

"ON THE STAGGER"**EAST CORK CLUBS**

"On the Stagger" stumbled by not mentioning the Eagle Track Club among the Cork City athletic clubs. Eagle, Cork's newest, were featured earlier in the year. The driving force behind them is Freddie Gilbert from Blarney, for many years a highly regarded coach with St. Finbarr's juvenile section. While Eagle were formed to cater for juveniles initially, they are not neglecting the adults. Their best known members are Freddie's son, Tony, a middle distance runner who won a scholarship to the University of Lowell, near Boston, and Fidelma Kirwan, a Celtic and schools' 400 metres hurdles international. One of Fidelma's teachers at Mount Mercy Secondary School has been Reg Hayes, President of Cork Co. B.L.E. Board.

Moving eastward from Cork City the first clubs encountered are the Glanmire N.A.C.A. and Glounthaune B.L.E. Both are located in what once were rural villages but are now residential centres for people who work in Cork. Glounthaune is a melting pot for Germans and Japanese who have come to the nearby industrial estates, and as the young children grow up some unusual names should appear on the team sheets of the local clubs. At present Colm Twohig is Glounthaune's best known athlete. As a teenager he has run the 15-mile Cork-to-Cobh race and he is a schools' international. A name for the future is Ken Murphy, a student at Coláiste Mhuire in Cobh and living in Little Island like Colm Twohig. With proper coaching Ken could use his upper body mobility to better effect in the discus and hammer than in the shot, on which he has been concentrating.

Sacred Heart College, Carrignavar, is better known as a Gaelic football-playing school - Kerry's John Egan went there - and it has hosted coaching courses. The school's scientific approach to athletes could help nearby Watergrasshill. A few years ago efforts were made to revive the Carrigtwohill club.

Cobh, from where the 1932 Olympic squad departed for Los Angeles, has three clubs: Ballymore N.A.C.A. who date back to 1941 but are concentrating on cycling now; St. Colman's N.A.C.A. who are strong on cross-country and distance running, and Ballymore-Cobh B.L.E. In the past there were also three clubs in the town: Ballymore N.A.C.A.,

Ballymore B.L.E. and Cobh B.L.E., but the latter two amalgamated. For a town of 10,000 it is unfortunate that Ballymore-Cobh has not been able to put a senior team in cross-country for many years. There are about sixty adult and two hundred youth and under-age soccer players in Cobh but the town is an ideal training ground for athletes, particularly running, with expansive playing fields and well surfaced, quiet hills.

Patrick O'Halloran has been an outstanding sprinter and long and triple jumper as a juvenile and junior. Now he coaches Joanne McCall and Sonya O'Sullivan, two promising Ballymore-Cobh athletes. Joanne is a sprinter but Sonya, just fifteen, has been up with the best of the female distance runners in races of ten kilometres and seven miles. Willie Cronin, who has experience of running in San Francisco where he worked, is an addition to the coaching team. Sean Kennedy, the club chairman, is one of the organisers of the Cara Partners Sports and Social club race at Little Island on Sunday, November 25.

Midleton people may have felt doom and gloom coming because of the increasing level of unemployment but in sport it is a case of boom and bloom. The hurling and Gaelic football teams have had glasses raised to them for their efforts on behalf of the town, Omokilly and Cork in the Centenary year of the G.A.A. Midleton has successful soccer and rugby clubs, and the athletic club ranks with the best. Names from the recent past are Joe Brice and Mike Keogh, but one of the most popular selections for the Los Angeles Olympics was that of Liam

O'Brien in the Steeplechase. Liam is an entirely home-trained athlete, and it is a disappointment that in the past Cork City Sports has not had a steeplechase on its programme to give Liam experience of international competition. The spectacular event for the spectators could have been set up and completed in ten minutes.

Liam is a great supporter of the grass roots of athletics, and the East Cork track and field league must be one of the last of its kind in the country. John Walshe, a member of the Midleton club, but living in the seaside village of Ballycotton, is unique for his organisation of the Ballycotton 10 and a series of five-mile road races.

Sprinter Paul Sheedy of Midleton came to prominence in the 1983 season, and as a youth John Hartnett, of the Cork All-Ireland hurling panel, was a promising pole vaulter. He also used his strength to good effect in the shot and but for G.A.A. commitments would be a good decathlete. The Midleton club can provide competitors in most events and compete in the National League.

Youghal A.C. are a prominent club in Co. Cork, and their neighbours, East Side, are making great strides. with the O'Mahony clan at the helm East Side stress family participation as much as grooming young athletes. They cover a wide area of villages and train in centres as varied as Killeagh, Glenbower Wood and the various strands in East Cork. Liam O'Brien, a physical education teacher as well as an international athlete, is providing coaching guidance. The biggest event in the two years'



history of the club will be the staging of the Cork County Cross-country championships on Sunday, 2nd December.

Away to the north are the twin villages of Bridesbridge and Castlelyons, where St. Nicholas A.C. are centred. Their impressive organisational ability in their equally short existence has been acknowledged by their being awarded the Cork Co. Southern Region and National Inter-Counties' cross-country championships in the past two seasons.

No reference to East Cork can be made without mention of Tom and Carmel Casey who have done so much for juvenile athletics.

Just outside the East Cork division is the town of Fermoy, where the Grange club is established. John Hartnett and Fanahan McSweeney are two Grange stars of the 'Sixties and 'Seventies.

Tom Burke put Grange on the map with the international cross-country fixture which brought Brendan Foster, Mike McCleod, Mohammed Kedir and Henry Rono to the long fields beside the Cork - Dublin road. Mitchelstown Co-op sponsored the event and gave it the name of one of their brands of Cheese, Galtee. On the last occasion the event was held, former world cross-country champion Leon Schots of Belgium won from twice champion John Treacy. Back in the field were Robert de Castella (who came back to Europe for his epic Rotterdam Marathon performance two months later), and another twice winner of the

world cross-country championship, Craig Virgin of the United States.

That was on a still, grey, icy day early in 1983. The race was not held last season. Tom Burke and a number of people left the Grange club to form Fermoy and District Harriers. Tom was a cyclist in his competitive days but the new club is proving to be interested in local athletics as much as in the big occasion. An inter-firm league involving the Army and local firms provided a novel competition.

Often when major fixtures lapse it is difficult to revive them, and the Galtee event had to compete with cross-country fixtures which are becoming as numerous as the European track meetings during the summer. Enticements of £1,000 to appear are offered to leading athletes. Tom Burke, who has done the unexpected in the past, has the Galtee event back on the map on Sunday, 27th January, with an invitational ten kilometre race for men, an open eight kilometre race for men and a four kilometre race for women.

When Tom Burke poses for a photograph nobody has to tell him to say "Cheese!"

Death

This year's National Athletic and Cycling Association Congress will not be the same without the presence of Mr.

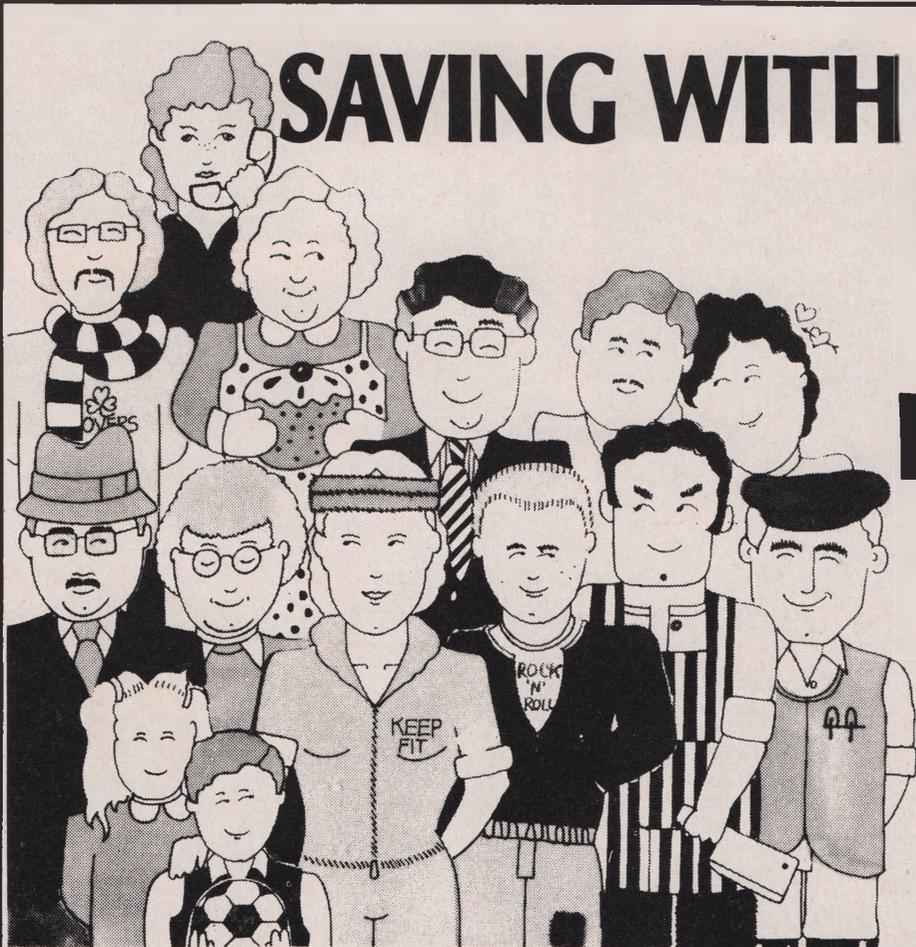
Maurice O'Donoghue, a Vice-President of the Association, who died recently.

In a long and active life, the man with the hat and stick fought in the War of Independence and held the principles of a thirty-two county Ireland in sport and politics dear to his heart. He was proud of his membership of the Fianna Fáil party but in athletics and cycling he never asked people which party they supported. His Riverstick club, just a few fields away from the Cork Airport runway, promoted two cycle races and two sports meetings each year. Among the athletes produced by his club was Joy Murphy (nee Good) who has competed with success at almost every event. Her husband, Tom Murphy, and another Riverstick runner, Joe Coppithorne, began the Belgooly ten-mile race which attracts about five hundred participants.

Although in his eighties, Mr. O'Donoghue was involved in the administration of his club's events up to his final weeks.

Another long servant of athletics in the Cork area, Mr. Bill Nestor, has suffered a bereavement with the death of his wife. Bill was an outstanding sprinter in his younger days. Then he became a timekeeper and starter for both athletics and cycling, and an official of Cork County Board. Bill is a member of the St. Finbarr's club and is probably the best athletics' historian in the country.

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