

Centenary of Gaelic Sunday

By Seamus J. King

Gaelic Sunday was the response of the G.A.A. to a proclamation by the British authorities early in July 1918 prohibiting all 'meetings, assemblies, or processions in public places' without written authorisation from the police'.

The G.A.A. responded in two ways. It forbade any club or part of the G.A.A. body to apply for a permit to play a game, 'breaches of which were to be punishable by automatic and indefinite suspension'.

More dramatically the G.A.A.'s resistance went beyond non-compliance to actual defiance of the proclamation. County Boards were instructed to hold a meeting of their club delegates with a view to organising a program of club matches to be held on August 4th. All these games were to start simultaneously at 3 pm and nowhere was a permit to be sought.

The press reported at the time that about 1,500 hurling, football and camogie matches were scheduled, that over 50,000 players were expected to participate and that many thousands more would turn out to watch.

The numbers that participated may not have been as great as the weather turned out to be atrocious. The football match planned for Castlegrace against Cahir was abandoned owing to the inclemency of the weather.

Newspaper reports

The Nationalist of August 7, 1918 reported that the match between Boherlahan and Cashel did go ahead. The local correspondent reported that 'notwithstanding the inclement nature of the afternoon a goodly muster foregathered in the sports field to witness the contest, which turned out as expected in an easy win for the All-Ireland champions'.

Neither team was at full strength, owing to the prevalence of 'flu' amongst them, but both fifteens gave a good exhibition of the national game. The result was: Boherlahan 5 goals Cashel 1 goal 2 points. Mr J. Cahill, U.C, P.L.G., Cashel refereed.

'The Cashel Brass Band played to the grounds, where an excellent musical selection was discoursed. The band returned playing an inspiring national air. Throughout the entire proceedings there was nothing but perfect good order, and not an unseemly incident was associated with the festival. The local police were passive onlookers, and they did not in the least interfere with the match.'

The last sentence sums up the success of the G.A.A. defiance. There was no showdown between the British authorities and the G.A.A. as had been expected. The authorities realised the impossibility of policing so many events and relented beforehand 'a circular being sent out to the police to the effect that Gaelic games were no longer to be considered to fall under the terms of the July 4th proclamation.'

Participation in County Tipperary

The Nationalist reported on August 7 that 12 games were played between the South division clubs, about 14 in the Mid division and 16 in the North. (There was no West division at the time.)

The report continued: 'At Ballyfowloo, Clonmel hurlers defeated

Ballyfowloo after a well-fought contest by 3 goals to 1 point..

'At Kilcash, Clonmel footballers went down before the home team after 25 minutes play by 2 points to 1 point. The heavy rain greatly interfered with the game, which was abandoned after 25 minutes.'

Another match was played at Ballydine. The contestants were Golden and Ballydine. The newspaper report described the match as 'a noteworthy exhibition of good feeling.' Few spectators were present and the match ended in a draw. The referee on the occasion was P. Hayes, Ballydine

The paper reported that the matches went off without difficulty 'in no case was there any interference with the players though youths of 9 and 10 years of age were arrested for doing the same thing about a week before.'

The Midland Tribune gave an extensive report of G.A.A. activity on the day in North Tipperary. Written by 'The Whip', the writer screams Victory! at the beginning of his column and writes euphorically on how the Gaels of the division defied the Government directive on playing games. He continued: 'The Gaels of North Tipp, I am glad to say, acted as one man, and their display on Sunday last was one to be proud of. Fourteen matches was no small task, and the fact that they were all carried out shows the loyalty and patriotism of the Gaels of this sporting district.'

He goes on to give a list of the games played: Killadangan v Ardcroney at Ardcroney; Finnoe v Kilbarron at Finnoe; Abbeyville v Eglishe and Lorrha v Glenahilty at Abbeyville; Roscrea v Coolderry at Roscrea; Toomevara v Moneygall at Park; Toomevara v Gurtagarry at Gurtagarry; Ballymackey v Nenagh at Kilruane; Ballina v Ballywilliam; Newport v Birdhill; Portroe v Garrykennedy; Shalee v Foilnamuck; Templederry v Curreeney; Newport Shamrocks v Ballinahinch.

No Interference

'The Whip' continued his report: 'In only one case, as far as I can learn, was there anything like interference, and that was in Kilruane, where the local police sergeant demanded admission, but did not consider it worth fourpence of his money. He took the name and address of the young man, who refused him admission without the payment of fourpence, and then he viewed the proceedings over the ditch.'

'The Whip' attended the match between Nenagh and Ballymackey at Kilruane. The posters had stated Nenagh as the venue and this inconvenienced the writer, who walked the railway line to get there, but was late arriving. He added that five policemen were also inconvenienced and took up positions at the Show Grounds before the time advertised for the match. The game at Kilruane turned out not to be up 'to All-Ireland standard, or even championship standard, but nonetheless, the game was a good one, and well worth fourpence of anybody's money, even Sergeant O'Donnell's' The result was a draw, Nenagh 3-3 Ballymackey 2-5.

I couldn't find a detailed report of what teams played in the 14 matches in the Mid division. *The Tipperary Star* report for August 10 is unsatisfactory, lacking in detail. All it carries is a generic report of what happened in the county without any specific information relating to the Mid division. Perhaps, someone reading this may be able to fill in the details.