



ed are (from left): Mr. Gerry Sheehan, a Murphy, who is a member of the com- Valera lived as a boy.

## Granddaughter of Coll (Dev's) visits Bruree

COLL DI GANGI, grand-daughter of Coll—uncle of Eamon de Valera, who at the infant de Valera from the United Bruree over 90 years ago—paid her first land when she came over for Mr. de Valera. Before returning to her home in she decided there was one place she had it was Bruree.

arrived at Lime- Station, one of she met was a Mr. Patrick who is a C.I.E.

man then put with Mr. Mannix r Bruree man, some people in old them that gi was on her

Bruree she was Tony O'Keeffe, Mrs. Mary Her- stown, and Mr. Sheehan, Knock- nt the afternoon ehan family at a family who se friends of Mr. rs. Birdie Shee- Ned Coll, when visit to his brot- more.

se of the after- i Gangi visited era's home at nd also various n the immediate h were closely- h the late states- visited the mus- de Valera, Bru- was immensely

thrilled and moved by the exhibits she saw there, especially the lock of her great grandmother's hair (de Valera's grandmother), which is contained in a casket with a lock of Mr. de Valera's own hair.

Both locks of hair had been sent to Mr. de Valera's mother in the 1890's, and were eventually brought back to Ireland and presented by Mr. de Valera to the museum.

Mrs. Di Gangi spent the night at the home of Mrs. Mary Herlihy, whose mother, the late Mrs. Nora Joyce, was a neighbour and contemporary of Mr. de Valera.

Next day, Mrs. Di Gangi visited the Christian Brothers' School in Rathluir, which Mr. de Valera had once attended.

In Bruree she met two further people who had once met her grandfather, Ned Coll. They were Mr. Laurence O'Keeffe and his sister, Mrs. Hannie London.

During her visit, Mrs. Di Gangi was presented by Mr. Mannix Joyce with a copy of his history of Bruree, and was presented by Mr. Donncha O Briain, former Dail Deputy, with a copy of T. P. O'Neill's

## 70 years later, another honour for man who got a gold for race he officially didn't win

BY RICHARD NAUGHTON

IN 1905 MR. ALMA FITT was presented with a gold medal by the committee of Limerick Boat Club for a race he did not officially win. This Saturday Mr. Fitt will be again honoured by his old club when the president, Mr. Philip A. O'Doherty, will make him a presentation to mark his seventieth year of membership.

Saturday's ceremony will be unique in local rowing history, and Mr. Fitt's seventy years of continuous club membership may well contribute a national record.

The function recalls an extraordinary incident at the Limerick Regatta of 1905. It was the under-age fours race for the Clevee Challenge Cup and as Mr. Fitt's crew neared the finishing line they came from second place with a well sustained effort, drew level with the leaders and in the last few yards put their boat in front, winning by half a canvas.

### Amazement

But to everyone's amazement the judge gave his decision in favour of the second crew. A mistake had obviously been made, and to compensate the crew for the laurels denied them, they were later awarded gold medals by the club.

Rowing in the four were Alma Fitt (bow), W. E. Jeffares, L. J. Hewson, A. L. Earls (stroke), with A. S. Murray (cox). At the club dinner in November of that year the crew were present as guests, and the president, J. P. Hall, presented them with the medals awarded by the committee.

Mr. Fitt is the only survivor of the crew. Hewson, who later became a parson, died some years ago; Jeffares was a Bank of Ireland official; Earls went to South America. The cox, Alfred J. Murray, was nephew of the famous rowing personality, Bruce Murray.

It was Mr. Fitt's first regatta, and though he won many trophies in the years up to 1911, he was never successful in a senior race. And the reason was a good one: "There was a fellow named Healy rowing with Shannon, and others like Hall, O'Brien, Shanahan and Glazer, who took a lot of the fun out of it for us."

### George Ross

Among the more unusual of his presentation prizes are four pewter pots which he won in seasons 1907-'08-'09-'11. In his last season he rowed with the great No. 6, George Ross, "the best water man I ever

knew". Ross, who died a few years ago, was for a long period a bank manager in Gort.

When Mr. Fitt was elected to L.B.C. in 1905 the club had a record membership of 181. Band promenades were held on the club pier and three eights and five fours were in training. There was great enthusiasm for boating and sailing and 22 pleasure boats were anchored off Sarsfield Bridge. Devotees of leisure boating were divided into two types, "bankers" and "dykers". The "bankers" were fond of a swim and the "dykers" were fond of the companionship of ladies!

Mr Fitt is a member of one of Limerick's oldest and most respected families. His grandfather, Edward Fitt, was proprietor of the Old Newgate Brewery, and his father-in-law was one of the founders of the Limerick Savings Bank.

### Tradition

The family connections with the Saving Bank was maintained to present times by Mr. Fitt; his father was there for over sixty years and he himself carried on this great tradition of service to the citizens of Limerick up to his



Mr. Fitt: a national record?

retirement a few years ago. Mr. Fitt is related to the well-known Limerick families of Wallace and Fogarty. The former numbered in their ranks silversmiths and antiquarians, and the latter, founders of the Limerick Theatre Royal, were prominent in medical and civil engineering spheres.

On the Fitt side of the family, his uncles included Francis Matthew Fitt, a solicitor of prominent reputation who was killed in a traffic accident in London in 1908; William B. Fitt, the auctioneer, and Edward G. Fitt, the provision merchant who lived and laboured in Limerick until their deaths in the 'forties.

The Fitt family have also made their name in the United States.

### Pastorates

The Rev. Frank Fitt, who was born in Limerick in 1889, the son of Francis Matthew Fitt, held two pastorates for over forty years, at Highland Park, Illinois, from 1918 to 1930 and at Grosse Pointe, Michigan, from 1930 to his retirement in 1958.

Alfred Bradley Fitt, son of the Rev. Frank Fitt, was successively legal adviser to the Governor of the State of Michigan, a member of the Judiciary Committee of the U.S. Senate, deputy undersecretary of the Army for manpower and, in 1963, deputy undersecretary of defence for civil rights.

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