

TIPPERARY ATHLETES



Richard O'Brien

by Michael O'Dwyer

Richard O'Brien was born on 25 May 1899 at Longford, Oola, County Limerick. He was a son of Cornelius O'Brien and Mary O'Brien (née English). His parents got married in Annacarty church on 20 September 1893. Both the 1901 and 1911 censuses show Richard was staying with his grandparents, Cornelius and Mary English, at Carrowkeale, Clonoulty, County Tipperary. However, after living for a few years at Ballygodeen, Monard, by early 1913, Cornelius O'Brien and family were living at Puddingfield, Tipperary town. Richard O'Brien, of Puddingfield, competed for Tipperary Athletic Club in the inaugural NACA national senior cross-country championship on 24 March 1923 at Phoenix Park. It was won by fellow club member J. J. Ryan, with Richard O'Brien finishing twentieth, and the club finishing in fourth place. Richard O'Brien's next two best national championships were the junior cross-country races in 1924 and 1926. He was the first clubman to finish in both, in the former he finished thirteenth, and the club third, and in the latter he finished eighteenth, and the club sixth. His most memorable race though was the NACA national senior cross-country championship on 6 March 1926 at Phoenix Park. It was won again by J. J. Ryan, for the fourth successive year, and Richard O'Brien was the next clubman in thirteenth place. Tipperary Athletic Club did not have a full team but for the first time there was an inter-county championship as well as an inter-club championship. The inter-county championship was won by Tipperary with the six scorers being J. J. Ryan, Redmond Moore, Tommy Keating, Richard O'Brien, Paddy Butler and W. O'Sullivan. On 15 December 1926 at the town hall, Tipperary town, members of Tipperary Athletic Club presented a gold medal to Richard O'Brien, and a gold watch to Jack Ryan, Kilshane, as a token of their appreciation of their services to the club, prior to both emigrating to America. A few days later they sailed on the SS *Celtic* from Cobh to New York. Jack Ryan was an uncle of Sean Ryan, Dromline, president of the GAA from 1928 to 1932. In New York they settled in the Bronx where Richard O'Brien got married to Katherine Cotter, native of Kilcoran South, Fermoy, County Cork, on 25 August 1935. His brother and sister Jack and Bridget were married to Sarah and Denis Ryan, whose brother J. J. Ryan was the champion athlete. Richard O'Brien died on 30 November 1979 in New York, aged eighty, and is interred in Gate of Heaven Cemetery, Hawthorne, Westchester County, New York.