

AROUND THE ROWING CLUBS

Athlunkard Boat Club

The present and the past of A.B.C.

ALTHOUGH not by any means the oldest rowing club in Limerick, Athlunkard Boat Club have won more championship races than any other. They seemed to come as easy as A.B.C. But the beginnings of A.B.C. were not by any means easy. Way back in the September of 1897, when the club was only an idea in the minds of Jack Gilligan, Larry Shanahan and Brian O'Connor, a lot of back-breaking work had to be envisaged and accomplished before the shed that was the original club premises was built.

That was the first ambition they achieved on the Abbeyside, and from it their crews went out and achieved even greater ambitions in regatta courses throughout Ireland. Athlunkard has a glorious past. But clubs, anymore than anyone else, do not live in the past, however much they may learn from it. Athlunkard has a hopeful future, too, and in preparing for it they are building a water tank to train their oarsmen and buying a new clinker four in, which to race them.

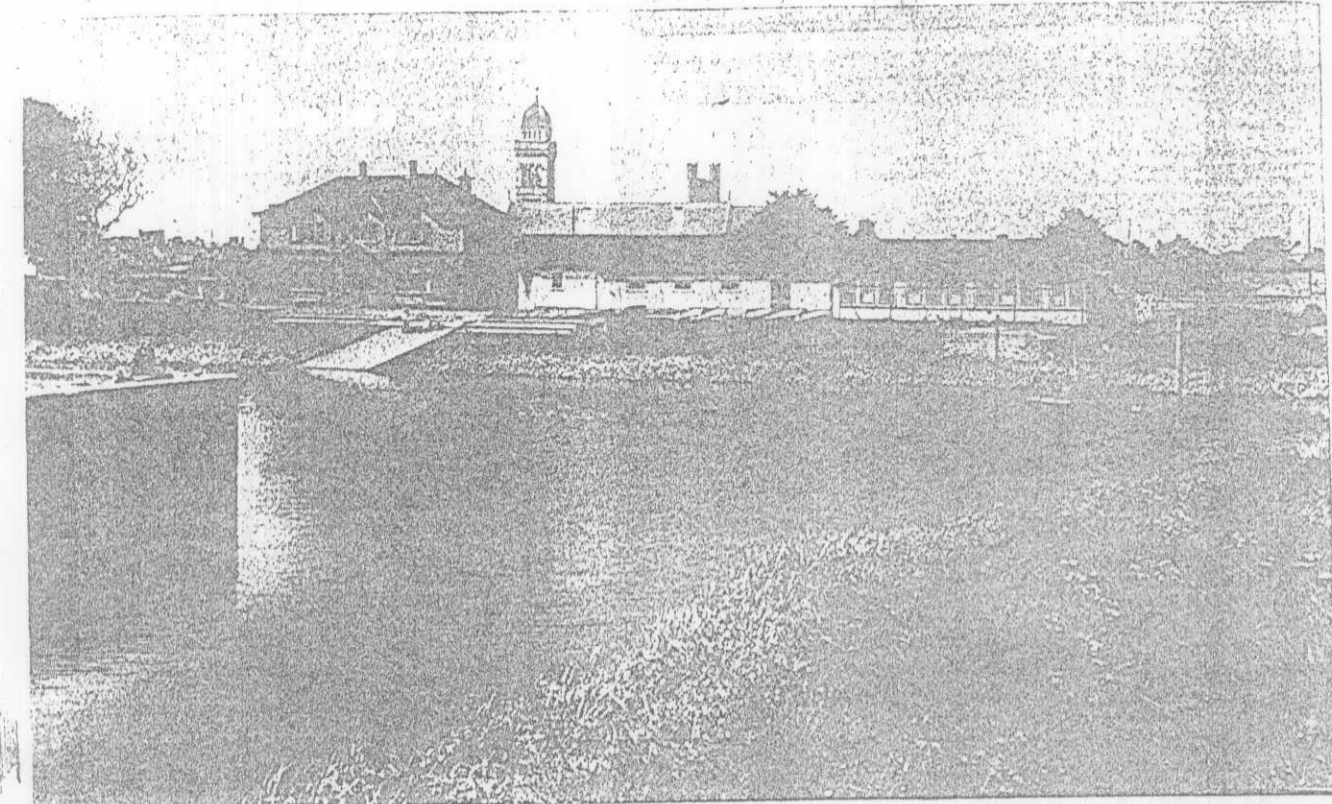
The Present

Athlunkard's thirty-four oarsmen in training are made up of 4 seniors, 12 maidens and 18 schoolboys. The Club will have a second senior four, a maiden eight and a schoolboys' eight represented at regattas. For early training, Athlunkard has the advantage of the placid

interest in the scientific approach to physical fitness. An instructor in physical training to Neptune and U.C.D., Cyril graduated from Loughborough College, Leicestershire, and is at present continuing his studies in America. Coaches from the other city clubs will be interested to learn that Athlunkard have a set of weights on order from England. Used fairly extensively in cir-

who will remember the remarkable race for Ladies' Plate in 1961, when Eddie's uncle, Alec and John McDonkey, were rowing with T. Earle (stic), and J. Griffin (bow). Paddy Byrnes was cox, and he was carried away in the excitement of the race that he stood up in the boat to give more force to his exertions. It was the first time anything like it ever happened. And one of the club's prized possessions is a photograph of the actual event. The crew, of course, came from behind to win. Some years later a more enterprising cox, I don't know from what club, employed the same technique, with a variation. Opening his oil-cloth coat to the wind, he brought his crew sailing through all the astonished opposition. Some heated discussions with the umpires followed!

Eddie McDonkey told me that rowing standards in his Club this year were an improvement on those of late years. Cappoquin Regatta was rather early for their maiden eight, but the Christian Brothers schoolboys' crew had put up a very good



A tranquil scene... An early-evening study of Athlunkard Boat Club with the boathouse and ballroom to the right of the building. In the background can be seen St. Mary's Church and St. Mary's Cathedral.

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 1951 when W. Henn stroked the winners of the Inter-provincial Championships, leaving Athlunkard a comfortable margin as the premier Limerick club in class events.

Looking after coaching this year are Gerry O'Donovan, Ger Meehan, Desmond Henn and Jackie Price. Gerry won a maiden four and the Head-of-the-River for eights in 1953; a

always regarded as a lucky addition to any crew in which he rowed.

As a cox, Jim Crowe has a remarkable record that will compare with any in Ireland. In 1939, he has won to date fifty-three races. They include the Junior Union Cup, the Maiden Union Cup, the Inter-provincial Championships, two Shannon Rowing Club Challenge Cups, the City Challenge Cup and two Quin eights. The only race that has eluded him is, peculiarly enough, the least on the Limerick Regatta programme—the New York Four. But the years do not weary nor condemn coxswains as they do oarsmen, and Jim can be counted on to add this last one to the greatest of his trophies. "My best race," he told me, "was that for the Junior Union Cup. In the final, with a quarter of a mile to go, our crew was two lengths behind Neptune. But we caught them twenty yards from the post, and won by two feet. It was the best crew I ever coxed." And, for the record, here they are—Christy Wallace (bow), Sam Benson, Steph Clancy, Jimmy Clancy, F. Woodwells, Tom Power, Paddy Mullane, Enda McNamara (stic). It is interesting to note that the Clancy brothers are sons of the late Stephen Clancy, who was in the winning Union Cup crews of 1913 and 1923.

Only surviving member of the Club founders is Tom Bernard, who was also a well-known coxswain in his day. Other veterans include Liam Forde and Morgan Costelloe. They are the only surviving members of the famous Senior Union Cup crews. Social amenities on the very

fine four, with oars and cradle. And, with an eye to the future, there is an order a new clinker four, which will arrive in September. Along with having a great past, Athlunkard has a bright future, too.

The Past

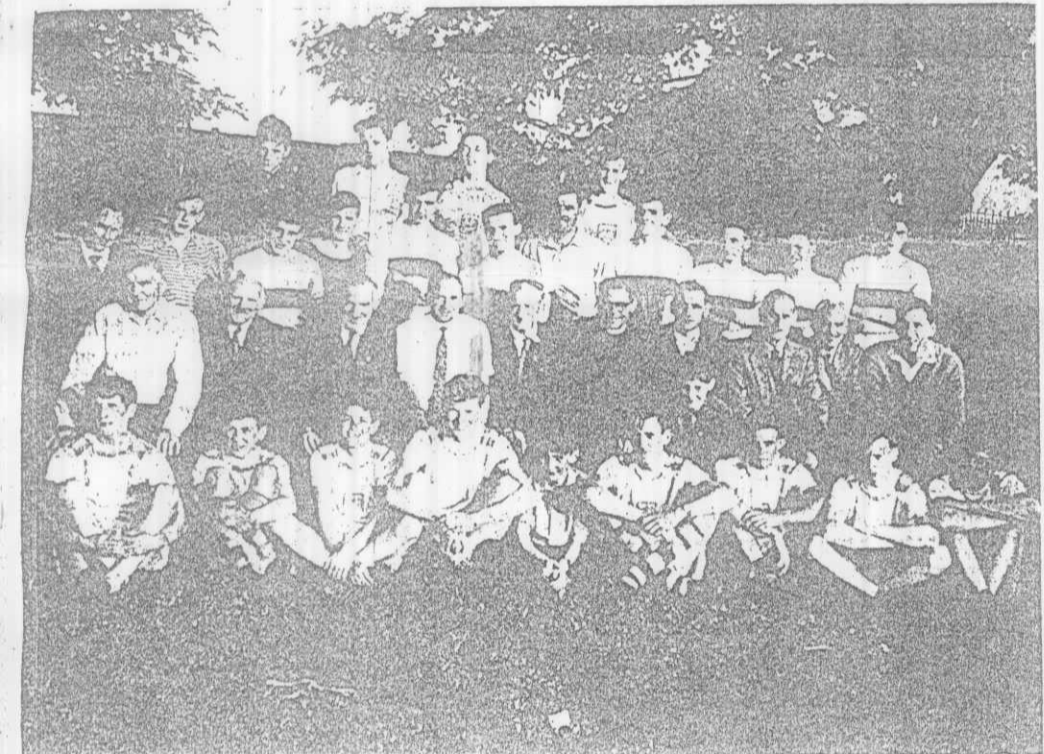
How did it all begin? Who better to tell me of the Alpha of A.B.C. than Parish historian Willie W. Gleeson. It was Sep-

tember, 1897, when a bunch of the Parish boys decided to start a boat club. Cash in hand amounted to 30/-, and with this Jack Gilligan, Larry Shanahan and Bryan O'Connor went to Ebrill's yard and bought a job lot of timber. In a short time a rectangular shed took shape.

One day, seeing the ungraceful building, the then Bishop of Limerick, Most Rev. Dr. O'Dwyer, suggested that a more worthy structure be erected. A subscription list was started, and a 150 yards stretch of swamp and refuse dump was converted into the beautifully laid-out grounds we know to-day. Voluntary labour and the late summer of 1898 saw a one-storey clubhouse and boathouse completed. They called it Athlunkard Boat Club. Founders were John Shanahan, Jack Gilligan, Jack Thede, Bryan and Jog O'Connor, Poarse Hartney, Joe Hegarty, Larry Shanahan, William "Loe" Ahern, Denis Murnane, Richard Hartney, Jim Shanahan (afterwards Brother Sebastian, O.F.M.), Charlie Harty,

key, O'Connor (Mike Ryan) family, O'Shaughnessy, Quin, Quilivan, Reid and Vaughan. And that famous octet of coxswains, Byrne, Clancy, Crowe, Henn, Howard, Keane, Quilivan and Storan, that steered so many crews to victory.

Outstanding officials include John Shanahan, Tom Bernard, James O'Farrell, Michael Hanley, James O'Mahony, James Keane, James Kelly, James O'Donovan, John Crowe, Michael O'Halloran and Dan O'Connor. And we must not forget honest John



A group of oarsmen and members taken in a happy mood on the club grounds. Seated (second row, 1 to 7): D. O'Sullivan, J. Quilivan, A. Moore, G. O'Donovan (captain), E. McDonkey (President), Rev. Bro. Mullins, C.B.S.; D. Henn, J. O'Donovan, W. Quilivan, D. O'Shaughnessy. Included in back row are: W. Henn and S. Heagney.

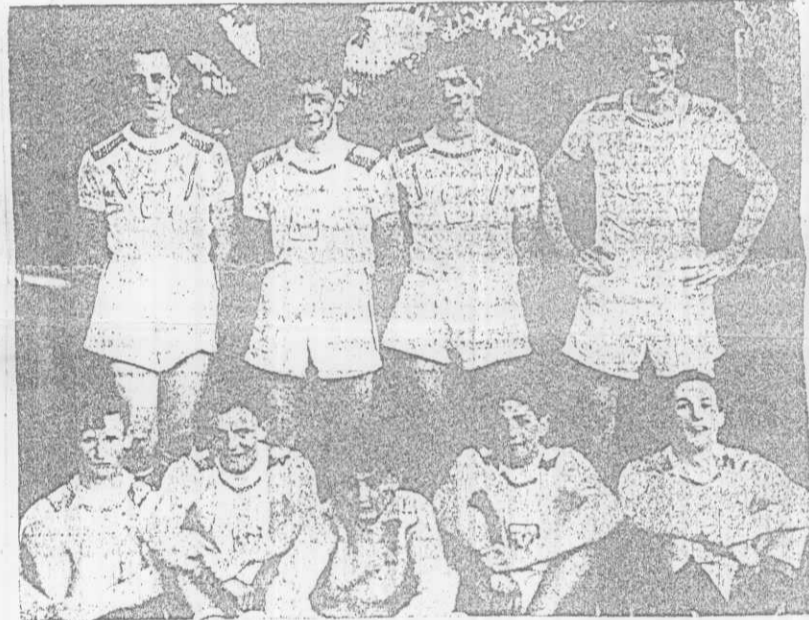
surface of the Abbey River. The schoolboys, who are in charge of Brother Mullins, were on the water as early as February. Off-water exercises include physical training, which was begun in January, and running on the Island Bank. For the Christian Brothers boys, the policy of becoming fitter earlier has paid dividends, and their magnificent performance in winning the Head-of-the-River last Wednesday may be the fore-runner of many victories later in the season.

Circuit training, is of course, nothing really new, but the lecture given by Mr. Cyril White in A.B.C. this year has revived

ent training, the set is graded from the 13lb. weights to the heavier range. Another valuable asset to training is a water tank which was built by voluntary labour. Measuring 13' x 9' x 2' 6", it was built by the voluntary labour of the Club President, with the Captain, Vice-Captain, and Leo Clancy. This year's officials are Eddie McDonkey, President; Leo Clancy, Vice-President; Tom Heagney, Hon. Treasurer; Jim Crowe, Hon. Secretary; Gerry O'Donovan, Captain; and Ger. Meehan, Vice-Captain.

Eddie McDonkey comes from a family long associated with the sport. There are few left show, "If the sport keeps moving along its present lines," he told me, "I think it has a great future." The club will be represented at Limerick, Cork, Athlone, and, possibly, Cahow Regattas.

The Club's earliest coaches were Limerickman John de Courey and an English professional coach, John Tierrier. 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.



Head-of-the-River champions... The youthful O.B.S. eight taken after their great win on Wednesday night.

Roche, faithful and dutiful caretaker who looked after the Club's property for over 30 years.

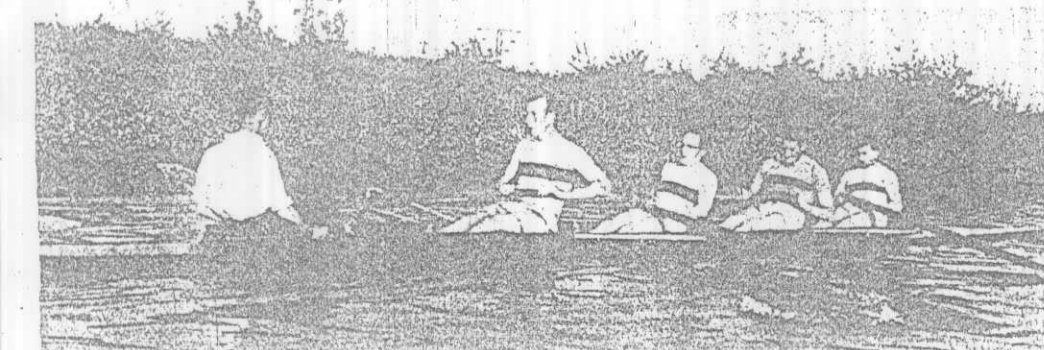
The new and spacious Club premises were erected in 1924. On the walls hang many interesting and historical photographs and letters, all of which are highly valued by the members. And there, too, is a life-size photograph of the Club's first patron and Life President, Very Rev. Denis Shanahan, P.P., St. 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?"

SUCH IS THE ALPHA OF A.B.C., AS TOLD TO ME BY WILLIE W. GLEESON. AND THERE ARE MANY GREAT THINGS TO COME BEFORE THE OMEGA BE WRITTEN.

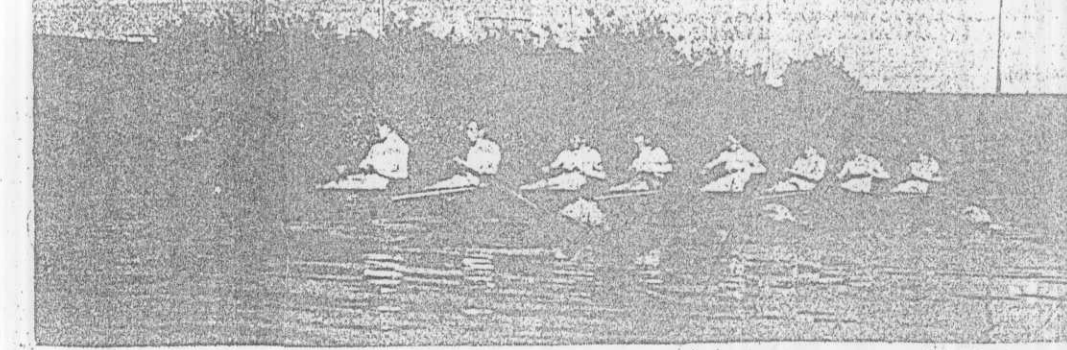


A popular and efficient Captain... Gerry O'Donovan.

fine club premises include table tennis, television and billiards. And soon it is hoped that a miniature golf course will be laid down. Racing equipment is excellent. There is a good fine eight, a new clinker eight, and a new



The senior four seen here going through their paces. From 1 to 4: J. Crowe (cox), G. Meehan (stic), J. Kelly, J. Meehan, A. Reidy (bow).



A fine shot of the O.B.S. eight in action. From 1 to 8: J. Campbell (cox), P. Carey (stic), M. Hogan, M. O'Malley, A. Griffin, J. Worsley, J. Clancy, N. Carroll, J. Ryan (bow).