

SOCCER GERALDINES AFC 75TH ANNIVERSARY

Looking back with pride

Geraldines AFC are 75 years in existence this year and **PRO Turlough McNamara** relives another part of the club's eventful history

Over the years many trophies have found a home under the tower and each of those victories in all grades will forever hold a place with those who played their part.

It was back in the season of 1953/54 that the candy stripes annexed their first ever league title in the same season the Club won their first eve double.

Having been unable to add any silverware to the Cromer Cup victory in 1949/50 Geraldines kicked off 1953/54 determined to bring honours to the club.

They set about their task in superb style winning their first six games on the trot before arch-rivals Garryowen Celtic temporarily halted their run, holding Jimmy Heffernan & Co to a 1-1 draw.

Celtic incidentally withdrew from junior football some weeks later but the Dines went from strength to strength and were favourites together with Wembley Rovers to represent Limerick in the 'open draw' stages of the FAI.

It was the Blues that proved the biggest threat to the men from the Cellar and when the sides met in the second last series of matches it was Martin Reddan and his Wembley team mates who claimed the points thanks to a Tom Clifford goal in an absorbing contest at Shelbourne Park.

This left us a point in arrears and only victory over Johnsgate in the final league game on March 4 would see us take the title. Inspired by Frankie Collopy, who returned after a stint with Wembley, they destroyed their arch rivals much to the delight of their happy bank of followers. The 'Gate had no answer to a Dines eleven who had the scorers in Jimmy Heffernan, a cupule from Dick Keane and a superb hat-trick from Frankie Collopy left us 6-0 winners and our very first league title. The panel that season comprised of Johnny Collopy, Noel Greaney, John Hannon, Tom Power, Pat Butler, Micheal Collopy, Frank Collopy, and Josie Butler.

The Club did never the less lift a second trophy that June when they captured the coveted North Munster Cup. Geraldines took on keen rivals Wembley in the semi-final. The Red and Whites swept into and unassailable or so it seemed three goal lead in the opening 25 minutes, but Wembley to their credit battled back to tie the game at three a piece at the end of normal time.

In the fifth minute of extra time Wembley swept into the lead for the first time but not to be out done we tie the game at four apiece and the supporters went home in the knowledge that another cracker between the sides lay in store.

The replay was scheduled for the Pike Field and as expected the game drew a huge and enthusiastic crowd to the venue and the players did not disappoint. We were again first to score through Jimmy Heffernan but within ten minutes Tom Clifford levelled matters to leave the sides even at the break. The second half was delicately poised with both defences soaking up pressure and as extra



Back in the day: The Geraldines team that were League and North Munster Cup Winners in 1954: Back row from left - Sean O'Donovan, Pa Butler, Johnny Collopy, John Noonan, Jimmy Heffernan, Donal O'Donovan. Front - John Hannon, Josie Butler, Tommy Power, Dick Keane, Noel Greaney. Insets from left - Frankie Collopy and Paddy Hughes; Below - the Geraldines team that won the Lawson Cup in 1961/62

time loomed Josie Butler headed the winner.

In a seven-goal thriller Geraldines lifted the North Munster Cup for the first time with John Noonan the hero netting the all-important winner with the game destined for extra time.

The 1954/55 season yielded nothing in the line of silverware despite the fact that under age sides were entered at U-14 and U-17 level but the club kept plugging away due in the main to the staunch work of J. Lowe, G Greaney, G Cross, G Storan, D O Sullivan, J Ryan, P Butler, J Sinclair, J Butler, J Noonan, M Coughlan.

Things improved considerably the following season and despite a 4-0 exit at the semi-final stage of the FAI we enjoyed a far better campaign both on league and cup fronts even if there wasn't any silverware to show at the end.

The late 50 proved to be a barren period in the extreme for the club but those involved at the time will remember vividly an intriguing Lawson Cup match against Caledonians which ended all square (2-2) amidst all sorts of suggestions that the referee had overplayed the tie by 14 minutes and that Cals equaliser was literally a shot in the dark.

Geraldines had qualified for the semi-final with a 5-1 victory Star Rovers. On a beautiful evening a crowd which yielded £105 to the collection turned up to see if the Dines could lower the colours of the mighty Caledonians who lined out: Don Murray, Paddy White, Pat Sheehan, Harry Byrnes, Tom O Connor, Pa Wilmot, Tommy Lynch, Dickie Butler, Davy Constable, PJ Meagher and Louie Byrnes.

What a combination! Geraldines

could call on Jimmy Heffernan, Mick Daly, Mick Ryan, Tom McInerney, John Kelly, John Noonan among others and so keen was the interest that the referee had to half proceeding on five occasions as the supporters encroached on the playing area.

Jimmy Heffernan put the Dines ahead before Cals levelled to eave 1-1 at the short whistle Mick Ryan restored our lead with a fine goal. With the 90 minutes up and darkness rapidly descending Geraldines looked home and dry.

Then came the drama. The referee, who later reputedly admitted that his watch had stopped, allowed 14 minutes overtime and at the end of which Tommy Lynch had levelled matters at two apiece to the absolute consternation of the Geraldine's players and supporters.

The replay was scheduled for the following night at Healy's Field and Cals obviously elated at getting a second bite at the cherry romped home to a 4-0 win.

While trophies were scarce in the period the club did endeavour to

revive interest in the juvenile section and in 1959 Eddie Lynch, Josie Butler, Frankie Greaney and Sean O Donovan with the assistance of Don Bosco players acquired by Frank Greaney helped refloat the underage section bringing such players as Gus Hourigan, Sean Buckley, Joe Quinn, Sammy Dalton and net minder Willie Morrissey to their ranks at a time when youngsters like Eddie O Donovan Pike and Sean Carter Fairview were gracing the playing fields on the schoolboy scene.

Having been there or thereabout in the mid to late fifties it was hoped that as the club entered a new decade the persistence of C Daly, P Leahy, M Coughlan, J Purcell, B O Sullivan and others off the field would manifest itself on the field and at last some silverware could adorn our very barren sideboard.

League form however on the junior front was quite indifferent and by the beginning of the new decade had dropped vital points which left us lying fifth in the table three points adrift of Wembley Rovers with Bally-

nanty, Limerick B and Caledonians in hot pursuit.

League hopes had evaporated by this stage and there was no joy either on the Saxone Cup front where Caledonians again mastered Hugh 'Mull' and Co though it took two replays (2-2 and 0-0) before Cals won by the odd goal in seven. Ten days after that the same club ended our interest on a more decisive 4-0 score line.

Our good run in the Lawson Cup ended in a 2-1 defeat at the hands of Limerick B at Rangers Park on the 5th June 1960 when Al Finucane headed the winner and Don Kelly (Geraldines) and Tony Brosnahan had earlier exchanged goals.

On the youth front the season was a fruitless one trophy wise though they did give the mighty Fairview Rangers a great game in the Munster Youth Cup. Encouraged by a 5-0 win over Shelbourne in round one when Tim O'Brien (2), D McInerney, Jim McCarthy and Joe O'Brien scored they drew 3-3 with the blue and golds in the second round in a game where Noel Keehan was superb between the sticks. Christy Neville opened the scoring for Geraldines before Larry Cross levelled.

John Hennessy gave Fairview the lead and then Mick O'Connell the Fairview custodian carried a Sean Colbert effort over the line to leave the sides sharing four goals at the end of the game.

Sam O'Connor restored Fairview's lead before Colbert again came to our rescue with a superb goal. Unfortunately that effort proved too much and the View went on to win the replay. It should be noted that five years later most of that Fairview side went to take FAI Junior Cup honours.



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Champions: The Geraldines team that won the Lawson Cup in 1971. Back row - Gerry O'Sullivan, Patsy Collopy, Dan Cullinane, Finbar Ryan, Jimmy McCarthy, Paddy Murphy, Pat Mullins, Liam Lawlor, Denis Vereker, John Ryan; Middle row - Sonny Coughlan, Paddy Fitzgerald, Joe Purcell, Gerry Mulcahy, Paddy Hughes, Ger Costelloe, Front - John Joe O'Regan and Fintan Lawlor.

A fine Lawson Cup history

In the latest of his articles on Geraldine's 75-year celebrations **Turlough McNamara** looks back on the club's proud tradition in the Lawson Cup

If one trophy has truly abiding memories for all Geraldines, it surely is the coveted famous Lawson Cup which has found its home under the Tower on seven occasions in our 75 years of football. Indeed this year also marks the 50th anniversary of our first Lawson success.

The 1961/62 season proved to be a pivotal one for all in Geraldines as the ground work had been laid and though Geraldines lost their opening game of the season 2-1 to Prospect on August 20, 1961, (Harry Cox scoring) they quickly set about displaying the type of football that was by the seasons end to bring them Limerick's most coveted trophy.

Star Rovers provided the opposition in the opening round at Healy's Field where goals from Josie Butler, Harry Cox and Joe O'Brien saw the Dines safely through. Another Parish side provided the opposition in round two Island Utd and it took a Hugh Mulcahy goal to see off Larry Johnson, Pa Hayes, Pa Phayer & Co.

In the semi-final we had a much easier than expected 5-1 victory over a Prospect XI that included Jimmy McCarthy, Mick Benson and Junior Joyce. Joe O'Brien helped himself to four goals in this encounter with Harry Cox getting the other.

Our reward was another crack at Ballananty in the final and the date was set for the first Sunday in June

and the venue the Markets Field.

Because of the traditional church procession that celebrates the feast of Corpus Christi the kick off was delayed until 5pm and as the procession ended in St Johns Square once the ceremonies had been completed almost everyone to a man made the short trip up Garryowen to the Markets Field. It was 'house full' and a perfect setting for the top tie of the season.

Ballananty were a more talented and experienced side and had a cabinet full of trophies to prove it, but the valiant Dines once more came out on top. J O'Brien headed two beauties while 'Nockie' Tobin knocked in one in reply. Every Geraldine was a hero - Kelly and Fitzie, the fulls, kept 'Nockie' and 'Tootsie' well under control nothing passed Jackie Gavin down the middle, Denis McInerney was a trojan at right half while Paddy Allen on the left was as we all remember him Paddy Allen. Up front wingers Cox and Mulcahy teased and taunted the Balla defence, Jimmy Rochford at 37 somehow managed to pull out all his old skills in what was his last football hurrah. He went out in style. Hugh Mulcahy, the quiet man of the team, was his usual industrious self and Joe O'Brien did what he was best at shoving the ball in the net. Net minder Vinny Prendergast was a pillar of strength in goal.

The victorious team was: V Prendergast, J Kelly, D Fitzgerald, D McInerney, J Gavin, P Allen, J Rochford, H Mulcahy, H Cox, J O'Brien, and P Mulcahy.

The scenes which followed that victory had to be seen to be believed and the elation was something to be savoured. The celebrations following the presentation of the cup by LDMC chairman Jim Jackman lasted long into the night culminating in a su-

perb speech at 1am at the home of the then LDMC sec Charlie Ingle who addressed and congratulated a happy Geraldines contingent from the upper chambers of his Janesboro residence.

Ten years on from the first victory the Club then won their first of four Lawsons in a row. It was in 1970-71 and in the opening round saw off Wanders 3-0 as Liam Lawlor (2) and Denis Vereker struck. The Boro B were next up as we advanced 4-2 - Liam Lawlor with two goals again while Denis Vereker and new signing John Joe Regan, who had joined from Croom, added one each.

Prospect and Tanyard all were seen off before we faced a mighty Cals side that had beaten us earlier in an area FAI final. The Lawson final was fixed for the Markets field on Sunday, June 12, 1971, with Cals installed as unbackable favourites. By all accounts this was a cracker as an efficient Dines outfit ended their ten-year trophy famine with a sensational 1-0 extra time victory.

The hero of this victory was Liam Lawlor as he quenched all hope for Sean Carter and Co as he latched on to John Slattery's cross to crack the net as the candy stripes played some of their best football in extra time. The squad of players was: Jude Curtis, Larry Murphy, Jimmy McCarthy, Liam Lawlor, Fintan Lawlor, Dan Cullinane, John Ryan, Jackie Clancy, John Slattery, Denis Vereker, Patsy Collopy, M Collopy, P. Mullins, M. O Gorman, A Drew, Dickie Butler.

Twelve months on and lady luck again smiled on us when pipping Fairview in the final after a thrilling tie at the Markets Field.

Anybody at this particular game will remember the thrills, spills and goalmouth incidents with both goalkeepers O'Reilly, Fairview and

our own Paddy Murphy in brilliant form.

After many dramatic near misses and close shaves, Fairview finally took the lead when Sean O'Connor and Christy Egan combined well for the latter to square across to Gerry Caulfield who headed on for the in-rushing Kieran Carey and he gave Paddy Murphy no chance from close range. But Denis Vereker became a Geraldine's hero almost overnight with a magnificent performance in the middle of the park and with John Ryan and Jimmy McCarthy lending support the game turned our way. John Joe missed a sitter from six yards O'Reilly brought off superb saves from Artie and John Ryan. Going into the final quarter Fairview looked to be good enough to hold out.

Vereker won a battle for possession in his own half and pumped a long ball downfield to centre forward Walter Shanahan who finished off with some aplomb to send this final into extra time. With a replay looming John Joe Regan took a pass from Artie Murphy in the last minute and guided the ball home. The team was Pat Murphy, Fintan Lawlor, Jim McCarthy, Denis Vereker, Finbar Ryan, John Ryan, Walter Shanahan, Art Murphy, Liam Lawlor and Ger Mitchell.

The three in a row of Lawsons was annexed the following year and we got a good start beating neighbours St Johns CYMS 5-1 with Shanahan (2), O'Regan, Finbar Ryan and Vereker scoring. Paddy Buckley replied for the 'Saints'. Weston Villa were next to feel the power of the Reds being hammered 6-1 with Murphy (3), Martin O'Donnell, Seamie Kenihan and Liam Lawlor scoring. In the quarter final they beat Roxboro 2-1 while in the penultimate round Abbey Rovers fell 5-1 with Koyce (3), O'Donnell and

O'Regan scoring.

Though the final took a back seat to the official opening of Priory Park - now Jackman Park - it was nevertheless fitting that Geraldines should mark the auspicious occasion by inscribing their name on the trophy at the expense of Caledonians. Once again it was Martin O'Donnell who emerged the hero with a well struck penalty kick. Thirty nine years on, his son Paul is the current A Manager. Many thought our thirst for Lawson Cup glory had diminished after taking three in a row but such was not the case when beating Ballananty Rovers in an epic final by the odd goal in three.

Arty Murphy gave us the lead beating deputy custodian Pat Lawlor, Tommy Meehan levelled. The issue was now in the melting pot and it took some heroic defensive work by Jim McCarthy, Art Murphy, Seamus Kenihan and Finbar Ryan to keep the Ballananty front runners at bay.

In yet another Lawson final it took a late goal in extra time to seal victory as yet again Liam Lawlor popped up to score four minutes from time and with that Lawson number four in a row was won.

The club then won two more Lawsons back to back in 1979-80 and 1980-81 with players of the quality of Alfie Johnson, Liam Lawlor, Mick Condon, Pat Madigan, Ger Cussen, Dave Power, Tom Hannon, Finbar Ryan, Fintan Lawlor, Gerry Burke, Pat Healy, and Eddie O'Neill.

Without question that was a Golden spell for the Club as a long with Lawson victories the Premier league success came in 1972-73, 1974-75, 1978-79, 1979-80 and 1980-81 as Saxone Cups were won in 1972-73, 1973-74 and 1980-81 and also the Munster Junior Cup came our way in 1978-79 all in all a great period for all involved with the Dines.