

# Ted Russell, mayor, TD, senator, businessman, sportsman

By MARTIN BYRNES

THE death occurred this Sunday of the city's longest-serving public representative, Freeman of Limerick and honorary doctor of UL, Ted Russell, aged 92.

George Edward Russell was Alderman for Ward One in each of four decades, was five times mayor, represented Limerick as a TD and later as a senator. He was chairman of the then Limerick Harbour

Commissioners for what is believed to be a world record 26 successive years. He was also a director of the Chamber of Commerce and became its president.

His business interests included the family firm, Dan O'Connor Ltd., the animal feeds millers on the Ballysinn Road, and the National Bakery on Broad Street and National Rusks on the Dock Road. He was also chairman of Silvermines Lead and Zinc plc, and of Shield

Insurance company. He also founded Limerick Dairies with Michael O'Brien Kelly.

A lifelong member of Bohemians RFC and a former president of the club, he had been a Munster trialist in his younger days. He faithfully followed Ireland on the rugby field, making his headquarters the Berkeley Court Hotel on Lansdowne Road for international weekends.

Born into a prosperous Limerick merchant family with a tradition

of public service (his own grandfather, George Russell represented the Irishtown Ward on City Council until 1876 and other forebears, John Norris Russell, Richard Russell and Thomson Russell had each been Sheriffs of Limerick in the mid 1800s), the young Ted was educated at Stoneyhurst, a Catholic boarding school in England before returning to join the firm of his uncle, Dan O'Connor at their shop and store at William Street in 1929.

He was descended from the milling and baking Russells.

He was easily elected to the City Council in 1941 and to the Harbour Commissioners, and sat for the short-lived Clann na Poblachta, under Seán McBride.

Mr Russell entered the Dáil an independent. He later transferred to Fine Gael. He continued as a member of Seanad Éireann until the election of 1977, and withdrew from City Council at

the elections of 1979 after 38 years as Alderman for Ward One. He was replaced as councillor by his son, George, who sat one term. At the time of his leaving council, Ted Russell donated a gold medallion, inscribed with the arms of the city, to be worn by the Lady Mayoress at official functions. Its first recipient was Mrs Helen Byrne.

A noted philanthropist, Mr Russell also donated the land behind his home, 'Der-

avoher', North Circular Road, to the people at the time of the construction of Condell Road, and is now the roadside park beside Barrington's Pier which bears his name.

Also dedicated to him during his lifetime, to mark his service to the Harbour Commissioners, is the city dock itself.

Among his other interests was the mercantile history of Limerick, and he made a memorable contribution to the special mil-

lennium supplement of the Limerick Leader of January 1, 2000.

Mr Russell was made Freeman of Limerick in 1995 in the company of two other notables, Dr Brendan O'Regan, chief motivator of Shannon Airport and Shannon Development, and Dr Edward M Walsh, founding president of the University of Limerick. At the time of his investiture as freeman by Mayor Dick Sadlier, Mr Russell made an impassioned appeal to city

councillors to conserve the tradition and character which has been part of Limerick for a thousand years.

He was subsequently conferred with an honorary doctorate by UL. When his beloved Bohemians merged with UL, he continued to attend their matches, well into his nineties. His coffin was draped in the club colours.

He is survived by his wife Derry, and his son George and daughters, Mary, Margaret and Derry.

# Remembering the varied life of city's most honoured son

By MICHAEL NOONAN TD

TED Russell is dead and Limerick mourns. George E (Ted) Russell was born in 1912 ten years before the State was founded.

During his long life he served that State well in both national and local politics, in business and in sport, and in many voluntary organisations.

He was Mayor of Limerick on five occasions. He was a member of Limerick City Council for 36 years, a member of the Harbour Commissioners for 31 years, 26 as chair-

man, and he served as both a TD for Limerick and as a Senator.

His public career is a catalogue of Limerick life in the twentieth century. No event took place in which he was not a dynamic, wise and prudent participant.

His contribution to business was immense. The National Bakery, Dan O'Connor Limited and National Rusks, but also as a senator on the industrial and commercial panel, and as a director and president of the Limerick Chamber of Commerce. The list of his directorships is like a role call of Limerick business: chairman of Silvermines, of Arran Energy, of Limerick Dairies, of Limerick

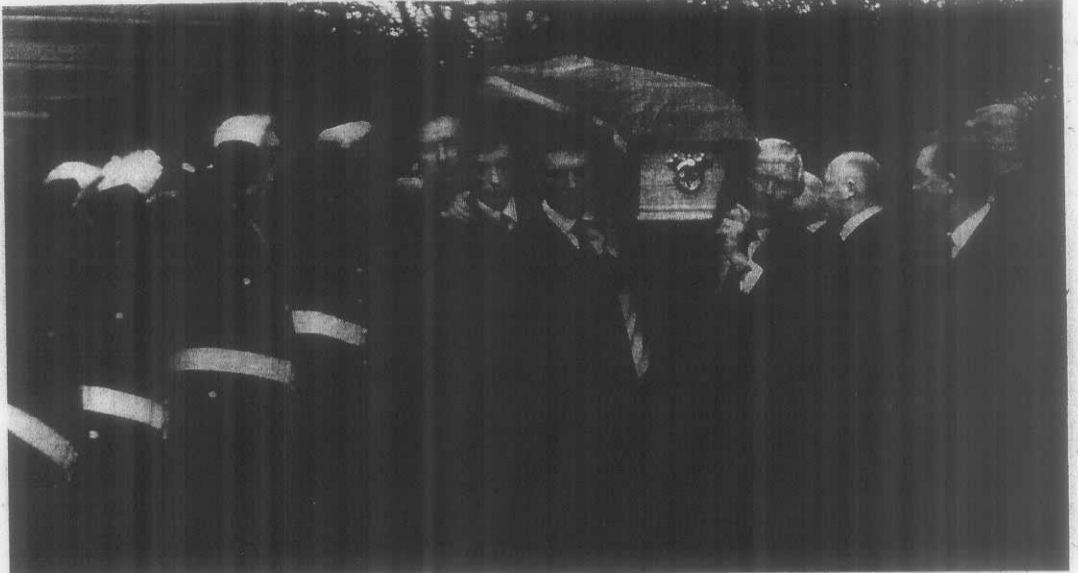
Meat Packers, of SVS Shipping, director of Shield Insurance, Limerick Clothing Company, Ferenka Limited and Limerick Savings Bank.

He excelled as a sportsman. When he was a boarder in Stoneyhurst he made the school XV, he captained Bohemians in 1935 and 1936, played for Munster in 1936, 1937 and 1938 and got a final trial for Ireland in 1938. At Stoneyhurst he was a champion athlete and was very proud of the three silver cups he won in the school sports in his final year. As a young man he hunted with the Limerick Harriers and was director of Limerick Racecourse for many years.

This catalogue of his public life obscures the

private man who is remembered so fondly particularly on the North side of the city: the good employer who gave work to so many the charitable man who merged his work with the St Vincent de Paul Society with his work in the City Hall to help the poor; the good neighbour who walked to daily Mass in the Holy Rosary Church, the kind benefactor who donated part of his property at Barrington's Pier to the people, the loving husband who married Derry Gleeson in 1938, the loving father of Mary, Margaret George and Derry.

Ted Russell was a Freeman of Limerick. No man deserved the honour more. He will be sorely missed.



Draped in the colours of his beloved UL Bohs, and saluted by an honopur party from the Limerick City Civil Defence, the coffin of Ted Russell is taken from Holy Rosary Church (LL)



Former club president Ted Russell conducts UL Boh's celebrations at Thomond Park after beating Midleton RFC and reaching the Division One AIB All, pictured with club president Fergus Walsh (LL)

# The piety and charity of Ted Russell's life is celebrated

By MAIRÉAD NÍ CHAOIMH

A CITY councillor paying tribute to the late Ted Russell, described him as "the last great merchant prince of Limerick".

Cllr Kathleen Leddin, at a special meeting of the council called this Wednesday to honour Mr Russell.

"He was the last of the rich upper class merchants of Limerick, the last of the huge benefactors."

Mr Russell 92, a leading figure on the political, sporting, and business stage of Limerick City was laid to rest this Wednesday in Mount St Lawrence cemetery.

Bishop Donal Murray, while delivering the final commendation and farewell for Mr Russell at his funeral Mass said, "We have lost an outstanding and amazing son of Limerick".

A wide cross-section of Limerick life was represented at the funeral in the Holy Rosary Church on the Ennis Road.

Eulogising at the Mass his son George said, "My father was a man of principle, integrity, honesty and loyalty. Yes, he could be stubborn and opinionated, but maybe it was these characteristics that helped him achieve all he did."

Mr Russell was five times mayor of Limerick over three decades and he also served as a

TD and Senator. He was chairman of a number of local businesses, and played key roles in many organisations such as the Limerick Harbour Commissioners, Limerick Chamber of Commerce, Bohemians rugby club, Saint Vincent de Paul and the Cancer Association of Ireland.

Present at the funeral were Mayor of Limerick Michael Hourigan, Cathaoirleach of Limerick County Council Eddie Wade, Dean Maurice Sirr, Dean of St Mary's Cathedral and representatives of the Garda Síochána.

Robed County and City Councillors, members of Bohemians rugby club and the Civil Defence formed a guard of honour as the coffin was carried out of the church.

Mr Russell's 87-year-old wife Derry led the mourners at the Mass accompanied by her children Derry, George, Margaret and Derry.

Fr Tom Ryan, who concelebrated the Mass with eight other priests, said Mr Russell "did so much for Limerick but never lost the common touch."

"He continued to go to Mass every day up until only a few months ago. He was a great Christian, and when he used to visit families in St Mary's Park he would quietly leave half a crown on the kitchen table," said Fr Ryan.

He also said that he was "a caring father".

A book of condolences was at the church and also at the removal at Millford Care Centre on Tuesday night for people to sign.

His son George said his father had a long and full life.

"He put more into it than others would put into ten," he said.

One of Mr Russell's finest moments was in 1995 when he was presented with the highest honour Limerick City Council can bestow on a citizen—the freedom of the city.

He was also honoured with an honorary doctorate of economic science from UL two years ago.

Prayers of the faithful and the offertory procession were carried out by Mr Russell's grandchildren William and David Hartnett and Christine and Caroline O'Neill.

Soloist at the Mass was Derek Moloney and organist was Colette Davis.

Tom O'Donnell, retired Fine Gael minister and MEP said no man deserved the freedom of the city more than Mr Russell.

"He had a deep commitment to Limerick. He was a dedicated and sincere public representative who gave outstanding service to Limerick and Ireland. It is very fitting that he was accorded the honour of freeman. Ní bheidh a leithéid ann arís," he said.

At the Limerick City Council meeting Cllr Ger Fahy said that Mr Russell's contribution to local charities and communities was not widely known.

"He was not just a figurehead of charities, he also gave of his time and was actively involved," said Cllr Fahy.

"I remember back in 1986 I asked Ted could he help with the Limerick Rescue Service. And it was down to his intervention that it got a boat and an engine. This was quite typical of the man," he said.

Mayor Michael Hourigan said in every area of Limerick life Mr Russell made a contribution.

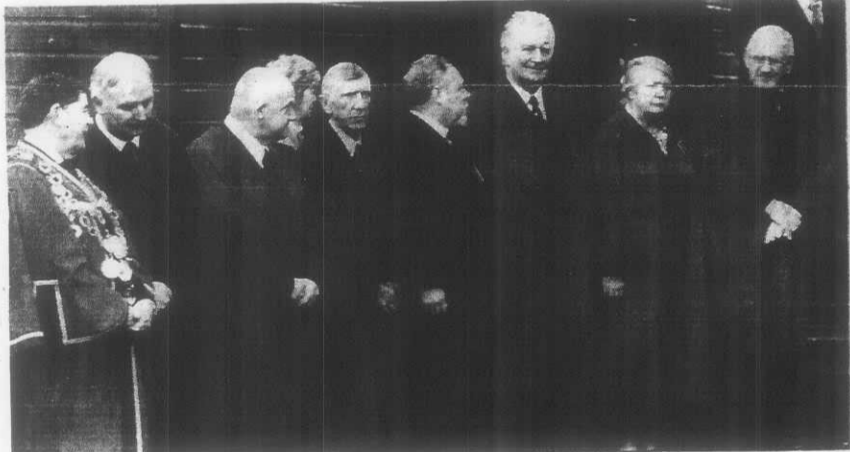
"His family were one of the major employers in Limerick for a long time."

"Ted told me himself that one of the areas he was most proud of was the establishment of St Luke's Hospital in Dublin. This in particular made him happy," said the Mayor.

Mr Russell was the driving force behind the establishment of that hospital and the University of Limerick.

According to Minister for Defence Willie O'Dea Mr Russell was "central in the campaign in the setting up of UL".

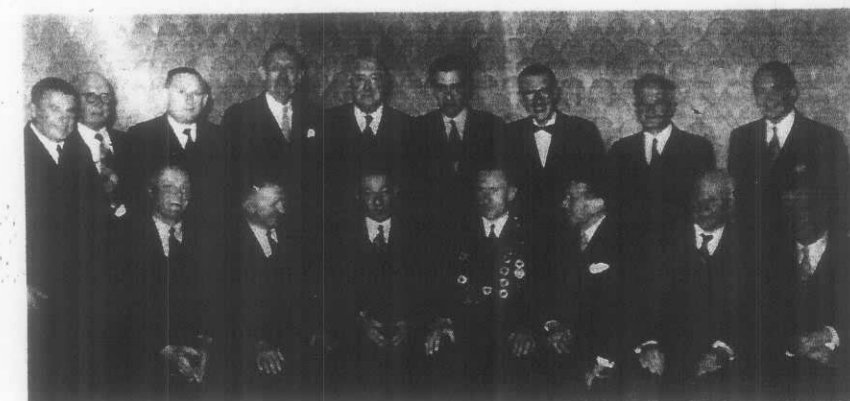
"Most developments in Limerick in the past 30 years he was involved in. He was a Limerick institution," concluded Minister O'Dea.



Mayor Michael Hourigan, City Manager, Tom Mackey and city councillors line up to pay their respects



Pictured at the launch of the book "Made in Limerick" at the Georgian House Pery Square, Mayor Dick Sadlier with Ted Russell and Denis Leonard, Limerick Civic Trust (LL)



The photograph was taken at an occasion of a dinner of the ex-Mayors of Limerick at the invitation of Alderman G. E. Russell, Mayor of Limerick at Cruise's Hotel, O'Connell Street, on Saturday, June 23rd, 1956. Seated (left to right): Patrick J. Donnellan, 1930-'31, 1931-'32, 1932-'33, James Reidy 1944-'45, Michael J. Keyes 1928-'29, G. E. Russell 1954-'55, 1955-'56, 1956-'57, Stephen M. O'Mara, 1921-'22, Patrick F. Quinlan 1933-'34, 1934-'35, Desmond J. O'Malley 1941-'42, 1942-'43. Standing (left to right): Stephen Coughlan 1951-'52, Patrick O'Connell 1947-'48, John Carew 1953-'54, Gerald B. Dillon 1949-'50, Michael Hartery 1945-'56, John C. Hickey 1946-'47, James McQuane 1943-'44, Kevin Bradshaw 1950-'51, 1952-'53, Michael B. O'Malley 1948-'49. Unavoidably absent from the photograph was Alphonsus M. O'Mara 1918-'29.