

# TIPPERARY ATHLETES

## **J. J. O'Connor**

by Michael O'Dwyer

J. J. O'Connor was born on 12 April 1889 at Cloghera, Bansha, County Tipperary. He was the fourth son, and one of nine children, of James O'Connor and Ellen O'Connor (née Kearney). His parents got married in the Church of the Assumption, Ballyporeen, on 23 June 1877. His father was an egg dealer as well as having a shop and pub premises (now known as the Foot Bar) in Cloghera. J. J. O'Connor first hit the national athletics scene when he came second in the Irish 3 mile championship at the Markets Field, Limerick on 15 September 1910. He also finished in second place in the Irish 5 mile championship at Thurles sports on 6 November 1910. Both were GAA events and were won by Tim Crowe who, like J. J. O'Connor, was a member of Galteemore Harriers. Prior to those two championship races, in August 1910, at what was the fourth annual meeting of the local Ballydavid sports, held at the foot of the Galtee mountains, J. J. O'Connor won the marathon race (about six miles) from Bansha to Ballydavid. In second place was M. Ryan, Kilfeacle. The following year he won the GAA national novice cross-country championship at Donnycarney, Dublin, on 5 March 1911. The four mile course had such obstacles as a stone wall and a wide brook to be jumped, as well as nearly two hundred yards of ploughed land. Having led from the front throughout the race, J. J. O'Connor won by 350 yards in the time of 24 minutes 32 seconds. In July 1911 he won the Munster 4 miles championship title in a time of about 21 minutes at the Tincurry sports in Cahir. He got married to Margaret Power from Templenahurny, Bansha, on 15 November 1916 at the Church of St Paul, Arran Quay, Dublin. J. J. O'Connor had a large egg and fowl business in the Market Yard, Tipperary town, and lived in Ballyvernane, Bansha, and later years in Sandymount, Tipperary town. Two of his nephews, Jim O'Connor, and Jack Grogan, played for Galtee Rovers when they won the Tipperary senior county football championship in 1949 and 1950. The former also won a county senior football medal with Arravale Rovers in 1941. Jack Grogan, known as Jack the egg man, was also an athlete and worked for his uncle collecting eggs. A daughter of J. J. O'Connor, Sr Mary Celine, was a teacher at Mercy Convent, Carrick-on-Suir, when she died on 19 April 1948. J. J. 'Jack' O'Connor died on 24 January 1959 at his residence, Sandymount, Tipperary town, aged sixty-nine, and is interred in Athassel Abbey cemetery, Golden.