

‘The Deerfoot of Dowras’

John J. Daly,
(1880 - 1969)

By

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Athenry was bedecked with banners and bunting in August 2008 when local man Paul Hession competed in the Summer Olympic Games in Beijing, reaching the semi-finals of the 200 metre sprint. His home town took pride in the achievements of the young medical student, the “fastest man in Ireland.”

A little over one hundred years before Hession’s time, another local began his illustrious career in the same town.

John James Daly, ‘The Deerfoot of Dowras’ claimed that his interest in athletics began at a sports meeting in Athenry when he had a go at the high jump.

To quote from an interview printed in the Connacht Tribune on Sept. 13th 1958

“On that day, with two others from Corofin, he went to the sports in Athenry. Arriving in time to see the High Jump event won with a jump of 5 feet 2 inches, John Daly and some other young men present decided to see if they could beat the winning effort. Up he stepped and sprang over the bar, still at the height of the winning effort, but in coming back to mother earth the tail of his coat caught the bar and brought it down”.

The young Corofin man was so enthused that he went home, dug a pit in one of the family fields and began practising the long jump and the hop, step and jump.

His first competitive outing was at Mount Bellew sports in September 1900, where he won the high and broad jumps, also competing in the 440 yard sprint in which he got third place. He had found his vocation in life.

John J. Daly was born at Dowras House, Ballyglunin, Co. Galway on 22nd February 1880.¹ The Census of 1901 has him listed as a 21 year old Farmer's Son, one of five children living with his parents Patrick and Sabina (nee King). Head of the

household is Grandfather Michael, 91 years old. Michael's birthplace is listed as County Clare, while all the others are natives of County Galway.

The townland of Dowras - or Dawros as it is spelled in some official documents - translates as 'the river meadow of the oxen, "Damh ros"ⁱⁱ and can be found near Currendrum, on the eastern bank of the Clare River, and south of Corofin castle. The Dalys farmed about 100 acres of fertile limestone land.

After his initial success at the local sports Daly joined the Galway City Harriers. He was on their club team which was entered for the Irish cross country championship held at Elm Park, Merrion, Dublin 1901. He won that competition by eighty yards.

In the article quoted above from the Connacht Tribune of Sept. 1958 Daly claimed that he had met his destiny at the Athenry sports on 29h. June 1901, but on that mid-summer feast-day of Saints Peter and Paul John J. Daly was a long way from Athenry.

He was instead at the Glasgow Exhibition in Scotland, representing his country for the first time – and competing in the 4 mile flat race at the international meeting between Ireland and Scotland.

Fifty-seven years later he may have been mistaken about the date, but Daly had a vivid recollection of the events in Scotland.

“Half way through that race one of young Daly's shoes broke and as he continued in his bare feet (on the cinder track) the crowd of about 80,000 people laughed. By the time another lap had been completed cheers rose for the stout-hearted young Irish lad, who according to all reason, should now be out of the race.

On he ran, and so good was his effort that he finished second to D. W. Mills.

When the race concluded the crowd which had laughed now swarmed on to the arena to acclaim the young Irishman.

Hallmarks of any great athlete in Mr. Daly's opinion are 'speed, strength, and determination'. And he said: 'In that race in Scotland I was running for my country and I was more determined than ever when my shoe broke half way through the race.'

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At this remove – a hundred and ten years later - it seems a bit churlish to be concerned about the exactitude of dates and other details, but it does draw attention to the difficulty in getting an accurate picture of historical events.

The local papers are a major source of information, written with relish and style, and giving not only facts but a fascinating word-picture of the times and the concerns of the populace.

For instance, under the reproduction of a photograph featuring a young man posing with a collection of trophies, and the headline “A GREAT GALWAY ATHLETE” printed in the Tuam Herald on April 2nd. 1904^{iv} is a long detailed list of John J. Daly’s sporting successes.

At that date he had already won 37 medals -15 gold and 12 silver. The article goes on to describe how Daly joined the Galway City Harriers and declares

“ . . . and this, we may say, was the great turning point in his athletic career, For the first time he competed with them for the Southern Cross-Country Championship of Ireland and finished second to Tom Hynes of “Go-as-you-please” fame.”

Galway City Harriers were at that time winning premier honours in the Irish cross-country championships. Tom Hynes - who had succeeded another great Galway cross-country runner, John F. Joyce - was at the zenith of his prowess but soon found more than a match in Daly. The two, though club-mates were keen rivals, and a spanking set-to was always to be looked forward to between them. Joyce went to America in 1899, and until the advent of Daly was the greatest runner in the States.^v

The article from April 1904 mentioned above was quite unusual. At the beginning of the 20th century the Herald did not feature illustrations, except as part of an occasional advertisement, while sports reports were usually a couple of paragraphs long.

Without any evidence to back it up I suspect that it was the man himself who instigated this long and comprehensive list of John J. Daly’s achievements, perhaps with one eye on his forthcoming adventure in the United States, a calling card of sorts, or a c.v.

One gets the impression that sports events were of minor interest to the general population at the beginning of the twentieth century - a bit like wind-surfing

or skateboarding now – important to the participants and enthusiasts but not having the prurient interest of a TV audience to contend with.

Soccer, Golf, Motor sports and even GAA competitions now feature regularly on screens in our homes, attracting advertising, sponsorship and attention; and broadcast all over the world.

According to Wikipedia “*Media outlets reported unprecedented audience interest in the Beijing Olympic Games. 4.7 billion viewers watching some of the events on TV while new online media carried live video streams of the competitions to all corners of the globe.*”

When John J. Daly went to the Olympic Games in 1904 things were a lot different than when Paul Hession took on the likes of Usain Bolt in 2008.

1904 was before Ireland became independent, so Daly was recorded as a British competitor in America. Also representing Great Britain at the games was Tom Kiely from Ballyneale, Co. Tipperary who competed in ‘the all-round’, precursor of today’s decathlon.

Kiely won the All Round in St. Louis and came home with the gold medal. Another Tipperary man John J. Holloway from Bansha, who was resident in the United States took 4th place in the same competition. ^{vi}

Kiely, Holloway and Daly were the only participants in St. Louis who represented Great Britain and Ireland. There was not any organised team from these islands in the way there had been for the Paris Olympics four years earlier, when Great Britain and Ireland had 102 athletes competing in 18 events.

However, there were many Irish-born and Irish American athletes on the teams from different parts of the United States at St. Louis, including the aforementioned John Francis Joyce of Ower, Headford, John Flanagan of Co. Limerick and Martin Sheridan from Bohola, Co. Mayo. They all seem to have got along with each other, Kiely sharing lodgings in St. Louis with Flanagan and Sheridan.

Details are sketchy, some sources claim John Daly was invited to the games by the Greater New York Irish Athletic Association, ^{vii} while others insist he went on his own initiative, and only joined the GNYIAA afterwards. ^{viii} Either way, word had reached the New World that he was on his way. He sailed from Queenstown on the Campania and was processed through U.S. immigration at Ellis Island on August 6th. 1904.

When he arrived members of the Galwaymen's Association were there to greet him and gave him a rousing reception.

Although he had been seasick for a few days on the boat, apparently he was again in good form, as when one of the Galway lassies present challenged him to a reel, he stepped out and as the crowd supplied the music danced with the colleen amid applause from the crowd.^{ix}

Meanwhile, back in Ireland the “Sports” newspaper was trumpeting, *J.J. Daly has arrived at New York and leaves today for St. Louis, where he will compete in the two miles Steeplechase of the world on Monday next. Daly should win, for it was only by a mere accident that he was beaten in the English championship in this event.^x*

Arriving in St Louis as an established and experienced international athlete Daly must have noticed the farcical nature of the proceedings. He was in cowboy country and the cowboys were in charge. It was chaotic; The Games of the Third Olympiad of the modern era were reduced to a side-show of the World's Fair and were lost among other more popular cultural exhibits.

The Olympic participants totaled 651 athletes - 645 men and 6 women representing 12 countries. However, only 42 events included athletes who were *not* from the United States. The actual events that formed the bulk of the recognized Olympic sports were held from Monday, August 29th. to Saturday, September 3rd.

The men's 2590 metre steeplechase was a track and field athletics event . The competition was held on August 29th. 1904. 7 athletes from 2 nations competed. It was the only time the event was held at that distance.

Jim Lightbody (USA) won in a time of 7.39.6 with John Daly second in 7.40.6. A step by step account of the race is featured in an official document called The Lucas Report. I include a pertinent paragraph.

Lightbody cleared the brushes like one who had spent his early life cross country running in England, though the steeple chase at this meeting was the first event of the kind in which he had ever competed. Not once did Lightbody jump on the fence on front of the water jump to secure assistance, but he cleared the three foot brush like the best thoroughbred hunter either in America or England.

Indeed Daly was a disappointment. A man hailing from the other side of the water where steeple chases are daily occurrences was expected to give Lightbody a good race, but the American won the event by 100 yards, and had he so wished, could have defeated Daly by 400 yards and broken the record seven or eight seconds, on the form he displayed;

... whether it was the effect of the hot, dry atmosphere of the middle West that defeated the great Irishman, or the better running of Lightbody, 'twas apparently a difficult matter to tell.

Instead of “running steeple-chases as a daily occurrence” Daly had a much more humble background in sport. Working alone in his rural habitat, he even had to design his own training methods.

He developed his long stride by running between a pair of galloping horses, holding on to the bridle of each horse and keeping pace with the running animals. He enjoyed coursing and hunting with dogs, was captain of the Corofin Rebels football team and had grown up working the family farm in Dowras.

His daily practise runs took place on local roads. Accompanied by his younger brother Henry he ran a clockwise course from their home at Dowras House, across the River Clare by Daly’s bridge, through Corbally, onto the Tuam/Galway road at Carrownrooaun, turning right at Anbally, Tavanaghbeg, through Corofin village to Brockagh crossroads and Balintober, right for Ardskea More and Ballaun, then a last long straight run to the gates of the family home, a distance just under 9 km.

Two days after competing in the steeplechase at St. Louis John Daly took part in the 1 Mile handicap there. Wearing a three-leaved shamrock on his distinctive green singlet the Deerfoot of Dowras came home a winner ‘to the delight of the Irish lads and lassies that had come from the Irish Village to witness the sports’. His running is described as ‘superb’ by Lucas and he won the race by 10 yards in 4 minutes. 27.4 seconds.^{xi}

The St. Louis Star newspaper of Sept. 1st 1904 wrote

The One Mile handicap brought out a new star – John J. Daly of Ireland. Daly was beaten on Monday by Lightbody on the Mile-and-a-Half Steeplechase. On the flat he is a wonder . . . This race was characterised by rough work by both Daly and

Munson. These two indulged in a bumpy match at every opportunity. The Irishman proved that he also knew this game.^{xii}

Historian Kevin McCarthy describes Daly as being known for his aggressive running, claiming that the Corofin man could have missed out on the St. Louis Olympics had the GAA authorities decided to suspend him for rough tactics at the national cross country championships earlier in 1904. A doctor's certificate showing that Daly's ankle had been severely strained during the race was enough for athletics administrator Frank Dineen to exonerate the young runner and allow him to partake in the games.^{xiii}

Later that year Daly himself described his exploits at the games.

I was beaten in the first run at St. Louis chiefly because I was not feeling well – a 1,500 metre steeplechase. I felt indisposed the day the Marathon Race was held, and regretted my condition, for I had come specially prepared for it.^{xiv}

While athletic competitions were being held, Worlds Fair exhibitions of all sorts attracted thousands of visitors to the city. The Irish Village had restaurants and a theatre where traditional music, dance and drama were performed. The village contained reconstructions of the Irish house of parliament, Blarney Castle and Cormac's Chapel.

The Ancient Order of Hibernians held their annual convention with 600 delegates at St. Louis on the day of the Irish Sports in July, hosting 2,000 guests at that evening's banquet.

Daly and the other GNYIAA athletes rushed back to New York after the Olympics. They travelled by train and went straight to Celtic Park where Clan na Gael were hosting the annual renewal of the Tailtin Games. Ten thousand spectators attended this fund-raising event on that Labor Day, Monday 5th. Sept. 1904

John Devoy, driving force behind republican Clan na Gael edited the main Irish American newspaper "The Gaelic American". Devoy, with assistant editor Tom Clarke reported on the successes of all the Irish athletes at the Olympics.^{xv} On that September holiday at Celtic Park they - as champions of the world and Irishmen all - were greeted like heroes.

21 GNYIAA members competed at St. Louis including Daly, John Joyce. John J. Flanagan, Frank Riley, Mike Connelly and Martin Sheridan.

Born in Bohola, County Mayo, on March 28, 1881, Martin John Sheridan was five-time Olympic champion, with a total of nine Olympic medals, sports writers of his era proclaimed him the greatest track and field athlete of all time.

The prodigious Sheridan's disciplines were Discus, Shot Putt, Standing Long Jump and Stone Throwing, but Joyce was a distance runner and steeplechaser. He had won the AAU 10,000 metres at St. Louis in July and was also national cross country champion. Joyce and Daly became fierce rivals in that autumn of 1904.

In Daly's own words:

I met my countryman, John Joyce, the American Champion, at Celtic Park, on Oct. 30th. He fell near the finish of the race and a match resulted which brought last Sunday's race, the hardest of my career. I finished first. On Thursday I won the Metropolitan Cross Championship, but was sorry that Joyce met with a mishap and that some of my rivals did not force me to make better time.”^{xvi}

Daly came home from America in time for Christmas 1904. Before leaving New York he was honoured by the Galwaymens Association at the Murray Hill Lyceum and presented with a Silver Loving Cup. As part of the celebrations at The Galwaymens Association that evening the following lines by Stephen M. Flaherty of New York were read and even published in the Tuam Herald on Dec. 3rd. the day of the celebrations in New York.

*For trophies won by the stalwart Gael
Tonight will our pulses thrill;
In glad acclaim we shout “All Hail”
With vigorous voice and will.
Enthused we meet – a devoted band –
Fair bouchal and lovely dame:
In exile from our own dear land
To honour John Daly's fame!*

*O'er many a Galway mountain height
Shall wave old Ireland's green.
On many a hill will bonfires burn
Nigh Tuam's cathedral town,
When Erin's champion will return
Bearing home the victor's crown.*

On Thursday 22nd December Daly arrived back to Ballyglunin. The Tuam Herald of Christmas Eve describes an eventful week at the little railway station.

“On Monday evening The Corofin Fife and Drum Band, accompanied by Fr. Eagleton P.P. and Fr. Neary C.C. with a vast concourse of cars, horsemen, and pedestrians received his Grace, the Most Reverend Dr. Healy, the Archbishop of Tuam who was returning from Rome. The district around during the night was ablaze with bonfires etc. On Tuesday J.J. Smyth - a landlord from Loughrea who gave his Corofin tenants a rent reduction - got an even warmer reception, with bonfires, torch lights, arches shedding a bright lustre and adornment all the way to Nohillys house in Clough. On Thursday the scene was no less striking than those of the preceding evenings, when Cummer joyfully welcomed home John J. Daly the world-famed athlete.”^{xvii}

At this time Daly was 24 years old. He was described by journalist W.P. Murphy as “a tall lithesome slender youth” and by the Tuam Herald as “*the son of a respected well- to-do farmer Mr. Patrick Daly D.C. From 1901 Daly’s career has been one long succession of victories. Through all those years he has played the game straightforwardly and manly. No man, from his keenest opponent on the track to the most captious critic outside the arena, could ever say of Daly that he acted crooked or in any way subversive of those principles which should actuate a sportsman and a gentleman. With splendid stature and appearance on the field he stands 6 feet 1 inch in height, deep chested and muscular looking, and runs within a pound or two over 13 stone.*”^{xviii}

Daly was all over the Herald that Christmas week; a long article he wrote himself seems to have been reprinted from a New York paper. In the piece he says he loves America, its democratic spirit and its progressive approach to athletics; but goes on to gently criticize’ the yanks’ for not understanding the type of ground needed for cross-country running.

In the same edition of the Herald the Tuam Harriers club are reported as having “enjoyed an excellent spin, twice circling Parkmore with Richard Walsh cutting the pace”. The Harriers were hopeful of competing at the big interclub race on St. Stephens Day at Athenry.

The Herald of Dec. 31st 1904 reporting on the Athenry event says that *“The day was fine, the sun bright if not warm, and a large number of spectators were present, It was expected that John J. Daly would do duty for his club – but owing to family reasons he found it was impossible.”*

His absence was also noted from reports of the Southern Championships of Cross Country running held at Ballybrit on Jan 28th 1905.

The local media continued to feature our hero, January’s paper reporting his being elected captain of the Corofin Rebels Football Club, and touted as one of the star performers at an upcoming concert in the village.

On Sunday 12th February 1905 Daly *“was presented with complimentary addresses and a substantial Testimonial by the Corofin Parish council.”*^{xxix}

Later reports describe *“a magnificent array of silver cups, some few of John J. Daly’s trophies, kindly lent for the occasion, on display during a concert at the spacious halls of the Cummer Monastery School,”*

And the newspaper reporter remarked

“That Mr. Daly’s own narrative of his wonderful exploits was a graphic and highly interesting part of the concert’s bill.”^{xxx}

The Herald of Feb 18th 1905 goes a step further. An article describing an upcoming concert at Headford Castle in aid of Fr. Heaney’s Caherlistrane Parochial Buildings fund promised that J.J. Daly would sing “Silent oh Moyle”. Subsequent reports of this event made no mention of his performance but do praise a ‘gramophone recital’ by Mr. Whyte.^{xxxi}

By September 1905 Daly was fully involved in life at home. A letter from him to a friend from Corofin - Joe Raftery - has ‘The Deerfoot of Dowras’ describing the social whirl of his days thus;

Dowras House,
Ballyglunin,
Sept.27th. 1905

My Dear "Joe",

Your welcome letter of the 17th.inst.arrived.Hope you got my p.card and that you were not disappointed when I did not turn up.

I did not return from Oughterard until last Sat. I was away from home since the 23rd, the Lahinch Sports. I competed in the mile there, couldn't get nearer than 3rd. place. it looks as if I'm not going to get beyond that this season, I intended running in the 2 miles and 4, but I met Patsy Hillam and a chap called Farragher so we went off enjoying ourselves (don't you know) and forgot all about the sports.

Went to Lisdoonvarna that night and remained there until Sat. I went to Oughterard then for a week so that knocked me out of Limerick although I got a very inducing invitation from Thomas St.

I was speaking to your "Boss" this evening and suggested we both go to the Limerick races, I think he's half inclined, said he would make up his mind before Sunday.

Some of the Tuam fellows were out coursing in B.cregg today, I heard they slaughtered 7 hares, I think your dog was with them. Staff says Corofin is gone to H. since you left. He is gone daffed on coursing.

The parcel from Cornish came, let me know what I'll do - didn't get any mails in fact I was not in Ballyglunin, Didn't get the cards done since. She is not worth bothering about, must see what N. is like.

Henry and two cousins of ours went off cycling to Cong this evening. We are having lovely weather now.

I never saw Golden Plover so numerous. I shot 20 Sunday, 11 yesterday and 18 today and a fair share of Partridge. I'm afraid shooting will be scarce xmas time but I'll guarantee some hare.

Nothing more of interest, I'll say goodbye.

Yours very sincerely,

J.J. Daly

rem. me to O'Malley

Rafty was at school in Mungret College, Limerick at the time, which accounts for the references to that city, while the ‘Staff’ referred to was my own grandfather, John Stephens.

1906 Olympic Games Athens

The Intercalated Olympic Games were developed to be a series of International Olympic Games half-way between what we now call Games of the Olympiad. The Intercalated Games was to always be held in Athens, and were to have equal status with the international games. In fact, the only such games were held in 1906.

There is still much confusion about Dalys involvement in the Athens games. T. W. Murphy, a sports reporter who was privy to many of the goings on in the run-up to the games claimed that the GAA decided to send Daly to Greece and had promised to pay his expenses, while adding that Daly never got the promised money.^{xxii}

Kevin McCarthy in his definitive study ‘Gold Silver and Green’ also contends that the GAA were involved, but I can now give you the real story.

“A roll of drums, please, and sound those trumpets.”

Ladies, Gentlemen, seekers of the truth everywhere, please allow me to introduce to you, from more than one hundred years ago, the words of one who knows, Please welcome, the main man himself,

Mister John Joseph Daly, The Deerfoot of Dowras.

Writing just after the games, and displaying a lot of skill and descriptive power Daly writes a vivid and colourful account of his participation. His unique perspective and his ability to capture the atmosphere and import of the moment show some literary talent. The piece was published in the Tuam Herald of July 21st. 1906 under the heading

THE NOTED GALWAY ATHLETE TELLS OF HIS EXPERIENCE IN THE OLYMPIC GAMES AT ATHENS.

*(From the “New York Daily News”..
By John J. Daly.*

I met with an accident in the Gaelic football field shortly after my return from my tour in the United States of America and Canada two years ago, and was unable

to run last year, but got in shape for the Gaelic Athletic Association championship cross country, which I won on February 25 last over the Clonskeagh course. Two weeks later I won the senior cross country championship held under the Irish Amateur Athletic Association rules at Elm Park, Merrion, Dublin. Both distances were about eight miles, and Tom Hynes, my old rival, was a starter.

Richard Croker, former leader of Tammany hall was anxious to have a team of representative Irish athletes to compete at the Olympic games in Greece, and early in the year made public his desire in the columns of the "Irish Field". Mr. Croker opened a fund to defray the expenses of the prospective team with a generous subscription of £10. Patrons of the Irish turf or horse racing men, subscribed an additional £50, but there were little response from the public. W.C. Frith, who is on the staff of the "Irish Field" selected Peter O'Connor and Con Leahy, the jumper.

I being winner of the longest distance championships held in the country, naturally thought I was entitled to run for Ireland in the distance runs and Marathon race. I signified my intention, but was told that none but those who were rated as sure winners, could have their expenses out of the fund collected.

I determined to compete at the Olympic games at my own expense.

In consequence of the misunderstanding about the score won by the Irish athletes in Greece and their relations or identification with the English representatives, I desire to make it perfectly plain that neither I nor any of the others got any expenses from the Amateur Athletic Association of England or the Greek government.

I met Con Leahy in Dublin and we joined Peter O'Connor, the Waterford jumper in London. We reached Paris via Dieppe. The English athletes and others interested in the Olympic games, in all about forty, travelled with us from London. We suffered severely in our journey by rail through France for want of sleep, food and water.

There is no sleeping accommodation on any but first class express trains on the Continent. We travelled as tourists and passed through the South of France into Italy.

After forty-eight hours journey we reached Turin. We were often twelve or fourteen hours without food or drink. We had not even water to wash with. We left Brindisi on the Baron Call, and at Corfu received a very enthusiastic welcome. A

crowd of citizens met us with a band and after parading us through the principal streets we were hospitably entertained at the leading hotel.

We resumed the voyage and when we touched Greek soil at Patras, our welcome was spiritedly intense. At Athens our reception was even greater.

We put up at the Xappion Hotel, where the American athletes also had their headquarters. They left after two days for the Hotel l'Angloterre, as the food was strange. I could not get accommodation there.

It would show a lack of taste to criticise the food procurable in Greece. To begin with, as athlete is finicky about his food. In Latin countries olive oil is frequently an adjunct to the cooking of meat, as a substitute for lard or fat. I could not eat meat cooked in this style. We got goat milk, goat's butter and meat in every form from roast to devilled. It was always goat, all but horns and whiskers. I could not drink the tea served nor use any of the food, and gradually became weak. The all round dissimilarity of food and drink was just as great as with Laver's Dragoon, when campaigning in the Pyrenees -

"To vinegar from mountain due

From toads to mountain mutton. "

I finished third in the five mile race, but was disqualified for running wide up the straight. I was anxious to see the Marathon race (route), and once went out about half way.

The roads in Greece are good, principally made of sand, but they are all turns. I never saw anything to equal them except "Corkscrew Hill" at Ballybaughan. On the eve of the Marathon, Blake, of Australia, Mercer of Egypt, Cormack of Scotland, Sherring of Canada, the winner, and I were driven to Marathon in the carriage of Mr. Bossequet of the English School, Athens. This gentleman was extremely kind to us, and I am proud to publicly pay a tribute to him. But for his attention I feel we could never have started. He sent his cook with beds and food for us to Marathon.

There was no provision made for our reception at Marathon. We wandered around the village, helpless and bereft of hope. Luckily we ran across an old Greek who, by many and varied signs, and distortion from hands and features, divined our quest. He led us to his abode, the door of which was on the summit of a stone stairs or steps.

We partook of a good supper, and shortly after spread our blankets. We slept about an hour, when Cormack, of Scotland, awoke us with a cry of

“What the --- is that?”

Blake shouted:

“It’s those - - - -”.

A series of blanks leaves imagination to supply the greeting we gave the visitors, whose presence was proclaimed by puncturing our bodies. We sat up all night.

We lined up for the race opposite the forty-first kilometre stone from Athens. The runners were all clad in regular athletic costume. Even if we spoke strange tongues, the bond of sporting sympathy was evident. No one wore spiked shoes. My shoes were of good leather, the soles covered with strips of rubber. Sherring wore ordinary shoes, with uppers reaching to the ankle, having soles one-quarter of an inch thick. They were specially made.

There were between forty-one and forty-five starters. We lined up in four rows. I had a watch strapped to my wrist and it was five minutes past three when the pistol barked, and out into the glaring blaze of sunlight and over the dusty roads we went. Silent and determined, with hope in each heart of winning the crucial test of the world’s most historical and trying pedestrian feat.

The first 400 yards through the village was over rough stones. Two little fellows shot to the front. I cannot recall their names. One was the Greek who was expected by his countrymen to win. They led for about five miles, which was fairly good going. Then Frank went out and made the running. Blake and I were near him; in fact fifty yards was the furthest we were apart up to fifteen miles.

We never spoke. It was a race with issues at stake that an athlete rarely gets a chance to run for. The Greeks had tents along to roadside in the last stages of the race. Refreshments were obtainable in them as well as medical advice or assistance.

After fifteen miles my feet began to blister, and the ankle which was injured last year gave way going down hill. I walked a quarter of a mile, when Sherring overtook me.

To describe any more of the race is impossible. I believe the best man won, and I cannot, if I would, detract from the merit of Sherring’s victory.

The Irish athletes felt indignant because their score was not registered by the officials at the Olympic games. Sherring’s parents are Irish. A Roscommon mother’s

patriotism is responsible fo the emblem of Ireland which he wore in the big race. It was a great, green shamrock, that easily covered his little chest and big heart.

John Daly dismissed his own efforts in the Five Mile race to just one line of that 1,400 word report. However “Standings Athletic Library’s report” draws from a wider perspective and describes the event thus.

FIVE MILE RUN.

Held on Wednesday, April 25, 1906.

H. C. Hawtrey, England, first ; John Svanberg, Sweden, second ; Ed Dahl, Sweden, third; George V. Bonhag, America, fourth; Pagliani, Italy, fifth; George Blake (Australia), Great Britain, sixth; time, 26m. 261-53. Won by fifty yards. John J. Daly of Ireland finished third, but was disqualified.

H. C. Hawtrey of England had no trouble in winning; John Svanberg of Sweden was second, and John J. Daly of Ireland finished third. He was a tired man. He and Dahl of Sweden made a great finish, running neck and neck for the last sixty yards. Daly led Dahl, who was six inches behind him, but Daly, in an unconscious manner, did not run straightaway to the tape, but instead kept running in and out, thus making it an utter impossibility for Dahl to get by him. This of course, was a foul, claimed by the Swedish representatives and allowed by the referee.

In an interview given by John Daly to the Connacht Tribune in 1958 he described how his ankle had first got injured. It had happened a long way from Greece during a football match between Corofin and Dunmore. He went up for a high ball, and taking it cleanly came down in a horse track on the ground. Out shot his ankle.

By 1907 Daly was back in the New World, winning the one, three and five mile championships of Canada, and the ten mile event in New York. He hoped to compete at the 1908 London Olympic Games but was injured at the time of those competitions at White City, his Olympic career was over.

While staying in touch with family and friends on frequent visits to Ireland, Daly’s business life in New York was thriving. The Tuam Herald of Jan. 21st 1922

reports him being the purchaser of two substantial properties, Knockbrack and Belleville in this locality. However, he lived in New York for the rest of his life.

According to a story he told his children Daly once worked for a week for a big company. He had a fight with his boss and never again worked for anyone else. With his brothers he went into the tavern business in New York, eventually owning and running five establishments. He used to call his bars the “poor man’s clubs.”

He served as president of the New York State Restaurant Liquor Dealers Association, the United Restaurant Liquor Dealers of Manhattan and the Restaurant Liquor Dealers Association of Bronx County. He also presided over The Anti-Partition League, and was active in the Irish community in New York.

J.J. was married to a Co. Clare girl, Miss Molly Hogan, who he met when she was a receptionist in a Dublin hotel. They had three in family, two girls and a boy. Major tragedy struck in 1920, when Molly Daly died just two weeks after giving birth.

John Daly himself died at the Mary Manning Walsh Home in New York in March 1969, aged 89.^{xxiii}

His race was run.

ⁱ 05 March 1880. Civil Registration District of Abbey. Reg. 5, Page 54, Entry 270

ⁱⁱ Sean Cunningham, Corofin Annual Vol. 14

ⁱⁱⁱ Connacht Tribune 13th Sept. 1958

^{iv} Tuam Herald on April 2nd, 1904

^v Tuam Herald Sat. Mar.20th 1909

^{vi} D. Guiney, “the Olympic Council of Ireland”.

^{vii} D. Guiney, “the Olympic Council of Ireland”.

^{viii} “Gold, Silver and Green”. K. McCarthy Cork University Press 2010

^{ix} “Great Galway Athletes of the Past”. J.J Waldron

^x ‘Sport’ 27th Aug, 1904

^{xi} Lucas Report on Olympics 1904

^{xii} Gold, Silver and Green”. K. McCarthy Cork University Press 2010

^{xiii} Gold, Silver and Green”. K. McCarthy Cork University Press 2010

^{xiv} Tuam Herald Dec. 24th 1904

^{xv} Gold, Silver and Green”. K. McCarthy Cork University Press 2010

^{xvi} Tuam Herald Dec. 24th 1904

^{xvii} Tuam Herald Dec. 24th 1904

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- ^{xviii} Tuam Herald Sat. Mar.20th 1909
^{xix} Tuam Herald Sat. Feb.18th 1905
^{xx} Tuam Herald Sat. Feb. 11th 1905
^{xxi} Tuam Herald Sat. Mar.4th 1905
^{xxii} Connacht Tribune 7th Sept. 1946
^{xxiii} Obit. New York Times 13th Mar. 1969

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