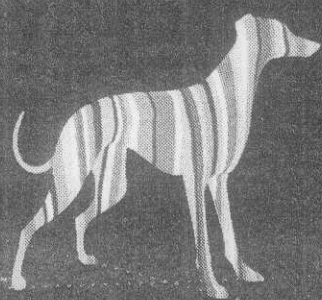
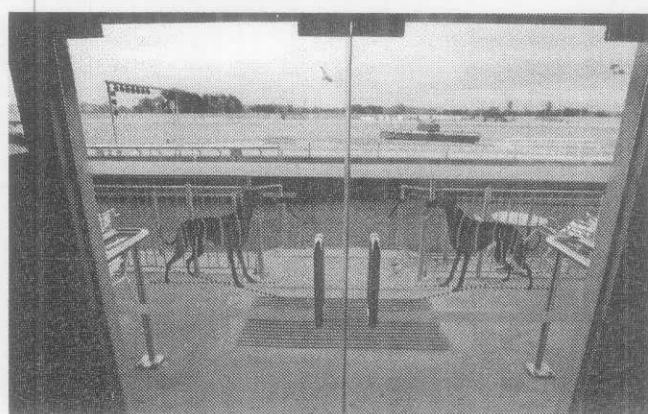


# Going to the Dogs

## Limerick's New Greyhound Stadium Opens

A LIMERICK POST SPECIAL FEATURE

Research and text by John O'Shaughnessy



Pg 54: New era dawns for greyhound racing in Mid West

Pg 55: Message from the Mayor

Pg 56: From Greenpark, to the Ennis Road, and back to Greenpark again

Pg 62: The night the Markets Field had its final send off



# New era dawns for greyhound racing in Mid West



*On any given race night, upwards of 130 people will be employed in various capacities at the stadium, including 80 in the restaurant, bar and food areas.*

A NEW era dawns for Limerick and the entire Mid West region on October 22 with the official opening of the Greenpark Greyhound Racing Stadium, the landmark €20 million home of an industry which, appropriately, also has relocated its Headquarters on site.

This major physical and sporting investment is not just a greyhound stadium.

It serves a multiplicity of purposes, ie events centre, conferences, entertainments, etc.

Covering a total of 12 acres on the Dock Road, and approached from the roundabout close to Roches Feeds, this fully glazed stadium adds enormously to the social and cultural life of Limerick.

It comes on stream at a time when the new road networks, including the Limerick Tunnel, lend easy access to what was once the home of horse racing.

The few hundred devoted greyhound enthusiasts who huddled thrice weekly in various corners from the wind and rain at the Markets Field, will now enjoy luxurious surroundings in what can only be described as the perfect setting.

Greenpark, the most modern greyhound stadia in the country, is designed to cater not only for owners, trainers, punters and all others directly associated with a thriving industry, but as the ideal and novel venue for a social night out while enjoying the thrill of dog racing on the track.

Not that the Markets Field has been forgotten—the main bar is named after the famous Mulgrave Street venue.

Catering at the new facility has been entrusted to Kudos, a company which also holds responsibility for 'feeding the troops' at the Cork's Curraheen Stadium.

Initially, racing will be held on two evenings per week, each Friday and Saturday, and in the lead up

to Christmas, there will be an additional night's racing on Thursday.

A major selling point at Greenpark is the all-in package of a four-course dining experience, together with race card and mobile tote staff available to each table, followed by entertainment, for a modest €45 each.

The restaurant seats 190 patrons, with an additional 80 seats in two corporate suites.

Not surprisingly, given the time of year, both areas are already heavily booked.

The serious greyhound enthusiasts, or the more casual supporter who prefers to mingle with the crowds and enjoy the banter, can partake in fast food and bar facilities.

On any given race night, upwards of 130 people

will be employed in various capacities at the stadium, including 80 in the restaurant, bar and food areas.

Doors will open at 6-30, and clients to be seated from 6-45 onwards.

Provision has been made for 450 secured car parking spaces, with private parking available for bookmakers, dog owners and buses. Oh yes, there are also bicycle stands.

12 ex-Markets Field bookmakers have signed in to take allotted perches underneath the stand.

And those unable to reach the venue by car, foot and bicycle, have not been forgotten.

Arrangements have been put in place for a bus service from outside the Markets Field on race nights.

Total capacity at the magnificent new stadium has been put at 2,900.

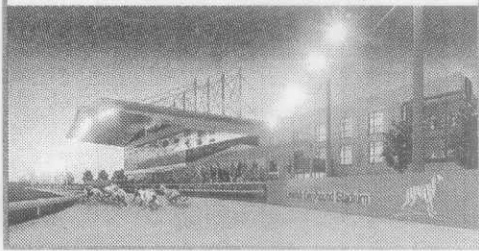
Take a bow Bord na gCon CEO, Adrian Neilan, you have given Limerick a stadium of which it can feel extremely proud.



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## Welcome message from Cllr. Maria Byrne, Mayor of Limerick

I am delighted to welcome two major events in Limerick's sporting world this weekend – the official opening of the new greyhound track on October 22, and the staging of the first International Rules match at the Gaelic Grounds one day later.

Limerick is justifying its selection as European City of Sport and its reputation as the sporting capital of Ireland...



The state-of-the-art greyhound stadium is a wonderful addition to the sporting infrastructure of our city.

Limerick has long been regarded as the centre of the greyhound industry. Bord na gCon recognised this when in the early 60s, they moved their head office from Dublin to Limerick – long before decentralisation was invented.

The Markets Field has served Limerick well for many years but the site was not capable of housing all the facilities that make up a modern stadium.

I remember being brought there as a child by my uncle Paddy Hanly to see one of his greyhounds run, and I have enjoyed many visits since then.

Greyhound racing has entered a new era. Patrons of the magnificent new venue at Greenpark will enjoy better parking facilities and very comfortable surroundings to wine, dine, watch racing and have a flutter. It will be a wonderful night out for the people of Limerick, and I congratulate Bord na gCon on their €20m investment and wish the venue every success.

Limerick will give its traditional warm welcome to Anthony Tohill and the Irish team, and Matt Malthouse and the Australian

team as they compete for the Cormac McAnallen Trophy at the Gaelic Grounds.

Limerick City Council will be hosting a welcome reception for our visitors on Thursday evening.

Saturday's will be a very keenly contested and spectacular sporting event which will surely guarantee a capacity attendance.

Limerick has a long tradition of promoting and supporting sport and we welcome the opportunity of hosting International Rules for the first time.

Well done to the Limerick County GAA Board, under chairman Liam Lenihan, in having secured this fixture.

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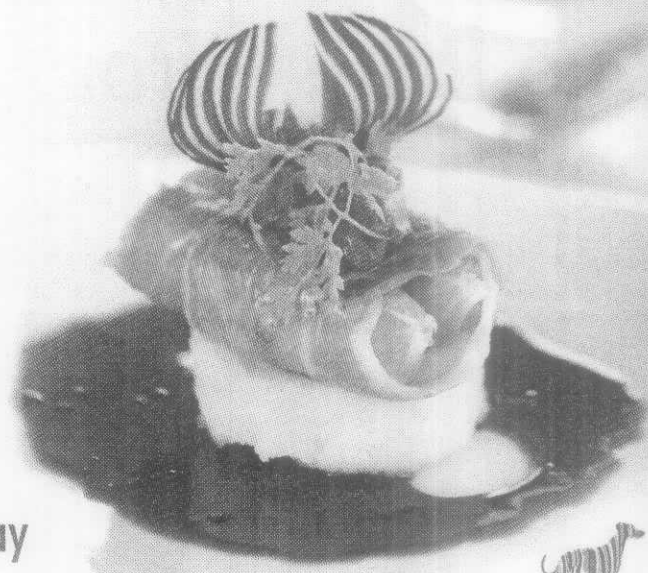
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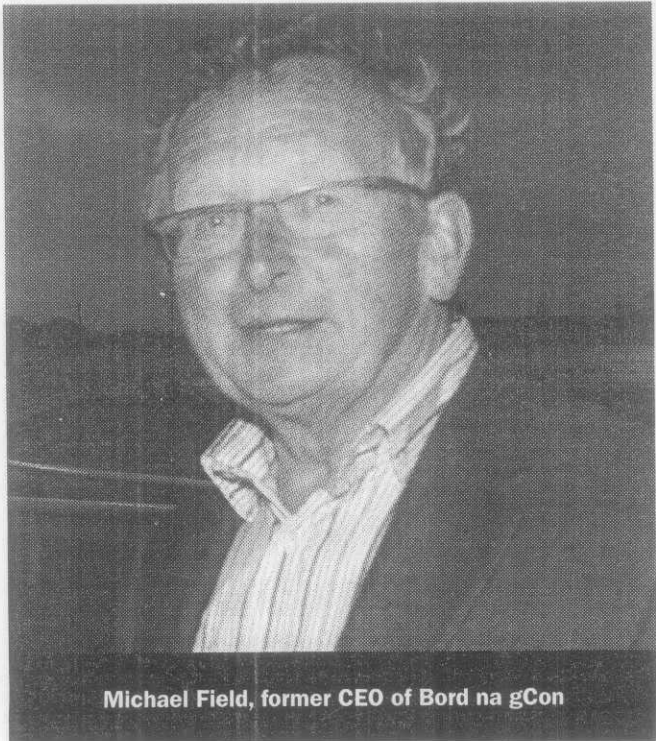
No Reserved Seating With This Package



# From Greenpark, to the Ennis Road, and back to Greenpark again

Campaign for new home was on and off for almost two decades

IT is somewhat ironic that the Irish Greyhound Board finally settled for their new home at the former Greenpark Racecourse – over a decade after it was first mooted as the venue most suited to replace



Michael Field, former CEO of Bord na gCon

the Markets Field.

Then CEO Michael Field, and a former principal at Ard Scoil Ris, raised the hopes of all associated with the industry in the Mid West when he called a press conference at their Henry Street Headquarters, to announce plans for Greenpark.

Delight, however, soon turned to disappointment when it was revealed there had been a change of heart by the Bord.

It seemed that the Markets Field was destined to continue life as a greyhound stadium when the former Eircom building, on Mulgrave Street, was purchased, and converted into a car park.

A few more years passed before then Bord na gCon chairman, Paschal Taggart, invited upwards of 200 people to the Castletroy Park Hotel to declare that they had purchased a site on the Ennis Road, close to the Two Mile Inn, and were ready to proceed.

There were mixed feelings from the audience. Some pointed out that the location was just not right, and others believed that the plans, as presented, were not financially viable.

All fell apart when planning permission was sought from Clare County Council, who inserted a number of clauses.

Having already fired two blanks, and with the Markets Field way past its sell by date, there was further pressure applied on Bord na gCon to deliver.

Patrickswell came into the frame, but negotiations stalled.

Many meetings later and a proposal was put forward to modernise the Markets Field.

Again, opinions were divided among the greyhound fraternity, but Bord na gCon, probably to satisfy their critics, threw a considerable amount of money into making the venue that bit more attractive.

But no cash injection, no matter how large, would transform the Markets Field into a modern day stadium. It was landlocked on all sides.

Also, there was a multiplicity of other problems at the venue.



Paschal Taggart, former chairman Bord na gCon

Pic: Michael Cowhey

Limerick, which housed the Headquarters of Bord na gCon, was seen as the poor relation, and the fight continued to what is now a successful conclusion.

Unfortunately, many of those who spearheaded the various campaigns for a new address are no longer with us.

Bord na gCon, who purchased the Markets Field from the Market Trustees well over a decade ago, still retain the land they bought on the Limerick/Clare border.

## Gus Ryan – from office boy to track manager

THERE is hardly a greyhound owner/trainer in the country that has not come face-to-face with Gus Ryan, former track manager at the Markets Field, who retired last year having completed over four decades in various capacities in Limerick and Clonmel.

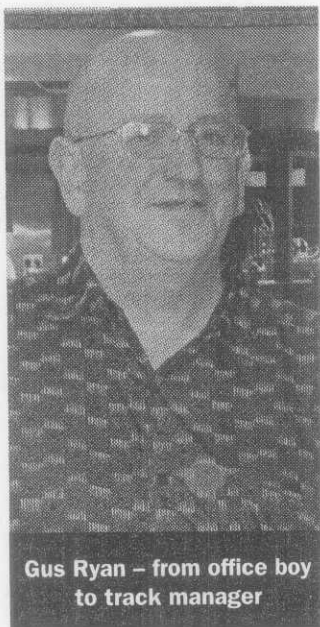
"I took up my first job at the Markets Field as an office boy in 1967, and other than a five year stint as manager in Clonmel, spent all my working life here".

According to records, he says, there were only four track managers prior to his appointment – W.J. Ryan, Willie Gleeson, John Lyons and Brendan O'Connell.

"And again, to the best of my knowledge, there was less than a handful of control stewards over the years, Maurice Fitzgerald, Paddy Fitzgerald, DJ Histon and the present holder of the office, Aidan Supple.

"I departed with great memories. We had a dedicated staff there, and also at the Bord na gCon offices in Henry Street, where Paddy O'Dwyer was particularly helpful and fully understood the workings of the industry".

Gus, replaced by Liam Kennedy, spoke of the great characters, both patrons and dog owners, who were regulars at the venue, people like the 'Jap' Ryan, 'Whacker' Daly, Mick Lip-



Gus Ryan – from office boy to track manager

per, 'Gyke' O'Sullivan, Liam Garrihy, now aged 93, Gerry Neville, Ned Quin, Jack McGann, Jerry Bourke, Jim Noonan, and Clare's Reddan, Browne and Doherty families.

He remembers fondly

such bookmakers as Stevie Coughlan, Martin Mullally, Malachy Skelly and John Moriarty.

Various members of the Holman family, he recalled, were employed at the Markets Field, including Celia Holman Lee's dad. "They lived across the road and it was easy enough for them to get to work," joked Gus.

Bord na gCon, he added, took control of the Markets Field from the Frost family around 1974. The property was in the ownership of the Market Trustees and leased out.

The dog to have recorded the fastest time at the Markets Field, he said, was Yellow Printer, back in 1968.

"Then there was the brilliant Time Up Please, winner of back-to-back Leger's, and trained by the legendary Ger McKenna, and I must also mention Larry Kelly's Romping to Work, which won both the Leger and Oaks".

Gus, promoted to manager 14 years ago, is looking forward to meeting old friends at Greenpark.

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# 'Limerick was last, and now it is the best' - O'Halloran

LIMERICK was last, and now it is the best. The words of Declan O'Halloran, newly appointed sales operations and commercial manager at Greenpark, mindful that it was the last piece in the jigsaw in Bord na gCon's development programme.

Declan does not hide his limited knowledge of the industry, "my sporting background is in rugby- but I am sure learning fast. I could argue some connection in that my uncle Des Fitzgerald, formerly of Upper William Street, was both greyhound owner and bookie".

However, when it comes to management skills, he ticks the right boxes.

Educated at Ard Scoil Ris, he spent several years with Woodchester Bank, and afterwards took up sales positions in Naas, Galway and Dublin, before returning to Limerick.

"Greenpark is a whole new experience for me, as it is for most.. I am very encouraged by the response from the general public and the business community. The restaurant and corporate suites are heavily booked up to Christmas, and we have enquiries well into 2011.

"This €20m investment is a really good news story for Limerick".

The official opening night, on October 22, promises to be something special, with a feast of entertainment on the programme.

Benefit nights, always popular at the Markets Field, are again proving to be a strong attraction.

Said Declan: "We have had an avalanche of

enquiries from sporting clubs and charitable organisations.

"It is important that we encourage clubs and communities to become involved. They can avail of the facility to raise funds, and help pro-



Declan O'Halloran

vide a family atmosphere. And those attending a greyhound meet for the first time might be prompted to return on a more regular basis and enjoy the fun that goes with it".

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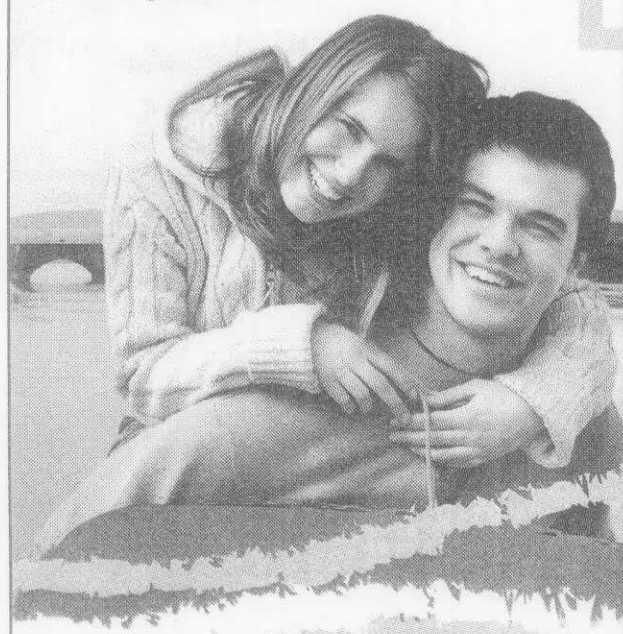
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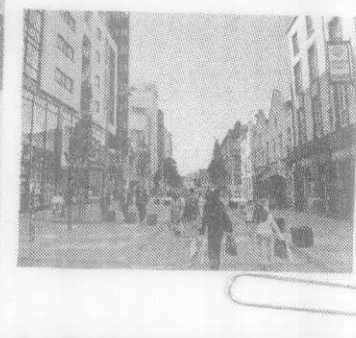
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## McManus takes stand

THE celebrated gambler and businessman JP McManus started his 'professional' life as a bookmaker at the Markets Field, and has not looked back since.



JP McManus started as a bookmaker at the Markets Field

The editor of this section of the Limerick Post supplement well recalls the evenings when JP occasionally stepped into the press box at the back of the stand during break times to shelter from the inclement weather, joined by friends Gerry Neville and Dave Bermingham, both of whom were in the insurance business.

McManus later went on to bigger things and handed over his perch to his brother Kevin.

In fact, JP probably met his future wife Noreen Kirby at the venue. Noreen's dad, the late Con Kirby, was chairman of the Limerick and Clare Greyhound Owners and Breeders Association and very highly regarded in the industry nationwide.

## Sean and Michael were at the helm

LIMERICK'S Sean Collins distinguished himself in his years as CEO of Bord na gCon.

Brother of former Fianna Fail Minister and MEP, Gerry Collins, he brought about a turnaround in the fortunes of the greyhound industry in Ireland.

He is father of current west Limerick Fianna Fail TD, Niall Collins.

Michael Field, a native of Duagh, county Kerry, but who has spent practically all his working life in Limerick, followed Sean Collins, to become only the third CEO of Bord na gCon.

Before his appointment, he was principal at Ard Scoil Ris. Michael and his wife Marie (nee Doran) have enjoyed much success as greyhound owners, concentrating more recently on coursing.

The late Noel Drumgoole, who had a period in charge of the Limerick hurling team, and was a founder member of Na Píarsaigh GAA club, held a key position at Bord na gCon in Henry Street, as did Mayo footballer, the late Seamus Flanagan.

Drumgoole, in fact, spearheaded the development of the Mackey Stand at the Gaelic Grounds in the late 1980s. He was a Dublin hurling star in the 1960s.

## TV history on December 18

A LITTLE bit of TV history will be made on December 18 when RTE will televise the Leger Final night 'live' from Greenpark.

This will be the first time for the national broadcaster to transmit the final of a classic from outside Dublin.



Sean Collins, ex CEO Bord na gCon

# The night Charlie Haughey hit town

Charlie Haughey opened new stand in 1966



THE Markets Field hosted what was probably its biggest attendance ever for a greyhound meet in 1966, when Charlie Haughey arrived in town to open the new stand on the Garryowen side of the ground.

This, it was claimed, was the "New Markets Field", following the largest single investment made there since opening day in 1932.

Greyhound enthusiasts from all over Munster travelled for the occasion, and wooed by all the advance publicity, hundreds of others with not the slightest interest in the sport, went along to witness first hand what all the fuss was about.

It was mentioned at the time that the late Donough O'Malley, then Minister for Education, and whose family had very strong connections with the industry, and the Markets Field, had pulled a few strings in political circles to persuade government to provide the necessary funding for the facility. Donough O'Malley died suddenly, two years later, aged in his mid-forties.

## Business community and celebrities to embrace Greenpark

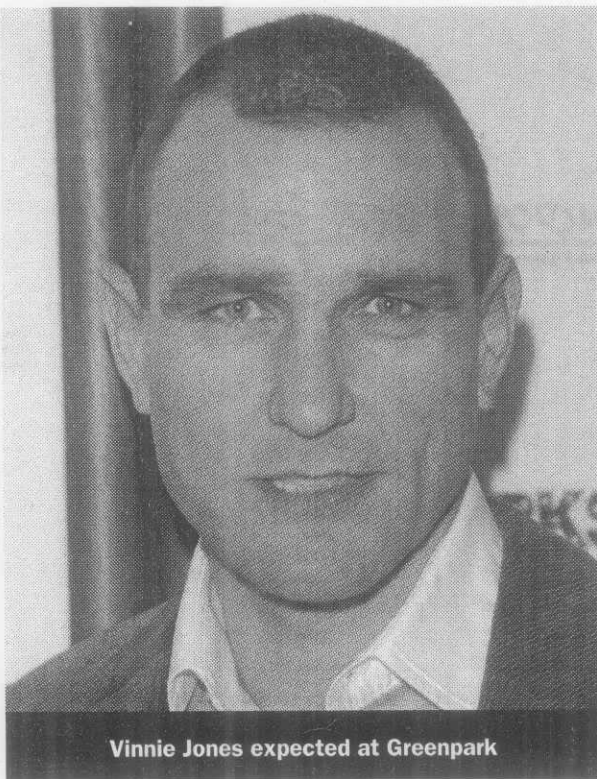
A HOST of celebrities attended racing at the Markets Field over the decades and now that Limerick has a €20 million physical and sporting investment at Greenpark, expect their numbers to swell.

Let's face it, even Bord na gCon must have felt embarrassed at having had to present the run-down venue as the face of local greyhound racing to guests and visitors alike.

Expect actor and dog owner Vinne Jones, regularly spotted at the Markets Field, to be an early arrival at Greenpark.

There was a time when captains of industry in the Mid West took delight in inviting their American, German and Japanese masters to the Mulgrave Street venue as a form of entertainment, but as the world advanced, and the Markets Field fell into decay, they sought other options.

Now, in the words of Declan O'Halloran, sales operations and commercial manager, that valuable market is now ready to be tapped into again.



Vinnie Jones expected at Greenpark

## Famous people at Greenpark

WHILE the Markets Field hosted a number of famous people in the past, the old Greenpark Racecourse-now Greenpark Greyhound Stadium-pulled off real coups with the visits of John F. Kennedy and Pope John Paul II, with over 60,000 people having flocked to the venue on each occasion.

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## Liam steeped in history in the Irish greyhound industry

ARMED with an unrivalled background in the greyhound industry, Liam Kennedy commands the pivotal role as Racing Operations Support Officer at the new stadium in Greenpark, a position that holds various responsibilities.

The 26-year-old Newcastle West man takes on the racing aspects of the stadium, undertaken for decades by his predecessor, Gus Ryan.

Kennedy has worked with the Irish Greyhound Board since 2004, learning the stadium and racing management sides of the business working with senior managers at Dundalk, Waterford and most recently Galway stadiums.

He is steeped in the history of the sport, having been the first owner of arguably the greatest greyhound in history, Ballyregan Bob.

"My father bred him and we were born at around the same time so he was initially registered in my name," explained Liam.

"He was sold just before making his track debut in July 1984 and went on to break every record in the book".

Liam's varied and interesting career started at the age of 10, covering the hare in trials at Newcastle West.

He graduated from Tralee ITC in 2004 with a diploma in business studies and has a keen eye, having been judge at Shelbourne Park for the final of the Paddypower.com Irish Greyhound Derby last year, when Shelbourne Aston beat Slip the Lark by the narrowest of margins.

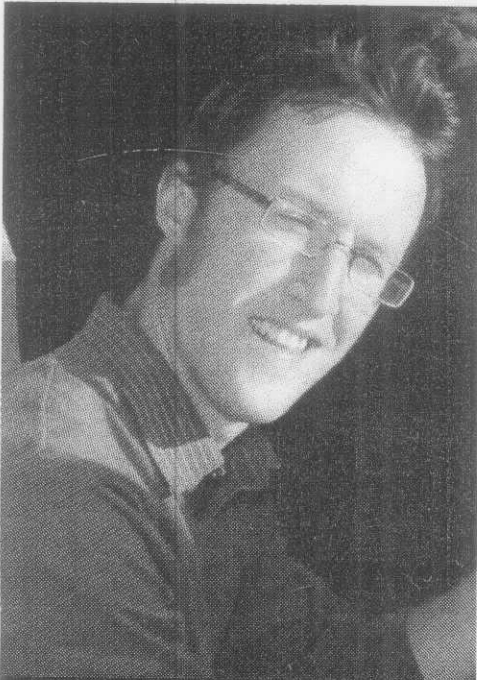
"I am really looking forward to getting involved in Limerick," he added. "There is a great racing surface and it will be my number one priority to maintain that as well as it had been at the Markets Field by Gus Ryan.

"I have learnt a lot about the importance of putting on a good show and leaving patrons eager to return".

Irish Greyhound Board chief executive Adrian Neilan, who strongly pushed Limerick's claims for a new stadium, is delighted to have Liam on board.

"Liam knows the sport inside out and has a great feel for the needs of our racing professionals and the racing

public. He has served a great apprenticeship around the tracks and is ready now to take the next step by taking on responsibility at our new Limerick stadium".



Liam Kennedy holds pivotal role at new stadium

Pic: Michael Cowhey

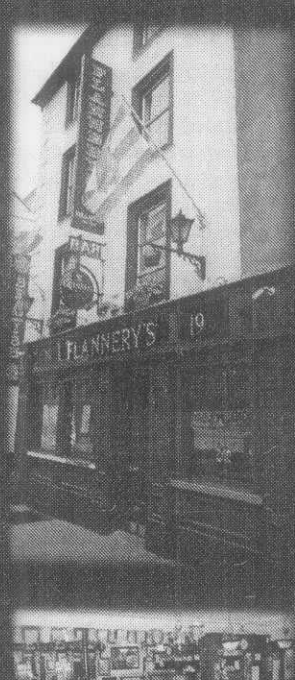
Liam Kennedy will be first in the gates each evening, and probably last to leave.

He is held in the highest esteem by breeders, owners and trainers, and is looking forward to welcoming friends old and new to Greenpark.

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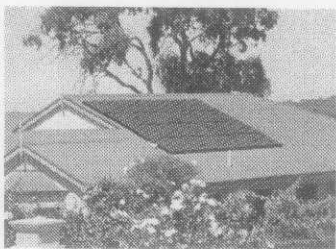
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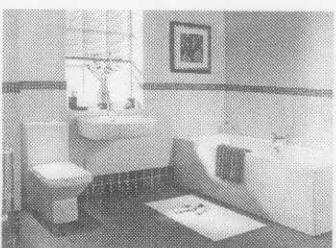
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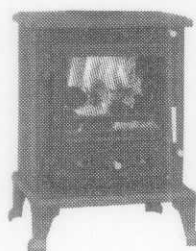
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# Memorable soccer moments at the Markets Field

GOODBYE, Markets Field, welcome Greenpark Stadium.

The future of the former remains uncertain, but the latter is destined for a great innings.

It was in 1974-75 that Bord na gCon assumed control of the Markets Field.

Prior to that it was in the care of the Frost family from Cratloe, headed by the legendary JP Frost and son Kevin, and a board of directors, which included Dessie O'Malley, who went on to found the PDs.

The Limerick Market Trustees, who were owners, leased the property.

City folk were more familiar with the Markets Field as the home of Limerick soccer club.

Upwards of 5,000 fans crammed in on important

It was at the Markets Field that the best of local talent came to the fore.

Names that spring to mind were Beaver Cronin, Paddy Hayes, the Collopy brothers, Christy and Patsy, Mick Lipper, Tony McKeown, Paddy Cusack, Rory Keane, Gerry McCarthy, Joe O'Brien, Al Finucane, Kevin Fitzpatrick, Joe O'Mahony and Tony Meaney.

In the early 1960s, local man Blarney Keane, from Prospect, steered the club to their first ever success, the Shield. The legendary Stanley Matthews travelled over to present the trophy.

Southampton, with Kevin Keegan on the right wing, and Lawrie McMenamy as manager, scored a 3-0 victory over the locals in the Cup Winners Cup at the turn of the 80s, and Dutch side Alkmaar 67,



match days, and when Dundalk visited in the late 1970s, in what was seen as the League decider, it was estimated that the attendance topped 8,000. Limerick, under Eoin Hand, won 2-0, and went on to clinch the title in Athlone.

That was the day Malcolm McDonald of England and Newcastle United fame was introduced to the crowd. He was set to make his Limerick debut, but his clearance did not come through in time from the English FA, and he returned home.

were earlier visitors.

Limerick's other home European games were played at Thomond Park and Lansdowne Road.

Glasgow Celtic made the occasional trip to the Markets Field, where, in the mid 1960s, Fairview Rangers brought the FAI Junior Cup to Shannonside for the first time, beating Douglas of Cork in a replay.

Of course, the Markets Field also hosted other field games, notably rugby.



At the Know Asia Grow Asia tourism event in Dublin were Geraldine Egan, Tourism Ireland; Joe Kelly, Kelly Tour Guides Ltd; and Orla Strumble, Irish Greyhound Board.

## IGB looks to East for new business visitors

LIMERICK'S new greyhound stadium is ready to welcome visitors from China, India, Japan and the Middle East, thanks to a new initiative by Tourism Ireland.

The Irish Greyhound Board's Orla Strumble attended a seminar entitled Know Asia Grow Asia in Dublin, at which hoteliers, bed and breakfast operators, car hire companies and other sports were present.

They heard of the various opportunities these emerging tourism markets present.

Industry experts already working in these markets provided insights into what the Asian customer is looking for, as well as practical advice and tips about how to work more effectively with the travel trade in Asia and ultimately to grow business from these markets.

Now the Irish Greyhound Board are anxious to tap into this new market, offering modern stadia all over the country.

Ms Strumble points out that the Markets Field was a mecca

for tourists who had been looking for something different, and is confident that they can now win over many new friends from this latest promotion in their state-of-the-art venue.

"The World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) forecasts that the Asian-Pacific region is set to become one of the fastest-growing markets for outbound travel over the next ten years, with up to one-third of total world tourism coming from this region by 2020."

## Finished product is tribute to contractor

THE finished product at Greenpark Stadium is a tribute to John Sisk & Son Ltd., awarded with the contract for what was the largest construction project in the Mid West inside the last two years.

The stadium is similar in design, size, scope and complexity of Cork Greyhound Stadium, at Curraheen.

A new three-storey Headquarters office building attached to the Stadium was also constructed to house the Irish Greyhound Board, previously located at Henry Street.

Upwards of 250 construction jobs were created.

The original plans approved by the Irish Greyhound Board in 2005 were updated to accommodate greater building and environmental efficiency.

John J Casey and Company was appointed as project manager for the construction of the stadium in 2008.

## Des Hanrahan-Limerick's first and only chairman of Bord na gCon

THE opening of the new greyhound stadium will be a proud day for Des Hanrahan, now into his 80s, and who resides in Castletroy.

Back in late 1965, Des had a big decision to make.

In what was seen as a surprise choice, he was offered the position as chairman of Bord na gCon., the first and only Limerickman to be thus honoured.

Des was reared in the world of print media and was sports correspondent for all national newspapers and RTE. He was sports editor of a local publication.

Adept at all sports, he had a particular interest in greyhound racing and coursing, and in fact, owned a "greyhound or two".

In his youth, he had shown his soccer skills with Star Rovers AFC.

Excited by this new challenge, Des opted to put pen, paper and typewriter aside, and relocated to plush new offices in Henry Street, where Bord na gCon had set up their Headquarters.

Des spent 18 years in the hot seat and shaped the future of the Irish greyhound industry.

## Old Timers

MARKETS Field 'old-timers' have not been forgotten.

Dozens of senior citizens were regulars at the Mulgrave Street venue, and Bord na gCon, in co-operation with a local bus owner, have arranged transport from the Markets Field area to and from Greenpark on race nights, for a nominal return fare.

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# The night the Markets Field had its final send off

Mary Crotty with "Inislosky Fox" pictured saying goodbye at Market Field's Greyhound Stadium.



*'I saw how greyhound racing was rejuvenated in Cork when they moved to the new stadium in Curraheen; I think it will do the same for Limerick...'*

Reporter Colum Coomey was at the Mulgrave Street venue to say a final goodbye to a slice of Limerick history

HUNDREDS of avid greyhound racing enthusiasts, young and old, firmly believed that the Markets Field would outlive them.

So many promises had been made over two decades that even mere talk of a new home had almost been abandoned.

The day did arrive, however, when the gates were shut for the last time on a wet mid-July evening.

It was time to make way for the new €20 million stadium at Greenpark.

Upwards of 1,500 fans defied the heavy rain to witness the end of an era on that eventful night.

Even those who had been strong advocates of change were seen to shed a few tears, and left to harbour memories of great occasions.

It was a particularly nostalgic occasion for Rat bane's Paddy Kiely, aged 86, who had a 70-year association with the venue on two fronts.

Standing in his customary position alongside the tote, ready to pounce for what he believed would be a safe bet in the opening race on the card, the former Doran Builders employee recalled the day that he played a minor cup soccer match at the Markets Field in 1942 for Artisans against Wanderers.

That was the day when running under the stand after the match he split his forehead with a piece of timber.

Paddy refereed many major matches at the Markets Field, including the visit of Glasgow Celtic in the 1960's, when Jock Stein was at the helm and Kenny Dalglish and up-and-coming star player.

Apart from the soccer connection, he played rugby at the ground in the war years, and remembered in particular a friendly match for St Mary's against Garryowen in 1943.

Another long standing fixture at the track was bookmaker Frank Dunworth, 76, of the North Circular Road, who took his position for the first time at the Markets Field as a 23 year old, in 1956.

"I was brought up on Mungret Street and I started coming here I was a 10 year-old".



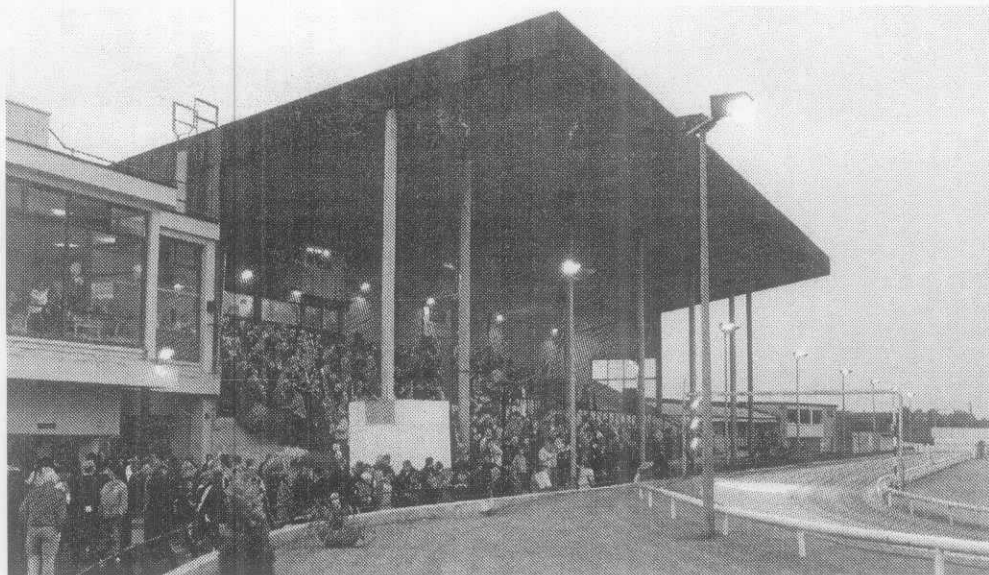
Mike and Sarah Loughnane, Nenagh.

Flanked by his two sons Stephen and Frank Jr, Mr Dunworth did not hide that he was sad to be leaving the track behind, and, indeed, questioned the move from the city centre location to Greenpark.

"There is no need for it, we'll be losing the best track in the country, they should have redeveloped the Markets Field instead".

No doubt he had a change of heart when he went to visit the Greenpark facility, what with all its mod cons.

He recalled fond memories of many great race nights over the years.



"We had some great characters, the likes of Gerry Brennan, Martin Mullaly, Paddy O'Neill, Stevie Coughlan, Malachy Skelly and Al Hogan".

There were also big punters, but was reluctant to mention names.

"40 or 50 years ago you could get a living out of it but not anymore... it's just a hobby now".

Another bookmaker I met, and almost 50 years younger than Frank, was 28 year-old Hugh O'Neill of Newmarket on Fergus, the third generation of his family to work at the track.

"I was brought in here before I can remember...I started when I turned 16.

"I accept that we need to move with the times but I think the bookmakers and the dogs are becoming more of a side-show.

"It's not about the gambling anymore; it's about the restaurant and the entertainment. "At the same time though, it will bring in more people, I mean you're not exactly going to bring your girlfriend down here".

He remembered when his grandfather had a book at the Markets Field, and there were dozens of others around him.

Punter Tom Hayes was very much in favour of the move

to the new track:

"I saw how greyhound racing was rejuvenated in Cork when they moved to the new stadium in Curraheen; I think it will do the same for Limerick".

The Kerryman, who has been bringing his dogs to the Markets Field for 30 years, described the track as the best in the country.

"I fell out with the race manager in Tralee 25 years ago and I've been coming here every Thursday and Saturday since because it's the finest in the country".

Former race manager Gus Ryan, agreed that the own-

Other memories that stand out for Gus are the thrill that local winners had when they won a race, especially the St.Leger.

"It was the second most important race in the country after the Derby. When we had local winners they were some occasions.

"Those that come to mind are Gerry O'Dea, Christy Daly, Jimmy Kelly, Willy Barry and most recently Pdraig Heffernan's Never Give Up".

So many people worked with him over the years, he said, sometimes you'd remember the dog before the person.

One character who sticks out in his mind was Michael 'The Gyke' O'Sullivan from Hospital, who recently passed away, at the age of 92.

"The owners and trainers would always be pulling strokes on each other. The Gyke wanted to slow one of his dogs in a trial so he stuffed his ears with cotton wool so he wouldn't hear the hare coming".

Gus met his late wife Margaret at the Market's Field in 1970, when she was working with auctioneers Sections.

"You wouldn't believe the amount couples that met here and went on to be married. This was a family venue in the past and you'd have families like the Kirby's and the Reddan's here every week".

He almost missed his first date with his future wife when one of his good friend's passed away at the track.

"I could name about nine or 10 people who died with excitement here after winning races. Mick Loughnane had a heart attack after winning the Leger with Time Up Please in 1971".

Soccer folk also have very happy memories of the Mulgrave Street venue, singling out the Ewan Fenton and Eoin Hand management years, when crowds of up to 8,000 flocked there.

Some famous names graced the venue, including the legendary Stanley Matthews in 1953, who travelled over to present the Shield Trophy to Limerick, who were collecting their first major honours.

Rory Keane, from Prospect, managed the team; he had plied his trade with ex-Swansea FC.

On the way out, a few hardy souls broke into Auld Lang Syne. Well they might!



Orla Strumble IGB with John Wall, Tralee.