

# WORKSHEET

A HISTORY OF IRELAND IN 100 OBJECTS, A SELECTION  
LEAVING CERTIFICATE, ORDINARY AND HIGHER LEVEL HISTORY

## GAA Medal, 1887

### WORKSHEET 1

#### GAA MEDAL, 1887

Obverse Side



Details on Medal

Significance of Details

Reverse Side



Details on Medal

Significance of Details

## WORKSHEET 2

### GAA MEDAL, 1887

Olympic Medal  
Summer Games, Athens 1896



Motifs on Medal

Shape of Medal



Motifs on Medal

Shape of Medal

## WORKSHEET 3

### GAA MEDAL, 1887

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Was the GAA seeking to break from Britain?	Document providing the relevant evidence
Was the GAA reacting to Britain's cultural influence?	
Was the GAA simply interested in cultural revival?	

## WORKSHEET 4

### GAA MEDAL, 1887

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#### Source A

Extract from *Freeman's Journal*, Tuesday, 15 May 1888, page 7.

The County Limerick Gaelic Championship (from Our Correspondent) Limerick

'As arranged by the Central Council the winning Gaelic teams under both Father Sheehy's and Mr O'Brien's County Boards met yesterday for the purpose of playing off for the championship of the county. On account of the circumstances much interest was centred in the proceedings, and three special trains had to be run by the Waterford and Limerick Railway Co. Perfect order and good feeling prevailed throughout and everything passed off amicably. The Limerick Commercials, the All Ireland Champions of last year, were matched against the St. Michael's, Limerick, and the South Liberties Hurling Club against the Murroe.

Details - Commercials V St. Michael's - After about ten minutes' play St. Michael's secured a point, and near the close of half time the Commercials also placed a point to their credit. At change of sides play commenced in earnest, and the St Michael's not playing with much spirit, the Commercials continued to score, and ultimately won by two goals and eight points, to one point for their opponents.'

#### Questions:

1. This report deals with a match that was played after the Commercials won the first All-Ireland Football title; what evidence shows that many people wanted to see the team play?
2. Explain how the language of this article differs from the language used in modern sports journalism. Can you explain why it is different?

## Source B

Extract from *Story of the G.A.A.* [i.e. *Gaelic Athletic Association*], by Thomas F. O'Sullivan, p. 57.  
Printed at 49 Middle Abbey Street, Dublin, 1916.

'The final between the Commercials and Dundalk Young Ireland's was played at Dublin (Clonakeagh – sic) on the 29th April, 1888. The contest was fought out in a fine manly sporting spirit and was unmarred by any unpleasant incident. Louth did a good deal of clever handwork, and the Limerick play was characterised by a fine defence and spirited rushes. Dundalk winning the toss played with the wind, and scored three points to their opponents' one before sides were changed. In the second half, however, the Commercials forced the pace and achieved victory. Mr John Cullinane (now MP) refereed and the final score was: Limerick 1 goal and 4 points, Louth 3 points. Limerick team—Denis Corbett (Capt and cul báire), Ty Fitzgibbon, W Gunning, R Breen, J Hyland, T McNamara, -Spain, P Corbett, M Slattery, J Kennedy, MI Casey, J Mulqueen, Malachi O'Brien, P Kelly, Ty Kennedy, P Keating, W Cleary, R Normoyle, P Reeves, T Keating, T McMahan

Thurles (hurling champions) or the Commercials did not get their championship medals until over a quarter of a century later...'

## Questions:

1. O'Sullivan's book was based on recollections he first published in a series of newspaper articles in 1914. Is this a reliable source, in your opinion?
2. Both Source A and B comment on the behaviour of the attending crowds. Why do you think this was so important, in the broader context of the GAA's early years?

## WORKSHEET 5

### GAA MEDAL, 1887

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#### The 1887 Split

This article is available on the GAA Museum website:  
<http://www.crokepark.ie/gaa-museum/gaa-archive/>

'Throughout its formative years Cusack often had to deny that the G.A.A. was established as a political body; he was adamant that it had been established solely for the dual purposes of opening up athletics to the ordinary citizen and reversing the decline of native pastimes.

However, with legislative independence the burning issue of the day, keeping politics out of a parish based, nationwide organisation such as the G.A.A. would have been impossible.

For most of the 19th century nationalist Ireland was split between two clearly defined groups—those in favour of peaceful political agitation (Home Rule) and those who favoured physical force (IRB).

Both groups had taken an early interest in the GAA. By 1887 a struggle for control of the GAA broke out between the two camps and split the GAA in a way never seen since.

Between 1884 and 1887 several key events had taken place within the GAA; Cusack had been removed from the post of Secretary in 1886 and key positions within the Association had been filled by IRB members, including the post of vice-president which was taken up by P.T. Hoctor; the level of influence the IRB held within the Association can be seen by the invitation to the Fenian John O'Leary to become a patron of the Association.

The exiled Cusack established a paper The Celtic Times and used it as a vehicle to criticise the leadership and administration of the Association. So fierce were his criticisms that within four months of its publication the Association issued an official organ of its own The Gael, under the editorship of Hoctor.

Throughout 1887 the IRB faction continued to tighten its grip on the administration of the Association, culminating in the revision of the rules of the Association; such revisions normally required the approval of Convention but the IRB faction forced them through at a Dublin meeting.

In April 1887 Davin, sensing that he could do no good, resigned as President of the Association. This left the IRB faction in control of the Executive and with the added tactical advantage of ownership of the mouthpiece of the Association.

The IRB saw the upcoming 1887 Convention in Thurles as an opportune time to seize full control of the Association.

The 1887 Convention, held in Thurles on the 9th of November 1887, is without doubt the most dramatic Convention ever seen in the history of the GAA.

Within three years the 'Seven men in Thurles' had grown to over 1,000 delegates; the mood in the town was tense with police lining the streets expecting trouble. The IRB faction had arrived to the venue, the local courthouse, early and ensured they filled all available seats.

When the meeting commenced, Fitzgerald (IRB) and Scanlon (Home Rule) both sought the Chair; leading to loud arguments and fist fights amongst the spectators. When the IRB candidate, Edward Bennett, defeated Maurice Davin for the Presidency, Scanlon left and announced his intention to form a rival athletic association; one which would pledge allegiance to the National League. Symbolically he led a march to Hayes Hotel, where he chaired a meeting during which a call of support was issued to the imprisoned MP William O'Brien; requested the support of Croke and demanded that Davin be reinstated as President of the G.A.A.

Scanlon's secession seemed to draw matters to a head; over the coming weeks clubs throughout the country held their own conventions, those who may have only marginally supported the physical force faction were now given a stark choice—the relatively unknown Bennett or Davin. Anti-Bennett clubs grew by the week.

Croke, who had publicly distanced himself from the Bennett administration, now set about bringing the two sides together. A provisional committee, equally representing both sides, was formed and a new

Convention was scheduled for the 4th of January 1888. In the run up to this convention clubs held their own conventions and the proceedings of these gave a good indication that the mood was swinging firmly in the favour of Davin.

At the 1888 Convention, orderly and dignified by all accounts, Maurice Davin was elected as President and Prendergast as Secretary. The only members of the Bennett administration to survive the cull were Frewen (elected Treasurer) and O'Riordan (elected central council secretary). A new constitution was drafted and symbolically the MP William O'Brien was invited to become a patron.

The six week split ended practically overnight, helped no doubt by the decisions of both the Celtic Times and The Gael to cease publication. Planning for the upcoming 1888 Invasion tour helped focus minds.'

### Questions:

1. What did Cusack often have to deny?
2. For what dual purpose had the GAA been established?
3. What was the burning issue of the day?
4. Between which two clearly defined groups were nationalists split?
5. What happened within the GAA in 1887?
6. Between 1884 and 1887:
  - list the key events that had taken place within the GAA.
  - what was the motivation behind the IRB increasing its influence?
7. What was the purpose of the two newspapers?
8. Why did Davin resign in 1887?
9. What was the consequence of the split for clubs throughout the country?
10. How did Croke set about bringing the two sides together?
11. Are there any references to any other tensions described in the above passage?

## WORKSHEET 6

### GAA MEDAL, 1887

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#### The 1888 American Invasion Tour

This article is available on the GAA Museum website:  
<http://www.crokepark.ie/GAA-Museum/GAA-Archive/>

'One of the ideas considered by the founders of the GAA was the revival of the ancient "Tailteann Games" (An Aonach Tailteann).

In 1888 the idea of hosting this "Celtic Festival" was again raised and plans were put in place to hold the festival in Dublin in the summer of 1889. The festival would include field games, athletic contests, an industrial exhibition and literary and musical competitions. It was estimated that hosting the festival would cost in the region of £5,000.

To raise the capital it was planned that a group of Irish athletes would embark on a fundraising tour of Irish centres in America, staging displays of hurling and athletics and international contests between Ireland and America.

£1,000 would be needed for this American Tour and a nationwide fundraising campaign was initiated, the idea being that each of the 800 or so affiliated clubs would contribute a small amount.

In the meantime the process of selecting hurlers and athletes to accompany the tour began.

Counties with properly constituted boards were asked to nominate a number of hurlers for the trip, but the fall-out from the 1887 split and the renewed influence of the IRB meant that some counties (most notably Cork, Limerick and Galway) did not nominate any hurlers. In the end 25 hurlers were chosen, with both Tipperary and Dublin contributing 5 each.

The All-Ireland athletic contest was held in Limerick in August 1888 and Maurice Davin and Daniel Frewen (treasurer) attended with a view of selecting the best competitors. The selection of the 18 athletes to travel was straightforward.

When the Central Council examined the details of the fund it was discovered that, despite all the public appeals, the amount collected fell far short of the target. With preparations at an advanced stage, cancelling the tour was not feasible so the decision was made to postpone the August departure date, until the 16th of September, and to intensify the fund-raising campaign.

To help raise funds Davin decided to bring the party together a week before the departure date and hold a number of exhibition fund-raising games in Dublin, Wexford, Dundalk, Kilkenny, Tipperary and Cork.

On September 16 1888 the "Invaders" boarded the Wisconsin and after a nine-day journey they arrived in New York to a heroes' welcome, with representatives of the Irish Societies clamouring to greet them.

The tour visited several areas in New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Trenton, Newark, Patterson, Providence and Lowell. They were awarded a tumultuous welcome in each centre and the press were generous in their coverage of the games, with hurling getting great reviews. From a social viewpoint the tour was a success and helped establish the GAA in America.

However influences outside of their control ultimately lead to the trip being considered a failure. The Invaders arrived in America to a bitter dispute between the two rival American athletic bodies; the National American Athletic Association (NAAA) and the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) The larger AAU refused to participate in the tour unless the GAA denounced the NAAA. When the GAA took a neutral

position the AAU refused to compete against them. This meant that the tour lost the attraction of the international contests between the Irish and the best Athletes of America. The tour lost much of its appeal and gate receipts suffered.

Attendances throughout the tour were also affected by the poor, sometimes hostile, weather, which in one case resulted in the abandonment of a hurling match half way through. Had the tour gone ahead in August, as originally planned, it is sure attendances (and gate receipts) would have been much higher.

When Davin and the other officials sat down during the last days of the tour to examine the financial position their worst fears were confirmed. A further £450 was needed just to meet the travel and accommodation bill. Michael Davitt advanced the party the money and all debts were cleared.

When the party left America on October 31 1888 its numbers had fallen and of the 51 that arrived, 17 (and possibly more) chose to stay in America permanently.

Upon arrival in Cobh the party was met by the Cork County Board and an address was read by Michael Deering in which he congratulated the party on the manner in which the tour had been conducted, stressing that the tour had proved Irish Athletes could hold their own against the Americans, and he highlighted the publicity generated for the Association as a result of the tour.

However the aim of the tour was to raise £5,000 for the staging of the Tailteann Games in 1889. In this aspect the tour must be considered a financial failure.

It would be 34 years before the idea of staging the Tailteann Games was raised again.'

### Questions:

1. What events would be included in the Celtic Festival?
2. How was it planned to fund the festival?
3. Why did Cork, Limerick and Galway not nominate any hurlers?
4. Why did the tour lose most of its appeal in America?
5. Was the tour a financial success?
6. What long-term effect had the loss of 17 or more hurlers and athletes have?
7. What long-term effect did the financial failure of the American Invasion Tour have?