

## Patrick Devlin



## **WILLIAM MALEY (1868-1958)** **Manager Glasgow Celtic FC (1897-1940)**

William Maley was a great sporting ambassador on the world stage and was held in the highest esteem in Scottish and Irish soccer historical circles. He was there at the formation of Glasgow Celtic FC and to this day is revered at the club. His work has been well documented in numerous books and other publications and celebrated in verse and song.

William Maley was born on 25 April 1868 at Newry Military barracks the third of four sons of Sgt Thomas Maley, a member of the 1st Batt, 21st Regiment of RIB Fusiliers. When Thomas was discharged at Newry in 1870 the family moved to Glasgow. As a young man, William Maley was much more involved in athletics than in football, although he had played a few games for Cathcart Hazelbank Juniors in 1886 and with Third Lanark A.C. from later that year. In 1888, he was signed by the fledgling Celtic and became one of the club's first players as a midfielder. He also played for the Scottish national team. In 1896, he made a single appearance for Manchester City in a Second Division match against Loughborough.

In 1897 the board of Celtic directors appointed him as Secretary/Manager. He won the League Championship for the club in his first full season as Manager. He never worked with his players in training; he watched games from the directors' box and never indulged in team talks or spoke to his players at half time or post-match. He would not even announce the team: players learned if they were in or out through reading the line-up in the newspaper.

Celtic had been a buying club in their opening decade, spending heavily to bring professionals to the club. Maley decided to scrap that and rely almost entirely on recruiting young men fresh from junior football. He created a young team who won six league titles in a row between 1905 and 1910 and won the first Scottish league and Scottish cup doubles. It was the finest team in the football world, and the six-in-a-row record remained unbroken until the 1970's. The team won four titles in succession between 1914 and 1917 and set what is still the

## HIDDEN GEMS AND FORGOTTEN PEOPLE

UK record for an unbeaten run in professional football: 62 games (49 won 13 drawn) from 13 Nov 1915 to 21 April 1917.

That side won two more titles, in 1919 and 1922. Celtic continued to gather trophies throughout the 1920's and mid 1930's. The side won the league title in 1936 and 1938 and the cup in 1937. By then Maley was approaching 70 and was the longest serving manager at Celtic.

In his 43 years as manager he won 16 league titles, 14 Scottish cups and 14 Glasgow cups. He was also devoted to athletics and turned Celtic Park into a great sports venue in the 1920's. Maley retired in Feb 1940. He died on 2 April 1958.

On 15 November 2009 Maley was inducted into the Scottish Football Hall of Fame.