

Hurling stars of '73 relive the magic of Croke Park 40 years after famous win

Read all about it: how the Leader covered the win

■ Hartigan and Cregan share special memories of Limerick's cherished victory

AINÉ FITZGERALD

FORTY years after Limerick claimed their last senior All-Ireland hurling final title, Pat Hartigan can still distinctly remember the pair of socks he wore on that famous day in 1973.

At the last training session before the big day, the Limerick team were presented with a set of socks - white with two green hoops on the top.

Speaking only hours after millions of euro exchanged hands as transfer deadline day came to a close for European soccer clubs, Pat recalled this week how big a deal it was back then for he and his hurling teammates to be presented with a simple pair of socks.

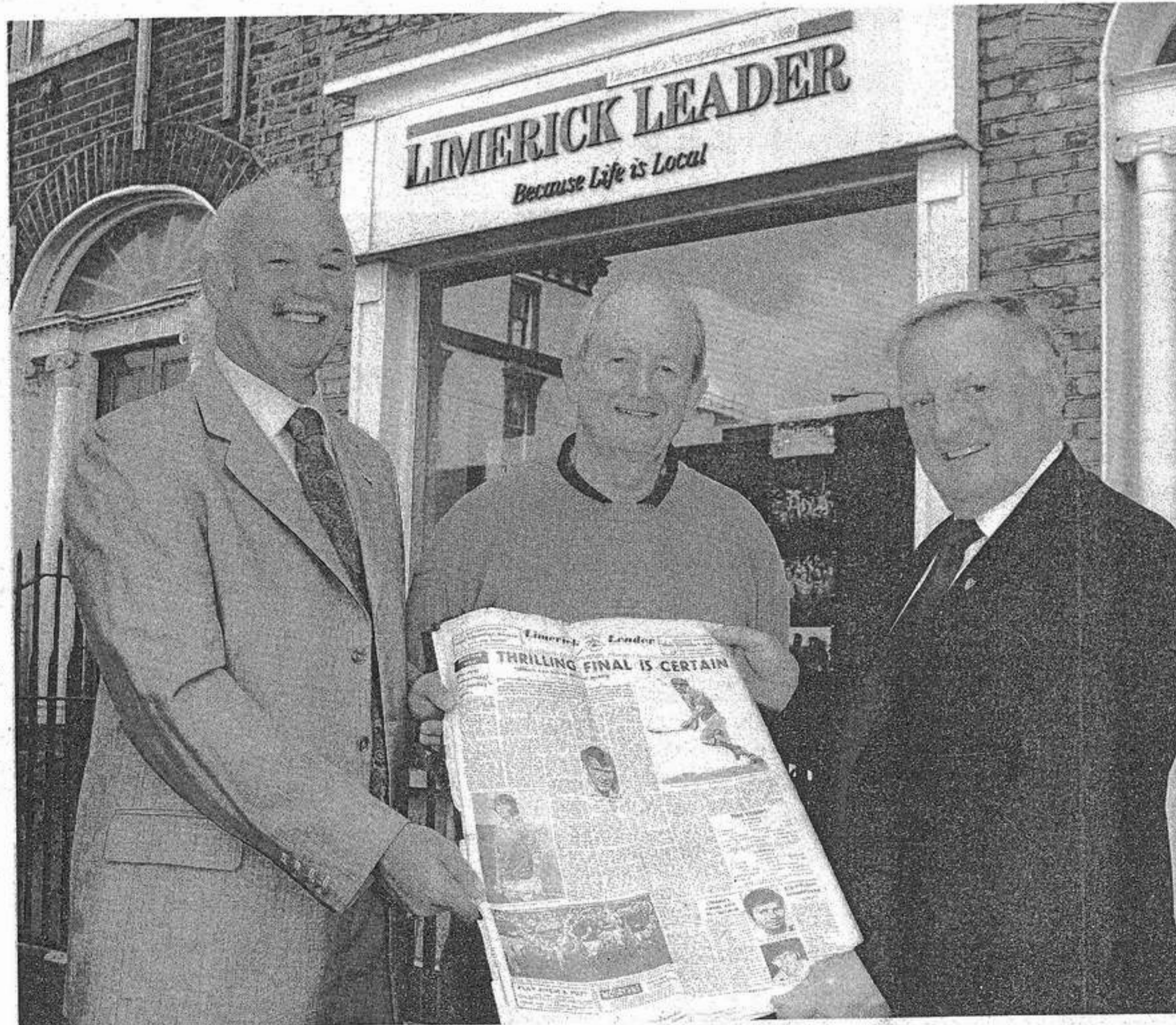
"These socks were very unique," he enthuses. "We got them on the last night of training so we could try them on."

Limerick team photographs taken on the day show all the players with the socks pulled up to their knees. "They were so nice you didn't want to have them down around your ankles. I generally wore them around my ankles but these socks looked so modern we said we might as well maximise them."

At that time, the players had only one jersey each. The All-Ireland final on September 2, 1973 was a very wet day but Pat doesn't recall the players changing their jerseys at half-time. "We went out in the same wet jerseys in the second half, from my recollections."

The South Liberties man was quite young at the time, just turned 23. It was his first time in Croke Park for an All-Ireland final.

"Once you left the hotel you said to yourself, 'When I get back again, there is going to be



Limerick GAA legends Pat Hartigan, Eamonn Cregan, and Eamon Grimes outside the Limerick Leader office this week with a copy of the paper from the week leading up to the 1973 All-Ireland hurling final. The Leader was one of very few to predict a victory for the green and white! Picture Michael Cowhey



Celebration time: Front pages from our Monday edition, top, and the weekend Leader following Limerick's triumph 40 years ago this week

Support the hurlers!

Recent correspondents to the Letters to the Editor page of the Leader have complained of too much coverage of the Limerick hurlers. Forty years ago, a letter published on the eve of the 1973 final made a very different point ...

Sir,

Now that Limerick hurlers are in the All-Ireland and have bridged a gap of 33 years, I think it only right that everyone should get behind them. I was disappointed to see that the County Board had to make an appeal for funds. There should be no need to. Firms and other big businesses should come to their aid and help by their contribution to have our team at top form for Sunday.

Maybe some garages could do their bit by supplying car stickers and flags, etc. Let's not allow the occasion to slip by and let no-one be able to say that "we let down the team".

Finally, it is a pity that we haven't some short rallying song that we could sing in Croke Park. I feel that it often helps to lift a team. However, if no-one comes up with a suitable one soon, then at least we can all take part in the chant, 'Limerick, Limerick' that was so nice to hear at Thurles.

I know very well that the Limerick Leader will do more than its share to make this an extra big occasion.

Thanking you, Mr Editor.

S HENNESSY
PATRICKSWELL

...and the standards were so high." Limerick and had a garage in Dunne was chairing it" Pat the day. Tom Boland was a good

in Croke Park for an All-Ireland final.

"Once you left the hotel you said to yourself, 'When I get back again, there is going to be widespread changes'."

He remembers travelling down Jones Road, pulling into Croke Park and seeing the huge crowd gathered over on the Cusack Stand.

"The mass of people there was something extraordinary," he recalls. "We had witnessed big crowds in Munster but the stadiums in Munster in those days were very open. It was a claustrophobic feel you got when you looked into Croke Park."

Running out onto the pitch with the roar of the crowd, "you felt everybody was in on top of you."

For teammate Eamonn Cregan, the experience was a little different. "I had gone to the bathroom and the team had gone out. The roar was over. I missed it. I missed the famous roar," he smiles.

The whole Croke Park setting, Pat says, was very different to what the players were used to. "We were used to balls coming through the blue sky but in Croke Park you were seeing them coming out from the faces in the

crowd, the stands were so high."

He remembers their opponents, Kilkenny, as being a "very strong, powerful team." "I cannot let this opportunity go without paying tribute to Pat Delaney, who captained Kilkenny that day. He died in recent weeks. He was a real warrior," he adds.

Once the final whistle went,

"The roar was over. I missed it. I missed the famous roar"

Eamonn Cregan

One of the stars of the '73 team

people were coming from all sides of the pitch to shoulder the players. Pat was trying to get up into the stand to meet the players for the presentation and he remembers looking down at a very loyal Limerick supporter by the name of Jim Keogh.

"Jim Keogh hurled with

Limerick and had a garage in Lower Gerald Griffin Street. You are talking about a powerfully strong man with tears rolling down his face. To this day, Jim Keogh's face, crying in front of the stand, is very much in my mind."

For Eamonn Cregan, his abiding memory is of Eamon Grimes receiving the cup. "It was something we had all been dreaming about for years, going back to secondary school. There was nothing like it."

While the dressing room was strictly for players and management in those days, the South Liberties boys managed to sneak in one of their own. "We spotted JP [McManus] and we got him in the window and rightly so," says Pat. "He was chairman of South Liberties and he was the man who single-handedly, in my opinion, put South Liberties in the right direction. He was ahead of his time when it came to South Liberties and Limerick."

After the game, Pat was asked by RTE to do an interview for Sunday Sport which would air after the evening news. "Mick

Dunne was chairing it," Pat recalls. "At that time, RTE didn't make arrangements for you to be collected from the hotel. At about 8pm that night I said, 'I have to go to RTE' but I couldn't get out of the hotel because they couldn't open the doors to let me out - the crowd outside was so big and trying to get in. I had

"You're talking about a strong man with tears down his face"

Pat Hartigan

Limerick full-back in 1973

to go out a fire exit, got a bus into the city and got a taxi outside to Montrose."

When he returned to the hotel, there were thousands gathered outside. The team were unwinding inside.

"Everyone was sitting down because of the exhaustion of

the day. Tom Boland was a good pianist. We went into a room where there was a piano and we sang 'til the early hours."

The homecoming on Monday night was "phenomenal". Pat recalls the scene coming in the Dublin Road. "Once you got to the top of the hill you could see a mass of people all the way into Limerick."

"Jed O'Dwyer's father [John] of the Hurlers Pub was out on the road with a bonfire, and my God it was fairly blazing for us."

From Castleconnell into Limerick city, the bus, Eamonn Cregan recalls, travelled at a snail's pace. "We passed our house on the way in on the Dublin Road. My father [Ned] had just died the year before but my mother was there, Hannie. It was significant," he says.

While each player has their own cherished individual memories of '73, there is also the shared pride, and sense of achievement.

"There is always a bond there," says Eamonn. "It will always be there, no matter what happens."

than its snare to make this an extra big occasion.
Thanking you, Mr Editor.
S HENNESSY
PATRICKSWELL



Mayor Mick Lipper manning the train to Dublin. That was no gimmick either, train engineer was the Labour man's day job

Captain Grimes recalls fond memories of that glorious day

AINE FITZGERALD

THE eyes of the country were on Eamon Grimes as he lifted the Liam McCarthy Cup aloft, but only hours earlier the Limerick captain had been on the missing list!

As the team bus pulled out from the Crofton Airport Hotel on September 2, 1973, headed for Croke Park, the star midfielder was asleep in his bed.

"We went to Mass and had our breakfast. As you can imagine, we were up early that morning so we went for a bit of a rest," says the South Liberties man.

"The next thing, the bus was gone and somebody discovered I wasn't on it so they had to come back. They hadn't gone too far."

Forty years to the week later, Eamon has many fond memories of that sacred day. What first springs to mind is the lead up to the game - the excitement, the anticipation, the hype.

"We hadn't won it for 33 years prior to that and we hadn't been in a final for 33 years," he recalls.

"The communication cord wasn't as great then as it is now. You had the Limerick Leader - that was the only paper really at the time that would be doing anything major. Now, you have the television and radio, you have coverage from all angles. There was nothing like that



These boots were made for hurling! Eamon Grimes, Limerick captain, receiving a presentation of Adidas boots on behalf of the team from Pieterse O'Farrell, Limerick Sports Store, and Michael O'Connell, Three Stripe International. Inset: Eamon on his way up to collect the Liam McCarthy Cup

when we were there. Everything that was spoken about was what was written in the paper. The Leader was the bible."

On the day prior to the game, the first day of September, the players took the train from Limerick to Dublin.

In the cab was none other than the mayor of Limerick at the time, Mick Lipper. "He drove us up and back," Eamon recalls.

On the night before the game, the players headed into town for a walkabout. It was tradition at the time that the All-Ireland

final trophies would be displayed in the window of Clerys department store on O'Connell Street, the night before the hurling and football deciders. As Eamon peered through the glass, he could only hope that the Liam McCarthy cup would be between

his palms the following night.

Memories of the big day itself, are vivid. The dressing room, Eamon recalls, was fairly basic - "but way ahead of anything we ever had anywhere else."

"There was a swimming pool in between the two dressing

rooms at that time." Running out onto the pitch is something he will never forget. It was a wet day and the players had to wait 10 minutes for the president at the time, Erskine Childers, to arrive.

Once the game started, it was all about the hurling. Hype, build-up and speculation counted for nothing.

"The people were waiting, starved hungry for success"

Eamon Grimes

Limerick's captain in 1973

"Once you get a ball and hit that ball, that's all gone. You would nearly have commissioned your mind to concentrate."

When the final whistle was blown, a 33-year weight was lifted.

"It's the very same as though we had been walking through smoke and all of a sudden a wind blew, took it away and there was clear day light again," Eamon recalls.

He remembers too the faces of the supporters, smudged and lined with green and white dye

from their dripping-wet paper hats.

The lifting of the cup was, he says, "monumental". "The people were waiting, they were starved hungry for success. My dad, [Edward], God rest his soul, was quite near."

He can remember the walk from the Hogan Stand across to the Cusack where the dressing rooms were located. "That was a back slapping situation," he smiles.

Inside the dressing room the players reflected on what had just happened. JP McManus joined them for the celebrations. "We got JP into the dressing room, through the window."

The return home to Limerick was "beautiful". The team's first stop was Castleconnell where Eamon had the privilege of meeting the one and only Mick Mackey. "He presented me with a lovely trophy," he recalls. The team travelled by bus into Charlotte Quay and were presented to the Corporation officials.

Then, the party started. "We went out to my local, Spellacy's pub in Ballysheedy. It was supervised, you might say, by Cormac Hurley, who monitored all the traffic."

"We had a great time. People passed us going to work the following morning."



LIKE A PHOTOGRAPH? ALL THE PICTURES ON THIS PAGE - AND THOUSANDS OF OTHERS IN THE LEADER ARCHIVE - CAN BE ORDERED FROM OUR FRONT OFFICE, OR ONLINE BY CLICKING THE 'BUY A PHOTO' TAB ON THE HOME PAGE OF OUR WEBSITE, WWW.LIMERICKLEADER.IE

1973 GLORY REMEMBERED 13

Excitement in the air as we counted down to the first Sunday in September, 1973

Forty years ago, the Leader's **Sean Murphy** went on a tour of Limerick looking for views on the upcoming All-Ireland hurling final, with photographer **Dermot Lynch** in tow. Their report was a classic of local journalism – as enjoyable today as the week it appeared

WHATEVER else Limerick hurlers will lack when they face Kilkenny in the All Ireland at Croke Park on Sunday, it certainly will not be support. For every man, woman and child capable of making the journey to the Big Smoke are on the move.

From the Hillside village of Tournafulla, homestead of goalkeeper Seamus Horgan, to Doon, on the extreme Eastern end, and from Kilbehenny to Coonagh, a new generation of hurling fans are preparing to give their heroes a welcome of flags, hats, scarves and rosettes not witnessed at Croke Park since Down carried off the Sam Maguire Cup in 1960.

Yes, indeed, Limerick will be The Deserted County and perhaps some budding poet might pen the words to match Oliver Goldsmith's The Deserted Village.

In Patsy Flannery's tavern on Upper William Street, it was like a reunion of the old-timers. Jimmy Close, a stalwart attacker in the 1934 Limerick team which defeated Dublin, got the ball moving by saying: "If Limerick play ground hurling like they did in the opening ten minutes of the Munster final, there is no team in Ireland to beat them." And the opinion was strongly supported by former Limerick League of Ireland player, Kevin Holman.

Dave Clohessy, who proudly showed me the coveted Celtic Cross medals won in '34 and '36, deplores the absence of a Fedamore representative from the panel, but says that if Limerick play the hurling they are capable of, the bonfires will be blazing.

Mick Grace, a Kilkenny man domiciled in Limerick for many years, whose sons Richie and Matt won Harty Cup medals with Limerick CBS and later figured in various Limerick teams, was



Discussing Limerick's chances at Gerry Moore's bar in Doon in the run-up to the 1973 All-Ireland were, from left, Willie Keogh, Thomas Howard, William Lonergan, Sally Maher, Michael Maher and local undertaker, Michael Danaher, who commented: 'We'll bury Kilkenny!' And so we did ... Picture: Dermot Lynch

renowned hurling follower told me that interest in the game was just amazing. He thinks that Kilkenny are using the injuries to upset Limerick's approach and warns the selectors and players to not fall for the trap. Having seen the panel in training, he feels that Limerick



Pat Horgan, brother of the Limerick goalkeeper, Seamus, with some of his customers outside Kennedy O'Brien's where he worked back in 1973. From left: Bart Dillon, Kennedy Park; Phil O Carroll, Bruff, who played with Na Fianna, and Con Carey, Killoran Terrace, a noted rugby player in his day



Thomas Cross, Lower Park, and Paddy McMahon proudly holding the hurley and the medal won when Limerick defeated Kilkenny in the 1940 decider. Thomas was attending his 41st All-Ireland final back in 1973

In Herbertstown, the feat of Na Fianna, the local junior side, in reaching their second successive South Limerick final had to take second place to the Limerick vs Kilkenny clash. Local farmer Christy Scanlon, a hard-tackling defender in his day, thought Limerick would just about manage to win, while

game and replay was none other than Christy Ring. "It's no wonder I remember 1940 so vividly," remarked Peter.

The hurling fever which is sweeping the county had reached epidemic proportions when we touched down in Patrickswell, where I was informed that the entire population of the parish was heading for Croke Park to

preview of the game in company with Mickey Cross, a legend from the golden days.

Cross feels that the game today is much slower because

"This will be no pantomime," quipped Bart Dillon, a well known performer with the Panto Frolics Group

players are too fond of picking the ball. "In our time it was first-time pulling," said Mickey.

"The present team are a speedy and crafty combination and if they get the lucky breaks they will just about pip Kilkenny, who always produce great teams," concluded Cross.

Willie Doyle, a bus driver from Murroe, was in a confident mood. "We have the power and determination to match any team," he told me on a break from duty on the Ballynanty route.

Pat Walshe, a supervisor with Coca Cola and native of Clare, maintains that Limerick on the Munster final form must be favourites to win. "If they do, and I sincerely hope they will, Clare will be the second best team in Ireland," laughed Pat, who lives at 201 Woodview Park, Moylish.

In a busy John Street Stores, owned by John Naughton, a

are in excellent trim and capable of winning the McCarthy Cup.

Pat Horgan, a fiery forward with Tournafoulla and a brother of goalkeeper Seamus, was in lively discussion with customers of various sporting allegiance on the pros and cons of the hurling final in Kennedy O'Brien's bar, where he is employed, when photographer Dermot Lynch and myself arrived at the scene.

"This will be no pantomime," quipped Bart Dillon from Kennedy Park, a well known performer with the Panto Frolics Group. "Limerick will win by 3-10 to 3-6," forecasts Dillon.

Con Carey, who captained Garryowen to beat Dolphin in the 1940 Munster Senior Cup final and also witnessed Limerick's All-Ireland win in the same year, thinks it will be very close and victory will come to Limerick. Phil Carroll, who lives in Bruff and lines out with Na Fianna, a Hospital-Herbertstown combination, exclaimed: "It's now or never!"

Sunday next will certainly be a day to remember for one Limerick fan - Thomas Cross from Lower Park - who will be watching his 41st consecutive All Ireland hurling final. He has not missed a hurling decider since Kilkenny beat Clare in 1932. Thomas recalls his first All Ireland final in 1923 with regret for Limerick, captained by Paddy McInerney, lost to Galway.

At Ballysimon, well known Monaleen administrator Leo Morrison was demonstrating to a customer how to play the



Sitting on the bridge below the village of Cappamore, talking hurling (what else was there to talk about during those heady days in 1973?) were three Limerick supporters: Richie Campbell, Jack Ryan and Michael McNamara

Burmah All Ireland game and in a quick comment said: "It must be Limerick, but I would prefer to see Kilkenny at full strength," and Paddy Lyons, chairman of the Kiltelly-Dromkeen GAA club, nodded in agreement.

At Cappamore, I met Ritchie Campbell, Jack Ryan and

Michael McNamara sitting on the bridge below the town and hurling was again the topic. They all agreed that Limerick should win but felt that Kilkenny would not be beaten easily. In Doon, hometown of Willie Moore, Jim O'Donnell and Jim Allis, everywhere we went the

All Ireland was debated.

In Gerry Moore's bar (father of Willie Moore), Willie's sisters - Louisa, Mairead and Anna - were busy serving local hurling fans. Amidst applause, local undertaker Michael Danaher gave the verdict: "We'll bury Kilkenny!"

Con Birrane, who won a minor All Ireland medal with Limerick in 1940, was one of the few people interviewed who favoured Kilkenny. "I am hoping Limerick will win it but I don't think they will do it," he said.

In Old Pallas, Jim Quirke, who won a county hurling championship medal with Cappamore, did not relish the idea of facing an All Ireland final with a changed lineout. "Cregan will be missed in the forwards - he is the only goal getter we have," he said. "The defence is now on trial but if things work out Limerick could finish on top."



The original Sean Murphy report in the Leader dated September 1, 1973

Mike McCarthy, a commercial traveller who learned his hurling at Belcamp College, opined that Limerick - especially with Ned Rea on the edge of the square - carried too many big guns for a weakened Kilkenny outfit.

Dromcollogher's Donie Broderick, a CIE bus conductor on the Broadford route and a member of the Limerick side which surprised Clare in that sensational 1955 Munster final, feels that Limerick have the talent and ability to at least win an All Ireland title. "If they use their speed to exploit the open spaces and play fast ground hurling, the Limerick supporters will certainly chant 'We are the Champions!'" shortly after five o'clock on Sunday," he said.

In Croom, Jack English, honorary secretary of the local club for many years, recalled how he made the trip to Dublin in 1940 to see Limerick win their last All Ireland title for 8/6d! "I had a shilling each way on the winner of the Galway Plate at 100/8 and my winnings covered the entire expenses," declared the talkative Jack.

"Thirty-three years is a long time to be out of an All Ireland final - it is a big occasion and I hope the lads will not suffer from Croke Park nerves," said Peter Cregan, who played at left-back on the Limerick team which defeated Kilkenny 3-7 to 1-7 in 1940. Peter's task that day was marking Kilkenny's wizard Jimmy Langton - while in the Munster final of the same year his opponent in both the drawn

were heading to Croke Park to cheer Limerick to victory. Local publican Dom Punch, who is treasurer of the Patrickswell GAA club since its inception, feels that such support the team cannot fail.

Pa Foley, a brother of star half-back, Sean, told me during a break in a ballad session at the Cuchullain Lounge, where he is employed, that the spirit and determination was a revelation.



Peter Cregan, left-half back on the 1940 winning team, said: 'Ground hurling will win it for Limerick'

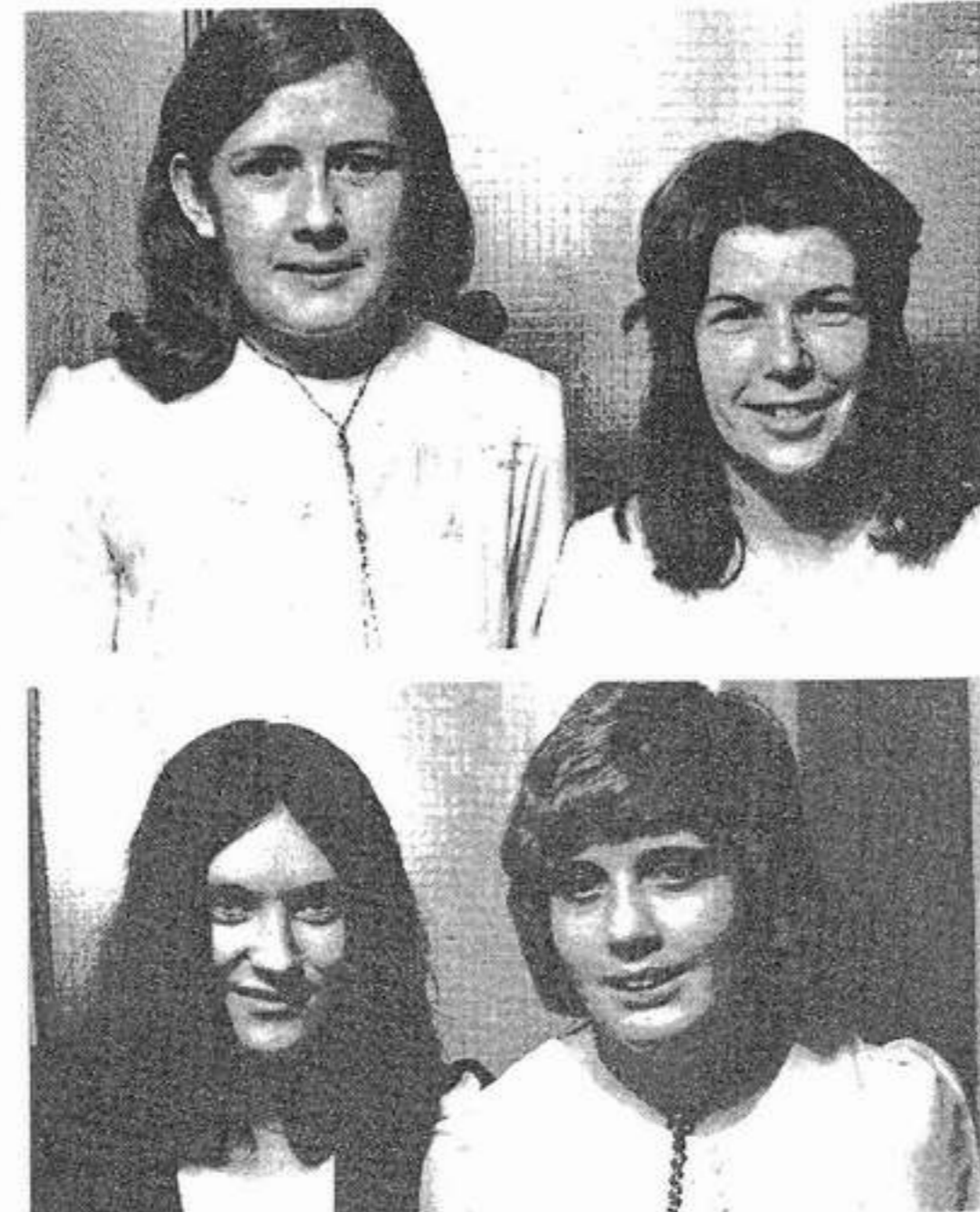
"Don't forget to come out when we have the McCarthy Cup here," quipped young Foley, a hurler who looks like following in his brother's footsteps.

The ladies are keen followers and judges of hurling in the 'Well and well known inter-county camogie player Phil Darcy, a great admirer of Sean Foley and Richie Bennis, forecast a Limerick win by four points.

Look who else Sean Murphy met on his travels: Out and about with the Leader before the big match



Mick Grace, a Kilkennyman, pictured with Mickey Cross of the successful Limerick teams of 1934 and 1936. Mickey doesn't look too impressed with that Kilkenny People - no doubt he wanted to get his hands on the Leader!



Above: Mike McCarthy from Herbertstown was in no doubt. "It's victory for Limerick!" he told our roving reporter, Sean Murphy

Top left: Patrickswell girls Frances Lynch and Anne Murphy told the Limerick Leader they would be at Croke Park cheering their favourites, Sean Foley and Richie Bennis

Bottom left: Mary Mulqueen and Margaret Lynch, both of Patrickswell, real hurling country, were excited about the 1973 final



John Naughton of John Street Stores, and daughter Geraldine, were hoping for a Limerick triumph. Thankfully, they got it!