

## New Clubs and Teams

The autumn of 1893 saw a modest revival in GAA activity in Kilkenny as elsewhere. Teams began to reorganize and to play tournaments and friendlies. In Kells athletic meetings, cycle races, cricket games and terrier coursing meetings continued to dominate the sporting calendar. Kells terrier coursing club held its fifth annual meeting in December 1895. The president of the club was none other than Rory O'Gorman, the hon. sec., T.J. Shirley. The coursing meeting also featured a tug-of-war open to all Gaelic teams in the county and the slinging of the 56lb weight.

The foundation of a second club in the parish in 1896 - Dunnamaggin Football Club - coincided with a marked revival in the fortunes of the GAA nationwide. The team was known as the Glory Rovers. It was common at that time for teams to have sobriquets, and the local team took its name from the river Glory that winds its way through the parish. The river was probably called after the O'Gloiairn tribe that once inhabited the area.

Early in March 1896 Kells and Dunnamaggin met in a 'local derby' that took place in the "Gaelic Ground at Dunnamaggin". The Rovers were to have a glorious debut. At half-time they led by 1-5 to 0-2. In the end they won by the mammoth score of 8-6 to 0-2. The teams were: Glory Rovers: J. Brennan, J. Noonan, P. Moore, R. Braithwaite, P. Fleming, E. Hennessy, ?. Viennard, P. Delaney, M. Neill, R. Moore, J. Duncan, T. Fitzpatrick; Kells, J. Bowe, D. Molloy, M. McGuinness, J. Hurley, W. Hurley, A. Carthy, J. Comerford, J. Grace, H. Meighan, M. Meighan, P. Cleere, J. Pender, J. Dalton, J. Grace, P. Carroll, W. Lalor, J. Lalor.

In March Kells and Dunnamaggin were in action in a football tournament held in Callan. The "most conspicuous feature" of the game between Dunnamaggin and Kilbride noticed by the GAA correspondent was "the series of pugilistic encounters that punctuated the game at regular intervals". Dunnamaggin won by 0-3 to 0-2. The team was: John Brennan (captain), J. Mullaly, T. Shea, J. Shea, P. Morrissey, P. Dunphy, N. Shea, J. Connelly, T. Brennan, J. Cahill, N. Purcell, R. Ryan, D. Collins, D. Cahill, D. Brennan, J. Brennan. The first encounter between Dunnamaggin and Newmarket took place at the end of the month and turned out to be a positive one for the Rovers who won by 1-1 to 0-5. It was to be the first of many close encounters between near neighbours over the years.

In February Kells ran a football tournament that saw a new team from the parish take the field, namely, Bournamont (Ballyhall). Their debut was an inauspicious one, for Grange (Danesfort) beat them by three points to nil. They do not seem to have graced the playing fields again.

Football was still the dominant sport in Kilkenny at this time and the Kilkenny Journal in March 1896 lamented the decline in the popularity of hurling. But not all was well in the football arena. In the wake of one of the many tournaments held that year the paper claimed that in some games players were evidently of the opinion that "to excel in wrestling was a far better and a more necessary qualification than skill in kicking the ball". Kells were beaten in the football championship that year by Callan in a well-contested game. In November Kells hosted a local tournament game in which Kells Jolly Jokers played Dunnamaggin Glory Rovers.

That month saw a third parish team enter the lists when Kilmoganny Whites and Blues lined out against Coolagh. This was the first team to play for Kilmoganny "under Gaelic Rules". They were beaten by Coolagh 1-2 to 0-0

In February 1897 championship Kells met the city team Green Rovers in "Kells Medal Tournament". Rovers won the day and were to win the championship. Tournaments continued to be a major feature of GAA activity in the parish in that year. Dunnamaggin Football Club organized a "great Gaelic Tournament" with a "splendid set of jerseys" as the prize. The entry fee was two shillings. A gold and silver medal tournament: was held in Kilmoganny which included a hurling match between Callan and Raheen. This, according to the Journal, was "a new game at Kilmoganny". A tournament held in Kells featured the rising and striking of the hurling ball and football place kick.

April 1898 saw Kilmoganny take on Kilkenny Green Rovers on the Fair Green in Callan.. In a game that was "splendidly fought" the Kilkenny Rovers gained a hard fought victory over Kilmoganny by 0-7 to 0-5. On 3 July Kilmoganny (Rovers) played Coolagh (Robert Emmets) in Kilmoganny and despite the efforts of W. Crowley, Doran and Donovan Coolagh carried the day by 1-5 to 0-2.

Gaelic games appear to have been at a low ebb at this time in the area and no representative from the parish attended the county convention of April 1899. There is no indication that teams from the parish played in tournaments either. Cricket seems to have been the most popular sport in the area at the time. Perhaps the games were overshadowed by political events and the efforts to get Kells Dairy Co-operative off the ground. These events did not prevent Newtown GAA Club from organizing a football tournament in February 1899 nor the sports enthusiasts of Newtown from holding a sports under GAA rules in Mockler's field on 30 April with Rory O'Gorman and John F. Drennan to the fore in the organization.

## The New Century

The parish does not seem to have been represented in the championship of 1900 either, but later that year Kells Football Club was reorganized with D.J. Gorey as honorary secretary. In a St. Stephen's Day tournament in Sevenhouses Kells defeated Grange. A tug-o-war contest was held afterwards.

The Irish language lobby in the GAA was also gaining strength at this time. At the county convention at which D.J. Gorey represented Kells, a motion was passed that the county secretary be instructed to give a complete list of hurling and football terms printed in Irish with phonetic rendering and literal translation to all the clubs in the county. It was also decided that the affiliation charge for clubs would be £1.

On 14 July 1901 Kells Idolators, as they were now called, played Knocktopher in Callan. They were unfortunate to meet such a good team so early in the championship. Although they played with pluck and dash, the Kells team had had little practice and lined out without seven of their original team. Knocktopher easily won and went on to win the county championship. The following year Kells failed to raise a flag against Kilmacow. Kells still had a bit or reorganizing to do.

That year saw the emergence of the great Lamogue team that was to win four championships in a row from 1902 to 1905. They beat Tullogher in the first two, Mullinavat and Harristown in the others. Paddy O'Neill and Jim 'Dara' Donovan were stars of this great team which performed extremely well in the Leinster championship, reaching the final on three occasions.

Kells and Cotterstown met in the following year's championship in what proved to be a rather incident packed game. With the scores level early in the second half the spectators, according to the Journal reporter, "encroached to a great extent on the grounds marked off for play, and it was almost impossible for either party to know whether the ball was inside or outside the enclosure". The game continued with points exchanged game until "a prominent member of the Council" who was playing for Kells struck an opposing player. A "free fight" ensued between the combatants. The Cotterstown Gaels refused to continue the match, stating that such a 'scene' was a gross infringement of the rules and was more in keeping with the 'western tribes' than that of a civilised community. Kells won the replayed fixture and went on to contest the third round. There they met the county champions Lamogue who proved to be their nemesis, beating them by 2-3 to 1-1.

#### Graigue Harpers

July 1904 saw Dunnamaggin meet a new team in the championship - Graigue Harpers. The parish rule seemed to have well and truly gone as the team from Graigue which is in Callan parish but bordering Dunnamaggin and Windgap included players from Graigue, Kilmoganny and Croughtabeg. The game was played in Cotterstown and was won by Graigue, captained by J. Bergin of Croughtabeg. Other members of the team were T. Power, Graigue, J. Burke, M. Dwyer, Edward Moran of Kilmoganny, Jim Cahill, W. Ryan, J. Kearns, Graigue, W. Moran (brother of Edward), Jim O'Leary, Robert Moore and Mathew Moore of Kilmoganny, Patsy Whelan (Street) , Matt Doran, Currahill, Phil Moore, Bartley and Mick Farrell (Clone). They were beaten by Lamogue at Cotterstown in the second round .

Kells again met Cotterstown, this time at Kilmanagh in July. Cotterstown won but Kells objected that Cotterstown had illegal players and a replay was ordered, the game to be played without the "alleged illegal players". This was played at the Gaelic Grounds, Assylum Lane, Kilkenny, on 27 November. Cotterstown led at the break by 0-4 to 0-1 and with fifteen minutes left appeared to have the game won. But Kells staged a great recovery, and two goals saw them triumph with the score 2-1 to 0-4.

At the end of the month the championship game between Callan and Lamogue was played as part of a "monster Gaelic tournament" held in Dunnamaggin which included a juvenile between Kilmoganny and Knocktopher. Hugginstown fife and drum band was to attend. The close ties between Lamogue and Kilmoganny were evident when Lamogue staged a hurling and football tournament in Kilmoganny in aid of Kilmoganny and Blackbog Coursing Club.

Having beaten Cotterstown in the championship Kells had to face county champions Lamogue in the semi-final. The game was fixed for Piltown on February, but as Lamogue who were representing Kilkenny were training for their match with Kildare in the Leinster final on 26 February

they "respectfully declined" to play. Kells, to their credit, "remained at home" and did not take a walkover, as they were entitled to do but agreed to a deferral.

The two teams eventually met in Dunnamaggin on 16 April in a game which from start to finish was both fast and exciting, and not lacking in combination. The teams were level at half time, 1-1 each. Gorey scored the goal for Kells who narrowly missed several scores. Lamogue began the second half well and quickly scored a goal and a point. Kells failed to score and Lamogue added a point before the close to emerge winners on the score 2-3 to 1-1. The teams were:

Kells: D.J. Gorey (capt.), Glendon, R. Cass, E. Cass, Carroll, Hoyne, Gorey, Carr, Brady, Joe Marnell, Kelly, J. Marnell, Croke, Dalton, Griffin (goal);

Lamogue: M. Landy (capt.), P. Conway, Maher, E. Conway, Fitzpatrick, Purcell, Larry Comerford, Michael O'Neill, Dara Donovan, Paddy O'Neill, J. McCann, McGrath, Davis, Hyland, McCann. Lamogue went on to beat Mullinavat in the final later that month.

The following year Kells had a titanic struggle with Kilmacow in the first round of the 1905 championship. It took three games to resolve the issue. Objections to illegal players after the first two games and an appeal to the Leinster Council led to the third meeting of the two in April 1906. The game marked the GAA's return to St. James's Park after a long break. Intermittent showers made underfoot conditions difficult and the game suffered as a spectacle. The referee was Fox Maher. Kells captained by D.J. Gorey had the better of the exchanges in the first half and led by 1-1 to 0-1 at half-time. Kells were doing well in the second when Kilmacow attacked suddenly, disconcerting the Kells men who offered practically no defence. "The goal keeper adopted the rather desperate expedient of leaving his place and in rolled the ball unobstructed". Kells recovered, however, and went on to win the game, 1-6 to 1-1. The Kells team was: D.J. Gorey (captain), J. Glendon, E. Cass, R. Cass, M. Carroll, J. Carroll, J. Hoyne, D. Gorey, E. Power, J. O'Grady, D. Stapleton, R. Norris, J. Bove, R. Dalton, Jer Marnell, John Corr, P. Millea.

In the second round of the championship Kells met Lamogue. The game was played on 6 May and according to one correspondent (KJ) was "very rough". Level at half-time 1-2 each, Lamogue went on to win by eight points. Larry Comerford reportedly had his arm broken and "Butcher" Fitzpatrick his wrist. But Fitzpatrick was not too badly injured for he was on the field when Lamogue played Hugginstown in Kells on 27 May. Lamogue won the game and went on to win the championship again, beating Harristown in the final.

The 1906 championship was to be Kells' final attempt at winning a senior crown. In a game played in Kilmoganny on 12 August they beat Mullinavat. With Lamogue already beaten they must have thought that they had a very good chance of carrying off the cup for the first time. Alas, in the final, played on 5 May 1907, they were beaten by Glenmore, 2-2 to 1-2. Lack of fitness was the attributed cause of their failure. Glenmore's win was the source of much controversy. Kilmacow had objected to the composition of their team in an earlier round and had appealed the county board decision to the Leinster Council. In some quarters it was felt that Kells should be declared the real champions. At a meeting of the county board in February 1908 its chairman D.J. Gorey, speaking also on behalf of Kells, directed that the medals be sent to Glenmore.

Kilmoganny entered a team in the 1907 senior championship. Having got through the first round they faced a strong Miners' team in the second played on 5 October 1907. The Miners, strengthened by Dara Donovan and Paddy Neill who had transferred to them from Lamogue won the game and went on to beat Knocktopher in the final (0-7 to 0-4). There is no record of Kells participating in the senior championship that year. Perhaps they were distracted by the previous year's controversy. A selection from Kells did play John Hoyne's Good Men and True in May. The result was a draw, 1-4 to 2-1.

The summer of 1908 saw a succession of Athletic meetings held under GAA rules in or about Kells - Stoneyford, Callan, Ballyhendricken, Kells, Knocktopher, Thomastown, Kilkenny, with Harry Meighan the star of the longer races.

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