

Passing of Clann Eireann stalwart Bobby Murray

In recent times, the North Lurgan area has occasion to grieve at the passing of many of its native sons and daughters. Thus it was the same sense of shock which visited us all last week on Wednesday 13th February when we learned of the pass in of Robert 'Bobby' Murray of 16 Soye Gardens in the heart of the Kilwilke area.

Bobby came from a founding family in that area of strong faith in community, church and nation. He was reared in the strong values of dedication to family life, and service to place and parish. He attended Tannaghmore Primary School and, like many of us, came under the abiding Irish influence of teacher and later School Principal, Alf Murray. He would hardly have left school when that great Gael and later President of the GAA as Chairman of Clann Eireann, was planning a visionary future for the club.

This vision inspired Bobby and most of his contemporaries to emulate in later years the efforts of such as Bill Dummigan RIP, Jock McCafferty RIP, Jimmy Rooney RIP, Gerry Fagan RIP, Jaunty O'Neill RIP, Dan Lynch RIP, Ambrose Lavery RIP, Jimmy Smith RIP, Joe McCrory and Seamus McKavanagh and the youthful members who later brought fame to the club in Gaelic football, hurling, basketball and boxing. When the recreational club was originated then more willing hands were needed and Bobby, as always, came to the fore as a willing helper.

For the football team, when his own playing days were over at U-16 and Minor level, he assisted in the training in fair weather and foul, and was an outstanding help to that doyen of all caretakers, the late Dinny Thompson. A number of years' ago in 1990, Clann Eireann published a mid-term anthology of past endeavours to commemorate the opening of the hurling field. There, on page 14 of that fine publication, 'Mortas Chlann Eireann', is a photograph of a youthful Bobby as ever smiling gently, surrounded by his welcoming club members on the occasion of the return to the club of their Chairman, Alf Murray, as President of the GAA.

Recently, another great servant to the Association, Ulster Council Chairman, Armagh's own John O'Reilly, on the occasion of the Armagh County Dinner spoke, as ever, eloquently about the clubman, the ordinary person who does extraordinary things to keep the Association on the road. Such a one was Bobby and he was the same in his private life, as father, husband and grandfather, with his gentle roving cheerful ways. Whether it was in his working life as provider for his family, making sure the orange jerseys were set out for the next match, or the snooker table nap or boxing ring was spotless, Bobby was full of cheerful honest endeavour.

In recent times, he faced a most serious illness, with a cheerful, courageous outlook so typical of his whole life, comforted by his devotion to his faith and by the love of his family. There was a large attendance at his funeral Mass in St Peter's Church and his interment in St Colman's Cemetery on Friday 15th February 2002. This was a fitting tribute to his faithful and committed life to his family and community. We offer sincere condolences to his beloved wife Kathleen, his daughters Tracey and Laureen, and his son

Robert, his son-in-law Brendan, and grandchildren Sarah, Michael and Sean, and his extended family.

In "Mortal Chiann Eireann". As a tribute to the football exploits of Alf Murray RIP, a street ballad was published about the first ever Ulster team to win the Railway Cup in 1943. The last verse said: "So may God above protect these boys for they shall never fail to play the game and merit fame. They're a credit to the Gael." Such a one was Bobby.

Go Ndeandiah Dia Trocaire Ar A Anam.

Brendan McStravick (neighbour) and fellow clubman in Chlann Eireann.