

GAA MAN EXTRAORDINAIRE

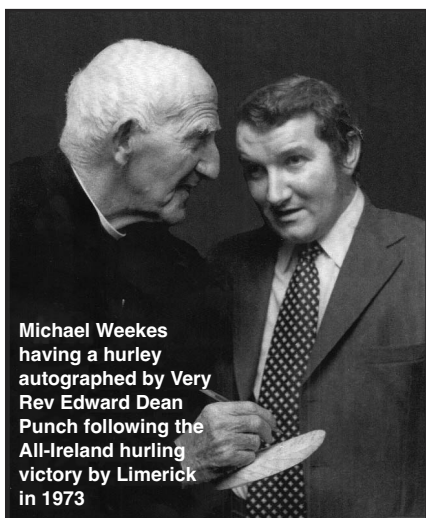
By Book Committee Colleagues

Our esteemed Grange Book Committee colleague, Michael Weekes, needs very little introduction. Michael of Holycross, a native of Ballybricken, born on 22nd March 1944, is a legend in GAA circles and beyond; he has been described as a “true-Gael”. Having passed his seventieth year, he remains an enthusiastic and committed GAA man, ever willing to serve. Michael made an immense contribution to our book committee, bringing knowledge, expertise and commitment. His experience as editor of the Bruff journal, *The Dawn*, for six publications during the period 1980-2000, brought us guidance and sound advice. Of course, Michael is from one of the oldest Grange families, the Weekes family having settled in Knockfennel over two hundred years ago, so it was appropriate to have him involved in our parish book project.

He was educated at Rochestown NS, Sheehan’s Cross, Ballybricken; Crescent College, Limerick; and Rockwell College, Cashel, Co Tipperary.

Michael, a fine hurler in his day, has over many decades, filled several important roles with distinction at club, county and provincial levels. As well as a long playing career, he participated in managing, coaching, mentoring and selecting hurling and football teams. Over the years, he put forward proposals designed to enhance the GAA and its activities, some which brought about notable developments.

Michael is also well known for his writing prowess, his keen interest in history and commitment to his local community wherever he has lived over the years. He has been a noted contributor and editor for a number of community publications as well as GAA printed matter. He edited the 1989 Limerick GAA yearbook. His love of and loyalty to the GAA has been the hallmark of his life, only surpassed by dedication to his family. With more than one string to his bow, Michael



Michael Weekes having a hurley autographed by Very Rev Edward Dean Punch following the All-Ireland hurling victory by Limerick in 1973



Limerick Masters All-Ireland Champions 2002. The team was managed by Michael Weekes.

was, for many years, a popular quizmaster for the National Rehabilitation pub quiz competitions, and he also performed that role for charity and festival table quiz events.

It was, therefore, fitting that the “Old Time Gaels of East Limerick Organisation” held a ‘Presentation Night’ at Caherconlish on December 5th, 2008, honouring Michael’s lifelong services to the Gaelic Athletic Association.

The Organisation was “founded in 2003 to acknowledge the contributions of Gaels in the division who have given lifelong, voluntary and dedicated service to the Gaelic Athletic Association in various capacities over the years. Many of these people worked quietly and in the background in areas like administration, fundraising, field maintenance, refereeing and endless other essential chores. Others have excelled on the field of play and brought honours to their clubs, division and county”. It becomes abundantly clear from a perusal of Michael’s GAA years that his accomplishments uniquely reached the heights set by the Organisation.

To commemorate the Presentation Night, the organisers produced an excellent and detailed booklet, chronicling Michael’s GAA life and achievements, in which most of the following appear.

His early playing career saw him win an East Limerick Minor Football medal with Caherline in 1961. During the time of his first employment in the 1960s in Dublin, he joined New Irelands Hurling Club and played senior hurling in Croke Park on a few occasions.

In 1975, Ballybricken won the East Limerick Junior Hurling Championship, ending years of frustration and near-misses. In the final, Ahane were defeated by 2-5 to 0-9; of the winning score, Michael had a personal tally of 2-4, displaying all of his immense style and craft.

Michael had a long playing career – he reluctantly retired at the age of 47, but he continued to serve the GAA and his club, Ballybricken, participating enthusiastically and influentially on numerous committees. Over the years (1970-1995), he held

every officer position in that club, including President, Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer and Public Relations Officer.

For four years (1976-79), Michael was Treasurer of Limerick County Bord Na nÓg.

He was associated with the organisation of Féile Na nGael in Limerick in 1973/1974, serving on two committees. He developed a special relationship with the Carrickmacross GAA Club in Co Monaghan, which he visited in 1974 with the McCarthy Cup, in the company of some well-known Limerick GAA "All-Stars". The Limerick Senior Hurling Team overcame Kilkenny in September 1973 to win the All-Ireland, a feat that has not been achieved since – how Michael would relish a repeat!

He was involved with the County Publications Committee, which won several "McNamee" awards for their efforts and he was Committee Treasurer for thirteen years, 1977-1989.

In 1983, he attended a one-week County Senior Hurling Coaching Course at Gormanstown College, Co Meath and was presented with a County Senior Hurling



Coaching
Badge.

Limerick All-Ireland Minor Hurling Champions 1984 including Grange man Anthony Madden (front row last on right). Michael Weekes of Holycross was a team selector.

Michael was the manager of East Limerick Inter-Divisional Minor Hurling Team from 1980-1983, winning the county competition in 1982.

He was a selector for the Limerick Minor Hurling Team for six years from 1980 to 1985. He was a proud selector when the Limerick Minor Hurling Team defeated Down in the All-Ireland semi-final in 1984 and again, soon after, when the team won All-Ireland honours in the same year. Anthony Madden from Lower Grange played on the team and earned his All-Ireland medal as a great hurling exponent.

In 1989, Michael managed the County Junior Hurling Team and was a selector for the Junior Team in 1995.

He served for three years (1989-1991) as PRO of the Limerick County Board. He resigned his PRO post when he was appointed a County Senior Hurler Selector in 1992.

He was a County Senior Hurling Selector for four years from 1992, during which time, Limerick won the Allianz National Hurling League in 1992 and

reached the Munster Final against Cork the same year.

He was a selector with “Babs” Keating (Tipperary) and Gerald McCarthy (Cork), when Munster won the Railway Cup Hurling Competition in 1992, after seven years.

The Munster Club Junior ‘A’ Hurling Tournament, ran by the Bruff GAA Club was the brainchild of Michael’s and became a major competition, culminating in an All-Ireland series. He organised the Munster division of these games for eight years over the period 1995-2008.

Michael was Chairman of Bruff GAA Club for the period 1997-2000, having previously been active on committee work in the club; and Vice-Chairman of the South Divisional GAA Board from 2000 to 2004.

He proposed to the County Board in 2000 that a Limerick Hurling Masters Team (over 40s) should participate in the All-Ireland Masters Championship, which commenced in 1991. Agreed by the County Board, he was elected team manager for seven years up to 2006. Over that period, two All-Ireland titles were won in 2002 and 2004. The motto of the ‘Masters’ was “*We don't stop playing because we grow old, we grow old because we stop playing*”. Sadly, the Masters hurling and football championships have been discontinued. A mark of the man – over the seven years, Michael organised friendly games, raising almost £26,000 in aid of Milford Hospice, Castletroy, Limerick.

His only son, also Michael, captained Bruff to win the County Intermediate Hurling Championship in 2008, an accomplishment that undoubtedly made Michael Senior a very proud man.

Despite his busy life, he attended GAA Congress events in 1981, 1989 and 1991 as a County Board delegate on each occasion. He also attended Munster and County Conventions, at which he proposed important motions that were passed, such as: *That an Inter-County Minor Hurling and Football League be organised by the Council* – Motion passed, *That the County Board appoint a liaison official to all County Teams* – Motion passed, *A new crest to be put on Limerick GAA Jerseys* – Motion passed, *That a supply and distribution centre be set up in Croke Park to ensure the availability of top quality hurleys at all times during the year at competitive prices* – Motion Recommended.

From 2009 to 2014, Michael has been Membership Secretary, Electronic Scoreboard Operator and Public Address Announcer in Bruff GAA Grounds.

The booklet associated with the ‘Presentation Night’ in December 2008, concluded as follows: *A man that epitomises what the GAA is all about. We are delighted to acknowledge his contribution to ‘gaeldom’.*

Your Book Committee colleagues wish to congratulate you too, Michael - very well done indeed!