

## SPORTING VIEW

### Jackie O'Connell steps down

No man in Limerick sport will merit his "retirement" more than Jackie O'Connell. Without fear of contradiction, the quietly spoken supreme of Limerick G.A.A. affairs for close on forty years fitted the expression "gentleman" to the letter.

His courtesy and efficiency are a by-word to all those in Gaelic games who had association with him and his departure will be keenly felt. But Mr. O'Connell has fully earned a break from the many exacting tasks which he took upon himself and nobody should begrudge it to him.

Jack O'Connell first made a serious impression in the great hurling years of the thirties. In 1934 he was a member of the Limerick team that won the All-Ireland hurling championship. He was one of the most skilled forwards that Limerick ever produced. Pressure of business was one of the chief factors that deprived him of even further honours as a player, but he was to go on to achieve even greater recognition as an administrator.

As secretary of the County Board, he became something of an institution. His task wasn't always an easy one, and he had to deal with many delicate matters, but he did so in a tactful, diligent manner that endeared him to all and ample testimony to his efficiency and popularity are the few occasions on which he was opposed in his 27 years in office.

When he eventually retired as Secretary, Mr. O'Connell served as Co. Board Chairman for two years, again impressing all by the wholehearted and intelligent way he went about the various tasks. In his role as Central Council delegate for the past eight years, Jack O'Connell's contributions have been immense and added not only to Limerick's stature, but to his own as one of the most able administrators Gaelic games ever had.

Now, he is to break further his connections with the Association, but those who know Jack O'Connell realise all too well that he will never lose his love for the games and will always be available whenever a problem arises.

He is that kind of gentleman.

## SOCCKER:

### C.B.S. plan World Cup walk

IN 1886, the "Limerick Chronicle" of the day tells us, the Irish Cycling Association and the Gaelic Athletic Association "paid £8.00 a day" for the use of the Markets Field. They were the first organisations to use the Markets Field as a sporting venue and their activities in those far-off days heralded the beginning of a ground that has since assumed a very special place in the hearts of all Limerick sports lovers. Now, it is threatened with "indefinite closure" and the two sports that remain on at the Markets Field, greyhound racing and soccer, must be in grave jeopardy after Dec. 31, 1974.

If the Frost family go ahead with their plans to close the Markets Field, it will be, to put it mildly, a controversial move. For all its drawbacks and those who have played there down the years will be the first to agree that at times its facilities bordered on the primitive the Markets Field has a glamour all of its own.

Its loss to Limerick sport would be incalculable.

So let us now go back in time back indeed to the 1880s - and the origination of the Markets Field as a sporting venue.

The following is the "Limerick Chronicle" description of the events . . .

"The Markets Field was leased to a number of citizens in the 1880s for the purpose of building artisan dwellings. They in turn, re-let the ground to an employee of the Trustees. The City Branch of the Irish National League protested vigorously against public property of this description being devoted to private interest and profit. Accordingly, steps were taken by the Market Trustees to know what was being done to have the houses erected.

"The prospective builders formed a company and applied to the Board of Works to sanction a loan, but the Board decided, after investigating the title, that the Market Trustees had no power to make a lease. Accordingly the building project was abandoned.

"In 1886, the organisers of the G.A.A. and the I.C.A. sports paid £8.00 per day for the use of the field."

So, with what appears to have been an exceptionally heavy daily tariff of £8, sporting proceedings got under way at the Markets Field. The first Gaelic sports, held under the rules of the G.A.A. and the I.C.A. in Limerick, commenced there on Sunday, September 19th, 1886. The



A view of the Markets Field with a soccer match in progress, showing the familiar landmark of St. John's Cathedral in the background.

sports were continued on Sunday, September 26th, and concluded on October 2nd with the first great band contest ever held in the city. The events attracted Ireland's cream of athletic talent, including such sporting giants as Mitchell of Emly, and the great R.I.C. cyclist Lowry.

## Records broken

Many records were broken at the sports, and the city was thronged with visitors from points as far distant as Waterford and Tuam. The third-class return fare from Waterford to Limerick was 3/-, and the trip took just 3½ hours.

Some time previously, a dispute existed between the G.A.A. and the I.C.A., but this, through the medium of Charles Gubbins, W. L. Stokes, A. W. Shaw and other prominent sporting personalities of the period, was settled, with the result that the men of both societies were enabled to compete at each other's sports.

The first day's fixture, under the direction of president, Stephen O'Mara, Mayor of Limerick; vice-presidents, L. O'Keefe, City High Sheriff; H. J. Gill, M.P.; W. Abraham, M.P.; J. Finnucane, M.P.; Judges, J. J. Clancy, T.C., Dublin; J. E. Kennedy, vice-president, GAA; Recd. Secs., E. A. Croke, J. Crowe; Call Stewards, T. Prendergast, J. J. Trehy; Handicapper and time-keeper, J. F. Gooley, Cork. Starter, J. MacNamara. Lap stewards,

E. O'Connor, M. Hogan, T. O'Neill. Telegraph stewards, J. Duggan, T. Malone, Hon. Secretary, E. J. Long.

So, the Markets Field had got off to the most propitious start possible, and for close on forty years, was to remain one of the most popular athletics venues in Ireland. On July 24th, 1888, P. J. Leahy, of Co. Limerick leapt 6 ft. 5½ inches, a world record, that for some strange reason, he never claimed. In 1899, there was a fantastic entry of 350 athletes for a meet that produced a number of records, and in 1920, one of Limerick's most famous sons, Jack O'Grady, whose exploits are now remembered by the monument at the top of Mulgrave Street, excelled himself there. The Garda sports at the Markets Field for many years, were exceedingly popular.

In the earlier years, the G.A.A. played their more important fixtures, first at the Grocers Field, situated where Lansdowne Park now stands, and also at Corkanree. Bnt, on November 22nd, 1896, the Limerick county senior hurling championship final was played at the Markets Field for the first time. The contestants were Caherline and Ballygarry, and the county final continued at the Markets Field up to 1916, when it moved for one year, to Pallaskey, before returning (with the exception of 1919), to the Markets Field.

In the late 'twenties, the

move to the Gaelic Grounds was made, although tournament games continued at the Markets Field up to about 1932.

The Markets Field was a famous inter-county venue. The then-record figure of £1,321 was paid by a tremendous crowd at the Cork-Tipperary Munster senior hurling final of 1925. The controversial final re-play of 1922 involving Limerick and Tipp., in which there were many rows, was also played at the Markets Field along with many other Munster Championship contests.

## Rugby

Young Ireland trained and played their matches there and trained alongside the Garryowen Rugby Club.

Which brings us to the oval ball game, which enjoyed a longer and closer association with the venue than any other, starting there as early as 1886, and stretching up to 1957, when Garryowen sold out their rights and moved to Dooradoyle. The Munster Cup final was played there on March 24th, 1888 when Queen's College beat Garryowen by a try to nil.

The following year, to be precise, March 25th, 1889, the Markets Field was again the Cup final venue, and Garryowen beat Limerick County by two goals and one try to nil to win the trophy for the first time. The teams that day may

be of interest . . .

**Garryowen** — full-back, Davis; halves, Nelson, Sullivan and McCarthy; quarters, Gavin and Stapleton; forwards, Prendergast, Collopy, Gaynor, T. Fogarty, McMahon, J. Fogarty, Hartnett, Archer and Hurley.

**Limerick County**—full-back, Swain; halves, Plummer, Peel and Egan; quarters, Hosford and Swain; forwards, de Courcy, Hynes, D. Toomey, Deegan, Egan, J. Toomey, Enright, Walnut, Hosford.

Mr. Meade acted as referee; umpire for Limerick, Mr. W. L. Stokes, and for Garryowen, Mr. J. Fogarty.

That, of course, was the first of innumerable Garryowen triumphs at the Markets Field, but as Young Munster and Bohemians came into existence in the twenties, so, too, did they enjoy their hour of glory at the venue. The tales of the exploits of these three, and Cork visitors like Constitution and University College, and the huge throngs they attracted in years gone by, are legion.

It was in the twenties and thirties, however, that a major change gradually began to evolve at the Markets Field. The ground that had housed Limerick's top G.A.A. and rugby matches, had been the centre for carnivals, circuses and even wrestling matches, and which had seen some of the world's finest athletes, was beginning to outlive its usefulness.

The G.A.A., for instance, moved to their present splendid grounds on the Ennis Road. The Rugby Union were in the initial stages of their switch to Thomond Park. The Markets Field, for all its suitability, had neither player nor spectator comforts sufficient to meet the wishes of at least two organisations, who, in any case, desired to be masters of their own domain.

But as hurling, football, and to a much lesser extent, rugby, moved out, so did soccer and greyhound racing move in, ensuring the continuation of the Markets Field as a leading sporting centre in Limerick. Limerick A.F.C. was founded in 1934, and straight away found the Markets Field a convenient and suitable home. They will be condemned in some quarters for still being there forty years later, but be that as it may, the many memorable soccer games played there have further enriched the traditions of the Markets Field.

## The dogs

Greyhound racing was launched there in 1932, and with

the subsequent advent of the Frost family as overlords, the facilities for this sport gradually improved until today they can rival those at most venues in the country.

The present difficulty isn't the only one to have threatened greyhound racing in Limerick. "Down Memory Lane" (30 years ago) in last week's "Chronicle," relates . . . "Following a difference between the Limerick Greyhound Track management and Garryowen Rugby F.C. over the lease of the grounds, the management announced that Saturday night meetings at the Markets Field would be discontinued. The club denied responsibility for the closing of the track.

"In the course of a letter outlining his club's position, the hon. secretary of Garryowen R.F.C., Mr. C. Carey, said that 'under a lease granted in 1926 by the trustees of Limerick Markets Field to certain prominent business people, who now constitute a body known as the Garryowen Athletic Grounds Ltd., the Markets Field was leased with the approval of the High Court for a period of 31 years, at an annual rent of £65.

"Under this lease, rights which were enjoyed by my club for many years prior to that date were specifically set out, namely a between the 15th September and 31st March of each year, St. Patrick's Day and Easter Monday included, that the Garryowen Football Club should have the exclusive use of the Markets Field on each Wednesday and Saturday. When Greyhound racing commenced at the Markets Field some years ago, the Greyhound Company were aware of the rights enjoyed by my club . . .

"Talks between legal representatives of the two bodies had recently, he said, reached an amicable conclusion, and he was surprised to hear that the company had now decided to discontinue racing on Saturdays."

Thankfully, that crux was overcome, and racing continues right up to the present day at the Markets Field. Garryowen finally left in 1957, and now only the dogs and soccer continue there. Present indications are that both are in jeopardy, but such a prospect would sadden the thousands of Limerick men and women who have looked upon the Markets Field as an important part of their lives for such a long time.

I have no doubt that a solution will—indeed must—be reached, for the continuation of greyhound racing and soccer in Limerick and of the Markets Field itself is an absolute necessity.

## Rugby fixtures and teams

### SATURDAY

**Senior Interprovincials:**  
Connacht v. Leinster, Sportsground, Galway, 2.30.  
Munster v. Ulster, Musgrave Park, Cork, 2.45.

### Senior Friendlies:

Young Munster v. Monkstown, Greenfields, 2.45. M. Lynch.  
Bohemians v. Clontarf, Thomond Park, 2.45. M. McInerney.

### Junior Friendlies:

Ennis v. Garryowen, Ennis, 2.45.  
Old Crescent v. Bruff, Rathbane, 2.45. Tom Moore.  
N.C.P.E. v. U.C.C., Plassey, 2.30. F. Malone.

### Final Junior Trial:

Munster Counties v. Cities, Clanwilliam, 2.30. G. Joyce.

### Youths:

Bohemians v. Clontarf, Annacotty, 2.45. G. Greenwood.

### Schools:

C.B.C. v. Crescent, Cork; Rockwell v. Templeogue, Rockwell, 2.45.

### Senior and Junior:

P.B.C. v. Limerick C.E.S., 11.30.

### SUNDAY

### Senior Friendlies:

Shannon v. Athlone, Thomond Park, 2.45. P. D'Arcy.  
Old Crescent 'A' v. Tralee, Rathbane, 2.45. J. Allen.

### Transfield League:

Presentation v. Shannon, at Ballysimon, 2.45. D. McGrath.  
Bruff v. Bohemians, Bruff, 2.45. J. Cole.

### Garryowen Cup:

Nenagh v. Carrick-on-Suir at Nenagh, 2.45. D. Carroll.

### Junior Friendlies:

Ballygarry Wasps v. Young Munster, Ballygarry, 2.45.  
S.P.S. v. Ballina, at Shannon, 2.45. J. Maloney.

Cashe v. Richmond, Bichmond Park, 2.45. A. McNamara.  
Bohemians v. St. Mary's, Thomond Park (back pitch), 2.45. J. O'Kane.

Old Crescent v. Thomond, Rosbrien, 2.45. F. Keegan.  
Garryowen v. Newport, Dooradoyle, 2.45. P. Duggan.

### Under 20:

Roscrea v. Garryowen, Roscrea, 2.45.

### Schools Interprovincial:

Connacht v. Munster, Galway, 2.45.

### Under 14 League:

St. Mary's v. Young Munster, 12 noon.

### TEAMS

**Young Munster**—P. Leahy; J. Costelloe, M. Gavin, D. Foley, B. O'Reilly; J. Brown, R. Ryan, D. Manning, T. McNamara, P. Huson; S. Carroll, B. O'Connor; G. Quaid, B. Minihan, J. Hayes.

**Young Munster II**: M. Thompson, J. Henry, J. Begg, J. Costelloe, M. Moore, M. Fitzgibbon, D. Allen, P. McGrath, T. King, P. Huson, P. Mullane, M. Moran, P. Foley, W. Johnson, J. Casey. Subs.: J. O'Donnell, M. Gleeson, K. Kiely, T. Ryan, K. Dillon, B. O'Connor.

**Presentation** (panel) — G. Ryan, N. Kirwan, T. Cronin, N. Markham, J. McCarthy, P. O'Donovan, J. O'Grady, J. McGarry, P. O'Donnell, M. Egan, M. Cronin, P. Hickey, P. Ryan, J. Bennis, T. Foley, G. Lawlor, P. O'Shea, M. Noonan, E. O'Shea, M. O'Shea.

## A HEALTH c broken int mid-night par terday.

It was describ

The clinic at Ballyna was described by Ch Bourke at a meeting. Mid-Western Health B being just a "bomb

He alleged that vandals in the building had holes in the roof and for "nocturnal parties" he said the board provide some pr against this type of va "It is not a matter guards," they canno there all night," he sa

## New clinic

Regarding the cons of the new clinic at C Park, Clr. Bourke stat as the bricks were he they were pulled down "Something should

to see that this is. The people need these Dr. Dick Stokes, pro medical officer, said t Ballynanty Beg area major new clinic, bu was the point in spe of money if the "pulled down."

"Mr. J. Hynes, C.E.O. that the new clinic w under construction at

## Reply t identity

### CLLR. THADY

paigning for ic drinking, received tice which does no

The reply states: and a suggestion on you advance carefu dered, Examination matter has thrown in administrative d which would seem

## DEATH

RIZGARD—December Regional Hospital, Insurance Park time