

TIPPERARY ATHLETES



Tom Fanning

by **Michael O'Dwyer**

Tom Fanning was born on 13 November 1904 at Gortreagh, Loughmore, County Tipperary. He was the third son of Patrick Fanning and Mary Fanning (née Bourke). He came from a large family and in around 1910 they moved to Coogulla, Castleiney and in the 1920s they moved to The Abbey, Templemore. Tom Fanning joined the Irish army at Limerick Barracks 4th Infantry Battalion, 4 Infantry Brigade. The battalion commander was Major Tommie Ryan. As a young infantryman he was soon to make a name for himself in both cross-country and long distance running. His first major win was on 25 February 1928 when he won the Irish junior cross-country championship at the Baldoyle racecourse and led the Limerick Barracks team to first place. The following year on 9 March 1929 he won the Irish senior cross-country championship at Phoenix Park and led the Limerick Barracks team to second place. The race was run over a distance of approximately nine miles with eight laps making up the course. According to a newspaper report, 'It included a considerably greater amount of rough country than is usually found in enclosed grounds, with a fair number of jumps.' Tom was second Irishman to finish in the 1928 International cross-country championship at Ayr, Scotland, and was first Irishman to finish in the 1929 International cross-country championship at Paris. He also represented Ireland in 1929 in the four mile race in a triangular international contest between Ireland, England and Scotland held at Cork Athletic Ground. Private Tom Fanning was mostly stationed at Collins Barracks, Cork. He competed in his first marathon in 1931 at the Army athletics championships. In 1932 he was second in the Army marathon championship in May with 3:07:00, was also second in the Irish marathon championship in June with 3:11:16, and although unplaced he completed another marathon in July. He was third in the Irish marathon championship in 1934. He won a total of five Army titles: cross-country in 1928, mile in 1929 with 4:43.2, and the marathon in 1933, 1934 and 1935. After retiring from the army he was masseur to the Tipperary senior hurling team for many years. He later helped as masseur to county minor hurling teams, the winning Templemore CBS Harty Cup team in 1978, and the Clonmore team which were county finalists in junior hurling the same year. Tom Fanning died on 20 July 1981 at the Hospital of the Assumption, Thurles, aged seventy-six, and is interred in Templemore cemetery.

Titles Won at Senior National Championships:

National Athletic and Cycling Association Championships

1929	Cross-Country (Inter-Club)	56:32
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