

Now its the turn of our rowing heroes

by Marie Hobbins

Local clubs generated Limerick's sporting tradition

A REVITALISATION of Limerick city's tradition of rowing on the Shannon River will be given a positive boost from the establishment of a rowing museum in a new state of the art Limerick Boat Club.

Michael Daly of Fordmount, has confirmed to Cllr Michael Hourigan, that he is very favourably disposed to providing a museum.

While full planning permission to the boat club development has yet to be secured, the inclusion of a rowing museum, which surfaced when the rezoning of Wellesley Pier (to commercial use) was successfully voted on in favour of Mr Daly's proposed development.

Cllr Hourigan acknowledged the great strides made in building the city's sporting image by the redevelopment of Thomond Park and the rugby museum located there.



Rowing Club was four years in existence. Others quickly followed - Limerick Boat Club in 1870, Athlunkard Boat Club in 1898, and St Michael's Rowing Club in 1901.

"It was clubs like these that generated the sporting tradition that today makes Limerick synonymous with sport, and if one were to delve into the history of many famous rugby families in Limerick today, one would find that their sporting roots were in rowing," he contends.

It is well known that when Athlunkard Boat Club was founded, it quickly became the centre of gravity for the Island Parish and that Shannon Rugby Club, which was also founded in The Parish, drew on the Athlunkard oarsmen as the nucleus for their teams. Similarly Young Munster's Rugby Club relied on oarsmen from St Michael's for their recruits.

An observation made by Mr Reid, should be particularly interesting to the city's younger generation

of sports enthusiasts.

"The enthusiasm for sport didn't just happen overnight - if we dig a little below the surface, we will find that the love of sport in this city has its roots, not so much in the sports with mass following today, but in minority sports like rowing".

Paying tribute to the many city oarsmen who have been successful in winning all grades of Irish rowing championships, he acknowledged the city's elite oarsmen who had numerous successes at international level, with Sam Lynch twice winning the lightweight single sculls in the world championships.

Emphasising the relevance and value of a rowing museum to the city, Mr Reid said:

"We've all benefited to some degree by the way sport has enriched our lives and as a result we owe a debt of gratitude to those who were the backbone in building up the clubs and teams that enhance the city's image today - a rowing museum would certainly afford us the opportunity to pay tribute to our sporting heroes".

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"However, we also have a very strong rowing tradition and our rowing heroes deserve to be recognised. The creation of a rowing museum would allow us to create a sports museum trail in the city - I'm calling on the city council and all of our rowing clubs to support this proposal, which would allow us to celebrate our strong rowing tradition," he said.

"Thronges of spectators lined the banks of the Shannon to witness the spectacle that was Limerick Regatta," says Austin Reid of Limerick Boat Club, who recounts that in 1870, the first year of the regatta in Limerick, some 15,000 people lined the river banks while hundreds more poured onto the various vessels, including transatlantic, masted schooners moored alongside the quay walls, to obtain advantage viewing.

"Each vessel was colourfully decked in bunting and flags, as were the shops, businesses and private residences in the vicinity of the river on the Thursday afternoon on which the regatta took place. Everything came to a standstill as employers and employees flocked to the river"

Mr Reid points out that by 1870, Shannon

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