty-three years of age in June 1910 when Dunnamaggin hosted a tournament which included two hurling matches - a first round junior hurling championship game between Piltown and James Stephens, and a friendly hurling match between Dunnamaggin and Seven Houses. The hurling match was probably in preparation for Dunnamaggin's first round junior hurling championship game against Lodgepark (Freshford) in Kilkenny fixed for 26 June. There is no record of how Dunnamaggin fared in this game. Pat is said to have lead out the hurling team that played Ahenure in Dunnamaggin on Gaelic Sunday 1918 in protest against the policy of the British government towards the GAA.

Pat Walsh was very active in the cause of the GAA, encouraging hurling in the area, training children, representing Glory Rovers at the Southern Board and Co. Board meetings and travelling by bicycle to follow Kilkenny hurling teams in the heady days of their many All-Ireland wins between 1904 and 1913. He used to walk to Kilkenny for county board meetings and the locals used to meet him in Kells on the way home to hear the news.

He was also a referee - was secretary of the Dunnamaggin branch of the Irish Volunteers formed in 1914 and later was a joint founder of the local Sinn Fein club at Dunnamaggin. An enthusiast for his native language, he was a member of Dunnamaggin Gaelic League and he liked to use his Irish name.

He was heavily involved in the War of Independence, being head of the Dunnamaggin company activities. He was arrested for possessing seditious literature on 8 December 1920 and spent two months in Waterford jail. He escaped capture in Haggard in 1921 and joined Hogan's column for a planned attack on the Black and Tans in Kilmanagh in May 1921. The attack did not materialise and in a subsequent engagement in Knocknagress near Woodsgift he was severely wounded. He was badly treated, given no assistance, and died in Cahir some days later. He was a great loss to the GAA in Dunnamaggin.

F.Ó.F.

Do You Remember?

Irish Press, 24 July 1936: An old Wexford man still living says that in his youth "there were no goal posts, but a twig was bent with its ends in the earth, like an arch, to serve as a goal. There was one of these 'bows' at each end of the field, and a 'bowman' to defend it.