

St. Michael's Temperance Society Rowing Club, 1941, winners of the New York Cup. Back: W. Stapleton, C. Howard (cox), J. Whelan (capt.). Front: K. Bourke, Rev. J. F. Cowpar, D. Heffernan, A. Stenbridge.

St. Michael's proud 150 years of sport

ST. Michael's Sporting Club, one of the oldest clubs in Limerick, celebrates its 150th anniversary this year. Founded as a Temperance Society in 1839 during the crusade of the great temperance advocate Father Theobald Mathew, the club has accomplished remarkable work for the well-being of its members and the citizens of Limerick during its 150 years of existence.

The club was originally located in rented rooms over a number of shops in Northumberland Street, now Lower Cecil Street, and the rooms were known as the Northumberland Rooms.

The first president was Rev. Fr. Patrick Darcy, and the first secretary was William Jackson. The priests of St. Michael's parish played an important part in the administration of the club and, in 1874, Rev. Dr. O'Dwyer, who was then a curate in St. Michael's, became president and spiritual director of the club. Bishop O'Dwyer had a stimulating influence on the members of St. Michael's and did a lot to revive the club. Dan Hannan became secretary in 1871 and gave forty years service until he retired in 1911.

St. Michael's had a fine sporting tradition and during the last century played hurling, Gaelic football, rugby and cricket at Corkinree sports grounds. On Sunday, July 17, St. Michael's beat Commercial, a team comprising local drapers, in the first county football final at Grocers Field. Commercial lodged an objection that St. Michael's had seven rugby players who were illegal. St. Michael's lost the replay and Commercial went on to win the first All-Ireland football final that year. In 1895 St. Michael's realised their cherished ambition by beating National 2-3 to 0-1 to win the county hurling final.

The captain of that victorious St. Michael's team was Paddy Stapleton, whose sons, Paddy and Billy, later became prominent members of St. Michael's Rowing Club.

St. Michael's Rowing Club was founded in 1901. Michael Joyce, who was M.P. for Limerick, played a prominent part in the founding of the rowing club. The first captain was Bill Merritt. St. Michael's had their first maiden success in 1906 when they won the Quin Cup at Limerick Regatta. St. Michael's first senior win came in 1913 when they won the Limerick Challenge Cup for fours. The crew was Paddy Mud O'Dwyer (stroke), P. O'Neill, G. Howlett, Willie Jack O'Brien and P. J. Henihan (cox).

A meeting was held in the Town Hall in January, 1908, to discuss the financial crisis that existed in St. Michael's and it was unanimously decided to support a fundraising campaign towards the building of a new premises. Many of the leading merchants gave generous contributions and the Shannon Carnival was a great fundraising success. The new 3-storey building, which is the present headquarters of the club, was formally opened by Bishop O'Dwyer on Monday, March 16, 1909.

Drama

St. Michael's had a very fine dramatic class which goes back to

the beginning of this century. Brothers Tom and Jack Savage played a major part in the success of the dramatic class and St. Michael's were always assured of full houses when the plays were performed. Popular plays produced were the Colleen Bawn, Arrah-na-Pogue, The Old Land, Con the Seachran and the Rebel's Wife. Members of the cast who appeared in the plays during the twenties were Ned Connaughton, Paddy Hannan, Joe O'Halloran, Jack Healy, George Smith, Michael Gleeson, Dinny Lannigan, Mick Brinn and Tom Duggan, often referred to as Fr. Tom for his many fine performances in the part of Fr. Tom in the Colleen Bawn. Some of the ladies who starred were Eileen Fitzmaurice, Bessie O'Dea and Queenie Houlihan.

Paddy Began became secretary in 1919 and gave a life-time of service in that position, which lasted 39 years. The end of the twenties was a successful period for the rowing club, with the underage four winning the gold medals at the Tailteann Games at Cork in 1928. A memorable race occurred in 1931 when the St. Michael's senior eight stroked by Paddy Stapleton led Emmets by three lengths in the Union Cup and looked certain of winning their first championship when a couple of bad errors cost them the race. In 1933 St. Michael's had to vacate their club in the docks to make way for the new dock extension, but thanks to the hospitality of Athlunkard they were able to continue rowing until the new boat club was opened in 1941.

The famous Riley Shield billiards competition was inaugurated in 1932 by two St. Michael's members, Jack Tuohy and Ned Cleary. Catholic Institute won the shield in the first year, but St. Michael's were successful in the 1934-35 season and went on to record many wins in this prestigious competition during the forties and fifties. Joyce Gardiner, the world champion lady billiards player from England, played an exhibition in St. Michael's in February, 1936. Her opponent was Paddy Ryan and the hall was full to capacity.

Jack Savage produced a number of very successful and popular pantomimes in the thirties and early forties which included Sinbad, Ali Baba and others. Some of the talented performers who took part in the pantomimes were Peggy O'Halloran, May Noonan, Peggy Barry, Bridie and Elizabeth Kearney, Maura O'Brien, Denis Murphy, J. Kenny, Harold McCann, M. Egan, May Noonan, Jimmy Sheehan, Paddy Neville, Billy Stapleton, Mick Goggin and Sofie Kearns. St. Michael's had a nice custom of giving charity performances in the City Home, Good Shepherd Convent and Presentation Convent when the pantomimes were over. A number of successful concerts to help pay off the debt in the new boat club were organised and some famous names such as Jimmy O'Dea, Joseph Locke, Fr. Sidney McEwin, Maire Ni Scoilade, Josephine Scanton and local tenor Jimmy Penny performed in those concerts.

It was only fitting that the first trophy won in the new boat club in 1941 was the New York Cup, which was donated by St. Michael's exiles in New York to Limerick Regatta in 1936. The winning crew were Olly Heffernan (stroke), K. Bourke, J. O'Mahony, A. Stenbridge (bow) and

Christy Howard (cox). The first captain of the new boat club was the very popular and well-liked Joe Whelan. There was great jubilation in the club in 1945 when the maiden eights, stroked by Willie Carmody, won at Athlone, Limerick and beat the Union Cup winners, U.C.D., in Cork. Tom Hanrahan was captain, Dick O'Halloran coach and Jack McCutcheon vice-captain. Dick O'Halloran became captain in 1946 and held this position for nine years.

Others

The club began to branch into other sports in the forties, such as table tennis and soccer. Joe Kennedy, Bobby Smith and Teddy Bowen won the Limerick Senior League for St. Michael's in 1943. Joe Kennedy beat Bobby Evans, St. Michael's School, Pery Square, in the final of the men's singles at the Limerick close championships in 1943 to become the first St. Michael's player to win this event. The club made their first appearance in the Limerick junior soccer league in the 1948-49 season. The soccer team played some memorable matches against C.I.E., who were the top team in Limerick at that time. The first St. Michael's team was: goal, Micky Walsh; fullbacks, Tom Tobin and Pat O'Dwyer; halfbacks, Tommy Cassidy and Sonny Hartigan; centre-half, Billy Windrum (capt.); inside forwards, Johnny Tucker and Joe Dillon; wingers, Paddy Mullins, Martin Synan, Tim Keogh; centre-forward, Billy Hoare. St. Michael's had their most successful season in 1956-57 when they beat a fancied Caledonians in the final of the Saxone Cup and were also underdogs when they beat Ballynanty to win the Tipperary Lawson.

The legendary Paddy Roche, who had been caretaker of St. Michael's for 40 years, retired in 1948. The visit of world snooker champion Joe Davis in September, 1953, attracted a huge crowd to St. Michael's. Joe scored his first century while on tour in St. Michael's and his opponents on that occasion were Eddie Byrne, Gerry Fitzgerald and Arnold Ashley. St. Michael's had a very well balanced Riley Shield team during the fifties and were successful on a number of occasions.

Players who competed were Eddie Byrne, Eddie Holliday, F. O'Donoghue, M. O'Brien, Sean Croke, Dan Brilly, Willie Hayden, Bill Murray and Wally O'Donoghue. The Riley Shield lapsed in the sixties but is being revived again this year as part of St. Michael's 150th anniversary celebrations.

Changes

The fifties was a time of change in the club with a number of the older members such as John White, who had served as deputy vice-president on the house committee for twenty years, retiring and Dick O'Halloran, another long serving member, also retired. Christy Hardiman was elected D.V.P. on the house committee and in 1955 when he was elected captain of the rowing club had nine wins. It was the beginning of a new era. Cyril Mullins became captain in 1956 when the club won their first senior eight at Limerick Regatta. The members of the crew who won that historic race were Michael Phelan (stroke), Noel

Killridge, C. O'Shaughnessy, T. Bourke, Ted Phayer, S. Meehan, P. Treacy, T. Cooney, Paddy Egan (cox).

The boat used on that memorable win was the Miss America, which was presented to the club by Teddy Forsyth and the St. Michael's exiles in New York in 1931.

Table tennis blossomed during the fifties with the arrival of some great players such as Micky Hickey, Paddy Redmond, Liam Wrenn, Pascal Ryan and a young Billy Marshall, who won the Irish schoolboys championship in 1958. St. Michael's won the Limerick Senior League from 1955 to 59 and there was great excitement when Micky Hickey was selected on the Munster team in 1958.

John (The Man) Frawley persuaded the Monarchs Showband to sponsor a perpetual trophy for St. Michael's annual Christmas snooker handicap in 1964 and this competition had become a very popular event over the years. Joe Lewis was the first to win the new trophy. In recent times St. Michael's have some fine players in Brian Mullins, Morgan Hayes, Albert Hogan and Gerry O'Brien, who is the current Limerick No. 1. Gerry made his first century break in 1985 and was selected on the Irish snooker team in 1987. Gerry has had some marvellous wins in recent years but winning the Leinster Open in 1988 must rank as his greatest achievement.

St. Michael's had a record 39 regatta wins under the captaincy of Paddy Treacy in 1969 and won the title of top Irish club that year. Dermot Henihan, whose grandfather was one of the founding members of St. Michael's Rowing Club, brought great success to the club in the twenties and eighties and is currently the president of the I.A.R.U. St. Michael's won the Irish junior A championship in 1979 and went on to record ten Irish championship wins over the last ten years. The seventies was a golden era for table tennis in the club, with Noel Glynn, Frank Glynn and Mary Sheehan having great success in the Irish ranking tournaments. Mary represented Ireland at the world championships in 1977 and Noel and Frank represented Ireland at the European junior championships. In the eighties St. Michael's produced some marvellous players, such as John O'Connell, Alan Marshall, Kieran Galvin, Billy Marshall Jr. and Caroline Leonard and the club has been well represented on the Munster teams over the last fifteen years. Caroline Leonard represented Ireland at senior international in recent years. Billy Marshall has been non-playing captain to many Irish teams over the past ten years and his coaching has played a major part in the players' success.

There have been many presidents of St. Michael's over the years but in the 150 years of the club's existence there have only been five honorary secretaries.

The present secretary, Paddy Egan, has given 31 years dedicated service to the club and has seen the club through a period of change which involved breaking from the Temperance Society in the sixties and joining the C.Y.M.S. The members at the A.G.M. in December, 1974, decided to leave the C.Y.M.S. and the club was given the new title of St. Michael's Sporting Club.

The purpose of the club was for the welfare of the citizens.

fences.

"She jumped six fences every morning at home for two weeks to make sure that she was fully prepared for 1 over fences on the racecourse," said Austin. He feels that has won over two and a half miles on the flat, three over fences should pose no problem.

Ballytigue Lad, owned by Pat and Mary O'Connell, Ballytigue, Bruce initiated a double for the Leahy j



Charlie Swan takes Lucky Baloo over the last fence on his way to winning at Tipperary.

Gerry O'Neill. This four year old is highly thought of by who advised the O'Connors to purchase him after the promising Ballytigue Buck with a broken leg.

Kevin O'Brien is still making a bold bid in the championship and he made the long journey to Down for Saturday worthwhile when winning a maiden hurdle Bolger's Renard Quay owned by Rathkeale solicitor Murphy.

And he got straight down to business the following Tipperary winning the opener, The Fort Union C Branded Down also from the Enda Bolger yard.

Antirrhinum who was making a comeback after a loss was the surprise packet of the afternoon winning the INH flat race with James Jones aboard. The six year has a liking for the Tipperary track having previously won the Donald Swan yard brought off a rapid fire double Lord de Montford and Lucky Baloo in consecutive hurdles.

Charlie Swan made it all on both horses with Lucky Baloo.

WEEKEND JUNIOR SOCCER

Mixed bag this weekend

There is a mixed bag on offer this weekend with games in the Lawson, Madden, Saxone, Mohawk and Munster Youth Cups with emphasis very much on the Madden quarter-finals.

The Madden Milk Cup is quickly becoming one of the most sought after trophies on offer locally. The milk company, main sponsors of Granville Rangers, is becoming very involved in the code in Limerick and on final night they have always treated the winners royally.

This year it is hoped the final will be played on the October Bank Holiday Monday and that fixtures are so far ahead can be attributed to the dedication of fixtures secretary, Oliver Barry.

The quarter finals, all with a 10.30 k.o. time, sees St. Patrick's, Kilmallock C, Moyross B and Glenagross installed favourites to reach the semi-finals.

St. Patrick's B v. Shelbourne C, 10.30 Patrickswell: A home win is predicted here. The Saints are motoring very well in the fifth division, though their opponents, Shelbourne are currently holding second spot a division higher. The county boys, however, are playing some tremendous football just now and will be looking to Scottie Phillips and Mick Rankin to see them through. Pat Murphy's charges, however, will be determined to fend off the Saints challenge and will be hoping that Geoff Eccles, Darren Fleming and Philip Cosgrove reproduce the kind of form that has brought them to within a point of leaders, Moyross. While Shelbourne will be expecting victory, I will stick my neck out and go for a home win.

Shannon Town C v. Kilmallock C, 10.30 Shannon: While Kilmallock won't relish the trip to Shannon they should nevertheless be good enough to advance. They will be without Dan Hennessy who emigrated to America this Thursday and his loss will be keenly felt

son's magnificent can they will certainly be looking to Madden Cup to help them to an even keel. A home win, however, is very much

Mohawk Cup

THIRD ROUND

Lisnagry A v. Troy C Lisnagry: If the home team can get the same momentum as last weekend they should advance to round four. recalled that Conor charges were within a beating division one levelers, Granville Rgs. A road, going down or after a most enjoyable. They possess one of goalkeepers I have seen outside the premier level wouldn't be at all surprised to see them in attendance of Robbie O'Connell, too impressive youngster brother Tony, has extra abundance. Pa Cooke, and Paul Tuohy are caught the eye against the lads. Troy are no slouch and will be looking McCarthy, Mike McC Joe O'Loughlin to make sure to be a very stiff indeed. Despite Troy's confidence, I feel this will be much too good.

Castle Rvs. v. New Cahernane: What can be said about this Fedamore travelled to Portland Park FAI tilt with first division side and emerged in winners after production of formance of their Hurley, a most efficient well as a prolific goal quietly confident that they will on Sunday and hoping that Mike McL Darren Malone rep kind of form that made toast of Fedamore last Newport, on the other rather disappointing down at home to B They could well suffice this time round.