

# St Michael's still making waves in world of rowing

■ Club with a storied past is looking to the future with new slipway development planned

CONOR LYNCH  
& GRAINNE KEAYS

LIMERICK'S St Michael's Rowing Club (SMRC) is steeped in tradition, with a rich history unfolding since its establishment in 1901.

Having recently discovered old archival photos depicting the decorated history of SMRC here at the Limerick Leader archives, we asked current and past long-term members, as well as the President of the club, to give us their insights into both the club's history and its present standing.

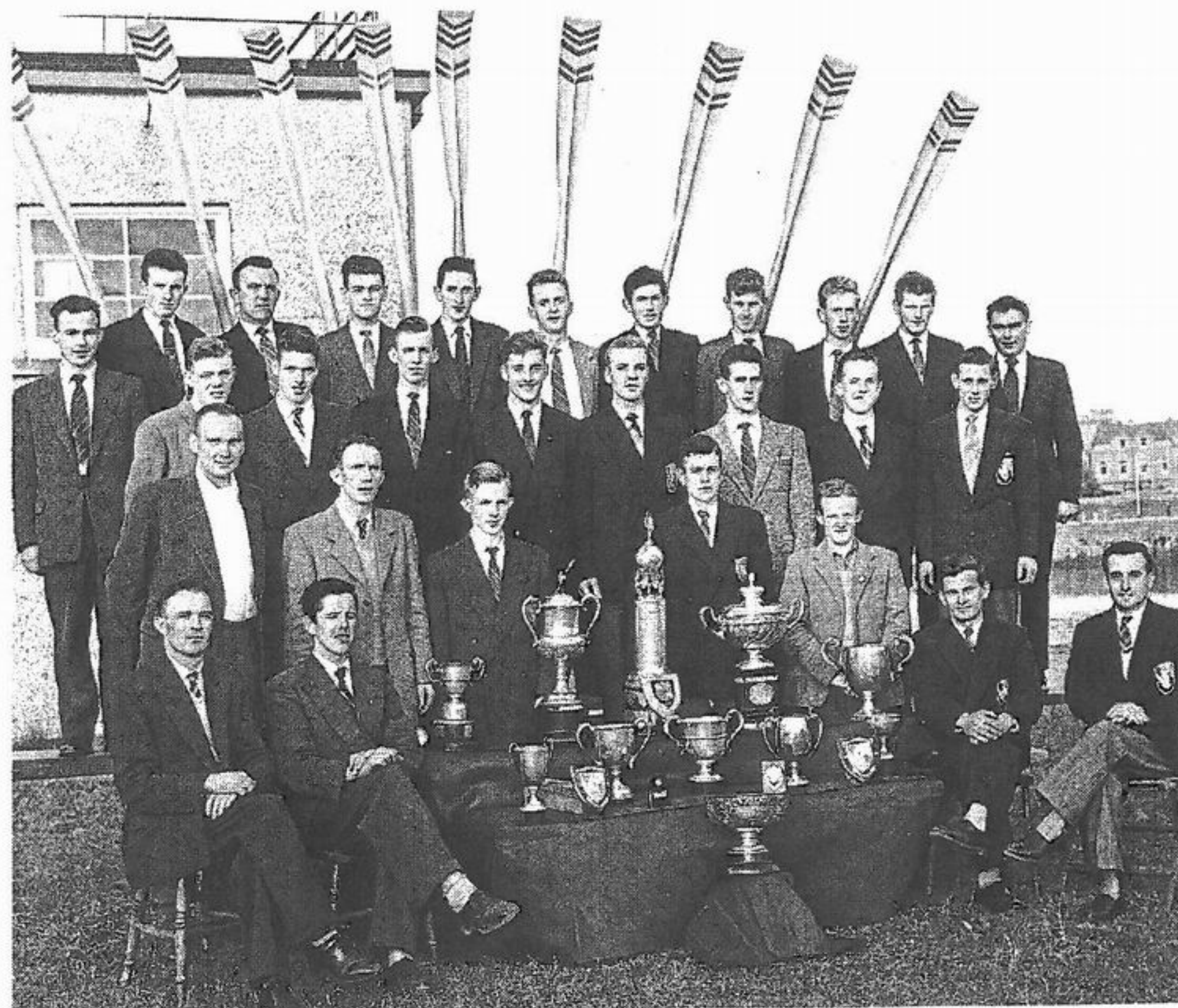
Currently the largest rowing club connected with Rowing Ireland, St Michael's Rowing Club has undergone a notable development in the past 40 years in particular.

At this summer's Rio Olympics, SMRC had three boats representing Ireland in Brazilian waters, with current club member, Sinead Jennings, now recognised as an established Olympic athlete, having rowed for Ireland in two of the previous three Olympic games.

With plans in place to reconstruct the current slipway at SMRC's boathouse in the coming weeks, the future looks incredibly bright for the 115-year-old Limerick club at this moment in time.

Located opposite the old Cleeve's factory, on O'Callaghan's Strand, St Michael's Rowing Club boat house is on the banks of the River Shannon, and so offers its members a "different perspective" and unique viewpoint of the Limerick area surrounding the clubhouse, according to SMRC President, Tom Larkin.

Long-term SMRC member, Kieran Kerr, who has been a member with the club for almost 40 years, joining in 1978, shared with the Limerick



St Michael's Rowing Club members with trophies, May 1956



Left: St Michael's Boat Club in mini regatta at Athlunkard Boat Club 14 September 1969. Dermot Henihan on the left. Dermot was the architect of the championship success the club had in the late 1970s and early 1980s. He became Captain and President of the club. He was President of the IARU for eight years and is current Secretary General of the Olympic Council of Ireland. Unfortunately, we do not have the names of the other rowers pictured here.

didn't encourage them at the time because we simply didn't

comparison to yesteryear, is that St Michael's is "now a more inclusive club".

Echoing Kieren's recollections of championship success in the late seventies, Tom was quick to remind us of the club's continued success throughout the decades that followed.

"We were still very, very successful in the '90s and 2000s, winning an awful lot of championships," recalls the proud president.

"In particular, we became very strong with women's rowing in the 2000's, specifically around 2009, 2010 and 2011. We had a very strong women's junior squad."

As Tom recalls, "women's rowing wasn't very strong in St Michael's up until those very recent years".

Then, five years ago, in 2011, it all changed as the St Michael's women's team achieved their very first championship success.

With SMRC winning nine national rowing championships in successive years, four in 2013 and five in 2014, both male and female teams, it comes as no surprise then that the ambitious club president sums up the last two years as "lean" for SMRC, with no silverware in the cabinet from these years.

However, the future is bright for the rowing club in the eyes of the president, with the club "thriving" at present at all age groups.

"We've got a very healthy junior membership currently, probably the biggest in Ireland," beams Tom.

"We have upwards of 60 junior members, both boys and girls.

"We also have a very healthy senior membership, again both men and women, who have the opportunity to participate in masters rowing, which is aimed at people who used to row competitively, but don't do so



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## DEATHS IN THE PAST WEEK

**MOLONY** Julia (née Hilton-Green), Ottersfield, Manister, Croom. October 26 peacefully at St John's Hospital. Beloved wife of Martin. Dearly loved mother of Jan, Suesanna, Peter and the late Mary. Sadly by her loving grandchildren, extended family and friends.

**BOURKE** Margaret, St Michael's Court, Watergate, Limerick City. Deeply regretted by son Don, daughter Joanne, sister Kathleen Halvey, grandchildren, great-grandchild, nieces and nephews, all other relatives and friends.

**MOLONEY** Danny, Highfield, Newtownshandrum, Cork/Effin. October 26. Beloved son of Sinead and John, brother of Sarah, Lauren and Ryan, grandson of Nana Alice and Nana Josie. Deeply regretted by his parents, sisters, brother, aunts, uncles, cousins, grandmother's, relatives and friends.

**CAREY** Denis, Leixlip, Kildare, formerly of Castlegarde, Cappamore. October 26. Beloved husband of Frances and dear father of Alan and Kevin and a devoted grandfather to Ciarán, Darragh, and Naoimh. Sadly missed by his loving wife, sons, grandchildren, daughter-in-law Amy, Kevin's partner Jackie, brother Larry, sisters Esther and Margaret, brothers-in-law, sisters-in-law, nieces, nephews, relatives, extended family, neighbours and friends.

**BROWNE** Martin John, Maiville, Kilrush Road, Ennis, Clare, formerly of Church Street, Glin. October 26 peacefully at Cork University Hospital. Will be sadly missed by his son Nathan, parents Betty and John and his close friend Mike Cosgrave, uncles, aunt, cousins, relatives and many friends.

**O'DONOGHUE** Kathleen (née Carey), Lynwood Park, Ballysimon. October 28. Wife of the late Peter, Mother of the late Andrew. Survived by sons Peter and David, grandchildren, brothers, sisters, nieces and nephews.

**MCGANN** Patsey (née Mullany), late of the Ennis Road, Limerick City. October 27 peacefully in the wonderful care of Corbally House Nursing Home. Beloved wife of the late Bryan. Dearly loved mother of Margaret (Shorten), Brian, Nuala, Gearoid, Pierce, Aonghus and Jim. Sadly missed by her loving son-in-law Andrew, daughters-in-law Fiona, Yvonne, Catherine, Paula and the late Claire, her adoring 25 grandchildren, nephews, nieces, extended family and friends.

(Strand Hill, Sligo). Sadly missed by her community, congregation, nieces, nephews, sisters-in-law, other relatives and friends.

**TRAVI** Nora (née Brosnan-Butcher), Shanakill, Tralee, Kerry/Mountcollins. October 30. Deeply regretted by her loving husband Alan, daughter Tracy, mother May, grandchildren Natalie and Michael, brother Tony, sisters Mag, Ben and Dawn, nephews, nieces, relatives and friends.

**REIDY** Nora, 45 Beechwood Avenue, Newcastle West. Saturday 29. Survived by her sister Mary (Molly) Sexton, nephews, nieces, grand-nephews, grandnieces, other relatives and friends.

**CAULFIELD** Marie (née Hickey), 14 Bishop Murphy Park, Parteen, Clare/Limerick. October 29. Loving mother of James, Julie, P.J., Sylvia, Margaret, Liz and Catherine. Deeply regretted by her family, sons-in-law, grandchildren, other relatives and friends.

**O'DONOGHUE** Sr Ellen (Lana), Limerick City/Ballinadee, Cork. October 31. Deeply regretted by her Sisters in community and her sisters Mary O'Reilly, Joanie Corcoran, Nora O'Kelly and Kathleen Keane and her brothers Diarmuid, Denny, Paddy (deceased), sisters-in-law, brothers-in-law, nephews, nieces, grandnieces, grandnephew, relatives and friends.

**O'CONNOR** Helen (née Can-naughton), Raheen. October 31 peacefully at Milford Care Centre. Beloved wife of Denis O' Connor. Dearly loved mother of John, Robert and Kate O' Connor. Sadly missed by her loving husband, sons, daughter, brothers, grandchild, extended family and friends.

**O'BRIEN** Nora (née Lynch), Verschoyle Court, Lower Mount Street, Dublin 2, formerly of Kilkee and Clarina. October 31. Beloved mother of Denise (Campion), Brenda (Coup - New Zealand), Gordon, Tom (USA), John (USA) and Peggie (Cantu - USA). She will be very sadly missed by her loving children, 14 grandchildren, great-grandson, in-laws, extended family and friends.

**MCCARTHY** John, Fortfield, Raheen, late of Glenroe and Limerick VEC. October 30 peacefully at home. Beloved husband of Helen. Deeply regretted by his brother David, sisters Mary (Curtin) and Brid (Hayes), brothers-in-law, sister-in-law, nephews, nieces, grand nephews, grand nieces, relat-



memories with regard to St Michael's history.

"The club was formed in 1901, but really, we were trying and trying [to win a championship] until we finally made the breakthrough in the late seventies. Here [in these photographs], you're really capturing the period where most of the activity would have taken place," Kieran says.

"There are two things that stand out from the seventies," Kieran recalls. "The first was Damien Masterson getting our first 'singlet' green jersey in 1978, and then in 1979, we won our first championship."

Kieran, who will release his own history of St Michael's, 'Band of Gold', on November 25, added that St Michael's "hadn't won a championship, and had

been trying for about 70 or 80 years" before the club "finally made the breakthrough" with eventual championship success in 1979.

"So, we finally made the breakthrough then in 1979, and this success proved to everyone at the club at that time that 'yes, we can do it', and then afterwards the floodgates opened as we have won 50 championships from then up until now."

"Traditionally," Kieran continues, "the members would have been a little bit older, but

around the time of the seventies, it would have been late teens to early twenties."

He further reveals that, "prior to this time period [the 1970s], rowing was predominantly for men, but as time went on, women's rowing was eventually introduced".

"St Michael's has changed incredibly over the years, because, when I joined in 1978, we just had the boat house which had a small dressing room in it, and it was just for men.

"We had a few ladies that rowed at the club, but we really

remembers.

"Then in 1996, we more than doubled the size of the club and we added a new gymnasium which included a ladies' changing room. This has really equipped us well ever since."

Two years after the club's first national championship success in the ground-breaking year of 1979, and the prestigious St Michael's Rowing Club had rubber-stamped its Head of the River event, which has since developed into the largest event of its kind over the last 30 years, with the first event being held back in December of 1981.

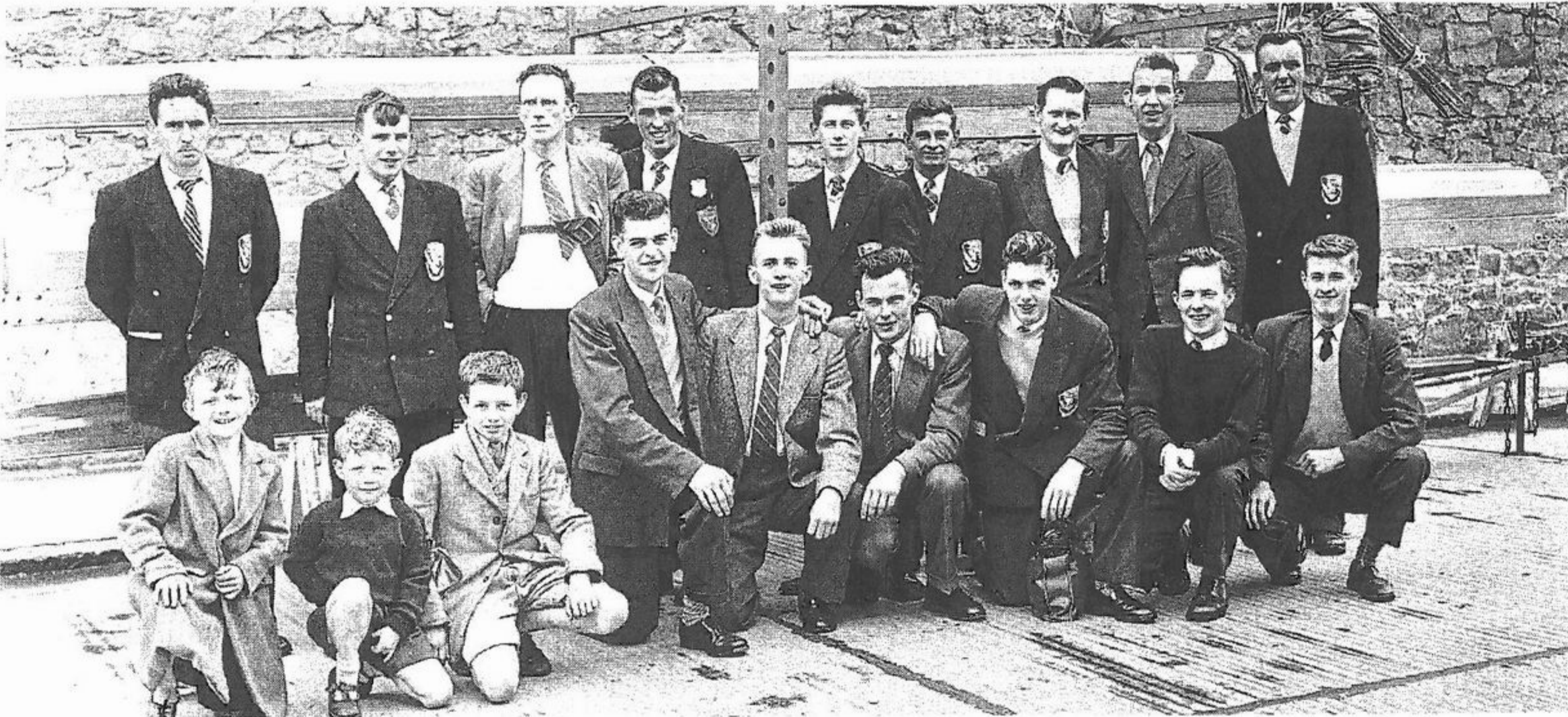
SMRC President Tom Larkin, who has just recently celebrated his second year anniversary as president of the rowing club, points out that one of the major differences at the club today, in

that "the amount of participants at St Michael's is increasing year after year".

Today, Tom says he notices that there is more ambition, more dedication, and above all, an increased drive from all members of the club to "keep the club strong, alive and growing".

"We have won an awful lot of national championships, so the expectation on ourselves is to do well and win championships. That's how we judge success," says Tom.

"At present we are providing an outlet for the young people of Limerick," says Tom, before concluding that, "now, in recent years, we have developed an ethos of being open in terms of getting people to come and try out the sport more and more."



Above: St Michael's Rowing Club members at the launch of the club's new boat, "The Ned", in 1958

Left: St. Michael's Rowing Club anniversary dinner at the Parkway, 1976. Back L-R: Paddy Treacy (SMRC Captain), unknown, (President Shannon RC), Bertie Wixted (IARU VP), Phil O'Doherty (President Limerick BC), Sean van Veen (President Athlunkard BC), Michael Johnston (Hon Sec IARU). Front: Wally Stevens (President IARU), Thady Coughlan (Mayor of Limerick), Willie Carmody (SMRC President), Minister Tom O'Donnell T.D

**MADIGAN** John (Marv), No 8 Liosdara, Broadford. October 28. Beloved son of Ann and Sean and loving brother of the late Michael. Will be sadly missed by his son, Leon, loving brothers, Gerard, James and Paul. Loved by Con, Teresa and Pa, aunts, uncles, cousins, relatives, neighbours and large circle of friends.

**LEAHY** Kathleen (Kay, née Henigan), Mayorstone, Limerick City/Listowel/Kerry/Clare. October 27 peacefully in the wonderful care of the staff at Caherass Nursing Home. Wife of the late Kevin, loving mother of Mary, Anne, Angela, Trish and Kevin and beloved sister of the late Madeline, Lauri and Michael. Deeply regretted by her children, her 11 grandchildren, sons-in-law, daughter-in-law, sisters Marie, Joan and Carmel, sisters-in-law, brother-in-law, nephews, nieces, cousins, relatives and her many friends.

**DWANE** Mary (née O'Keffee), Ballygibba South, Kilmallock.

**RYAN** Paschal, Oakland Drive, Greystones/Cork. Beloved husband of Kathleen and dearest father of Aidan, Dymna, Declan, Evelyn and Stephen. Deeply regretted by his wife, family, sons-in-law, daughters-in-law, grandchildren, sisters-in-law, brother-in-law, nephews, nieces, relatives and many friends.

**MCVEA** Trevor (Mac), Cromhill, Kiltteely. October 27. Sadly missed by his loving family, son Tony, daughters Margaret and Annie, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, sister-in-law, relatives, neighbours and friends.

**GREANEY** Bernie (née Houlihan), Kiltullane, Bruff. October 29 peacefully in the loving care of Milford Care Centre. Sadly missed by her loving husband Pat (Cyril), her loving family Kieran, Thomas, Patrick, Adele and Corina. Grandchildren Olivia, Lillian, Sophie and Darragh, brothers Tommy and Pakie, sisters Teresa and Geraldine, daughter-in-law Caroline, brothers-in-law, sisters-in-law, nieces, nephews, other relatives and friends.

**BYRNES** Ann (Nancy, née Tighe), Newtown Hill, Clarina. October 29 peacefully at home. Deeply regretted by her loving husband Peter, sons Eamonn and Patrick, daughters Esther (Murphy) and Caroline (O'Sullivan), daughters-in-law, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, brothers P.J. and Ted, nephews, nieces, extended family and friends.

**BUTLER** Sr Joanne Helene, Limerick/Elphin, Roscommon. October 29. Predeceased by her brothers and sisters Liam, Tommy and Eileen Butler (Elphin, Roscommon), Jo Tully (Slatta, Roscommon) and Teresa Keane

**MANAHAN** Celia, Main Street, Hospital.

**FINN** Edmond (Ned), Garrouse, Bruree. October 16. Predeceased by his wife Mary, his brothers Moss, Pat, Bill and Frank and his sister Breda. Greatly missed by his loving children Bill, Valerie, Marion; his grand children Liam, Sarah, Hannah and Carly; great grand children Sophia, Catarina, Matilda and Harry; in-laws: Maureen, Martyr, Sean, Kate, Andre, Andrew and Matthew and brother Sean and sister in laws Joan and Mary, nephews and nieces extended family and his many friends.

**DENNEHY** Kathleen (Kay, née McKenna), Lansdowne Gardens, Ennis Road, Limerick City/Tipperary.

**BRENNAN** Angela (née O'Connell), Garraun, Lisnagry. October 30 peacefully at The Park Nursing Home, Castletroy. Sadly missed by her loving husband Sam, daughter Bernadette, sons Mike and Simon, brother, sisters, grandchildren, great granddaughter, extended family, relatives and friends.

**WOODS** Oliver, Main Street, Hospital. October 30. Survived by brothers Jackie, Gussie. Frank and James, sisters Teresa, Pauline, Bernadette and Mary, nieces and nephews, sisters-in-law, brothers-in-law, relatives and friends.

**O'MAHONY** Clare (née O'Brien Moran), Adare/late of Fort Mary, Castleconnell. November 1 peacefully at Milford Nursing Home. Beloved wife of the late Frank (O' Mahony's Booksellers Limerick). Mourned and celebrated by her loving children Paul, Frank, Patricia, David, Deirdre and Peter, daughters-in-law Edel, Breda, Kathryn and Helga, son-in-law Phil, 19 grandchildren, 5 great grandchildren, OBMs and extended families.

**MCDERMOTT** Noel, Lanahrone Avenue, Corbally, late Mid-West Tyres. Beloved husband of Pauline and dearest father of Niall, Kieran, Conor, Gary, Katherine, Niamh and Orla. Deeply regretted by his wife, family, daughters-in-law Jan, Mary, Barbara and Deirdre, sons-in-law Yuksel, Ger & Josh, brothers Harry, Liam, Malcolm and Derry, grandchildren, other relatives and many friends.

**HICKEY** Breda (née Brennan), Millmount, Kilmallock. November 1 peacefully in the wonderful care of all at Mallow General Hospital. Survived by her daughter Catherine, Catherine's partner Adrian, sister Mary, brother Johnny, grandchildren, Leanne, Ce'ile, Callum, Éadaoin, nephews, nieces, cousins, relatives, very kind neighbours and her many friends.

We invite readers to submit obituaries of between 300 and 1000 words. Please include a jpg photograph of the deceased and e-mail to [news@limerickleader.ie](mailto:news@limerickleader.ie). Please also include your full contact details. There is no charge for inclusion.