

TIPPERARY ATHLETES



Bob Tisdall

by Michael O'Dwyer

Bob Tisdall was born on 16 May 1907 at Nuwara Eliya, Madhyama Palata, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka). He was the youngest of two children of William Newburgh Tisdall, a tea and rubber planter, and Margaret 'Meta' Tisdall (née Morton). His mother was native of Nenagh, and the marriage notice of his parents in the *Clonmel Chronicle* of 11 January 1902 reads, 'Tisdall and Morton – on 4th inst., at St. Mary's Church, Nenagh, William Newburgh Tisdall, of Ceylon, son of the late William Tisdall, Donemark, Bantry, to Margaret Josephine Rowley, youngest daughter of Dr. Robert Morton, Nenagh.' His sister Mary Tisdall was born on 29 June 1905 and got married to Colonel Eric Hooker on 3 April 1929. From the age of five Bob Tisdall was raised first in Nenagh and then a few miles away in Monsea, Ballycommon, and in around 1924 the family moved to Hazelpoint, Dromineer, on the banks of Lough Derg. Bob Tisdall was noted for his speed on the rugby pitch playing for Nenagh Ormond before excelling as a hurdler. In 1931, as a student at Cambridge University, where he got a bachelor of arts degree in agriculture and forestry, he won all four events he competed in against Oxford at the annual intervarsity contest – 440 yd, long jump, shot-put and 120 yd hurdles. At the Irish athletics championships held in Croke Park in 1930 he won the 120 yd hurdles and in 1932 won the Irish 440 yd hurdles in 54.2, along with the 120 yd hurdles title. On 3 July 1932 he was a passenger on the SS *Adriatic* sailing from Cobh to America to compete at the Los Angeles Olympics. On 1 August he won the 400 m hurdles final in a world record time of 51.8, and winning the Olympic gold medal but because he knocked the last hurdle the world record did not stand. Luckily for athletes this rule was changed in 1938. Later in the week he was competing in the decathlon and finished eight out of fifteen competitors. Shortly after arriving back in Ireland he competed for Tipperary in the 120 yd hurdles and 440 yd events at the Munster inter-county athletics championship in Clonmel. Bob Tisdall died on 27 July 2004 at Nambour, Queensland, Australia, aged ninety-seven. His time of 51.8 for the 400 m hurdles is still a Tipperary record. There is a statue of Bob Tisdall, along with ones of Matt McGrath and Johnny Hayes erected outside the Court House, in Nenagh.

Titles Won at Senior National Championships:

National Athletic and Cycling Association Championships

1930	120 yd Hurdles	15.8
1932	120 yd Hurdles	15.2
1932	440 yd Hurdles	54.2