

# 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 McMenemy 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.

## 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.



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.

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