

HURLING LIMERICK SENIOR AND INTERMEDIATE CHAMPIONSHIP PREVIEW

MOMENT IN TIME GLORY FOR SOUTH LIBERTIES, 1972

South Liberties celebrate

This year marks the 40th anniversary of South Liberties' first Limerick senior title since the 1890s.

Jerome O'Connell looks back on their famous 1972 success

ON October 1 1967 South Liberties looked destined to end a 76 year wait for their fourth county senior hurling title.

They have beaten Ahane in the semi-final and were leading Kilmallock as the county final in the Gaelic Grounds entered the final minute.

Up stepped Bernie Savage with a last gasp goal to snatch a draw for The Balbec, 3-3 to 0-12.

Two weeks later, Liberties were easily beaten 4-7 to 1-7.

Four years later the green and gold hoops again suffered county final heartbreak when an avalanche of Cloughaun goals saw them earn a 6-6 to 2-13 victory.

So by the time Eamonn Grimes lifted the Daly Cup on December 10 1972 the wait had stretched to 82 years for South Liberties, who were previously county champions in 1890.

In 1972, the club was led by none other than a 20-something year-old chairman by the name of JP McManus. The team was managed/trained by Harry Greensmyth and Willie O'Connell. It was one of those years when everything finally came right for Liberties after years of near misses.

The previous year they had conceded six goals in the county final but there was a change of personnel for 1972.

"I was inside in the Gaelic Grounds and Limerick were playing Galway in a challenge game before the championship and they were stuck for a goalkeeper. Mike Landon was a Liberties man and he was there. He had never played in goals and wasn't really getting on our team but he stood into goals and nothing could get past him," recalled Harry Greensmyth.

Landon assumed the No 1 shirt with Liberties and to his

testament the county final scoreline was 4-8 to 1-5.

Another change from the previous year was the arrival of Offaly native Joe McKenna.

"When I came to Limerick in 1970 I was working in Denis Coakley's Ltd on the Dock Road and Joe Grimes was there as well and I got to know some of the South Liberties lads and went out training with them because I couldn't get back to Offaly during the week. In 1972 I started to play with them when I left my own club Shinrone and then in '73 I started with Limerick," recalled Joe McKenna.

"Liberties had been beaten in the final of '71 by Cloughaun but it was still a huge task to get back to the final in '72."

He continued: "It had really taken over lives to win the championship. We had a great team but everything just happened to click that year".

More titles followed in 1974, 1976 and 1981.

"We should have won the Munster club in '81. We played Mount Sion and were up eight points early on but they came back," recalled McKenna, who was centre forward on the 1972 team and at the edge of the square by 1981.

Although new to the area, McKenna can recall the impressive community spirit surrounding the club in their break-through year.

"We had no dressing rooms are

"It was all about hurling for us. We had no transport and no money. When we came home from school or work it was up to Moloney's field for the evening."

anything like that but after every training Bill O'Connor the local publican would arrive down in the van and with the ladies of the club there would be soup and sandwiches for us," recalled McKenna.

Team captain was Eamonn Grimes.

"There was no ham," he joked. "It was maybe two loaves of bread buttered and with jam - no club had anything like that at the time. We thought we were in heaven," recalled Grimes.

"But there was no dressing room - all we had were the bushes and there was a still stream there. If you got dirty you had no other choice but to go down to the stream, although we often came out of it dirtier than we went in!" he recalled of their club grounds which was rented in the townland of Lickadoon, close to Knockea Church.

He added: "But its that kind of spirit that was great. I had brothers Mike, Lar, Joe and John played a bit as well. There were the Hartigan's and the Shanahan's".

While McKenna was a newcomer to the club for the '72 success, Grimes was one of those labouring for



the previous decade.

"You can go back and we were in eastern finals in '64, '65 and '66 and were beaten by Boher and then in '66 we went up senior and were beaten by Kilmallock in the final," recalled Grimes.

County final heartbreak was Grimes' lot in 1971 when he recalled Andy Dunworth scoring two goals from penalties for Cloughaun.

Finally the winning feeling came his way in 1972.

"We were a strong team - if you look at the players we had up the middle I was the smallest of them! It was all about hurling for us. We had nothing else. We had no transport and no

"Conditions were atrocious for hurling. If I remember right we changed our jerseys at half time. They had to be borrowed because no one had two sets of jerseys."

money. When we came home from school or work it was up to Moloney's field for the evening. Sur if you had a good hurley, you would hardly bring it to training incase you would break it!"

It might be 40 years on but the county final day is still a vivid memory.

"That was a very good Patrickswell team," recalled McKenna.

"I was marking Tony O'Brien and they had all the Bennis', Leonard Enright and Sean Foley. We had some great battles with them that time - there was a great rivalry between us at the time," outlined McKenna.

Grimes said that both clubs benefited from the role of the Christian Brothers.

"It all started back about 10 years before that. Cloughaun, South Liberties and Patrickswell all had players from the Christian brothers and out in Doon it was the same."

Grimes recalls that the October afternoon brought hail stones with driving wind and rain.

"It was a terrible day. Conditions were atrocious for hurling. If I remember right we changed our jerseys at half time. They had to be borrowed because no one had two sets of jerseys that time," he said.

After being denied in previous years, the Ballyneety based club was not to be denied this time round and they had 12-points to spare at the full time whistle.

Limerick County Board chairman Rory Kiely was on hand to present the Daly Cup to Eamonn Grimes after the victory and there was only on destination after a quick change out of their rain sodden gear.

"John Joe O'Dea up in Mulgrave Street was the first port of call for us. It was a terrible cold day and he had a big pot of spare ribs ready for us," recalled Grimes.

The county championship victory meant that the honour of captaining the Limerick senior team the following year fell to Grimes.

"It was the start of something great alright," he said of lifting the Liam McCarthy Cup within 12 months of captaining Liberties to the fourth of their seven Limerick championship titles.

SOUTH LIBERTIES - Mike Landon; Joe Grimes, Pat Hartigan, Seamus Butler; Mike Grimes, Walter Shanahan, Mikey Butler; Tom Ryan, Eamonn Grimes; Larry Grimes, Joe McKenna, Michael Shanahan; Eamonn Dooley, Denis O'Sullivan, Walter O'Donoghue.

PATRICKSWELL - Jimmy Shields; PJ O'Grady, Tim Quaid, Billy Nolan; Phil Bennis, Tony O'Brien Thomas Bennis; Richie Bennis, Leonard Enright; Frankie Nolan, Sean Foley, Liam Foley; Christy Jeffers, Liam Mann, Peter Bennis.



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as their famine ends



Happiness is: South Liberties (main picture) celebrate their Limerick SHC final win over Patrickswell in 1972. It was their first championship since 1890 - circled is a young JP McManus, chairman of the club. Below - captain Eamon Grimes receives the trophy from Limerick GAA chairman Rory Kiely. Opposite page - Grimes in action

Pictures: Limerick Leader Archive



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- 33/1.....Croom, Bruree
- 40/1.....South Liberties
- 50/1.....Knockainey, Granagh/Ballingarry
- 66/1...Hospital/Herbertstown, Garryspillane, Effin

Best of Luck to all Clubs in the Senior and Intermediate Hurling Championships

