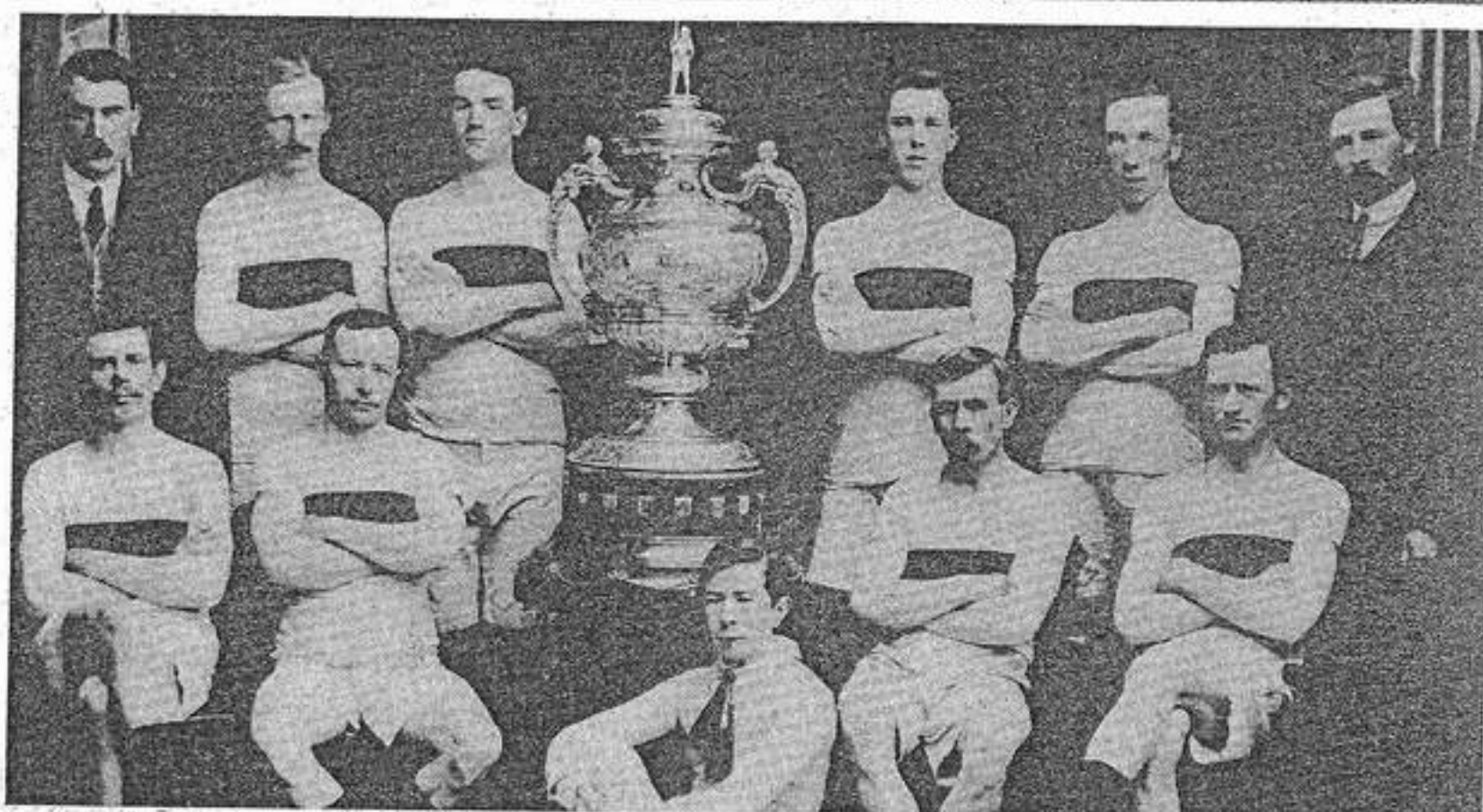


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Winners of the IARU Senior Eights Championship of Ireland at Limerick Regatta, 1913. Back: M. Halpin; Tom Earlie, stroke; Mick Guerin; Liam Forde; Morgan Costelloe; Bryan O'Connor, captain. Front: Joe Reid; Jim Keane; Stephen Clancy; Donat Cantrell. Bottom, centre, T. Keane, cox.

Centenary of famous boat race win by Athlunkard

DENIS O'SHAUGHNESSY
news@limerickleader.ie
@limerick_leader

THIS month, 100 years ago, Athlunkard Boat Club senior eight competed at Cork Regatta for the famous Leander trophy but were beaten by Trinity College in a great race.

The following day, the premier national event, the senior eights championship of Ireland, was being held at Limerick Regatta and Athlunkard were given little chance against the students, who were then the dominant force in Irish rowing.

Watched by up to 20,000 spectators lining the Docks and Cleeve's Bank, St Michael's, in very rough conditions, led the race at Barrington's Pier.

Athlunkard, brilliantly stroked by Tom Earlie, passed them and it became a battle between the Parish club and Trinity. Amid intense excitement, ABC defied all the odds and beat the hot favourites by a length. The Parish boys were the toast of the city.

After the race, the crew returned triumphantly to Shannon RC to great acclamation.

According to the late WW Gleeson, Mayor Thady Ryan was there to greet them and when standing them a round of drinks, all the crew asked for was lemonade! The director of the Confraternity, Fr Mangan, congratulated the crew on bringing honour to Limerick and remarked on their abstinence from drink. "What an example to others," he said. "Let me also say that during their period of training and after a hard day's work, they have been most loyal to the Confraternity at the same time."

The prizes were perfect replicas of the stunning Union Cup which was purchased by the Irish Amateur Rowing Union in 1912 for the sum of £100. The story goes that the race organisers were so sure of a Trinity win that they had the miniatures specially cast. In latter years, most of these replicas, treasured family possessions, were donated to the club for display purposes.

For Tom Earlie, it was the culmination of some great senior fours victories in which he was stroke. Described as a natural oarsmen, he was one of the greats of the club, yet his

demeanour was the essence of modesty, bordering on innocence. The story is told that such was the dominance of his second senior four that he was approached by a bookie before a Limerick regatta and offered a pony (betting slang for £25) to pull the race. Indignantly, Tom replied "what would I want a pony for, I'd have no place to keep him!"

Some 40 years later, the crew and captain of this 1913 championship winning crew were still hale and hearty and had their photo taken in the club grounds.

Interestingly, two of the crew, Joe Reid and Jim Keane, won Munster Senior Cup medals with Garryowen in 1914, showing the great connection between Athlunkard and the light blues. Joe's son Tom was one of the great Lions forwards in the tour of South Africa in 1955.

The IARU Cup was stolen from a Dublin jeweller in 1985 and melted down for its silver content, a terrible act of vandalism. The IARU wrote to the club requesting the loan of one of the miniatures so that a new cup could be copied - and this was acceded to.

Water tax 'senseless'

engineering sense. A more sensible approach would be