

YEARS OF GLORY



The Gort team of the era. Front row: Jim Stanford, Mickey Stack, t.), Martin Farrell, Pat Cooke. 3rd row: Mick Nelly, Hugh Courtney, Josie Kelly, Pat Hayes, John Spelman, Micky Hayes, John Brennan and Micky Deeley. 4th row: T. Nestor, Micky Killilea, Paddy Joe Cooney, Josie Fahy and Matt Halvey.

A. Brennan

Most people will associate 1914 and 1916 with world War I and the Easter Rising, few will associate it as the most successful period in the history of Gort G.A.A. Despite the turbulence of the time, Gort won the Senior Championship in 1914 and 1916 and only lost their crown on an objection in 1915. This achievement is all the more noteworthy considering with the exception of 1934, the home team have failed to regain the championship.

Why have the home club failed to win more County Championships in the intervening years. This question becomes all the more baffling when one considers the exceptional players and teams representing the Club through the years.

No doubt many will point to emigration but then every club in the county suffered from emigration. A more satisfactory answer to this question may be obtained indirectly by looking more closely at the earlier team.

The late Jack Fahy was a member of the early team, with his passing we have lost his acquaintance with those early matches and events.

Some years before his death I heard Jack reminising on the "good team" as he referred to it and the names associated with it.

EARLY TEAM

The team consisted of players living in the town and Ballybane. At this stage both Kiltartan and Kilmacduagh had their own clubs. Jack, while living in Kilbeacanty, choose to play his hurling with Gort.

To the best of my memory, he mentioned the following as the first

fifteen. In goal, Coleman Quinn; Full backs Jim Stankford, Pat Hayes and Matt Halvey; Half backs Josie Fahy, Jack himself and Joe Stankford. At centre field team captain John Hayes and Pat Cooke. Half forwards B. Stack, S. Stack and P. Joe Cooney. Full forwards Tom Mac, John Quinn and Eddie Nestor. The subs being Michael Hayes, J. Spelman and M. Farrell.

By any standards this was a very formidable side. Proof of their ability can be gaged when they lost by a mere 2 points in a challenge match against the All Ireland, winning Clare team of 1914. According to Jack Fahy they were "short Pat Cooke the same day".

The team possessed strength and ability while team work was perfected through constant practice. "There was nothing else to do", said Jack, "the number of dances was limited while transport was inefficient and slow." In addition the competitive spirit was cultivated through frequent matches, tournaments were held regularly, Tubber being a popular venue at the time.

CLUB OFFICIALS

Another feature in the club success was the high standard of co-operation achieved through the club administration. Among the officials were John Brennan who was both President and Trainer, James Cunningham, Secretary and Jack Fahy, Treasurer.

An indication of the discipline

expected is evident from an incident related by Jack Fahy.

"On one occasion the team was travelling by sidecar to Russane, where they were to play Kilbeacanty. When John Brennan, who by a number of accounts possessed a direct manner, discovered one or two of the team indulging in a quiet drink. The cavalcade was immediately halted, the bottles handed over and duly smashed against the wall. Needless to say, unlike Fr. Matthew this policy was not carried out for the glory of God but for the glory of the club.

BREAK UP

And glory they certainly achieved. They beat Tynagh and Woodford in the 1914 and 1916 finals respectively. Not bad for a club founded in 1910.

The teams sudden rise to fame was paralled by its sudden break up. The reasons were largely political and economic. The consequences of the Rising in 1916 spread through the whole of Ireland, intensifying the Republican cause but also creating division, while some members of the team emigrated to America.

But then if the 'Lament for Tommy Daly' is anything to go by they may all meet again.

*Beyond this place of toil and tears
Beyond this vale of woe
There is a spot in Paradise
Where all the burlers go.
And there in prime their goalie
Will race across the sod
To thrill our dead forefathers
On the level lawns of God.*