

BANDON AC

Billy Good

The existing Bandon club was founded on 30th January 1964. At the turn of the century there was also a club known as Bandon AC which was a combination of the Catholic Young Men's Society and the Gaelic Athletic Association and this club continued until lapsing during the emergency years.

In 1952 the Knocknacurra Club was revived after a lapse of some years and this club promoted the sport and sports meetings in the town during the following years. The Hales family of Knocknacurra, of which both Tom and Willie were prominent officials in the club - and competitors in their younger years, and their brother Bob who was an Irish international miler in 1911 and 1912, later becoming involved in coaching, together with the Nolan family of Knockroe of which Bill was an Irish international mile champion in 1931 and narrowly missed selection to the Irish team for the 1932 Olympics. Another prominent Irish international from the area was Patsy O'Flynn in 1913 and who was later to represent the U.S.A. in the 1920 Antwerp Olympics, finishing second in the 3,000m steeplechase. John Barrett, John Joe O'Mahony, Paddy Brennan and George Brennan were to give the first introduction to the sport to many of the founder members of Bandon AC.

The foundation stone of the club was laid at the annual general meeting of the Knocknacurra club in January 1964 where the majority of the outgoing officers were from the town. It was the intention among some members to move a motion that the club be renamed Bandon. Before this could be done the President, Tom Hales, suggested that the Bandon membership was strong enough to form a club of its own. The established members of Knocknacurra then withdrew to continue their activities as before. Those who remained decided to hold an open meeting in the old Boys' Club premises in North Main Street on January 30th.

At that meeting a full officer Board and committee was elected and affiliated to the Cork County Board (NACAI). At a board meeting held on 6th February 1964 in the GAA rooms, Cook Street Cork, for which the affiliation fee was £2 Guineas, the club was registered as St. Patricks AC. The name was inspired by the statue of the national saint in the room where the inaugural meeting was held - the name was subsequently changed to Bandon AC in 1966.

The first officers and committee of the club were -

President: George Bennett, Vice President: Fr. Liam Ahern (presently parish priest in Kilbriann) and Wm. Good (Snr)
Chairman: John Desmond, Vice Chairman: James Kearney, Hon. Secretary: John Byrne, Assistant Hon. Secretary: Denis Galvin, Hon. Tres: Eddie Cullony, Assistant Hon. Tres: John Lynch and PRO: Richard McSweeney.

Committee: Donough Coughlan, Billy Good, Sean Pierce, Sean Hyde, J.J. Kearney, Tim Quill, Donnie O'Brien, Diarmuid O'Donoghue, Michael Kearney, John Dromey, Willie Creedon, Peter Harrington, Liam Deasy, Sean O'Reilly, Eric Good, Michael Lawton and Anthony McCarthy.

Delegates to County Board: John Dromey and Willie Creedon. Ten of the above committee were active senior athletes with Knocknacurra so a transfer was necessary. As the transfer date was October 1st annually, the then County Board would not approve despite the fact that the members were joining a newly formed club. It was then appealed to the Munster Council. A meeting of which was held in Croom, Co. Limerick on Sunday 8th March 1964 - after the Munster cross-country Championships. There was much deliberation after which the council agreed the transfer on the technicality that the previous club had not at that point in time registered for the current year.

It was not long before success found its way to the club. On February 16th, 1964 at the juvenile cross-country Championships at Ballymartle the club's under 14 boys team took the honours in bringing the first county title to the club. The winning members of that team were Martin Desmond, Paddy Desmond (both nephews of the chairman), Danny Buckley, Donie Morgan, Derry O'Sullivan, Danny Kissane and Brendan Crowley (the present club secretary), who in 1974 gained senior international honours in the 400 metres.

The first County title medal in senior competition was won by Eddie Culloty (club treasurer) in taking the 56lbs for distance at the Novice Championships that year one which also saw Billy Good take the 800m novice title, whilst the first all Ireland medal for the club was won by Willie Creedon at the 1964 championships held in Gorey. Willie finished second in the long jump - beaten by three quarters of an inch / two centimetres - by the national champion Sean O'Dwyer of Ardroom.

The first sports meeting promoted by the club was an inter-schools competition for the post-primary schools. The Patton Trophy was presented to the overall winning school. This was held on Friday evening, 22nd May 1964, in the Charlie Hurley Park, followed on the Sunday - May 24th - with the Bandon open sports. The clubs athletes were very active during the 1964 track and field season competition at such "meets" as Caheragh, Annahadown, Nadd, Skibbereen, Nohoval, Flower Lodge, Millstreet, Blarney, Banteer and Youghal, with their share of success.

The club's first venture into the promotion of cross country was the county novice on 13th December 1964 over the Kilbeg course by kind permission of the O'Brien family. John Lynch the best of the club runners on the day. The club has promoted many cross country fixtures since - at Monorone, Clancoolbeg, Upton, Castlebernard and Callatrity. The latter is the present course in use and is on the lands of Denis Collins, the present club president who was the county senior cross country champion in 1955.

In 1965 two long standing associations with the club was formed - both Tom O'Neill and his son, Diarmuid became members. Tom became president soon afterwards and was looked upon as the father figure of the club until his death. Diarmuid is presently an honorary life member of the club. The other association was the transferring of Tadgh Twomey to the club being a member until his retirement in the early 'eighties.

Tadgh won no fewer than 33 national championship titles.

In 1966 the Sligo born Darrara agricultural student Michael Keane transferred to the club and in that year he won the 60 yards dash at the National Championships in Banteer. This completed a hat trick - as he had also won this event in 1964 and 1965. Michael also took a silver in the 100 yards at the same 1964 Championships. The following year whilst attempting to repeat his 60 yard title he had to withdraw from the final due to injury, after winning his heat in 6.3 seconds. That same year the Dagg Trophy was won for the first time and the club promoted the Munster track and field championships for the first time in the Charlie Hurley Park.

In 1966 the first official from the club to be appointed to the County Board was John Byrne and in later years further club members to serve on the County Board were Chris Warren, Ben Sheehan, Diarmuid O'Neill, Billy Good, Aidan Donnelly, Brendan Crowley and Michael Quinlan.

The following year saw the club take the initiative in calling a public meeting, at the Devonshire Arms Hotel on December 11th. This was to obtain views of the locals on the Town Park, as the club had applied to the Town Commissioners for a portion of the ground for use as an athletic track. The notice of the meeting was signed by the Chairman, Billy Good and the Secretary, Diarmuid O'Neill.

The result of that meeting can be seen today with the amount of development that has taken place over the years. The club held the Southern Region track and field Championships on the new track in both 1978 and 1979. This park was once described in a letter to the press - in 1966 - somewhat disparagingly. "The Name Town Park seems grand on paper but this so called park is a piece of waste hill covered with bones and rusty tin-cans - a grand place for a football match or a cycle race, it is also the official camping ground for tinkers".

A lot of progress has been made since work commenced in 1973, once legal difficulties were sorted out and trustees appointed. At present further development is on-going.

In 1967 and 1969 the McAuliffe Trophy for the most successful county at the National Juvenile track and field Championships was won by Cork. Contributing in no small way to the success of 1967 were Bertie Smith, John Sheehan and John Coakley. The trophy was in fact shared with Dublin in that year, whilst in 1969 contributing no less than two-thirds of the points total for outright winning were John Wilmot, Mary Ryan, John Stone, Ann Duggan and Robert Wilmot.

In 1969 the clubs first international honours were achieved by Roger Kingston (junior) Valerie Shortland and Bertie Smith (both schools). The club had to wait until 1974 for its first senior international - Brendan Crowley, who competed for Ireland against Iceland and Portugal. Brendan was followed in the international trail by John Sheehan, Catherine Burke, Fiona Connolly, Carmel McCarthy, Cormac O'Connor, Michael Coakley and more recently by Paul Kelleher.

Athletes who were prominent during the 'sixties included John Droney, Willie Creedon, Tadgh Twomey, Denis Twomey, Eddie

Culloty, Billy Good, Donagh Coughlan, Michael Keane, Dan Lynch, Michael Larkin, Bertie Smith, Sean Ryan, James Murphy, Roger Kingston, Mary Ryan, Valerie Shortland, Nora Coughlan, Mary Deasy, Mairead O'Neill, Billy Roycroft, Deirdre Sheehan, Ann O'Riordan, Ann Kelly, Catherine Wilmot, Ann Duggan, Ann Sheehan, John Stone, John Sheehan, Jimmy Sheehan, Robert Wilmot, Mary O'Halloran, Joe Morgan, Roger Patterson, Victor Gash, Joe O'Sullivan, Jim Good, Jerry Canniffe, Gerard O'Mahony, Eileen Duggan, Rose Lehane, Catherine O'Reilly, Ann Canniffe, Christina Walsh, Margaret Duggan, Catherine O'Connor, Mary O'Sullivan, Pa Ryan, Liam O'Reilly, Charles Ryan, John O'Sullivan, Margaret O'Sullivan, Brendan Wilmot, Anita Ryan, Eugene McCarthy, James Wilmot and Noelle Casey to name but a few.

The 'seventies saw the club prosper with its members continuing to be successful at divisional, county, regional and national level. The Taylor-Keith Trophy for the best overall club in the county was won on four occasions during this decade - in 1974, 1975, 1978 and 1979. The Dag trophy was won for a second time in 1974.

In 1979 at Upton, the club won the first of its two County men's Novice cross-country Championships - this after overcoming the firm favourites Leevale. The winning team was John Hurley, Joe O'Sullivan, Willie Grainger and Der McCarthy. In the same year Elizabeth Howe and Ann Kelly were members of the Carbery team that won the county senior women's title for the first time. The other novice winning success was in 1986 when the winning team was Tim Lucey, Cormac O'Connor, Ger Daly, James Daly and Ian Harpur.

In 1974 Tadhg Twomey set an new Irish record for the 56lbs over the bar event, breaking Ned Tobin's long standing record. He had been close on a few earlier occasions but the record was then not ratified due to technicalities.

During the 'seventies athletes to the fore included Brendan Crowley, Gerard Coughlan, Tadhg Twomey, Dan Lynch, Pat O'Donovan, Patrick McCarthy, John Stallard, Pádraigh Haydon, Finbarr Willmot, Liam Chambers, Michael O'Reilly, Michael Burke, John Roche, Ann Murphy, Anne O'Mahony, Joy Bennett, Joy Good, Ann Sheehan, John Sheehan, Michael Lawson, Brendan Hurley, Jimmy Sheehan, Paudie O'Riordan, Fr Michael Hurley, Bertie Smith, Liam O'Reilly, Richard Conroy, Ray Payne, Michael Lehane, Gerard Crowley, P.J.O'Driscoll, Vincent O'Donovan, Kieran Kelly, John Merrick, Ciaran Sheehan, Sgt Jim McNamara, Richard Conroy, David Stone, John O'Shea, Mary O'Donovan, Mary O'Reilly, Bernadette O'Donovan, Elizabeth Howe, Joan O'Reilly, Mary Finn, Terry Dineen, Mary Kelly, Mary Slattery, Marie Fleming, Donal Demsey, Catherine Crowley, Noelle Casey, Margo O'Driscoll, Dan O'Driscoll, Aidan Donnelly and Bernie Coughlan. Richard O'Flynn took the National Junior cross-country title at Killeslin, County Laois in February 1981 and was selected on the Irish team for the World Junior cross-country Championships that year. On his performance at the national juniors he was offered an athletics scholarship to Providence College. Richard subsequently competed in the World cross country championships

and until recent years also held the national over the bar record.

Women's athletics was at its infancy in the early 'sixties when a women's County Board was formed and independant women's athletic clubs were also founded - prominent among these were Leaside, Emerald Ladies and Bandon Ladies. The Bandon Ladies AC was founded on 21st December 1965 with the following officers and committee -

President: Fr McCarthy, Vice-Presidents: Mrs D Crowley and Mrs T Murphy, Chairperson: Noreen Deasy, Vice-Chairperson: Breda Herlihy, Hon. Secretary: Breda O'Neill, Hon. Treasurer: Nora Coughlan.

Committee: Kathleen O'Sullivan, Loreto Gaffney, Ann Phelan, Peggy Desmond, Murial McKenna, Maureen O'Mahony, Shelia Twomey, Mairead O'Neill, Helen O'Sullivan.

In 1967 Mary Deasy became Chairperson of the County Women's Board in succession to Betty Cody. The club continued until 1968 when it amalgamated with Bandon AC. Its prominent athletes during its existence included Nora Coughlan, Mary O'Halloran, Mairead O'Neill, Mary Deasy, Valerie Shortland, Helen O'Sullivan and Margaret O'Sullivan.

The club has also been associated with charitable events and on eleven occasions undertook a 70 mile charity run for two different charities. The Rehabilitation Centre at Upton was the beneficiary on ten of these occasions and the most recent run was in aid of the Watergate Centre in Bandon.

The 'nineties has seen the emergence of some top class athletes in Michael Coakley, Paul Kelleher, Breda Dennehy and Richard O'Flynn. In the World cross-country championships of 1993 the club had one senior member on both the Irish women's and men's teams through the representation of Breda Dennehy and Richard O'Flynn. The club was in fact the first in the county having senior representation on both teams in the same year.

Martin Harte has kept the club to the fore in the throwing events at the present and the club has an abundance of talent in its current juvenile ranks, among the better being Margaret Mary Crowley. The veterans are also emerging through Ann Kelly, Essie O'Leary, Betty Conroy, Liam Fleming and Neally O'Leary.

The club has always had an extremely hard working committee and its members also took many officership positions, not alone on the County Board but also the West Cork Board. The club is probably one of the few athletic clubs which has its own Chain of Office, which was kindly presented by the Irish National Building Society on the occasion of the clubs 25th anniversary having been expertly crafted by Hilsers' of Bandon.

The club Chairpersons since its foundation back in 1964 are as follows -

1964/1966 - John Desmond	1967/1968 - Billy Good
1969/1972 - Chris Warren	1973/1974 - George Bennet
1975 - Donough Coughlan	1976/1980 - Patrick McCarthy
1981 - Brendan Crowley	1982 - Ann Kelly
1983/1987 - Dan Riordan	1988 - Tim Lucey
1989/1991 - Billy Good	1992 - Liam Fleming