

WILLOWFIELD TEMPERANCE HARRIERS.

1898 - 1948.

(The Story of Fifty Years)

Compiled by

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(Honorary Secretary of the Club 1940-1945).

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DEDICATED TO ALL WILLOWFIELD

TEMPERANCE HARRIERS,
PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE.

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PREFACE

The compilation of this History and Record of Willowfield Temperance Harriers has taken several years to complete. The task was rendered somewhat more difficult than it need have been, because of the loss of all the early Minute Books of the Club. Consequently, much time and labour was extended searching the files of the I.S.N. for details of Annual General Meetings, Championships, Club Races, etc. A great wealth of material was unearthed but limitations of space forbid an exhaustive account of all the events from 1898 onwards. Discerning readers will note many omissions and lack of reference to Field and Track Championships, and other Sports Meetings, but as Willowfield has been, ab initio, a Cross Country Club, perhaps the omissions will be pardoned.

The book is divided, or rather has divided itself, into three sections and a number of appendices. The divisions are natural breaks in the history of 50 years. The first period terminates with the outbreak of hostilities in 1914; the second period commences with the return to peace-time conditions in 1919; and the third period opens with the Club's affiliation to the N.I.A.A.A. in 1934.

While this history and record has been written to commemorate Willowfield's first Fifty Years and is primarily intended for members and well-wishers of the Club, I have endeavoured to keep other clubs in the "picture", and details are usually given of the individual winner, and the first three teams to finish in each championship or inter-club race.

Several people have greatly assisted me in my efforts to present this "Story of Fifty Years" and I wish to express my indebtedness to the Proprietors and the Editor, Mr. P. Keenan, for permission to "comb" the files of the I.S.N.; Mr. James Towe (The Historian of Irish Athletics), indeed, without the use of his scrap-books this book would never have been possible; Mr. Wm. Mol (Chairman of the N.I.A.A.A.) and Mr. D. McKeag (Joint President of the Club) who helped to clear up some obscure points about championship winning teams; and the young lady who typed a not-too-easily decipherable manuscript.

31st December, 1949.

PART ONE
1898 - 1914

1898-99.

One September evening in the year 1898 a group of young men met in the Willowfield district of Belfast and held the inaugural meeting of the Willowfield Temperance Harrier Club. The actual number of original members is uncertain. Unfortunately the initial Minute Book of the Club has long since disappeared, and in spite of an elaborate search through the files of the local newspapers, a report of the first meeting has not come to light. This, however, is not surprising when we realise that Harrier Clubs were springing up like mushrooms in 1898, - and disappearing almost as quickly. The founding of another club was not an event calculated to capture either half a column in the local newspapers or the imagination of their readers.

What information I have been able to accumulate shows a discrepancy in names and total number of foundation members. Albeit three names appear in the lists of all my four authorities, namely R. Barclay, R. Carey and S. J. Holmes.

(1) The oral tradition current in the Club for more than a generation is that R. Barclay, R. Carey, S. J. Holmes and T. Mahood were the four foundation members.

(2) Mr. R. Barclay in a letter to Ireland's Saturday

Night of the 28th January, 1939, wrote, when referring to a letter from Mr. R. Carey (New Zealand) - "Bob will remember that about 1898, he, with Sam Holmes, Tom Mahood and myself constituted Willowfield Temperance Harriers. Carey was formerly a member of the old County Down Harriers, while I had returned to Belfast, after running for several years with Kingstown Harriers, Dublin."

(3) Mr. R. Carey, in a letter to the same journal on the 31st of July, 1948, making reference to a photograph which the Club gave him when leaving for New Zealand, says, "The photo of the Club which the boys gave me when leaving home has a great fascination for me, for I see them (as they were then), friends that I have never forgotten - Bob Barclay, W. Auld, S. J. Holmes and myself (the first members of the Club), T. Murphy the three brothers McKeag, the McMillans, the Bamfords, Charlie Shields, Jim Lawther and all the others, with Dr. Cathcart (President) in the centre."

Mr. R. Carey's death was reported in the Ireland's Saturday Night a few weeks after his letter was published.

(4) A gentleman associated with the Club in its infancy, states that there were five foundation members, namely, R. Barclay, R. Carey, S. J. Holmes, D. Brown and G. W. Bamford

What conclusion can be drawn from the evidence presented above? Surely it is this, R. Barclay, R. Carey and S. J. Holmes are without dispute foundation members of the Club

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and T. Mahood, W. Auld, D. Brown and G. W. Bamford, ~~is~~ not foundation members, were associated with the Club within a few weeks of its inception.

The word "Willowfield" was an obvious one for the title or part of the title of the Club. The majority of the foundation members resided in the district and belonged to the local Presbyterian Church, which, up to 1896, had been called "Willowfield Presbyterian Church", now W. J. McQuiston Memorial.

Among the rules and regulations drawn up at that inaugural meeting of the Club are two which explain the reason for and the significance of the word "Temperance" as a part of the Club's cognomen. Rule 2 states, "That the objects of the Club shall be to foster Temperance principles in connexion with cross country running." Rule 3 states, "That the members are in no circumstances to use the rooms of public houses or hotels otherwise than temperance, either in advent of travelling or weekly runs, and to discourage this practice."

Rule 3 may seem unnecessary to the present day athletes who chance to read these pages, especially the reference that weekly runs should not take place from public houses, but in 1898, athletics in Ireland were in their infancy. Few, if any, of the clubs had permanent headquarters of their own - in the main, they had to rely on the generosity of the local

churches for the use of lecture halls, for a few hours on a week-night and Saturday, or be indebted to the Principal of a National School, or as some club reports published in the local papers of 1898, obtain the use of a room at a Public House in the suburbs of Belfast. The founders of Willowfield set their faces against this third choice, and being imbued with a praiseworthy zeal for temperance in the athletic world decreed accordingly.

The Club's first headquarters were at the Brown Memorial National School - now known as Euston Street Junior P. E. School. The then Minister of McQuiston Church, the Rev. T. R. Ballantine B.A., was manager of the school, and it was mainly through his interest and influence that the Club was able to secure training quarters there.

In 1898 there were 52 Harrier Clubs in Ireland. Then, as now, the majority were confined to the provinces of Ulster and Leinster. In the 1880's, when organised athletics first became popular in Gt. Britain and Ireland, there were only about 21 clubs in the four provinces. In the first cross country season of Willowfield, the number of clubs had greatly increased. In Ulster there were 24 clubs; Trinity Harriers, Ulsterville Harriers, Glentoran Harriers, Rugby Amateurs, Deramore Harriers, Hibernian Harriers, Willowfield Temperance Harriers, Castleton Harriers, Ireland's Saturday Night Harriers,

Belfast University Harriers, West End Harriers, County Antrim Harriers, County Down Harriers, Sprucefield Harriers, Belmont Harriers, Lisburn Harriers, Derry Harriers, Bloomfield Harriers, Carrickfergus Harriers, St. Jude's Harriers, Newry Harriers, Armagh Harriers, North Belfast Harriers and Springvale Harriers. Leinster had 22 clubs; Haddington Harriers, County Dublin Harriers, Dublin University Harriers, Clonliffe Harriers, City and Suburban Harriers, Donore Harriers, Leinster Harriers, Abington Harriers, Pembroke, Phoenix, Aberdeen, Beaumont, Howth, C.B.B. Harriers, Belgrave Harriers, Eagle Harriers, Tally-ho Harriers, Drogheda Harriers, Dundalk Harriers, Dunleer Harriers, Kingstown Harriers and Reash Harriers. Munster had 4 clubs; Cork City Harriers, St. Patrick's Harriers, Urbs Intacta Harriers and Limerick Harriers. And finally, Connaught, where only two clubs were active - Ballinasloe Harriers and Galway Harriers.

It was the formation of the Northern branch of the Cross Country Association that gave an impetus to the growth of existing clubs and contributed largely to the founding of new clubs in Ulster. Prior to the 1898-99 season, the only Championships were the Irish National Senior and Junior, held always in the vicinity of Dublin. Lack of adequate financial resources, however, was a paramount feature in the early years of Irish athletics, thus few Northern Clubs could afford

to travel to Dublin for the National Championships. The First Annual General Meeting of the Northern branch of the Cross Country Association of Ireland was held during the month of January, 1898. A preliminary meeting had been held in the Prince of Wales Hotel, Victoria Street, on 31st December, 1897, with a view to establishing a Northern Branch, and this meeting was attended by some sixty interested persons. A resolution was passed that a branch should be founded and that the First Annual General Meeting should be held in a fortnight's time, consisting of five delegates from each club in the North of Ireland. The Northern Branch was successfully launched in January, 1898, and it was decided to hold a local championship in the season 1898-99. Thus, with the formation of this branch, the Ulster clubs could anticipate races where the expenses of competing and travelling would be practically nil.

The Willowfield officials resolved early in their first season to be represented at the first championship of the Northern branch of the Association. The first published report of the Club that I have been able to trace, emphasises their eagerness to have a team ready for the big occasion. The run described was held on the 13th October, 1898.

*Willowfield Temperance Harriers held a large muster of members on Thursday night, where a fast spin was indulged in by way of training for a race next Thursday night. The

running of Messrs. Holmes, Brown, Barclay and Dawson augurs well for an exciting finish. Competitors will remember to send in their names on or before Wednesday next."

Towards the end of December, however, the attendances were becoming irregular - only seven members put in an appearance for a mid-week run on the 15th December - Messrs. R. Carey, T. Dawson, R. Barclay, J. Sharpe, D. Brown, S. J. Holmes and T. Malcolm.

A Five mile race was decided on Saturday, 31st December, 1898, the winner being T. Mahood, (2) J. Dawson (3) S. J. Holmes and finishing in the following order, R. Barclay, R. Carey, G. W. Bamford, J. Paton and T. Malcolm.

In spite of the dearth of numbers, the wearers of the White and Black with a Green star to complete the ensemble - for such were the colours of the Club at its genesis - the now familiar Black, Blue and White, with the symbol of a Greyhound and the Barred Gate, came later in the Club's history - competed in the first local championship, the Northern Junior Cross Country Championship (the word "Junior" was deleted in 1901). This race had to be held on two successive Saturdays before a final decision was reached. The first race was held on the 4th March, 1899 on a course opposite Flush House and Campbell Park, the present headquarters of the 9th Old Boys Harrier and Athletic Club. Owing to faulty lap scoring the

race was declared null and void, and it was decided to re-run the event on the 11th March at the same venue. Here is what Mr. R. Barclay says in his letter to the Ireland's Saturday Night of the 28th January, 1939. "I well remember our first attempt to run the Junior at Rosetta. The course was too small and flat with no obstacles, the lap scorers few and inexperienced; with the result that everything was a mix-up and the race declared void, as it was impossible to identify either the individual or team winners. It was generally conceded that W. Millar of Trinity Harriers won individual honours."

On the 11th March, five of the seven clubs which had competed the week previously, took the field, University Amateurs and Hibernians not running. The individual on this occasion was J. Kirkpatrick (Deramore Harriers). The team championship was won by County Antrim with 64 points, (2) Trinity Harriers, 71 points, (3) Deramore Harriers, 84 points, (4) Ulsterville, 109 points, (5) Willowfield, 183 points. The Willowfield scoring six were (15) S. J. Holmes, (30) T. Mahood, (33) R. Carey, (34) T. Dawson, (55) D. Brown, (56) G. W. Bamford. Not a very auspicious start, but athletes are not made in a day as all interested in the sport well know. The Club was not deterred by its low finishing place in that first championship. The commence-

ment of the next cross country season found the officials making preparations for the Second Annual General Meeting.

1899-1900.

On the 4th September, 1899, the Second Annual General Meeting of the Club was held at 50 Newry Street, Castlereagh Road. The following quotation is from the Ireland's Saturday Night of 6th September, 1899. "The Treasurer's report was read and duly passed. The following officers were elected: Patron, T. C. D. Cathcart, M.D., Treasurer, William Auld, Captain, S. J. Holmes, Vice-Captain, T. Dawson, Secretary, T. Mahood."

The Club's Patron, Dr. T. C. D. Cathcart, during his term of office, presented a trophy to the Club for annual competition among the members. This trophy - The Cathcart Cup - is still a proud possession of the Club. The Cup was first competed for on the 26th of December, 1899, at the old Glentoran Football Grounds, Templemore Avenue. The race then, as now, was a six mile affair, the winner being G. W. Bamford, (2) S. J. Holmes, (3) W. Dalzell.

The Second Northern Cross Country Championship was held at Beechwood, Beersbridge Road, on the 24th February, 1900. The individual winner was W. Millar of Trinity Harriers, and the team honours went to Trinity with 52 points, (2) County Antrim, 66 points, (3) tie between Willowfield and Ulsterville

with 107 points each. Willowfield's first man home was J. Minnis in second place. Only four teams competed.

1900-01.

This was the season that saw the perseverance and dogged determination of Willowfield rewarded. But before I give an account of the championship, I will quote part of the 3rd Annual General Meeting, as reported in the press. "The Third Annual General Meeting of the above Club was held in the Brown Memorial National School, Euston Street, on Friday, 7th September, 1900, Mr. R. Barclay presiding. Elections resulted as follows:- Patron, T. C. D. Cathcart, M.D., President, G. W. Wolff, M.P., Captain, T. P. Mahood, Vice-Captain, J. Maxwell, Secretary, R. Barclay, Assistant Secretary, R. Carey, Treasurer, W. Auld. Committee, J. Minnis, T. Dawson, T. A. Hutchinson, A. Carey, J. Sharpe and S. J. Holmes. The opening run will be held from the above clubroom (which has been kindly placed at the disposal of the Club for the season by Mr. M. R. Foley), on Saturday, 11th instant. As there are considerable funds in hand and a good roll, a record season is expected. A hearty vote of thanks to the various gentlemen who assisted the Club financially during the past season, and the outgoing officials who had acted so efficiently, brought the meeting to a close."

The optimism expressed in this report was borne out when

the Third Northern Championship came round for decision on the 19th January, 1901. The course was at the Bog Meadows. Seven clubs competed. The race resolved into a great struggle between County Antrim and Willowfield, with County Antrim getting the verdict. The individual winner was J. W. Jefferson, and the team placings were as follows:- (1) County Antrim, 84 points, (2) Willowfield, 88 points, (3) West Belfast, 110 points. The Club's scoring six were, (6) S. McMillan, (9) T. Murphy, (13) S. J. Holmes, (15) D. McKeag, (20) W. McMillan and (25) R. Massey. Surely this was a happy day for the Willowfield pioneers, seeing and helping their Club gain its first honour. This kudos gave the members the confidence they needed, and while they had still to wait for a few more years before gaining first position in a championship, the roll of the Club never fell below 20 active members.

1901-02.

The Fourth Annual General Meeting was held on the 4th September. The officials for the ensuing season were Captain T. P. Mahood, Vice-captain, S. McMillan, Secretary, J. B. Hutchinson, Assistant Secretary, W. J. McClay, Treasurer, S. J. Holmes, Committee, D. McKeag, T. McKeag, T. Murphy, R. Barclay, A. McRoberts. Delegates to Northern Branch of the Cross Country Association of Ireland, R. Barclay, T. Murphy and J. B. Hutchinson.

The opening run of the season was held on Saturday the 5th October.

The Northern Championship was held as usual during the season, on the 25th January at Belvoir Park. This was the first occasion that a championship had been held on what was to become one of the most famous cross country courses in the North of Ireland for many years. The individual winner was J. McAuley, County Antrim, and the team race was also captured by the same club with 67 points, (2) Hibernian, 111 points, (3) Willowfield, 115 points. Eight teams faced the starter. T. P. Mahood was the Club's first representative in fourth position.

1902-03.

"The opening run of the season took place from Ballyhackamore Thirty members turned out the trail crossed the railway line, skirted the Brickworks and Knock Golf Course, home via Neill's Hill..... "

The Northern Championship was decided at Belvoir Park on the 28th February, a total of eight teams competed. Individual winner was J. Thompson, County Antrim, and the team championship went to Trinity Harriers with 58 points, (2) County Antrim, 90 points, (3) West Belfast, 114 points, (4) Willowfield, 153 points. The finishing positions of Willowfield are not available, but here is a list of the Club's representatives:-

C. Shields, T. P. Mahood, J. Lawther, S. J. Holmes, D. McKeag, J. M. Kelly, E. Shaw, T. Murphy, F. Morrison, S. Ham, C. McCarry and A. McClurg.

1903-04.

Dundonald was the venue for the Club's opening run on 3rd October. Twenty members took the trail which lead by Ballyrobert verging on Comber and back to Dundonald, a distance of six miles.

The Northern Championship at Belvoir Park on the 27th February, 1904, resulted in a win for Trinity Harriers with 72 points, (2) Hibernian, 74 points, (3) North Belfast, 115 points, (4) a tie between Willowfield and County Antrim with 178 points. Individual winner, S. Lee (West Belfast). Eight teams competed, and T. Campbell was the Club's first man home in eighth position.

1904-05.

The opening run of the season was from Ballyhackamore on the 1st October. Twenty members had an outing over a seven mile course.

The Northern Championship attracted an entry of nine teams this year, and was decided at Belvoir Park. The individual winner was T. McCullough, County Antrim, the same club annexing the team race with 89 points, (2) Trinity points, (3) Willowfield, 144 points. The team placing on

that occasion was (2) C. Shields, (11) T. Campbell, (23) S. J. Holmes, (33) J. Lawther, (35) A. Alexander, (40) T. Murphy.

1905-06.

For this season I have been able to glean the following report of the Eighth Annual General Meeting of the Club from the Ireland's Saturday Night. "Willowfield Temperance Harriers held their Eighth Annual Meeting in Grogan's Restaurant, Mr. James Parkhill in the chair . attendance 55 members. The secretary submitted his report and intimated that the Club's membership had reached a record of seventy Officials elected:- President, Mr. J. Parkhill, Captain, T. Campbell, Vice-captain, C. Shields, Secretary, G. W. Bamford, Assistant Secretary, A. Alexander, Treasurer, S. J. Holmes, Delegate to N.B.I.A.A.A., W. Valentine, Delegates to N.B.C.C.A.I., T. McKeag, T. Mahood, G. W. Bamford. Committee, D. McKeag, T. Murphy, E. Shaw, T. McKeag, J. Cull and F. Mark.

It is interesting to recall that the proprietor of Grogan's Restaurant, Mr. C. W. Grogan presented a trophy to the Club in November, 1903, and that F. Rodgers was the first holder of "Grogan's Challenge Cup."

The Northern championship was again held at Belvoir Park. The individual winner was S. Lee, West Belfast, and team honours were won by Ulsterville with 66 points, (2) Willowfield, 118 points, (3) Trinity, 121 points. The Club's

first three men home were (4) C. Shields, (8) T. Campbell, (9) W. McLaughlin.

1906-07.

The Annual General Meeting for the year 1906-07 was held at Grogan's Restaurant. "Mr. J. Parkhill presiding over a large attendance of old and new members. The annual reports were passed as satisfactory. The elections were as follows:- Chairman, F. Mark, Vice-Chairman, E. Shaw, Captain, C. Shields, Vice-Captain, J. Anderson, Secretary, T. McKeag, Assistant Secretary, J. Larmour, Treasurer, S. J. Holmes, Auditors, J. Cull and A. Bowes, Committee, T. Campbell, H. Shields, G. W. Bamford, A. Alexander, W. Bennett and J. McKeag." At this meeting of the club an admirer of Willowfield presented a Gold medal for the best attendance at all the club runs for the ensuing session. For many years afterwards a Gold medal was given for the best attendance, and so keen was the competition that it was often necessary to hold a race among those who had a hundred per cent. attendance, in order to award the medal.

The Club competed in the Irish National Junior Championship in Dublin in this session. There were nine teams in the race, but so severe was the course that only five teams finished. West-Belfast were expected to do well in the event, but failed to appear in time for the commencement of the race.

Team honours were gained by Donore "A" with 27 points, (2) Willowfield, 72 points and (3) Donore "B", 133 points. Individual, W. Cooke (Donore).

The Northern Senior Championship was won by West Belfast, (2) Willowfield, and the individual title holder was S. Lee, West Belfast, with J. Kerr of Willowfield in second position. A newspaper reporter describing the thrilling race which resulted in a narrow victory for West Belfast, said, "When both West Belfast and Willowfield had finished their first half-dozen no one could really say for a minute or two who had won. A hurried count of points, however, left it clear that West Belfast had just landed the event. If Willowfield did not win," the writer adds, "they put up a performance so fine that it deserves to reckon as almost equal in importance and merit and when next season comes round I shall be very much surprised if Willowfield are not 'cock of the walk'".

This Ireland's Saturday Night reporter prophesied perhaps better than he knew. The Club's star was definitely on the ascendancy in the 1906-07 season, and before the new cross country season had opened the fame of Willowfield was being noised abroad. On the 22nd June, 1907, a "Go-As-You-Please" from Belfast to Lurgan was sponsored by the proprietors of the Ireland's Saturday Night and the winner was W. F. Furlonger running in Willowfield colours. The best descriptive

term that could be used to describe the race would be a "Mammoth Marathon". Four hundred and sixty one entries were received, 401 athletes took the field and 303 finished the course. Is it any wonder the old-timers still talk about the Belfast to Lurgan Go-As-You-Please !" The day of the race was like an annual holiday; crowds thronged the road-sides as the runners passed through every little village and hamlet from Balmoral to Lurgan. The excitement of the crowd as W. F. Furlonger breasted the tape at Lurgan must surely have equalled that of the Athenian crowd at the First Modern Olympic Games held in Greece in the year 1896, when, appropriately enough, a Greek, S. Louis, won from a field of 25 runners. The time for the 1896 Marathon (26 miles and 385 yards) was 2 hours 55 minutes and 20 seconds. At Athens in 1906, the distance was covered in 2 hours 51 minutes and 23 5/5 seconds. Furlonger's time of 3 hours 8 minutes and 21 1/5 seconds was for a distance 685 yards in excess of the full Marathon distance. While allowing for the fact that the condition of the course is a determining factor in the actual times returned by Marathon runners - consequently there is no official World Record for the Marathon race - a comparison of Furlonger's time with that of the 1906 Olympic victor clearly demonstrates that this Irish athlete was an outstanding long distance runner. It has been claimed that no British athlete

has ever won the Olympic Marathon, I have no doubt that had W. F. Furlonger had an opportunity of competing in the Games, he would have come very near to annexing the Olympic title.

1907-08.

The Tenth Annual General Meeting was held on Monday, the 30th September at the Club's new headquarters, Mountpotting Y.M.C.A., Mr. J. Parkhill presiding. The secretary's report mentioned that the Club had had a very successful season, finishing second in both the Irish National Junior and the Northern Championships. "Members", he continued, "had won twenty prizes at summer sports meetings, excluding the prizes in the "Go-As-You-Please" which amounted to thirty. The club supplied the winner of the very trying race to Lurgan, and also won the sealed handicap. The winner of a similar race to Downpatrick was also a Club member." The secretary concluded his report by saying the membership of the Club was around fifty and the average attendance at each run was twenty. The elections for the season were as follows:- Patron, G. W. Wolff, Esq., M.P., President, Mr. J. Parkhill, Chairman, D. McKeag, Vice-Chairman, E. Shaw, Secretary, T. McKeag, Assistant Secretary, J. Larmour, Treasurer, S. J. Holmes, Captain, J. Anderson, Vice-Captain, C. Matthews. Committee, J. McKeag, C. Shields, F. Mark, T. Campbell, J. Cull and S. Crothers. The account of the meeting concluded by giving a list of runs

and venues for the month of October. I am quoting them because I think it is interesting to note that the idea of combined runs among clubs is not a novelty. 5th October, Ballyclare, 12 October, combined run with Trinity Harriers at Dundonald, 19th October, St. John's, Malone, 26th October, Greenville Hall, Bloomfield.

The Club's first success in 1907-08 was the Irish National Junior Championship at Dublin. Eleven teams for the championship competed at Clonskeagh, County Dublin. A newspaper report aptly sums up the race with the caption "Ulster Sweeps the Boards". Willowfield were first with 78 points, (2) West Belfast, 97 points, (3) Ulsterville, 107 points. The individual winner was Regan (Haddington Harriers). The Club's first three men were (5) J. Cully, (9) C. Shields, (11) W. Gordon.

The next big event was the Northern Senior Championship at Belvoir Park. Nine teams competed. J. Kerr (Willowfield) was the individual champion. The team race resulted as follows:- (1) Willowfield, 47 points, (2) Ulsterville, 85 points, (3) a tie between West Belfast and East Antrim. The Club's scoring six were (1) J. Kerr, (5) C. Shields, (8) J. Cully, (10) T. Campbell and (11) R. Kerr.

The Ireland's Saturday Night, describing the race said, "Willowfield, by their decided win, demonstrated what the Junior National event has already indicated - namely, that

at present they are the best junior team in Ireland. For the last three years Tom McKeag, his brother Davie and Tom Murphy have steadily and determinedly set themselves the task of making the Willowfield team fit to win this distinction" The writer of the article concludes his report, "Where Willowfield scored was in their uniformity as a team.." "It will be noticed that within two minutes of the arrival of the first man home they had almost two complete teams home, and even the second side was close up to the fourth team."

With victories in both the Irish Junior and Northern Senior, hopes were high that the Club would be victorious in the Irish National Senior the same year; unfortunately it was not to be. The championship was decided at Clonskeagh; six teams faced the flag. The race was won by Haddington Harriers with a total of 43 points. (2) Willowfield with 65 points, J. Kerr (Willowfield) proved himself the athlete of the day, supplementing his Northern title with the proud title of Irish National Senior Cross Country Champion.

Competent judges tell me that the Willowfield team of 1907-08 was the most outstanding of all the teams that have sported the Willowfield colours. Ten of the Northern Championship team finished in the first thirteen positions - a great feat !

1908-09.

The Club opened its eleventh session in fine fettle. With the championship teams of the previous year at its disposal the future outlook was bright indeed, albeit a new junior team must now be recruited and trained.

The Northern Senior Championship at Belvoir Park resulted in an easy victory for the Club, although J. Kerr and S. Lee (West Belfast) first and second respectively, were disqualified for an alleged infringement of the rules. Fourteen teams competed in the event. Willowfield's total points were 68, (2) Ulsterville, 102 points, (3) West Belfast, 114 points. The championship team was, (4) J. Cully, (5) W. Ashe, (7) S. Cochrane, (15) W. Rankin, (17) T. Nelson, (20) T. Campbell. The individual winner was R. Kerr (East Antrim).

Interest was now centred on the Irish National Senior at Dublin. City and Suburban Harriers had competed in the English National Championship during the year, finishing in third position, and were expected to carry off the Irish title. Willowfield, second the previous year, entertained great expectations too. Six teams competed. City and Suburban emerged the victors with 39 points, (2) Willowfield, 68 points, (3) Clonliffe, 103 points. The Club's team was (10) Rankin, (12) Crothers, (13) Nelson, (15) Cully, (16) Ashe

and (20) Gordon.

1909-10.

The Club was now in a commanding position in Ulster athletics, and this season created a new record, winning the Northern Senior Championship for the third successive year.

The National Junior Championship, held at Clonskeagh, was poorly supported by the Ulster clubs because of the heavy expenditure necessitated in travelling to Dublin. Only seven clubs competed, and the Club emerged winners with one point margin from City and Suburban. Willowfield, 73 points, (2) City and Suburban, 74 points, (3) Donore, 150 points. The championship team was (5) W. Gordon, (7) A. McLaughlin, (10) S. Crothers, (14) J. Anderson, (18) P. Anderson and (21) W. Mol.

The Northern Senior was held at Belvoir Park. "The race between East Antrim and Willowfield was a grand one. J. Kerr, now competing for East Antrim, was an easy winner. But if the individual position was easily settled not the team placings. Rarely, indeed, have so many startling changes been witnessed in the course of a race. At the first time past the judges the chances of East Antrim were of the rosiest description and they continued to flatter their supporters until the last mile was reached when splendid

work was put in by the Willowfield "A" team. They bettered their positions repeatedly, and after a desperate struggle they succeeded in getting home by five points over the Ballyclare team. Willowfield had six men in fifteen, ten in twenty, and the full list of starters inside thirty. McGreevy, without let or hindrance, ran his race and should yet develop into a champion. W. Gordon repeated his Junior championship form For East Antrim the brothers Kerr stood out from all other competitors." (Ireland's Saturday Night.)

The details are as follows:- Thirteen teams competed.

- (1) Willowfield, 59 points, (2) East Antrim, 64 points,
- (3) North Belfast, 226 points. The team was (5) T. McGreevy,
- (4) W. Gordon, (10) W. Ashe, (13) P. Anderson, (14) T. Campbell and (15) A. McLaughlin.

1910-11.

The Irish National Junior was decided at Newtownards. Connaught Rangers won the title with the low total of 47 points. Willowfield does not seem to have entered a team.

In the Northern Senior championship at Belvoir Park - the thirteenth of the series - the holders (Willowfield) were defeated and East Antrim achieved a double triumph, the individual title-holder was J. Kerr for the second year in succession. I am not trying to minimise East Antrim's

success when I add that two of Willowfield's best runners, T. McGreevy and A. L. Colhoun were on the injured list. Fifteen teams competed, (1) East Antrim, 81 points, (2) Willowfield, 124 points, (3) North Belfast, 133 points. A Willowfield "B" team was ninth in the race.

1911-12.

The brilliant successes of the 1907-8-9-10 years were now drawing to a close. The Club was suffering from a dearth of junior runners and no Club team competed in the National Irish Junior at Dundrum. The race is of interest because a new club called the "Vegetarians" took part in the race, but sad to relate, the arch prophets of vegetarianism must have been disappointed, because it was the "beef-eaters" who raised the winning flag. North Belfast gained the team championship, and J. Martin (Ulster-ville) was individual champion.

The Northern Senior championship at Belvoir Park saw North Belfast, who for the past two seasons filled third position in the race, win the event. R. Kerr (East Antrim) was the individual winner.

1912-13.

In this season the Club was struggling hard to regain its high place.

The Irish National Junior was held at Newtownards. Nine teams competed. North Belfast, now the team of the year, won the title with 74 points. (2) Donore, 79 points, (3) The Buffs, 102 points. The Club occupied the lowly position of eighth place with 265 points.

North Belfast went on to win both the Northern Senior and the Irish National Senior Championships. Willowfield finished 5th in the Northern Senior.

1913-14.

This season, the last before the First World War, saw Ulsterville wrestle the Northern title from North Belfast. Willowfield, still in the process of rebuilding a new team, were in fifth position. Details - (1) Ulsterville, 36 points, (2) North Belfast, 67 points, (3) Duncairn, 111 points.

In addition Ulsterville, 87 points, captured the Irish National Junior title at Newtownards, with H. C. Irwin, (Donore) the individual winner. The Buffs were second with 107 points, (5) Donore, 117 points. Willowfield were eighth with 275 points - Team, R. Rodgers, T. McDowell, W. Hanna, J. Cleland, J. Jackson, J. Shanks and J. P. Foy.

An hiatus of almost five years now occurs in the pages of the history of Irish athletics, and in the story of Willowfield Temperance Harriers. The majority of clubs disbanded for the war years, and many members answered the call of King and Country and some laid down their lives in the cause of Freedom.