

ST MICHAEL'S ROWING CLUB

ARCHIVE SPECIAL 15

■ St Michael's: Mayor of Limerick City and County Kieran O'Hanlon talks about his past with club

Mayor O'Hanlon remembers glory days at St Michael's

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EVERYONE enjoys seeing their picture in the paper. However, in the case of our public representatives, one would imagine that the novelty might wear off after a time. Not for Kieran O'Hanlon, the Mayor of the City and County of Limerick.

To his great surprise, the Mayor found himself looking at a picture when he was 18 in the Limerick Leader's recent archive feature on St Michael's Rowing Club. He immediately ordered a print of the photograph from our front office.

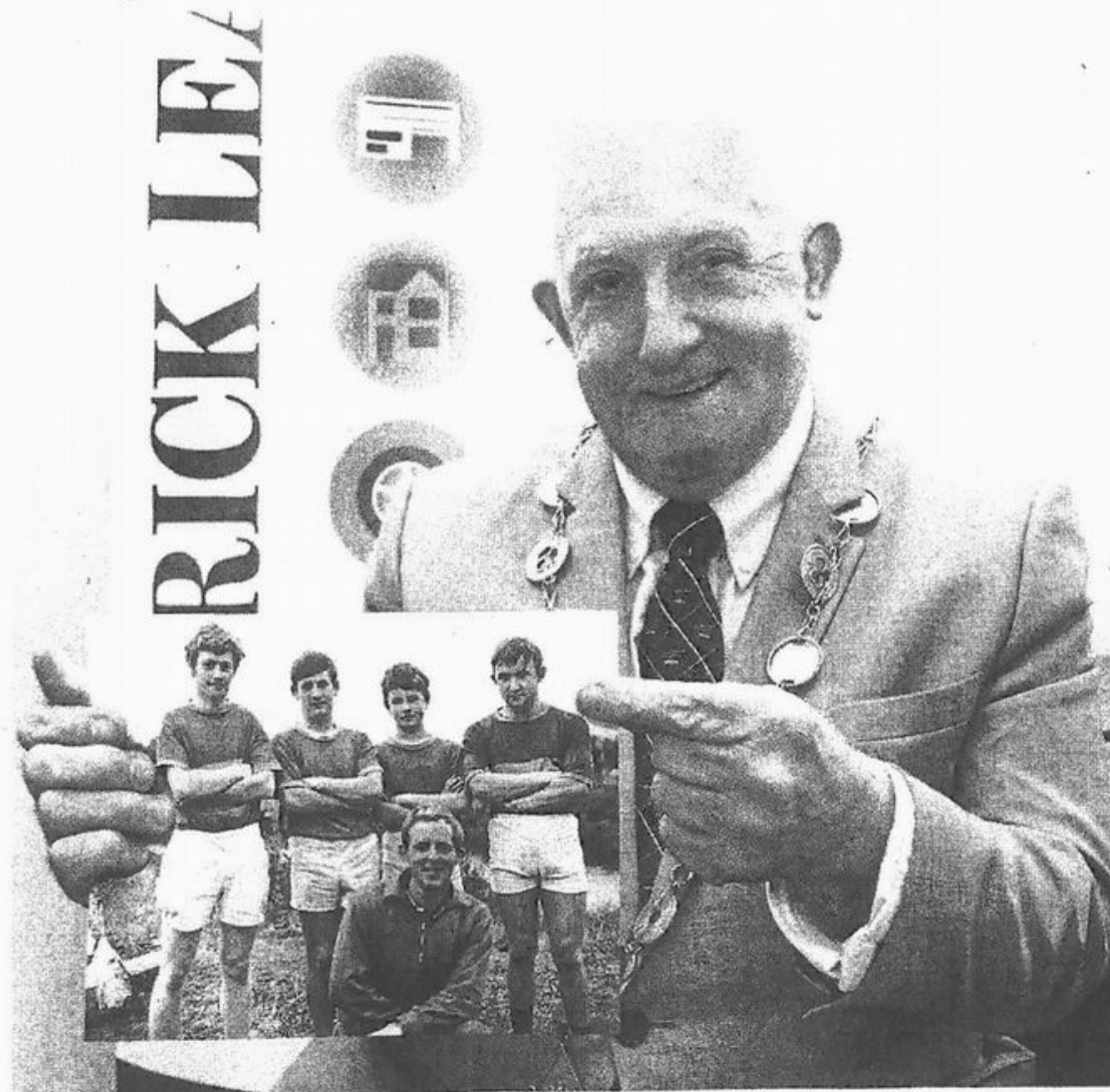
The Mayor gave us the names of "the novice four" in the photograph: (L to R) Dermot Henihan, Jackie Ryan, Frank O'Neill, Kieran O'Hanlon and Michael Moore. It was taken at the Athlunkard Festival of Rowing on the Abbey River in 1969.

The year after this picture was taken, the Mayor recalls being at the Limerick Boat Club Centenary Regatta. There was a huge rivalry between St Michael's and Limerick Boat Club.

Having been taunted by his cousin, Christy Clancy (who was rowing for Limerick Boat Club) that St Michael's were about to be hammered, the Mayor found himself making an impetuous £5 bet on the outcome.

"A fiver was a week's wages to me. I was an apprentice electrician." The threat of financial ruin seems to have helped with motivation as St Michael's were victorious.

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That's me: Mayor Kieran O'Hanlon points to a picture of himself as a member of St Michael's Rowing Club in 1969 PICTURE: ADRIAN BUTLER

much," quips Mr O'Hanlon) but they adjourned to a nearby pub where he was able to buy a round of drinks for the two crews and two coxes (18 people) and still had change going home. The trophy is

still treasured in the O'Hanlon household.

The Mayor recalls taking part in a festival in Lough Gur, where the four Limerick crews were invited to take part:

Athlunkard Rowing Club, Limerick Boat Club, Shannon Rowing Club and St. Michael's.

"It was unusual to have a rowing boat on small lake - we usually rowed on the river, a mile

or two, but Lough Gur was only ... about twenty lengths of a boat - so whoever got out in front won," said O'Hanlon.

There were two semi finals, with two crews in each, and then a final. The final was between old rivals, Limerick Boat Club and St Michael's with the young Kieran O'Hanlon on board.

Limerick Boat Club got away ahead and looked certain to win. St Michael's cox, however, had other ideas. The official version says the rudder slipped on him and they rammed Limerick Boat Club. The oars went up in the air. Mackey Tobin, the treasurer of St Michael's, nearly had a heart attack, roaring at them from the shore about the cost of oars. When the race started again, St Michael's got out in front first and won the race.

Asked how he got into rowing in the first place, the Mayor explains that it was because of an issue that arose over his rugby loyalties.

Rugby was his sport as an 11-year-old and he played with Richmond. However, when he attended St Munchin's College, there was a rule: If you went to a rugby college you couldn't play for another team. The Mayor, by his own admission, decided he wouldn't play rugby for Munchin's.

However, the school insisted that every student play a sport. Rowing was O'Hanlon's choice. The school used to use the facilities of St Michael's and that is how his association with St Michael's came about.

The Mayor still gives his support to the club today, and will attend the launch of SMRC member Kieran Kerr's history of St Michael's book, Band of Gold, on November 25.



Dermot Henihan has been involved with St Michael's Rowing Club for as 'long as he can recall'

'Friends the best prize in sport', says Henihan

CONOR LYNCH

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LIMERICKMAN Dermot Henihan, who still lives in the house in which he was born, located right beside Limerick's St Michael's Rowing Club, has been involved with the established club for as long as he can remember.

Reminiscing to the Leader about his past with his beloved St Michael's, Mr Henihan joked that he first started going to St Michael's "in a pram."

He said: "I've been involved with the club all my life. I'm not actively involved with St Michael's at the moment, but I have no memory of not being involved in rowing at the club."

"My father was involved with the club, and my two brothers too. Then I became deeply involved with

sport "in whatever way" he possibly can be for the foreseeable future, "to try to make things better", giving his honest opinion.

Whether people agree or not with him and his opinions, Dermot says, "is a different story altogether."

Dermot recalled how he coached with St Michael's as well as on an international level up until the late nineties, after he had actively participated with his local club as a star member throughout the sixties and seventies.

Henihan was a pivotal part of the club's first championship winning success in 1979, and hereafter went on to become captain and president of the club.

The current OCI Honorary Secretary General remembered how his rowing career progressed after first becoming an SMRC member in the sixties.

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"My father was involved with the club, and my two brothers too. Then I became deeply involved with the club and rowing. I think I have held every office in the club with the exception of vice president," revealed the former captain and president of the rowing club.

"I have sat in more dirty, greasy boats than anybody you can find," laughed Dermot. "I have been out in the wildest weathers and, going out on a Saturday morning in the winter when it's raining, frosty, freezing, there really is nothing like it. That drip of water in the winter is something you'll never forget."

"Have I had a good time in sport?," Dermot continues. "I've had a fantastic life in sport, but I paid a big price in a lot of ways for it because I gave my life to it, and that's not to say that it hasn't given me an awful lot back too. It continues to give me back an awful lot."

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sport "in whatever way" he possibly can be for the foreseeable future, "to try to make things better", giving his honest opinion.

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The current OCI Honorary Secretary General remembered how his rowing career progressed after first becoming an SMRC member in the sixties.

"I went on from being the snotty-nose young fella in the sixties, to administrating throughout the seventies, to getting involved with firstly the Munster branch of Irish rowing, and then the Irish Amateur Rowing Union with the international teams in the eighties."

"I then went on to manage for Ireland. I was a coach for the Irish rowing team for 12 world championships," continued Mr Henihan.

"Then in 1996, I was the team manager and general bottle-washer for the Irish rowing team at the 1996 Olympics, which was my very first Olympics."

"But do you know something," concluded a grateful Dermot, "I have the most loyal set of friends and if I got that out of sport, well then that's enough for me."

"Medals and cups come and go. They break or stagnate on a shelf, but loyal friends are your biggest prize in sport."

'Friends the best prize in sport', says Henihan

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Another gem from our archive of a group at the launch and christening of two boats at St Michael's boat club in 1975