

TIM SLEVIN'S BRICK

A FITTING ADDITION TO THE LEITRIM WALL

Colin Regan

WHEN TIM SLEVIN and his brother got a call-up for the Tipperary minors in the 1940s, they flipped a coin to see who would attend. They only had one pair of boots, you see. Tim lost the toss.

Nonetheless, hurling would leave as indelible a mark on his life as he did on hurling. Wherever he went—driven by his work as part of the installation crew on the Rural Electrification Scheme—he brought with him, with the evangelical zeal of a Knight of the Crusades, hurling. He was renowned for his long puck-outs and his clean immaculate style. As one news reporter put it, his “delightful overhead play was a joy to watch”.

Leitrim was a considerable beneficiary. Tim and his wife Tina arrived in Ballinamore in September 1959, having already spent many years connecting houses to the grid across the northwest, from Mayo to Sligo to Mountcharles. Along the way he and his Waterford friend Barry Ormond, also connected countless people to their native game.

The small ball was a relative unknown entity in Ballinamore—the south Leitrim kingpins were engaged in a football rivalry with their north Leitrim nemesis, Melvin Gaels, to determine county dominance. But as electrical poles and transformers began popping up across the landscape, so too did men carrying the camán. Notable converts included the likes of Paddy Dolan, Sean Kavanagh,



Dermot Gannon, Michael McCarthy Pat Cull, Paddy Friel, and Gerry Mahon (future Hurling Board chairperson). Tim and Barry logged hours in Páirc Sean Ó Heslin coaching their apostles, young and old, as hurling took hold.

Mohill was the next deployment for the young Slevin family as electrification advanced in September 1963. The next year the St Finbarr's Hurling club was established, taking in enthusiasts from Ballinamore, Cloone, Fenagh, and Mohill. They went on to win the county title, with Tim wearing No 3 on his back, and would go on to win three in a row, and another in '68. That team would provide the backbone of the Leitrim team that won in '69 the Connacht Junior title. By the time Tim hung

up his boots in 1979 he had amassed eight county titles with Finbarr's and a lifetime of memories.

Mohill remains their home to this day, the place they reared their children, Micheal and Fiona. Tina still runs the renowned Coolabawn Guest House on Station Road. To mark his 90th birthday this year, on July 14th, and to honour the significance of his contribution to Leitrim hurling and his love of his native Tipperary, Tim's family bought a commemorative brick in the Leitrim Wall in the GAA Centre of Excellence in Annaduff. It reads:

**'Tim Slevin
Mohill & Lorrha
Leitrim hurler
1960-1979'**

Tim's first match for Leitrim was at the age of 30 and he won the three Connacht Junior titles in his 40s. Nowadays, when a player hits 30 years-of-age they're asking him when he's hanging up his boots. Tim may have lost that toss to claim the boots necessary to line out for the Tipperary minors, but, as the third youngest of 16 children, his parents John and Mary Slevin of Kilregane, Lorrha, imbued in him the importance of playing the long game. And Leitrim is grateful for that.

Tim Slevin at the Leitrim Wall





Leitrim Hurling team 1976

The Leitrim Wall is an innovative fundraising campaign developed by the Supporters Club to finish the GAA Centre of Excellence in Annaduff to the best possible standards. By buying an engraved brick to rest forever in one of the beautifully designed walls that adorn the Centre's entrance promenade, Leitrim people and supporters can leave their mark and their message for generations to come. The initiative has attracted great media attention, featuring on RTE News and Radio and across the national and regional newspapers, and has become a repository for the people and stories

that make Leitrim's sporting and social history so rich. You can buy a brick or gift one to a loved one by calling into the Centre of Excellence (just outside Annaduff on the N4), by speaking to any member of the County Board or Supporters Club, or by going online at: www.leitrimwall.ie

Thanks to Seán Mac Fearghail, who penned about Tim Slevin an article 'Spreading the Hurling Message to the West' in the book 'And then there was Light: Stories from Ireland's Rural Electrification', from which much of this piece was gleaned.

Tim Slevin in action in 1970 against Meath



Seasonal Winds

Molly Fitzgerald (Age 15)

*Some howl and scream throughout the night
And freeze the air with icy chills
As Winter's fury blazes bright
With little flakes that give us thrills*

*Some dance and float in natural flow
And give a gentle soft embrace
The laugh of Spring can melt the snow
With kind and petal ridden grace*

*Some come to rid the world of heat
And bring the salty ocean sprays
But Summer's rage is not a treat
It leaves some pain in happy days*

*One starts this cycle o'er a new
And signals creatures into sleep
But Autumn whispers of it's rue
As death piles like a large leaf heap*

Molly Fitzgerald (Age 15) attends Our Lady of Mercy Academy, Syosset, in New York. Molly's Mom, Margaret Hyland, received the *Leitrim Guardian Literary Award* (with Teresa Keane) in 1987 for their article entitled "Can the Real Ireland Survive in the Enlarged European Communities". Molly's maternal grandparents live in Drumshanbo and she visits regularly. It is great to see the interest in the *Leitrim Guardian* passing down through the generations and the diaspora.