

March celebration for CBS pipe band's golden jubilee

■ Since its first St Patrick's Day parade in 1963, the band has become a city institution

Daniel Tighe

CBS SEXTON STREET pipe band, a city institution, will be marching in Sunday's St Patrick's Day Parade as part of their golden jubilee celebrations.

Over the band's 50 year existence, a cross section of Limerick society have performed with the band. RTE children's programme presenter Emma O'Driscoll, marched with the pipe band in her formative years.

"Myself and Emma O'Driscoll were the first two females to ever march with the band. We marched in Knock around 2000," said Eimear Purcell, the band's PRO.

The band recently hosted a reunion night for all past and present members in an effort to get as many members as possible together for the jubilee march.

Founded in 1963 by the Christian brothers the band has survived both ups and downs to remain as relevant to Limerick today as it was 50 years ago.

Barry Carey who joined the band while a pupil in CBS in 1965 has been a major driver of the band and had to bring the band back from the brink on a number of occasions. The entire Carey family are integral to the longevity and recent growth of the pipe band.

Barry's daughter, Eimear, as well as being PRO acts as a liaison with parents and also as a youth leader.

"Originally, certainly, it was all boys, they were all pupils of CBS, they were all Irish. Now we have 15 schools represented in the band, we have Chinese, Nigerian, Brazilian, Polish, English and Irish. We've had to expand it because numbers in the school have fallen and likewise the numbers in the band," explained Eimear of the difficulties in keeping the band going.

"It was also going against us in terms of funding; we weren't seen as being inclusive enough and couldn't apply for grants, so we had to expand our membership, but that has been so positive for the band as a whole," she continued.

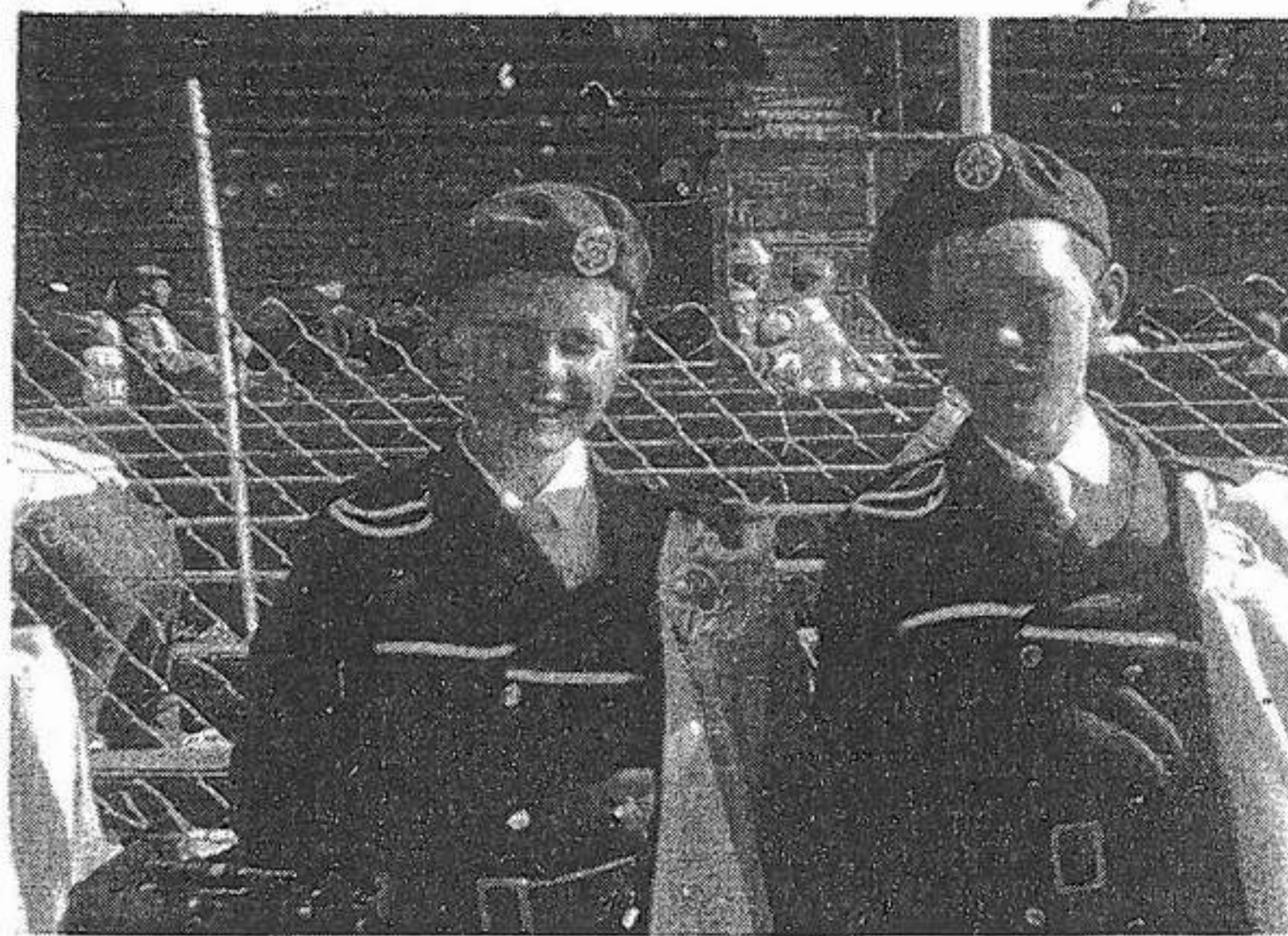
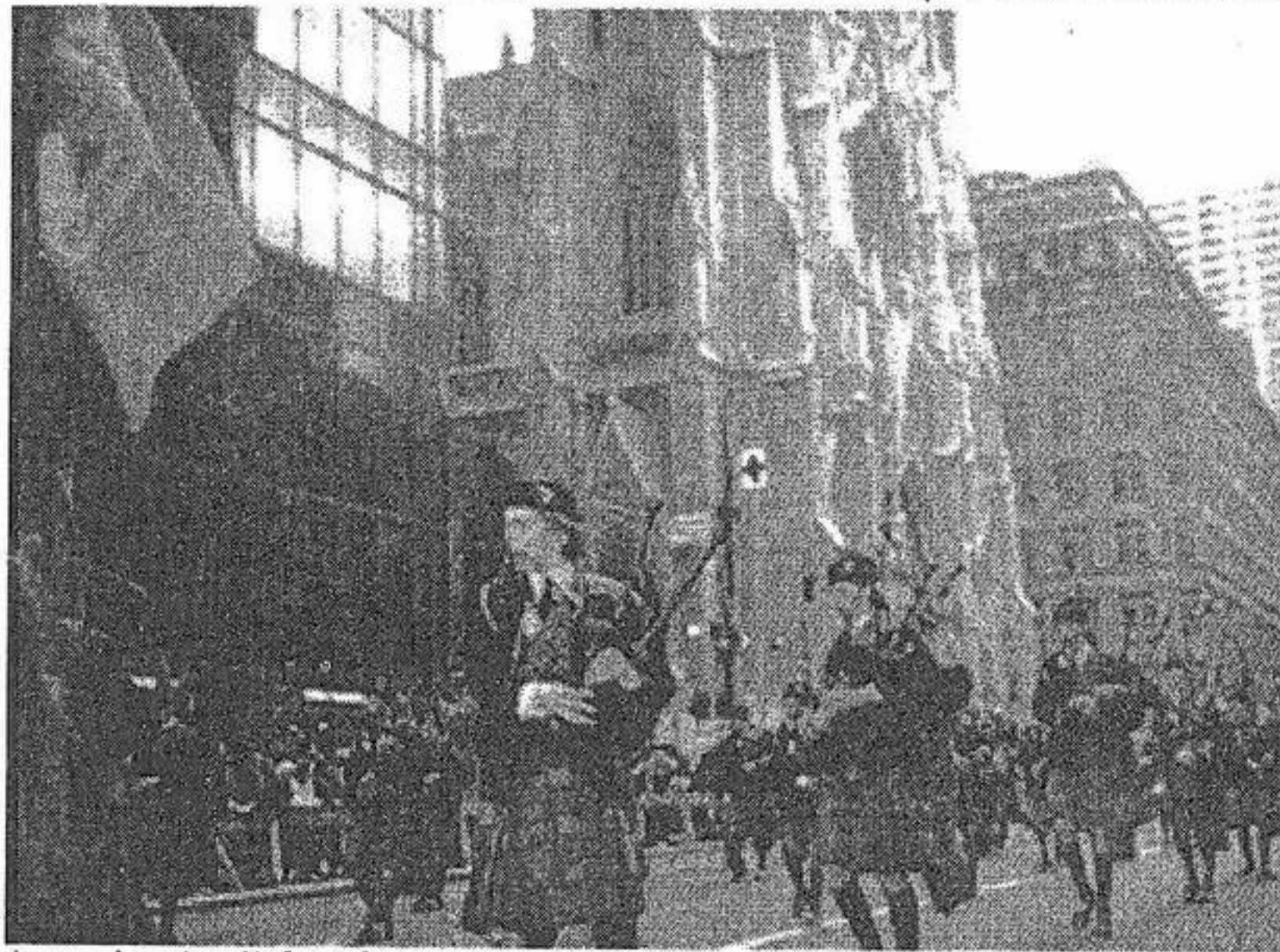
The band has marched through the city on St Patrick's Day every year since 1963, except for on three occasions; when they marched in the New York parade in 1986 and 1992 and when they made the shorter trip to perform in Cork city's 1998 parade.

Gerry McMahon, one of the original members from 1963, is also a major driver of the jubilee reunion and celebrations. "This is the real big one," Gerry said of the 50 year anniversary.

"That's very important to us, obviously the first band, it's their 50th birthday, but there has been 50 bands and we need to be careful that we



Clockwise from main: The CBS pipe band on its first march down O'Connell Street in the city in 1963; original band members from 1963; CBS pipe band members Michael O'Shea and Noel White in 1964; the band marching through Shannon Airport in 1964; performing in the New York parade in 1986; the band performing to enthralled tourists in Paris in 1994. For more photos visit cbspipeband.org



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"That's very important to us, obviously the first band, it's their 50th birthday, but there has been 50 bands and we need to be careful that we do not completely focus on the first band," said Eimear.

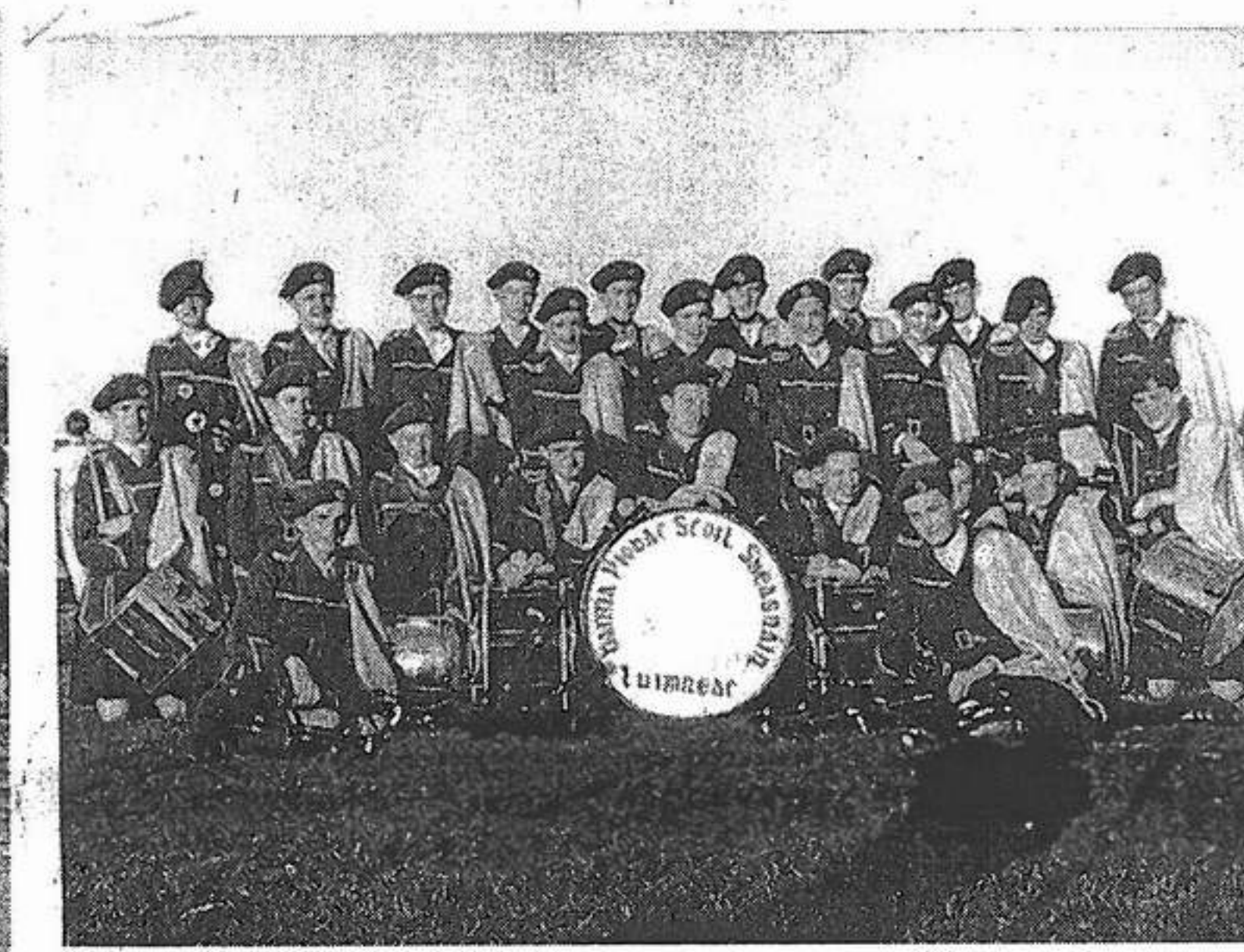
"This year we have a challenge that we have set ourselves in our 50th year, which started last St Patrick's Day and finishes at the end of March, to play in all 32 counties in Ireland. So far we have over 20 done.

"We do a huge amount of charity work. We zombied up the band and marched in a zombie march. We have done that twice for charity.

"We have former members of the band involved in 20 pipe bands all around the world from Hong Kong, Australia to America. For a lot of them, especially those who have unfortunately had



in 1964; the band marching through Shannon Airport in 1964; performing in the New York parade in 1986; the band performing to enthralled tourists in Paris in 1994. For more photos visit cbspipeband.org



to emigrate, it has been a link for them to meet up with fellow former members already in employment out there. It has helped them in terms of employment and some of the members of the band would have married female members of the other bands.

"It was like a social thing that you brought into adulthood with you. We see it now in the band there is quite a few relationships sparking up among the teenagers," Eimear laughed.

Barry, when asked if there was ever an occasion when he thought the band might cease to exist said:

"Oh lots, funding is desperately difficult and the other thing is, it is always an up down type of thing. Over the years what happens is, you get a family involvement

which is great because the parents get involved through their kids, but then the kids move on, leave school, get jobs, get married and suddenly we lose the kids, we lose the parents and we have to start again. So, it's always up and down."

"We very much see the band as a performance band, parading, supporting civic events, sporting events and charity events. We also provide a youth club in essence, providing a minimum of four hours activity a week for the young people. It is very cost effective for them as we don't want any barriers to them participating and learning. Pipe band equipment is, however, very specialised and expensive so funding is very important," Eimear concluded.



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Tom to put art on wheels at St Patri

Nick Rabbitts

AMONG the 3,000 people taking part in the much-anticipated St Patrick's Day parade this weekend will be councillor Tom Shortt.

The northside Labour member, and art teacher

take over next year to be inclusive of everyone.

"I want to provide for example, young graffiti artists with legitimate opportunities to express themselves and to make a positive contribution

to the cultural life of the city and the need to

he explained.

Cllr Shortt's entry into the parade will consist of a 16-foot long, nine-inch high mobile billboard, mounted on four bicycle wheels.

"It will add an outburst of youthful colour and energy to the parade

Instead, he said: "Artists should collaborate with community groups and sponsors to develop a more imaginative and entertaining parade. The parade committee is working in this direction and I support this approach."

