AHLUNKARD BOAT CLUB

by W.W. Gleeson

Courcy and an English professional coach, John Terrier. In 1913 the club won the Union Cup. And, in repeating the victory in 1923, rowing history was made. Three of the 1913 crew, Morgan Costelloe, Stephen Clancy and Jim Keane, also rowed in the 1923 crew. Athlunkard is the only Limerick club that has won the Senior Union Cup twice.

In 1941, with Enda McNamara as stroke, the club won the Junior Union Cup, and in 1946 Teddy McLoughlin stroked the winning Maiden Union Cup crew. The Championship list was completed in 1952 when W. Henn stroked the winners of the Inter-Provincial Championships, leaving Athlunkard a comfortable margin as the premier Limerick club in class events.

Some outstanding officials included John Shanahan, Tom Bernard, James O’Farrell, Michael Hanley, James O’Mahony, James Keane, James Reidy, James O’Donovan, John Crowe, Michael O’Halloran and Dan O’Connor. And we must not forget honest John Roche, faithful and dutiful caretaker who looked after the club’s property for over 30 years.

The new and spacious club premises were erected in 1925. On the walls hang many interesting and historical photographs and letters, all of which are highly valued by the members. And there, too, is a life-size photograph of the club’s first patron and Life President, Father Denis Shanahan, P.P., St. Mary’s. He was pastor when the club was founded and it was he who, when asked by a number of parishioners to re-establish the temperance society, replied: “What do you want a temperance society for? Haven’t you Athlunkard Boat Club?” (Yes; and today a 7-day licensed bar... thrown in for good measure!)

And what of the present? Clubs, anymore than anyone else cannot live in the past, however much they may learn from it.

Came the year 1974 and with it a lean period for the wearers of the Blue and Crimson; stock was low; the once-bright lights had been dimmed - but not extinguished! A new generation had taken over.

A group of young Parish maidens, anxious to prove their prowess on the water, and thus help to keep the flag flying (in rowing parlance), joined up.

Under the captaincy of Johnny O’Dwyer, and tutored by coaches Willie Henn and Paddy O’Brien, it wasn’t long until eights and fours, manned by ladies was a common sight on the Abbey river.

There were three grades: Senior Elite, Intermediate. Novice. Crews competed at the following regattas and “walked” away with major prizes on at least 24 occasions: Athlone, Blessington, Cappoquin, Craigavon, Dungarvon, Galway, Iniscarran, Islandbridge, Killarney, Marina (Cork), Tinarana

Competing for the first time in the Senior Elite at Craigavon, Belfast. In 1979, the A.B.C. crews were unlucky to be beaten by two feet in the final by the local crew, Craigavon. A bare three weeks later, at the Marina, the result was reversed, the Limerick ladies winning by a distance.

The following made up the panel: Maxine Murphy, Joan Masterson, Eileen Meehan, Una O’Driscoll, Ann Marie Moore, Siobhan Reynolds (cox), Mary Moran (cox), Bernadette Mulhins, Claire Murphy, Valerie Murphy, Mary McMahon, Miriam Murnane, Bernie Masterson, Yvonne Masterson, Bridie Cronin. Note: A new Cox has been added: it’s that wonder-boy Paul O’Driscoll.

And the prospects for 1981? Time alone will tell!

Such is the alpha of Athlunkard Boat Club, and there are many great things to come before the omega be written.

So, if Athlunkard is not the oldest club as rowing clubs go, no one can say it is not a vigorous one.