

YOUGHAL AC

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Athletics in Youghal dates back to the turn of the century. The town has produced many fine athletes and organised many successful sports events over the past century in this East Cork venue.

Back in the nineteen twenties Gerard Coughlan won an All-Army 800 metre title. In the following decade Tony Cashell took on the best in the country and at International level over the quarter mile, while Tom Smyth was among the best in the country in the high jump winning many a medal at county, regional and at national level. In the nineteen fifties a very successful sports were held in Copperalley catering for athletes and cyclists with the cream of Munster taking part. This venue lies on a hill to the east of the town, and was among the best surfaces in the county to compete on.

Three decades ago the Youghal Athletic and Cycling Club was formed. Founder members include the Maher family, Paddy Daly, Jerry Russell, Kevin McCarthy and Pierce Hennessy. The club boasted of many track and cross-country stars at all levels; Paddy Coleman was an Irish Mile Champion and was also a cross-country champion. Stephen Hennessy was an Irish Youth and All-Army champion.

On the cycling aspect there was Martin Maher, Gerry Geary and Denis McCarthy who all were National medalists. The mid 'sixties saw great cross-country teams emerge, winning county junior, novice, intermediate titles. Several members were selected for Cork teams bringing National honours to the seaside club. Names that come to mind include Paddy Coleman, Stephen Hennessy, Mick Hanly, Mick Buckley, the Walsh Brothers - George and Freddie and Jerry Russell.

The 'seventies saw juvenile athletics excell with top honours coming to the club for track and field and cross-country. Among these juveniles were Mary O'Neill, Alan Downey, Alan McCarthy, the Cooper twins, Martin and James Drake, Honorra Connolly, Colm Stack, David Savage and Mary Demsey/Sweeney. Mary won international honours on Irish school teams and is still running in the St. Finbarr's colours with tremendous success. She is the current County cross-country champion and features regularly on the current athletics circuit.

The club organised many events including the August Monday Sprints and many a sports meet in Copperall. The round-the-houses road races held at midnight on New Year's Eve always caught the imagination and were well supported.

To have a successful club you need dedicated officers and coaches and here the club were fortunate in having the services of such as Mel Power, James Drake, John Dempsey, Billy Drake, Pup O'Brien, Mary Goggin, Maura Dempsey Tess O'Neill, Denis O'Sullivan, Brenda Casey, Mrs O'Leary, Mrs Kiely.

With so much athletic tradition in the town, it was sad to see the club disband..... but there is a great ray of hope with the forming of a new club this very yearlong may this healthy and character building sport continue in Youghal and surrounding areas.