

Leader2

Off to a flyer Munster style is ready to impress at the Galway Races >P20



No rest for talented Emma Caherdavin folk singer plans tour dates after finishing her second album >P4

Preparations are well on the way in Cappamore >P5



FEATURES	1-3
ENTERTAINMENT	4
PICTURE SPECIALS	5, 6 & 17
CLASSIFIEDS	7-14
BUSINESS	15-16
JOBS TODAY	18
FASHION	19
	20

SATURDAY, JULY 29, 2017

limerickleader

@limerick_leader

limerickleader.ie

A Shannon adventure

The recovery of old documents led **Norma Prendiville** to Tom Mangan, famous for crossing the Shannon on wheels

THE story of Tom Mangan and his daring adventure in crossing the Shannon by bicycle is the stuff of folklore. But John B Keane through his pen picture created a local hero and made it the stuff of legend: one that still lives on in Glin where Tom was born and lived all his life.

It is also a story to bring a smile to any face.

Tom, born in Cahera in 1871, was a resourceful man, and a character in his own right. At a time of hardship in the country, he had the great good fortune to be employed as a clerk by the Shannon Steamship Company which collected and distributed goods all along the Shannon Estuary from Limerick to Kilrush serving the ports along the way, including Glin.

And in the course of his work, local

“ I’m not sure whether he could or couldn’t swim but I think he got the notion from his life on the pier ”

John Prendergast, grandson of Tom Mangan

historian Tom Donovan recalls, Tom Mangan saved a man from drowning at Glin Pier after he had fallen between a boat and the pier itself.

How or why he came up with his own version of a pedal boat to cross the Shannon, is lost in the mists of history. But the story lives on that he did indeed fashion a craft by placing a bi-

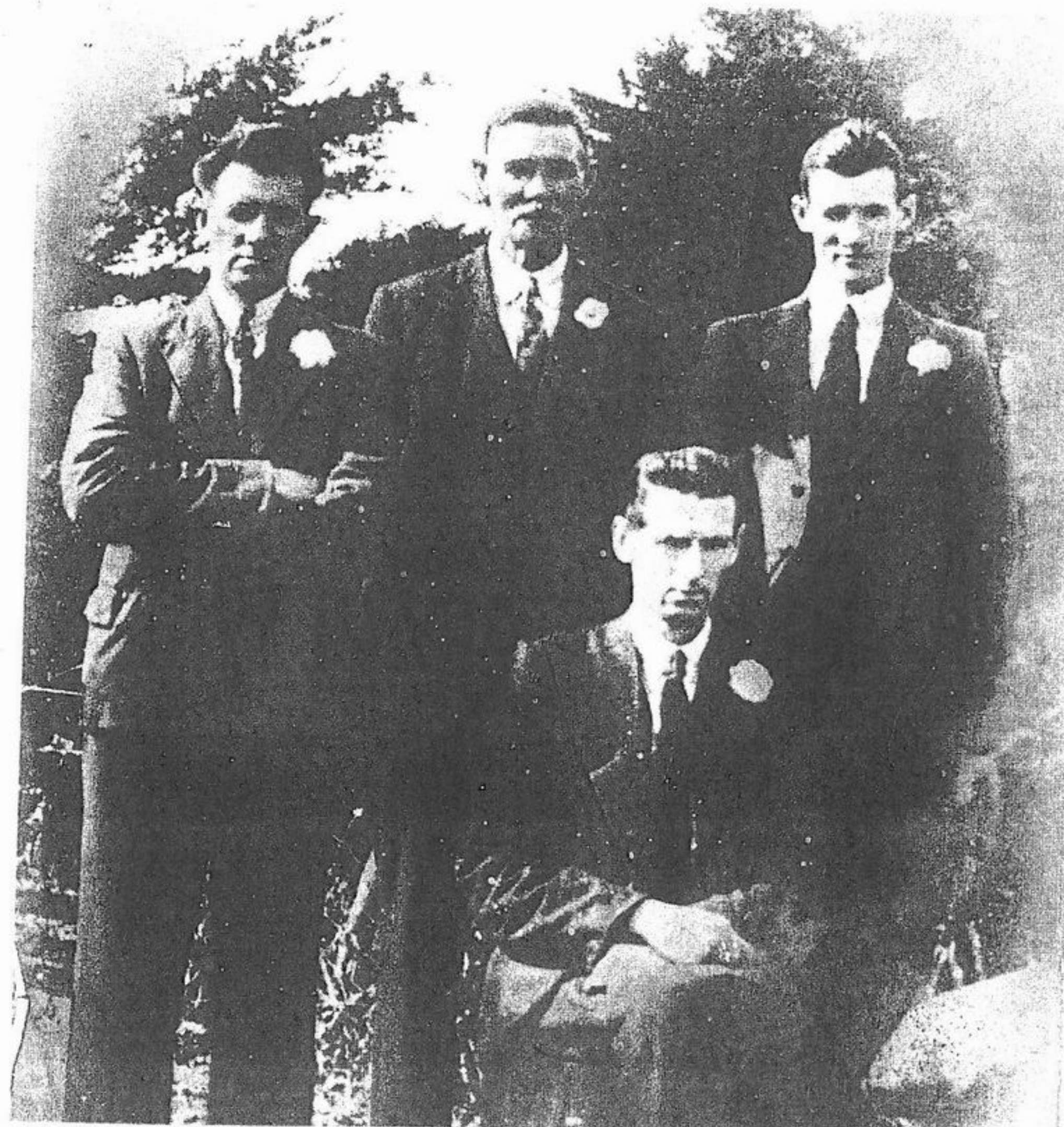
cycle on a kind of raft, with the wheels in a crevice.

And on a particular day in 1902, he pedalled across the river to Labasheeda, where he caused a huge stir and furore before the people there realised it was not some demon or monster coming over the water but a man.

Tom’s grandson, John Prendergast, this week recalled what had been handed down to him through the family.

“They described him as wild,” he laughed. “I’m not sure whether he could or couldn’t swim but I think he got the notion from his life on the pier and said to himself, ‘some way I am going to do it.’ He had a bike. He built

CONTINUES ON PAGE 2



A family picture shows Tom Mangan, back row centre, with his sons David, left, and John in the back row with another son Phil seated

Shannon crossing on wheels

CONTINUES FROM PAGE 1

the frame himself. He did a trial run from Glin Pier about a mile back. And on the day he set out for Labasheeda."

What happened there was recounted in high dramatic terms

by John B Keane some 70 years later in his Limerick Leader column of August 14, 1971. (See right) By then, Tom was dead but John B, a regular visitor to Glin, was charmed by his story and more

or less put it up to the local carnival committee that they should emulate Tom's feat as a crowd puller for their next carnival.

The challenge was taken up. "The idea was too good to miss," Tom O'Donovan explained. What happened then was that local man, Kevin Reidy, a man familiar with both the Limerick and Clare shores, designed a specially adapted bicycle-boat and the late Bill (Billeen) Culhane volunteered to cycle it.

"I remember it," Eoghan

“ He had a bike. He built the frame himself. He did a trial run from Glin Pier about a mile

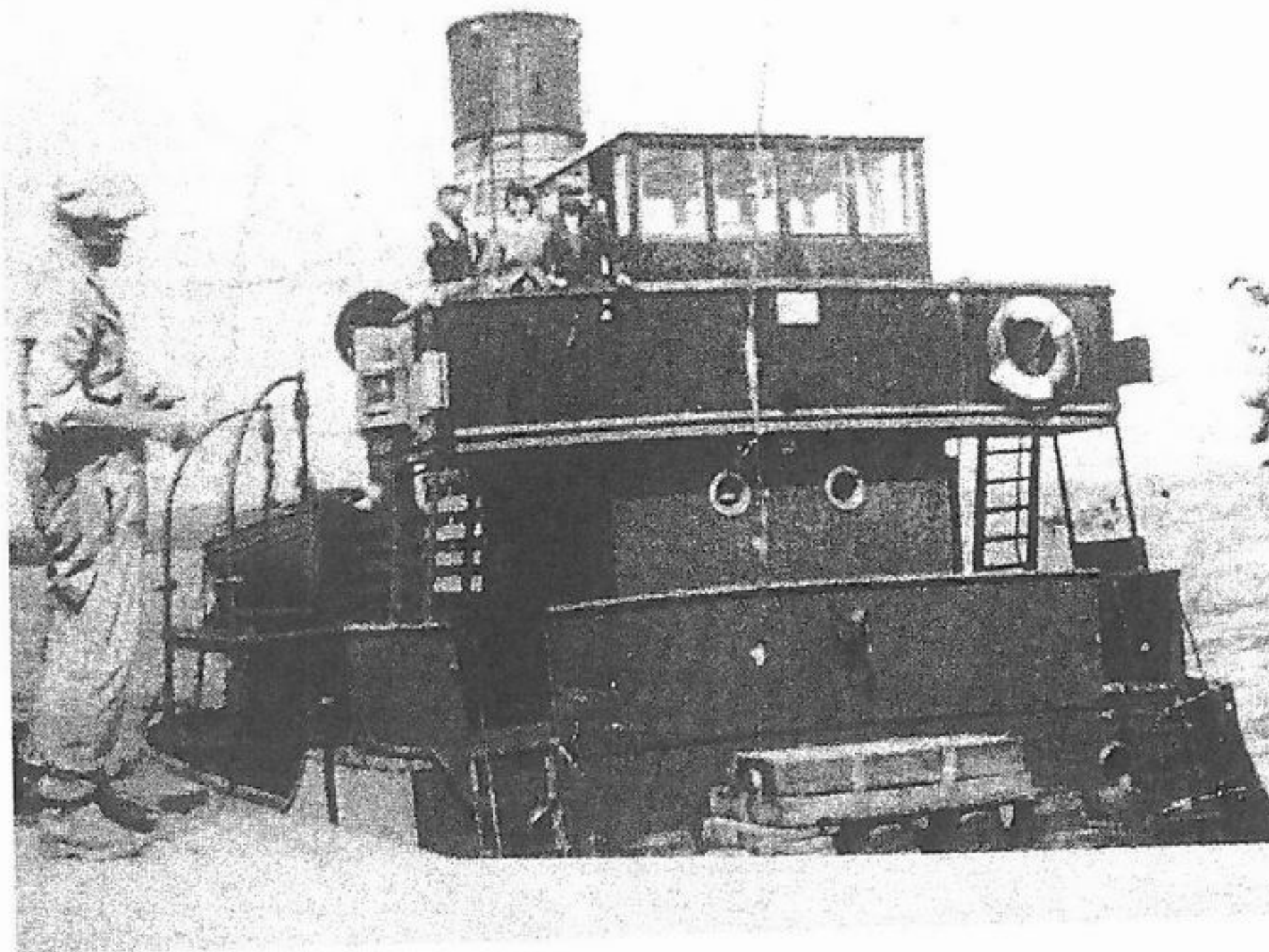
John Prendergast, grandson of Tom Mangan

Ryan, a member of Glin Historical Society recalled this week. He was a very young boy at the time, he said, and the idea had been to re-enact Tom Mangan's feat. "But in reality, they launched it at the pier," he continued. People were waiting at the old quay at the bottom of the

village. "Suddenly this thing appeared around Knocknaranna point." Billeen Big Mick Culhane was pedalling like mad. "He had a tough time coming around the point."

Ken Reidy, son of Kevin, was just a baby when his dad took up John B's challenge. Kevin, who is still alive and living in Glin, was a fitter by training and had his own engineering business in the town.

He has no memory of the re-enactment but does remember that his dad's pedal-craft was pushed all the way from Dublin to Shannon sometime in the 1980s where it went on display at Shannon Airport. It was, he said, a fund-raiser for some local Shannon cause.



The Cantona, one of the ships owned by the Shannon Steamship Company

Adding to history of Glin and Shannon

NORMA PRENDIVILLE

E: normap@limerickleader.ie

TOM Mangan's name lives on in Glin for his derring-do on his bicycle-boat. But now, almost 70 years after his death in 1949, Tom has left yet another legacy to his hometown and home county.

Earlier this year, the couple who are now the new owners of Tom's home in Cahera, were undertaking renovations. In the course of the work, the new owners, Maurice and Allison Hurley found a bundle of pa-



Quinn Ryan, Dolores McNamara, Francis Walsh, Des Sweeney, Mary Hogan, John A Cullane, Joseph Costello, Ned Dore, Shayne Mangan, and



Billeen Culhane on Kevin Reidy's reconstruction of Tom Mangan's cycle boat

A dramatic tale of adventure and derring-do



How John B Keane created a folk hero of Tom Mangan

ANYTIME I hear of a crossing of the Shannon, either by boat or by swimming I am reminded of the strangest crossing of all. It was made by the late Tom Mangan of Glin. Tom was the father of the famous Banger Mangan, who last year was elected Mayor of Glin. Tom Mangan's crossing of Ireland's longest river is unique. He went by bicycle. Laugh if you will, but it is a well known fact from Labasheeda to Kilbaha and from Ballylongford to Glin.

The time was 1902, and the place was the pier of Glin. It was a warm Sunday afternoon in July and a fairly large crowd, including many of the local clergy and gentry, as they were called, were gathered at the pier. Tom had converted his bicycle so that it was astride two flat boards, one under each wheel. The wheel touched the water through the crevice in each of the boards.

With loud cheers ringing in his ears, Tom Mangan headed for Labasheeda, on the coast of Clare. In Glin the watchers on the pier prayed for his safe passage, and went their separate ways when Tom faded from view in the July haze. Some went to the church and others lighted a bonfire, hoping that it would be seen by the good folk of Labasheeda and maybe alert them to Tom's crossing.

But let us move away from Glin and take a look at Labasheeda, where Tom was bound. In the local sportsfield a sports meeting was in progress. It was the biggest event of its kind ever held at Labasheeda. Athletes from all over the country were competing and a large force of the R.I.C. was also present in case of trouble. Not many eyes were turned towards the Shannon, where a great drama was reaching its pulsating climax.

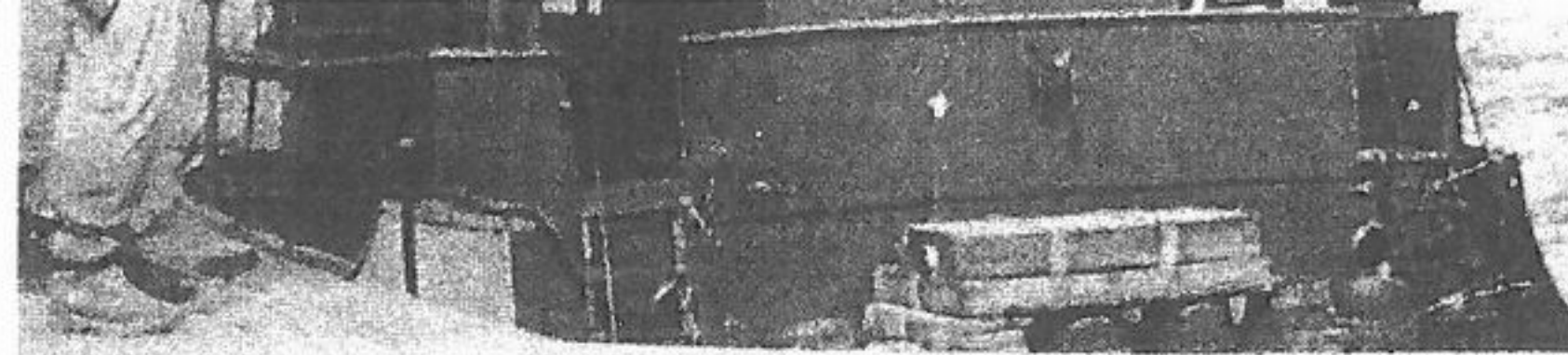
should emulate Tom's feat as a crowd puller for their next carnival.

The challenge was taken up. "The idea was too good to miss," Tom O'Donovan explained. What happened then was that local man, Kevin Reidy, a man familiar with both the Limerick and Clare shores, designed a specially adapted bicycle-boat and the late Bill (Billeen) Culhane volunteered to cycle it.

"I remember it," Eoghan

John B's challenge. Kevin, who is still alive and living in Glin, was a fitter by training and had his own engineering business in the town.

He has no memory of the re-enactment but does remember that his dad's pedal-craft was pushed all the way from Dublin to Shannon sometime in the 1980s where it went on display at Shannon Airport. It was, he said, a fund-raiser for some local Shannon cause.



The Cantona, one of the ships owned by the Shannon Steamship Company

of adventure and derring-do



How John B Keane created a folk hero of Tom Mangan

ANYTIME I hear of a crossing of the Shannon, either by boat or by swimming I am reminded of the strangest crossing of all. It was made by the late Tom Mangan of Glin. Tom was the father of the famous Banger Mangan, who last year was elected Mayor of Glin. Tom Mangan's crossing of Ireland's longest river is unique. He went by bicycle. Laugh if you will, but it is a well known fact from Labasheeda to Kilbaha and from Ballylongford to Glin.

The time was 1902, and the place was the pier of Glin. It was a warm Sunday afternoon in July and a fairly large crowd, including many of the local clergy and gentry, as they were called, were gathered at the pier. Tom had converted his bicycle so that it was astride two flat boards, one under each wheel. The wheel touched the water through the crevice in each of the boards.

With loud cheers ringing in his ears, Tom Mangan headed for Labasheeda, on the coast of Clare. In Glin the watchers on the pier prayed for his safe passage, and went their separate ways when Tom faded from view in the July haze. Some went to the church and others lit a bonfire, hoping that it would be seen by the good folk of Labasheeda and maybe alert them to Tom's crossing.

But let us move away from Glin and take a look at Labasheeda, where Tom was bound. In the local sportsfield a sports meeting was in progress. It was the biggest event of its kind ever held at Labasheeda. Athletes from all over the country were competing and a large force of the R.I.C. was also present in case of trouble. Not many eyes were turned towards the Shannon, where a great drama was reaching its pulsating climax.

Sea Demon

Suddenly a woman screamed and fainted. She fell with a finger pointing towards the great river. Other women screamed when they saw the strange object approaching from the sea. Men took off their caps and crossed themselves. Others knelt and prayed thinking it was some demon of the sea coming to devour them. "What is it?" people called to each other, while men with guilty consciences silently begged forgiveness for past sins.

The R.I.C. quickly lined the shore, and with grim faces awaited the monster's arrival. Then somebody giggled. The giggle turned to laughter. "It's Tom Mangan from Glin" a girl's voice called. "Praise be to God" said an old woman and "praise be to Tom Mangan".

Soon his name was on everybody's lips, and people started to applaud. When he staggered ashore covered in a lather of sweat and almost exhausted the local crowd cheered him. A brandy bottle was pressed to his lips. He recovered somewhat, and as soon as he did a sergeant of the R.I.C. approached him. Already the sergeant, thinking it might be an uprising had sent for reinforcements to Killaloe. He was somewhat annoyed by the wrong estimation of the situation.

Tom escapes

"I am arresting you in the name of the law" he said to Tom Mangan. In that time Tom was a young man, no more than a boy and possessed of great strength. "For what" said he "are you arresting me?" "Yes," the Clare people asked, "for what?" "For disorderly conduct" said the sergeant. "There's no-one going to arrest me" said Tom Mangan. He knocked the sergeant aside and dashed for his craft. Very soon he was aboard and cycling for all his worth in the general direction of Glin. Behind him he could hear the people of Clare shouting encouragement. What a wonderful thing it would be if the event could be commemorated during a Glin carnival. It could easily be done and there might also be a race of original craft from Labasheeda to Glin.

Festival and carnival committees are always on the look out for new ideas. Here is one which just cannot miss.

John B Keane's original article appeared in the Limerick Leader on August 14, 1971

Adding to history of Glin and Shannon

NORMA PRENDIVILLE

E: normap@limerickleader.ie

TOM Mangan's name lives on in Glin for his derring-do on his bicycle-boat. But now, almost 70 years after his death in 1949, Tom has left yet another legacy to his hometown and home county.

Earlier this year, the couple who are now the new owners of Tom's home in Cahera, were undertaking renovations. In the course of the work, the new owners, Maurice and Allison Hurley found a bundle of papers near an old fireplace.

Fortunately, says historian Tom Donovan, "they were alert enough to check the written entries on the papers and knew they were of some antiquity." It is thought they were stored safely in an alcove near the fireplace to prevent dampness.

Tom's grandson, John Prendergast was contacted and he, recognising the potential historical significance of the find, got in touch with Glin Historical Society. The papers were very quickly identified as manifests for the Shannon Steamship Company, for which Tom was the Glin agent.

"The records are for the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries including the First World War," Tom Donovan explains. "During this period most heavy goods were conveyed on water, as it was the quickest and most convenient means of transport. The main trade was carried on by the Shannon Steamship Company Ltd which operated a cargo service between Kilrush and Limerick and also served other ports on the lower Shannon including Glin."

"The firm which was based in Kilrush was run by the Glynn family and there was an agent at each port. Tom Mangan was the agent for the company in Glin. His duties included the re-



Owen Ryan, Dolores McNamara, Francis Walsh, Des Sweeney, Mary Hogan, John A Cullane, Joseph Costello, Ned Dore, Shayne Mangan, and John Prendergast PICTURE: MICHAEL COWHEY



The house where the documents were found



Maurice and Alison Hurley, with Isobel and Emily, also in picture is John Prendergast



Some of the old papers found

cording of all the cargoes landed at Glin Pier on manifests, which were large headed sheets. The manifests documented the names of all the customers who received goods after they were landed, including Glin Industrial School and various traders in the vicinity of Glin and neighbouring towns and villages."

Among the goods coming in to Glin, fellow local historian Eoghan Ryan explains, include porter and whiskey. Walkers whiskey from Limerick was bonded locally. "In pubs in Glin, they would break open the kegs and they would blend it themselves," he adds. The documents show goods coming from shops like Spaight's, Newsomes

and Boyds in Limerick, goods which included tea, sugar, raisins, soap as well as bedsteads and hardware items. The shops to which they went were also named: Culhanes, Conways, Geoghegans, Stacks, Normiles. In effect, Eoghan explains, what you had was 'just-in-time' shopping.

"It was like Amazon, only not by drone but by ship, twice a week," he says.

Goods going out from Glin included turf and until after the turn of the century, salmon and local oysters.

"Glin was a free pier," Mr Ryan adds. "There was no fee for landing. In other places you had to pay so much per ton." The pier, which dates from the 1876,

had sheds for goods, he explains, though they were all, bar one, knocked in the 1960s. Trading through the pier, he says, finished up in the 1950s.

For him, the importance of the documents is that they cast a light on everyday life at the time. "The most interesting thing for me is that it covers the years of the Civil War when the roads were up," he says.

"This is a real treasure trove of historic material and is a wonderful addition to the story of the River Shannon and is an inventory of the cargoes carried by boats that plied between Glin and other ports," says Bernard Stack, another member of Glin Historical Society says.

"Sadly a lot of similar records

have ended up in skips when their significance has gone unnoticed. John and the Hurleys have done a great service in donating these records and I hope it will encourage others to do likewise."

Mr Stack and others however had recognised that the material consisting of up to 300 brittle pages needed to be preserved and, following a meeting with Jacqui Hayes, archivist for Limerick City and County, John Prendergast donated them to Limerick Archives where they will be photographed and correctly preserved. Tom Mangan's painstaking work, along with his derring-do, will now be preserved for future generations and for future historians.