

## 40 12 FEATURES

## Then &amp; Now

Tom Aherne



# Recalling past All-Ireland triumphs

## A look back at when Limerick has lifted the Liam MacCarthy

**T**HIS WEEK it is all about Limerick and I would like to recall their seven All-Ireland successes to date, and pay tribute to the people who made it possible. They won their first All Ireland senior hurling championship at Tipperary on November 20 1898.

It was the previous year's final and Kilfinane representing Limerick defeated Tullaroan by 3-4 to 2-4 and J.J. Mc Cabe was the referee. Limerick trailed by 2-4 to 1-1 at half time, but they held their opponents scoreless in the second half to run out three point winners. John Downes and P.J. Mc Carthy were the trainers of the team. When the team returned from Tipperary every window of every house in Kilfinane was ablaze with candles, tar barrels blazed on the moat. There were bands everywhere and the celebrations went on into the small hours of the morning.

TEAM: Dinny Grimes Captain, James "Sean Og" Hanley, Maurice Flynn, Paddy Flynn, Mick Finn, Jim Finn, Paddy "Long" O'Brien, Tom "Goatee" Brazill, Mick Downes (Kilfinane) Sean Condon, John Hynes, Pat Butler, Pat Mulcahy, (Cappamore) Jim Reidy, Pat Cottrell (Ballingarry) Jim Flood (Caherline) Paddy Buskin (Croon).

Limerick won its second All Ireland title on January 26 1919 defeating Wexford by 9-5 to 1-3 on a cold bleak day. It was a disappointing final played in front of twelve thousand spectators, with Willie Walsh of Waterford the referee. Jim Dalton was their trainer this year and they were based in Foynes during the summer months. Part of the training involved climbing to the top of Knockpatrick Hill high above the village. Willie Hough

from Monagea was the captain, and also part of the selection committee, with J Ryan, T Brennan, T Humphries and D Lanigan.

Limerick won its third All Ireland title on March 4, 1923. It was the 1921 final delayed because of the Civil War, and twenty thousand people attended paying £ 1,680. Limerick defeated Dublin by 8-5 to 3-2 in a disappointing final with Willie Walsh in charge. Dublin were the holders but they were well beaten by a good all round display by the treaty men. Mick Neville of Kilfinny played with Dublin and the GAA Complex in Rathkeale bears his name. It was the first time that the Liam MacCarthy Cup was played for and Dan McCarthy President of the Association presented the cup to Bob McConkey captain of the winning team amidst great scenes of enthusiasm. James O'Mara of the O'Mara Opera Company and a Limerick native threw in the ball.

Limerick won its fourth All Ireland title defeating Dublin following a replay in 1934. It was Limerick 2-7 Dublin 3-4 on September 2, and Limerick won by 5-2 to 2-6 on September 30. Timmy Ryan captain of the team accepted the cup from the Patron of the GAA Murroe born Most Rev. J.M. Hartly, D.D., Archbishop of Cashel. The excitement was still evident that night when the winning players and officials were entertained at a reception held in Barry's Hotel by the Limerick Gaels resident in Dublin. Great scenes greeted the return of the players to Limerick on the Monday evening. Thirty thousand people were at the Railway Station, and along the way to the Imperial Hotel in Catherine Street. Four bands took part and the members of the City Fire Brigade formed a guard of honour, as tar barrels blazed and rockets soared into the sky

Limerick won its fifth All Ireland



Limerick won its third All Ireland title on March 4, 1923. It was the 1921 final delayed because of the Civil War, Bob McConkey captain of the 1921 All-Ireland winning team, above, was the first captain to lift the Liam MacCarthy Cup. PICTURE COURTESY: SEAN BUCKLEY

title defeating Kilkenny by 5-6 to 1-5 on September 6 1936 before an attendance of 51,235. Their win was a triumph of youth, dash and vigour over experience and determination. It was neck and neck for almost three quarters of the hour but then the Shannonsiders launched their all out offensive, sweeping down on the Black and Amber lines with the force of a tornado, carrying all before them to notch a glory filled victory. Later that week the team members, and County Board officials were entertained by the Savoy management and they saw a special news reel depicting scenes from the All Ireland.

Limerick won its sixth All Ireland title on September 1, 1940 on what was one of the greatest days hurling

marvellously spectacular exposition of hurling in one of the hardest games ever seen at Croke Park. Kilkenny remained a menace to the final whistle, but the opposing backs more than held their own. While the forwards were responsive to every opportunity and so the Shannonsiders won a meritorious victory by 3-7 to 1-7. The Limerick crowd took possession of the pitch in their wild enthusiasm, and thus ended one of the greatest games fought in the history of the championships.

Thunderous applause greeted the presentation of the All Ireland Cup to Limerick captain Mick Mackey by Paddy McNamee President of the Association. Another great reception awaited the members of both teams when they arrived back in Limerick on Monday night. The explosion of fog signals and the sounding of whistles and sirens announced their arrival. Six bands headed the procession to the hotel through crowded streets, with green and white flags everywhere and bonfires blazing.

Limerick won their seventh and last All Ireland title on September 2 1973 defeating Kilkenny by 1-21 to 1-14 after a long wait of 33 years. The match was played under the most difficult of weather conditions, the contestants still gave an exhibition, and the general verdict after the game was that hurling was the great winner. The Limerick success was hailed as the finest shot in the arm that the caman code got in many years.

The reception accorded the victorious Limerick players on their return was a fantastic one that by far exceeded in numbers and enthusiasm anything previously experienced by Shannonside. TEAM: Seamus Horgan, Willie Moore, Pat Hartigan, Jim O'Brien, Phil Bennis, Eamon Cregan, Sean Foley, Richie Bennis, Eamon Grimes Captain, Bernie Hartigan, Mossie Dowling, Liam O'Donoghue, Frankie Nolan, Eamon Rea, Joe Mc Kenna, Sub Tom Ryan.

Connors goes to Croker is the name of one of the songs in praise of Limerick which can be heard on YouTube. It was put together by Jacki and John O'Connor musicians from Kilcolman. Joining them on the recording is their cousin James O'Connor, Tadhg Maher All Ireland traditional singer from Offaly, and Martin O'Malley. It was composed to create some atmosphere, and fun on the run up to the final. The final verse goes as follows;

*That great Limerick team are heroes to a man*

*King John's Castle sees a victory after Kieley's masterplan*

*The skill and the passion, the likes has to be seen*

*And all that's left for me to say is come on you boys in green.*

The excitement is building and the green and white colours are to be seen all over the county. Best wishes to all involved and it is now time after 45 years to embrace new heroes. Come on Limerick!

wise for the county. A massive attendance of 49,260 beat wartime restrictions to be at Croke Park to see Limerick minors defeat Antrim by 6-4 to 2-4. A press report of the senior game had this to say- This match was fought out at top speed, and the display of field craft by both sides electrified the vast attendance, whose enthusiasm was tremendous during the various tough clashes. Kilkenny had a bright beginning but were being well held by Limerick, the half hour closing with the men from the Nore leading by two points 1-4 to 1-2.

On the resumption Limerick soon gained the measure of Kilkenny's opposition, and having wiped out the deficit, they entertained the spectators to a