

# Killaloe canal works underway

## 125 years on-and still striking up the band

Killaloe canal are currently underway. They will involve the repair and widening of the canal wall. Sheet piles have already been put in place to provide greater

the incorporation of a pedestrian footbridge creating a walkway which will be resurfaced as part of the project. The plans have been designed by Waterways Ireland. The project runs from R463 Killaloe to Scarriff Road and the canal will be

the installation of approximately 400m of sheet piles to underpin the existing canal wall. A new mains pump chamber has been included in the

newly installed floating moorings to the canal wall. The plans were approved by Waterways Ireland earlier in the year in preparation for this



Striking up the band 125 years on.

By Kate Donegan

THAT is the story of Limerick's celebrated St Mary's Fife and Drum Band, four of whose members claimed responsibility for the Bing Crosby hit song, McNamara's Band.

President Jack McGrath told the Limerick Post: "To reach 125 years without a break is absolutely amazing. I don't think any other band can rival us. We intend releasing a CD to mark the occasion and we're planning our second ever dinner dance".

Established in 1885, the band is housed, rather appropriately, in St Mary's Street, where it is home to 40 strong membership.

Loyalty to the band is reflected in long membership spans and Paddy "Whacker" Casey is the longest serving member, with 66 years service.

Jack explained that the tune McNamara's Band was initiated by

four Limerick brothers of that name, who all played in the same row of St Mary's Fife and Drum Band.

A long time ambition was to play at the St Patrick's Day parade in New York and in 1992, their dream came true.

Recalling their first overseas trip, Jack said: "Members, such as my father, had never been on a plane before and here they were strolling the streets of New York - it was an experience to be savoured and never forgotten".

Maintaining a high profile both nationally and internationally, they have played for dignitaries such as President John Fitzgerald Kennedy and His Holiness Pope John Paul II during their visits to Limerick.

Recently, they had the pleasure of playing with James Galway at the University Concert Hall.

For over 60 years, the band played at every Munster Senior Cup Final at Thomond Park.

However, here he expressed

disappointment. "Since the IRFU took over, that has all come to a halt. It's too commercialised now".

The last 25 years have been especially positive, and Jack says they are constantly moving forward.

"We had our first female member - Lisa Connelly, aged 13- in the late 90's, and we travel abroad more nowadays, we have to for the younger members. America and Spain are popular destinations and a band festival in Spain called Oktoberfest, draws members and their families annually".

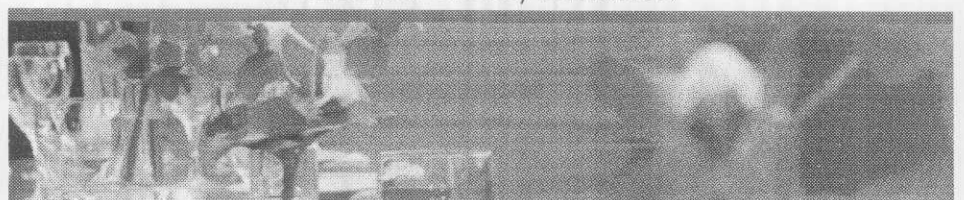
Since its foundation in 1885, the band has honoured the custom of parading through St. Mary's parish on New Year's Eve and finishing at St. Mary's Cathedral to ring the old year out and welcome in the new year.

St Mary's Fife and Drum Band has enjoyed much success winning the All-Ireland Championship and the Republic of Ireland Championship numerous times.



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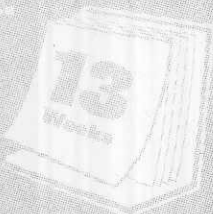
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