Gorvagh GAA 1924, 1925 & 1926

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IN EARLY SEPTEMBER I received a phone call from Ken Boyle, a man unknown to me. I gave him my email address and he sent me the following e mail on 21st September 2009.

'I have in my possession two Leitrim Senior GAA Championship medals which were won with Gorvagh in 1924/25 & 1926. My father's family were from Tully Lane, which runs from the Fenagh area across to the Ballinamore Carrick on Shannon road. My father (William) was born in 1913 and played for Fenagh in the early 1930's so he was too young to be playing in 1924/25 & 26. I am trying to establish were the medals won by one of his older brothers and any information would be greatly appreciated'. Signed Ken Boyle.

With the great assistance of the Leitrim County Library staff, Sean O Suilleabhan, & Caroline Martin, I established the following facts: the 1911 census for Ken's father's family show the sons listed as Thomas Joseph aged 4, John aged 2 & Hugh Patrick aged one. So, by 1924 they would have been 17, 15, & 14 respectively. Thomas looks the most likely to be playing senior football but still very young to be on a very successful Gorvagh team. Gorvagh (a part of the Mohill parish between Mohill & Fenagh) was the stronghold of Leitrim football in the 1923-1930 period. In 1922 through the great work of Charlie Flynn, with the help of the Murphy brothers of Gorvagh & the Reynolds brothers of Adoon, the club was reorganised. The stalwarts of their first championship win in 1924 were Jack Bohan, Peter Guckian, P Casserly, the Murphy & Reynolds brothers.

Championship wins followed in 1925 & the three in a row was completed in 1926 with the team reinforced by Carrick on Shannon players: Berney O Neill, Thomas Carr, Jim Loughlin, together with Mick Bohan & Dr Packy Flynn. Four-in-a-row followed in 1927, a feat only achieved by one other club in Leitrim, Melvin Gaels 1959-1962. Leitrim won its first senior Connacht title in 1927. The nucleus of this great team was formed by Gorvagh in P Casserly, J Reynolds Bohan, P Murray & B O Neill. For the record Gorvagh beat Fenagh in the 1924, 1925 & 1926 finals and Annaduff in the 1927 final. Such was the significance of Gorvagh's achievements in winning 4 in a row, a number of proud Gorvagh supporters contributed to a position on 'The team that built the Stand' in Pairc Sean MacDiarmada to honour the golden era of Gorvagh GAA Club

While researching this period in particular, one must mention another Gorvagh player from the 1950-1960 period, the scoring genius Cathal Flynn. Cathal Flynn playing with Leitrim, topped the National League scoring charts for ten years, nine years in row, and after a year out with injury was top scorer again the year he returned. In the 1958 Railway Cup semi-final played in Ballinasloe, Cathal & Mohill's Packy McCarty scored 1-9 out of Connacht's total of 1-11. They were lucky to get to Ballinasloe as they were both left behind in Dublin and had to hire a car at the cost of £5 to get to the match.

When I completed all the research, I contacted Ken so we could meet. It transpired he lives five minutes away from me here in Dublin.

Ken who is Dublin born, has fond memories of his uncle John, and aunts Annie & Mollie (Tully Lane). He was anxious to find out everything he could concerning the two Leitrim Championship medals in his possession. Ken had done his own research and had read a copy of the excellent Fenagh GAA Club history by Padraig Leyden. We spent a most enjoyable afternoon together.

All the above shows the significance of the medals in Ken's possession. Are they the oldest Leitrim county medals in existence? The medals are for three out of the four-in-a-row, (which has only been achieved by one other club, Melvin Gaels), and, maybe most unusual of all, one medal was cut for two years (1924/1925). The fact that the medals exist, eighty odd years later is amazing. Both medals are in mint condition. Based on all research to date it appears the medals were not won by either Ken's father or his uncles. All Ken is trying to establish is who won the medals which were given to him by his father.

Maybe someone has the 1927 medal which would complete the four-in-a-row set. If the 1927 medal is in existence maybe the three medals can be donated to the County Council or Library, or to Leitrim GAA, to be put on display for GAA enthusiasts with appropriate acknowledgement of the donors of the medals. If anyone can help they can e-mail me: *ed183@eircom.net*