

Southwark to honour GAA's Liam MacCarthy

Southwark Irish Forum is to honour the memory of GAA hero Liam MacCarthy at a special ceremony in South London on Easter Sunday writes Michael Hennessy

MacCarthy's links with South London and London generally are by now well established largely through the publication last year of a book of his life in Britain written by John Meaney and Damien Gaffney.

Just before last year's GAA congress in London MacCarthy's links with London Gaeldom took on a completely new dimension resulting in hitherto unpublished details about his life in the British capital. Coinciding with the congress there was a special ceremony at his graveside in South London culminating with the erection of headstone marking for the first time his burial place.

Now that Southwark Irish Forum has decided to honour MacCarthy's memory with another ceremony it will give further recognition to the role played by him in the founding of London GAA in 1896.

Mr Joe McIntyre chairman of Southwark Irish Forum and PRO of Dulwich Harps GAA Club told London Irish Press of the plans for honouring one of the greatest patriots Ireland has produced.

"Liam MacCarthy, apart from donating the cup for the All Ireland Senior Hurling Championship was as everybody knows 'The Father of London GAA'. He lived at 48A Honour Oak in East Dulwich and we feel there should be an annual ceremony recalling his contribution to the GAA here in London.

Southwark Irish Forum is coming forward with the idea and the funds to erect a plaque in his memory on Easter Sunday March 30," he said.

When the idea of erecting a plaque first surfaced there was considerable thought given to erecting it at the house where MacCarthy lived, but this was not proceeded with and instead

the plaque will be erected inside St Thomas More Hall, Lordship Lane, East Dulwich.

Mr McIntyre further added that the local GAA club Dulwich Harps would be involved in organising the ceremony which in addition to the plaque erection will also include a parade from East Dulwich to MacCarthy's grave in Camberwell Cemetery. The reception unveiling the plaque will be held afterwards at St Thomas More Hall and is expected to be attended by leading officers of the London County Board, local GAA followers and members of the public.

Mr McIntyre said that it was because of Liam MacCarthy's close links with the area that Southwark Irish Forum had decided to honour his memory by erecting a plaque.

Liam MacCarthy's life in London and his work for the GAA had until the publication of the Meaney /Gaffney book remained cloaked in darkness and few if any people were fully aware of the role and influence he brought to bear on the fledgling association in the capital.

The book entitled "Ireland's Forgotten Son" has focussed attention on arguably the greatest character the GAA has produced even going back to the time of Michael Cusack, Maurice Davin and Archbishop Croke of Cashel, three of the most powerful advocates behind the formation of the Gaelic Athletic Association at Hayes Hotel, Thurles on November 1, 1884.

In the short space of less than two years therefore the legacy of Liam MacCarthy has assumed huge proportions: his life and times have been opened up and his real contribution to the GAA along with his burning patriotism have been brought to increasing numbers of people, many of whom knew very little about him. Southwark Irish Forum's decision to further honour him is yet another chapter to the story of Liam MacCarthy's colourful life

* FOREST HILL

M. G.