

problem with that and time will tell whether the investments will justify the end. A lot of these projects were politically driven by influential Ministers and TD's looking after their own constituencies and the old saying comes

An artist's impression of Limerick's proposed new Greyhound Stadium in Coonagh

to mind "All is fair in love and war". The problem in the Mid-West region, especially Limerick, was that there was never any interest by our Ministers or Dail Deputies in the greyhound industry or the benefits that can be accrued from same. Although Deputy John Cregan did show a lot of interest in his comments about me in the Dail Chamber. Come to think of it, I didn't receive any reply or comment from John to my article in response to his Dail statement but I am sure that he is busy on affairs of State and with an election blooming in the new year, greyhounds and their owners in Limerick West will be the furthest thing from his mind.

Limerick has been completely ignored as regards development and lets have a look at the pathetic efforts of Bord na gCon and the Board of Limerick Greyhound Track in attempting to put a new facility in place. I am sorry but I think art this juncture that I should provide my readers with a brief resume of the history of the project.

I have been involved with Limerick and Clare greyhound breeders for years and this well organised group, which is a member of a national body, have been lobbying all and sundry over the past 40 years for improvements and the new facility. The Markets Field is a very strategically situated stadium, well known and is recognised country wide as a centre for sporting activity. Hurling, soccer, rugby, athletics and greyhound racing have been played there for over a 100 years. The property was owned by Limerick Corporation, now called the Limerick City Council, and was managed under the auspices of the Market Trustees, who are a sub body of the City Council. Bord na gCon has been the main tenant of the Markets Field for the past 30 years with the departure of soccer to Hogan Park and due to the efforts of the local GOBA and Alderman Pat Kennedy, Independent, Limerick City Council agreed to sell the freehold of the Markets Field at a very generous price for the continuation of its original use, sport and greyhound racing in particular. Little did the honourable Council know that plans were afoot to dispose of the Markets Field and move the greyhound racing operation to a Green Field site which had been chosen at Greenpark, the old Limerick racecourse.

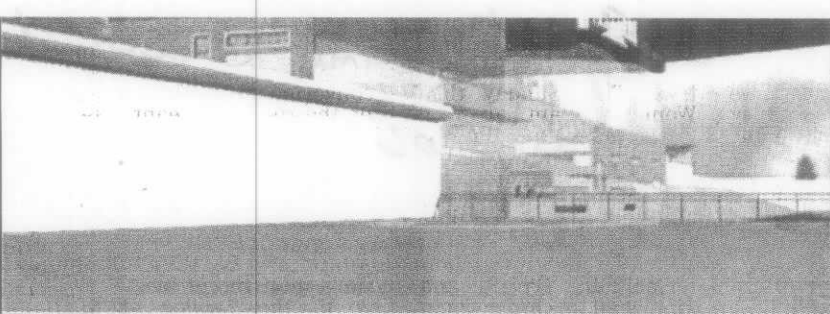
The saga had begun. The Greenpark site was selected and with huge fanfare, elaborate plans were set to purchase and develop the 11 acres from the Limerick Racecourse Company.

The suitability of the site was seriously questioned by the elected representatives of the greyhound industry locally, the Limerick and Clare GOBA.

These well founded worries were completely ignored by Bord na gCon, their architects and engineers and plans went ahead. Twelve months elapsed before there was a re-think by the board of the suitability of this site which caused them to look elsewhere, so low and behold, their sights turned back to a new development at the home of sport in Limerick, The Markets Field!

I suppose nostalgia played a part in their rethink. Elaborate plans were again brought up and after serious discussion by the GOBA, a delegation which included the writer, met with the full board at 104 Henry Street in a high powered meeting which was chaired by Mr. Pascal Taggart. Michael Field, CEO was also in attendance. There were three proposals shown and after serious discussion, it was unanimously agreed that the Markets Field would be redeveloped at a cost of seven million punts.

This development would be along similar lines as the new venture in Currageen Park, Cork. It was a bit like the Treaty negotiations between the



checked on. The unbelievable saga of Bord na gCon, which had been brought under the stewardship of the Minister of Sport, Arts and Tourism, Mr. John 'Donoghue,

continued and if anything can be said about this public funded body, it is to say that they are durable. Because in the middle of all the drugs, boardroom and political battles, the men that run this organisation delved again into the property market, this time in Clare with another huge fanfare at the Castletroy Park Hotel, announced that another site was purchased for 1.1m Euro. This time the brave speculators, showed the colour of their money and for what looked like a bargain price, sure weren't they well used to getting bargains, hadn't they got the Market's Field for proverbial song 300,000 punts. These men should have been developers, their talent was lost working for a State owned company, but wait a minute, what were they after buying? Was it 17 acres or 11 acres or did I hear 9.2 or 8.7 or just six acres, even so, six acres, even so, six acres on the Ennis Road wasn't bad value at 1.1m. The only problem is that you could hardly build a greyhound stadium on six acres, again, the prophets of doom, including myself, urged caution as to the location. Oops, nothing against Clare, the suitability and access came into our deliberations for not the first time, we were again castigated in public and private, the work "knockers" came into the equation and jealousy was mentioned.

Where would you go in any development without a management team and again, directors were in position with prominent individuals appointed to the Board of the new stadium? We had a board now but we had no stadium. So back to my introduction verse, "Here we go once again..." There are now serious problems on many fronts with the planning proposals as already stated, size of available site, quality of ground, parking availability, access to roadway and new roundabout at the Two Mile Inn, no access to the new Western Link motorway, traffic congestion and hazards, the tidal waters and drainage on Meelick Creek, as if we hadn't that problem before in Greenpark, sewerage and surface water treatment facilities, the procurement of extra land at a cost of €750,000 per acre plus the ongoing costs of these proposals, planning applications, drawings and reports running into hundreds of thousands of Euro. There is now internal confusion developing within the Board of the Limerick Racing Company and Bord na gCon with different reports emanating from same, depending on who you were talking to and I still haven't mentioned the graceful otter and his habitat. I understand that there are meetings proposed with the Clare County and the National Roads Authority and I would respectfully suggest that these talks be transferred to St. Andrew's in Scotland. St. Andrew's would be a very suitable location because if it sorted out the differences between Gerry Adams and Ian Paisley, it would surely be able to play a similar role with parties concerned. Didn't I hear that there was heavy fog in St. Andrews's, that should be a help, because I am also told by locals in the Meelick area, that this particular stretch of land can be fog bound in Wintertime.

Surely its time for the Government to step in and take charge of this unbelievable waste of public money. Isn't it time that the Controller and Auditor General had an input into developments, after all, isn't he the taxpayers watchdog. Put an end once and for all to the comedy of errors that the Limerick racetrack development has become. the responsibility of this fiasco must rest squarely on the shoulders of the Minister of Sport, Arts and Tourism, Mr. John O'Donoghue and the respective boards of the Limerick Greyhound racing track and Bord na gCon should consider their positions and resign.

Foynes

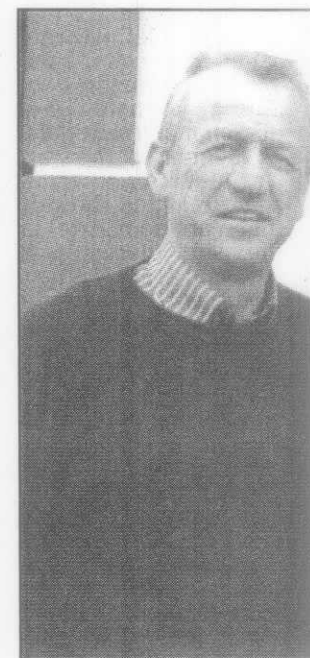
By HARRY GREENSMYTH

THE Markets Field in Limerick was the venue in 1907 and 1914, when Foynes and Abbeyfeale inscribed their names on the county senior football roll of honour for the first time, indeed to date Foynes have not advanced their record any further, while Abbeyfeale has claimed the title on seven occasions.

Abbeyfeale had been close on a few times prior to the initial win by Foynes.

It was on February 16 1908 when Foynes Smith O'Briens won the championship by defeating Commercial for 1907 honour. The team captain was John O'Connor and the team was completed by Tom Corbett, Michael O'Connor, Pat Sheehan, John Sheehan, Jim Kirwin, Jeweller Sheehy, Birdie Madden, Martin Fitzgerald, Ned Enright, Tom O'Brien, Ned Shanahan, Jack McCarthy, Dan Costello, Tom Hughes, Jimmy Walsh, Jimmy Braddish, Jim Hallett, Paddy Liston, Pat O'Shea. The Foynes men were relinquished of the crown the following year by Newcastlewest.

At Munster convention at Thurles, Limerick



Members of the St Senan training session this week