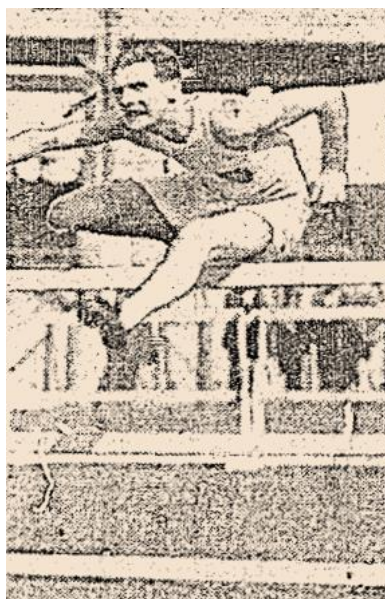


TIPPERARY ATHLETES



Theo Phelan

by Michael O'Dwyer

Theo Phelan was born on 12 September 1908 at Prior Park, Clonmel, County Tipperary. He was the second son of Theobald Phelan, a drapery salesman, and Jane 'Jennie' Phelan (née Hegarty). His parents got married in Ss. Peter & Paul's Church, Cork on 24 September 1905. The family moved to Newrath, Waterford in 1913, and to Rockshire Road, Ferrybank, Waterford in 1922. Theo was educated at Mount Sion CBS in Waterford, and also for possibly just one year at Rockwell College. At the Rockwell College sports on 3 June 1926, an annual event confined to students at the school, Theo Phelan won six events in the senior first division. He won the 100 yd (11.8), 100 yd handicap (11.0), 220 yd (26.4), 120 yd hurdles (20.8), high jump (5 ft 1 in.) and long jump (19 ft 10½ in.). While studying medicine at University College Dublin he represented Ireland in the triple jump in the 1928 Olympic Games in Amsterdam. Although his best jump was 45 ft 0½ in. (13.73 m) he did not go beyond the heats. Then only 19 years and 325 days old, Theo Phelan was, and remains, Tipperary's youngest Olympian. Four years later he won the 110 m hurdles at the Tailteann Games in Dublin with a time of 15.6. In the Irish athletics championships he won the triple jump in 1928, and the 120 yd hurdles in 1931, 1933 and 1934. Theo joined the Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC) in 1933. He was the British army 120 yd hurdles champion in 1934 and was posted to Egypt later that year. His time of 15.2¹ for the 110 m hurdles on 11 March 1935 in Alexandria, Egypt was an Irish record for several years, as was his time of 15.0² for the 120 yd hurdles when he won the Egyptian title the same year. He was awarded an Order of the British Empire (OBE) in 1943, and was promoted to lieutenant-colonel in 1948. After twenty years in the army, he retired in 1953 and returned to Dublin to work in Hume Street Hospital, and later in Stewart's Hospital in Palmerstown, Dublin. He was also an accomplished rugby player, played golf at Hermitage Golf Club in Dublin, and was a top-ranking bridge player. Dr Theo 'Paddy' Phelan, OBE died in Dublin on 7 April 1970, aged sixty-one, and is interred in Esker cemetery, Dublin. He had been known as Paddy Phelan ever since he left Ireland to join the RAMC, with the result that even his youngest children were young adults before they realised his actual name was Theobald.

¹ *The Waterford News*, 3 May 1935, pages 4 & 9

² *The Irish Press*, 28 May 1935, page 10

Titles Won at Senior National Championships:

National Athletic and Cycling Association Championships

1928	Triple Jump	46 ft 9 in.	(14.25 m)
1931	120 yd Hurdles	15.4	
1933	120 yd Hurdles	16.0	
1934	120 yd Hurdles	16.2	

Egyptian Athletics Championships

1935	120 yd Hurdles	15.0	
------	----------------	------	--