

TIPPERARY ATHLETES



Pat Kealy

by Michael O'Dwyer

Pat Kealy was born on 14 April 1879 at Boulea, Ballingarry, County Tipperary. He was the second son of Daniel Kealy, a farmer, and Catherine Kealy (née Tyne). His parents got married in Gortnahoe church on 8 February 1877. Pat was the second eldest in a family of ten children, and three of his sisters were Mother Alphonsus, Convent of Mercy, Trim, Sr Margaret Mary, Convent of Mercy, Athy, and Sr Rose, Sisters of Charity, London. When fourteen years of age Pat Kealy moved to Dublin, and later joined the athletic club Haddington Harriers. At the sports meeting of the Dublin Metropolitan Police on 14 July 1900 at Ballsbridge he finished in third place in the Irish AAA 3 miles walking championship with a time of 25:59.2. The winner was Martin K. Forrester, native of Banagher, County Offaly, and working in Dublin, in 22:50.2 and second was Frederick Streeter, native of England, and working in Straffan, in 23:11.6. Pat Kealy emigrated to South Africa in 1902, and joined Baden Powell's police, which afterwards became the South African Constabulary. In his troop starting off was no less a person than Ken McArthur, who won the marathon representing South Africa at the 1912 Olympic Games. Pat Kealy continued to regularly win or be placed in races in his adopted country, as he did in Ireland, and when he left South Africa in 1908 for Australia and New Zealand, and then America, he had success in races there too. At first he concentrated mostly in walking races but then switched to running. He returned to southern Africa in 1911 when he joined the British South Africa Police and served in Rhodesia (now known as Zimbabwe) over the next twenty years. On 2 December 1911 he defeated Jack Saunders in Bulawayo in a twenty-round boxing bout to win the amateur light-weight championship of Rhodesia, a title he successfully held until 1921. When the athletic club, the Bulawayo Celtic Harriers, was founded in 1912, Pat Kealy was the club's first captain. On 19 October that year he competed in the national 10 miles championship under the auspices of King's Athletic Club (in the era before the formation of the national governing body) at the club's grounds in Bulawayo. He won by nearly a lap from his nearest opponent in a time of 70 mins 54 secs. It was considered a very fair performance, considering the awful heat which prevailed. During the First World War he served as a company sergeant major in the Rhodesian native regiment throughout the East African campaign. After the war his interest in sport continued but for the most part he turned his attention to instruction as a boxing trainer at the schools. In later years his chief interest was swimming and he was chairman and examiner of the Bulawayo branch of the Royal Life Saving Society. He returned to Ireland in January 1931, and got married to Mary Kelly on 16 June 1931 at Ballingarry church. Pat Kealy died on 26 December 1959 at his residence, 2 Castle Avenue, Thurles, aged eighty, and is interred in St Patrick's Cemetery, Thurles. His son Fr Sean Kealy was president of Blackrock College from 1988 to 1994.

Titles Won at Senior National Championships:

**Rhodesian Athletics Championships
(under the auspices of King's Athletic Club)**

1912	10 Miles	1:10:54
------	----------	---------