



TODDS: LOCAL INSTITUTION
PART TWO OF OUR
LOOK BACK AT THE
RETAIL GIANT P20 & 21



**RETURN
MARK**
SPECIAL SOUVENIR

Historic night as Markets Field opens

■ Crowds of 3,000 set for re-opening

ANNE SHERIDAN

anne.sheridan@limerickleader.ie

A NEW era is set to dawn for Limerick's "iconic" Markets Field, as it re-opens this Friday night following the completion of a €4.5m redevelopment.

Some 31 years since it was fully operated as a soccer stadium, it has now been redeveloped with major funding made available by the JP McManus Foundation, amongst others, and plans secured for its long-term future.

President Michael D Higgins will be among those in attendance this Friday night when Limerick FC host Drogheda Utd in the SSE Airtricity League Premier Division at 7.45pm.

Pat O'Sullivan, chairman of Limerick FC, said "it was a big occasion for Limerick", as the ground is considered to be the spiritual home of soccer in the city.

The redeveloped venue will be a Category 2 UEFA stadium with a capacity of 3,075, and the main stand



George Lee, of LEDP, in the Markets Field

will have seating capacity for 1,340.

The funding has been made available from the Limerick Enterprise Development Partnership (LEDP) and the McManus Foundation, along with significant State funding.

Mr O'Sullivan emphasised that the stadium - owned by the LEDP - will need the continued support of the community - in the bad times, and in the good.

"I had a plan coming into Limerick soccer in 2009 to finance it and keep it alive.

I did it because the city was getting such a hammering with crime and anti-social issues, and I feel that sport has the ability to change a lot of people and how they live their lives, in particular soccer," he explained.

Among its downfalls, he said, was that the club only ever had the senior team, but they "put an underage structure in place to encapsulate the four corners of the city to bring communities together through sport".

"The Markets Field has the potential to fulfil the aspirations and hopes of an awful lot of people in Limerick when you speak to them about sport, and about soccer. It's the completion of a long term plan.

"I've spent a long time at it and it hasn't been easy. I think it's great for Garryowen area and the community there, and the city. Obviously I want to acknowledge the

CONTINUES ON PAGE 2

Great balls of fire



There were dramatic scenes at the fire which went on fire close to the motorway.

Maghnus

ALAN OWENS

alan.owens@limerickleader.ie

DESPITE admitting to being a less than expert swimmer, Limerick adventurer Maghnus Collins has set off on his latest expedition - 'unprecedented' 1,600km swim around the entire island of Ireland.

If completed, the Costcutt Swim 360 team of Maghnus and David Burns, from Coleraine, will be the first people to swim the entirety of the Irish coastline a likely the longest verifiable swim ever recorded in the Atlantic.

The pair - veterans of an epic 14,000km journey from Istanbul to Shanghai by bike, foot and raft - will attempt to complete the swim

KX: LIMERICK LEADER
6TH JUNE 2015
PAGE 1 & 2

City publican set to be new metro mayor

➔ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Fine Gael's leader in the metropolitian district Cllr Michael Hourigan believes the status quo of Limerick having two mayors will remain - for now.

If elected as overall mayor, Cllr Galvin said one of his principal aims will be to bring more parity to funding between city and county.

Born and raised in Abbeyfeale, he is married to Catriona.

First elected in 2004, he held his council seat in 2009 and 2014, where he increased his vote.

Cllr Hourigan says he expects the grand coalition to hold together.

But as the late Jim Kemmy said: "Until such time as the chain is around your neck, you are not officially the mayor."

Markets Field set to re-open on Friday

➔ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

McManuses and all those in LEDP who helped.

"But now what we're saying to the people of Limerick, who've said we'll support you when you go back to the Markets Field, it's there for them now, and I just hope people will come out and support us.

"There's a tendency in sport in Limerick that people really start to support you when you're winning, but like any friend in need, when you're trying to build something you need support."

While it has more recently been known as a greyhound stadium, Labour minister Jan O'Sullivan earlier said "the Markets Field holds a special place in the hearts of all Limerick sporting interests."

George Lee, of the

LEDP, said one of the "beauties" of the stadium project is that it is re-opening debt-free.

"That allows us the luxury of being able to establish the ground and put in place a business plan without having the pressure of ensuring the mortgage is paid every month. That means we can take a much longer term strategic view.

"This ground is for the people of Limerick, it is not just for soccer, but for every sport and other activities as well.

"Obviously, we have licensing criteria and we have to be careful of the pitch.

"Talking to Martin Russell, the Limerick FC manager, over the past couple of days, he really, really wants to get a result here on Friday night. It would be a fantastic homecoming if we could get the first three points in the bag."