

1913 – Croke Park – 2013

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THIS YEAR marks the centenary of the famous Dublin Lockout of 1913, but for the GAA it has also a special significance in that the grounds now known as Croke Park were purchased by the Association in December of that year.

The area occupied by Croke Park has had sporting links long before the advent of the GAA. In the 1870s the site was owned by Maurice Buttery and the grounds were known as the City and Suburban Racecourse, or more popularly as Jones Road Sportsground. The GAA was one of the most frequent users of the grounds in those days. Indeed on March 21st 1896 the Hurling and Football All-Ireland finals of the previous year were played at the venue. These were the first All-Ireland finals to be played there and both were won by Tipperary – Arravale Rovers in football and Tubberadora in hurling.

In 1907, following the death of Maurice Buttery, the grounds, which contained over fourteen acres, were put up for sale. The GAA given its tight financial position at the time didn't make an offer. The sale was postponed as no suitable bid was received and Frank Dineen, following private negotiations bought the grounds for £3,250.

Dineen, a native of Ballylanders, Co. Limerick, was President of the GAA's Athletics Council at the time. He had previously been President and Secretary of the GAA. In 1910, Dineen sold four acres to the Jesuit Fathers of Belvedere College, for £1,090. This land remained in their possession until 1991, when it was repurchased by the G.A.A. and forms part of the modern redevelopment of Croke Park.

By 1913, the financial situation of the Association had improved, mainly due to the success of the Croke Memorial Tournament. It had been assumed, especially in Tipperary, that the proceeds of the tournament would go towards a suitable memorial to Archbishop Croke in Thurles. But



Central Council had other ideas. The purchase of a permanent home for the GAA in the capital had become a priority for them and now they had the funds to proceed.

Following a long and bitter dispute with Tipperary Co. Board, it was decided that £300 would be spent on a



Archbishop Thomas Croke

new hall in Thurles – to be called Croke Memorial Hall – that a bronze statue would be erected in Thurles and that £2,400 would be used for the purchase of a ground in Dublin to be called the 'Croke Memorial Park Ground'.

In August 1913 a three man committee was set up to judge the respective merits of Jones' Road (£4,000) and the larger south-side property at Elm Park (£5,000). Dineen, fearing a lost sale, dropped the asking price to £3,625 and later to £3,500. In an 8-7 vote on October 4th, Central Council decided to purchase Jones' Road. On December 22nd 1913, ownership of the ground passed over to the GAA. Including legal fees, the total cost of the purchase was £3,641. The venue was named Croke Memorial Park, later shortened to Croke Park.



1895 All-Ireland Hurling Medal.

Lár na Páirce welcomes donations of GAA Memorabilia. If you wish to donate or loan items to the museum contact – Seamus J. King, Lár na Páirce, Thurles or phone 062-61307. This Museum of Gaelic Games on Stievenamon Road, Thurles, offers much more besides and is open from 10-5 Mondays to Saturdays, and on big match days. Admission is €3 per adult, €8 per family. Tel: 0504-22702.