

## Death of Tom Cheasty

The death took place earlier today (Friday) of the legendary Tom Cheasty, one of the greatest hurlers of the modern era and an iconic name in Waterford sport. An explosive player, his scintillating runs towards goal thrilled the nation for many years and, as an individual, he was extremely popular the length and breadth of the country. In his early 70s, the funeral arrangements were not available as we went to press. A member of the 1959 Waterford team that won the All Ireland, Tom retained his great interest in the game and it is ironic and sad that he should pass away just as his native county is poised to bridge the long gap of 48 years since the McCarthy Cup last crossed the river Suir into the city and county. Tom also played in the 1957 and 1963 All Ireland finals and won a National League medal in 1963.

A native of Knockaderry, Ballyduff, Tom moved to Killure near Waterford city to farm in the 70s and still lived there with his wife Kathleen and family up to the present time.

Tom began his hurling career with Ballyduff Lower and, in 1968, Ballyduff and Portlaw joined together to create a wonderful team that was awarded the senior championship crown the following year when De La Salle and Erins Own refused to play the other semi-final on the eve of the All Ireland final. The following year, 1970, Ballyduff/Portlaw won the title beating St. Molleran's in a replay. Tom went on to win three more senior county medals with Portlaw and he also won an intermediate football medal with Portlaw beating Ardmore in the final. Possessed of a great love and passion for the game, he continued to play almost into middle age and won a junior county medal with Ballyduff when he was in his 40s.

The Waterford County Board Chairman, Pat Flynn, paid tribute to Mr. Cheasty this morning describing him as 'a lion-hearted player, one of the best that Waterford ever produced'. Mr. Flynn said Tom was a great supporter of the current team and on behalf of everybody in Waterford GAA he wished to express his deepest sympathies to the late player's family.

The Waterford manager, Justin McCarthy, said he was deeply saddened to hear of Tom's death and revealed that the pair were in constant touch. 'Tom was a great man and a true hurling legend. He was very knowledgeable about the modern game and would ring me before big matches. I was pleased to receive those calls and I was very glad to hear his opinions and advice that I often heeded.'

Describing Tom as 'the heart and soul of the team in the 50s and 60s', Justin recalled that the first time he saw Tom play. 'It was in Cork in 1959 and he was simply amazing as Waterford beat Tipperary.' The manager said he had the honour of marking Tom in Cork's championship tie against Waterford in 1965. 'It was the first time the new rule of just having four players in the middle of the pitch for the throw in was applied and Tom and I contested that first ball.'

The former Ferrybank and Erins Own player, Jim Irish, played with Tom in the 1963 All Ireland and this morning described him as 'the greatest centre forward I ever played with or saw in Waterford'. In fact, said Mr. Irish, Tom Cheasty would have walked on to any time in the country such were his phenomenal skills. 'Tom was also a natural and gifted rugby player and had he opted for that code, I genuinely believe he would have been the greatest winger that Ireland could have had.'

A former colleague of Tom on the great Portlaw teams, Frank Cullinane, also paid tribute to his former colleague describing him as 'a prince among hurlers'. Mr. Cullinane said Tom's death would spark a whole raft of wonderful memories and his exploits would be talked about whenever Waterford hurling was discussed.