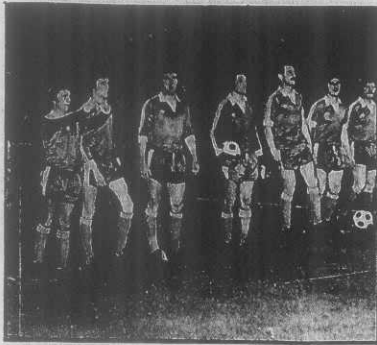


Limerick Leader

Printed by Limerick Leader Printing Ltd., and published by Limerick Leader Ltd., 54 O'Connell Street, Limerick. Telephones: 315233 (advertising) and 315344 (editorial), Telex: 28143.



Happy days . . . Limerick players salute the 50,000 crowd at Barnabeau Stadium, home of Real Madrid, and which hosted the 1982 World Cup Final.

PLAYING THE GAME

SOCCER IS special in Limerick, the most sports-conscious community in Ireland if not in Europe or even the entire world.

The city is famous for rugby — both on the field, where Limerickmen playing with near-religious fervour have accomplished anything and everything from capturing the Bateman Cup to beating the All Blacks, and off the field, where the oval ball transcends all barriers of class and creed.

The county, including the ancient borough, is famous for hurling. In Munster and All Ireland championships, in the National League and in the Oireachtas and other competitions successive generations of Limerickmen have acquitted themselves with distinction. Limerick hurlers consistently attract proportionately the largest following of spectators in the land.

In terms of participation, however, soccer is supreme. More Limerick people play association football than any other game. Nor is this a passing fad, a yo-yo style craze that subsides as quickly as it swells.

GAA players on Shannonside were prominent at soccer matches long before the abolition of the notorious Ban.

Senior soccer arrived comparatively late — 1937 to be precise — but the game here pre-dates Limerick AFC and it will survive, whatever the outcome of the current United versus City controversy.

But this is not to say that the presence of a League club locally is not important; on the contrary, it is tremendously so. Only a senior club can present the game at its best. Only a senior club can maintain the public interest necessary for the creation of a climate favourable for the development of young talent.

The schoolboy team, the junior team, the League of Ireland team, the "big league" team overseas, the Irish team — that is the logical progression to the top. Remove one link and the winning sequence is irretrievably lost.

But a successful League club means more than first-class soccer. It means a valuable financial spin-off to the local economy. It means national and international prestige — achieved perhaps in Continental competitions — which fosters tourism and industrialisation.

The collision of City and United is as regrettable as it was inevitable. Given Limerick AFC's sorry history of personality clashes, a showdown had to come sooner or later. No one, however, could have foreseen that it would assume such grotesque proportions.

Let all concerned learn by the experience, starting with Lesson Number One, which is simply that in the boardroom and on the terraces, as well as on the pitch, soccer is a team game.

LIMERICK

JOHN B. KEANE

OUT IN THE OPEN

Children who're never at a loss for an answer

SOME OF these treatises which appear here week in, week out are widely read. Others are not so widely read whilst I may safely assume that a certain percentage are not read at all. I suppose we can't be perfect all the time!

Experience has taught me that the surest way to evoke response to a particular piece is to devote it to schoolchildren or to stories concerning schoolchildren. They have the knack of stealing the show in print as well as on stage.

Since that last piece I wrote on schoolboys and schoolgirls and their long-unsung capacity for the creation of short, effective essays or compositions I have been accosted a surprising number of times in public houses, hospitals and hotels by exuberant parents with stories to tell about their incomparable offspring and their doings at school. There is simply no escape when a doting parent wants to recite the mysterious and incredible exploits of her young God. Bless her isn't she entitled to. Your own is your own. However there is a limit.

Tragedy

The tragedy is, that unlike their young, these long-winded although well-meaning procurators of genius have long since lost the ability to tell or re-tell a story without boring their listeners to tears.

It is, I fear, true to say that while there are thousands of tales about outstanding and unusual schoolboys there are few of these tales any good.

How wise the ancient Irish

MY LIFE AND TIMES

HARA HAD an obsession about his range. To him not only was it the first thing that the incoming person focused on but it was the object that the visitor's eyes would be fastened on while he was a visitor.

Hara kept it in mint condition but it was just outward cleanliness; it was great attention to the inner workings as well. Every morning it was cleaned out meticulously and any residue of soot that might have fallen down during the previous day was taken out and piled onto a growing dump at the bottom of the garden.

Twice a year the chimney was cleaned and the last cleaning coincided with the coming of summer. Then the range would be idle for the season but the outward appearance would be kept spick and span as before. Hara lived close to a wood and if he had the power that wood would be transplanted somewhere else.

You see, Hara was an ecologist as well as all the other things he professed to be and he wouldn't dream of cutting

Odds and Ends

CARD playing seems to have got a new lease of life in recent years. But nowadays most of the playing is in halls and community centres rather than in ordinary private houses. The houses where people gathered to play in the past were often described as gambling houses.

Some years ago Tom Mac-Namara of Loch Gur told me of a gambling house that was situated about a mile at the Kiltelty side of Herbertstown, and which he used frequent as a youth. It was a farmer's house with an open hearth where there was always a big fire of timber. There was a settee by the wall, and a dresser with a coop underneath it, in which, in the proper season, there would be a goose hatching. Fitches of home-cured bacon hung on the chimney. But let Tom himself continue the account.

"There was" he said "a

were. We need only look at their mighty legacy of sayings and proverbs to have this borne out. There is one which is apt for the occasion:

"Ceapann gach phreach dubh go dtaitheann an grian ar a gearrach fein," which means in literal translation that every old crow thinks the sun shines on its own young crow to the exclusion of lesser crows.

Sometimes the sun does shine but all too often it does not. The result is that we have too many stories about children with high scholastic attainments and far too few about the real characters of the classroom.

There are also many excellent stories concerning parents, in relation to schools, but we also hear too few of those.

I am happy to say that at this stage in the proceedings my references to outstanding schoolboys have brought in a tidy harvest of really relevant stories, some of them well and away beyond the pedestrian. More are dull as ditchwater while a sentimental few are so messy and maudlin that they

would have no trouble at all bringing tears from a hard-boiled egg.

Jealously

Fortunately for writers like myself there are discerning people who jealously hoard old and worthwhile tales until they meet up with somebody they can trust, i.e., someone they feel is worthy to distribute the story they have cherished for so long. They are pretty scarce on the ground, these vital contributors to the treasury of school tales. The important thing is that while they may be small in numbers their discernment lacks for nothing.

The following was told to me by a teacher now retired but still a good man to tell a yarn and even better to polish off a few pints of stout. Teachers are almost always great story tellers. They know when to stop and this is the first principle. Anyhow the story:

It was about the time when health nurses first appeared at national schools. Up to this the only breaks in the school tedium were pro-

vided by regular visitations from inspectors and priests. Occasionally too a haggard farmer would call to enquire if anybody had laid eyes on a lost heifer or bullock. The health nurse, although feared more than any of the others, was nevertheless a welcome diversion. She would spend the day examining the scholars for the all-too-numerous ravages of that pre-DDT period. It was also a time when soap was scarce and rashes and festering cuts abounded.

There was one of these nurses a trifle more fastidious, perhaps, than she should be. She tended to reprimand carelessly-dressed and sloppily turned-out boys and girls.

Huckleberry

Anyhow she was proceeding with her examination in the school of the teacher we described earlier when her attention was captured by one particular boy. She devoted more time and interest to him than all the others out together. He was definitely an outdoor type, a sort of local Huckleberry

Finn, a sworn enemy to soap and water, a scornee pocket combs and brushes but a healthy character nevertheless. "Oh dear! Oh dear!" the nurse said to herself, half herself, half to the class. "What a stink!"

With obvious disapproval she subjected the poor chap the most rigorous of examinations. The boy said nothing whatever. Bad was the investigation it infinitely more preferable learning lessons. He will be subjected to further examination.

This was carried out while the nurse held a dainty finger her nose in order to ward the powerful odours emanating from this unwash creature of the wilds.

The boy himself continued to make no notice but he sister in the same class was sat mortified through there stood her beloved brother, her hero and protector in many an aft school scrape, degraded as reviled by this monster from some distant town or city. She awaited her opportunity. It came when the nurse lifted an imperious fin-

Hara takes on the crows

down a grove of trees. Just shift them somewhere else. The problem with the wood was the way it attracted the crows. His house was full of their chattering as they passed overhead and full of their chattering as they roosted in the trees.

He heard them first thing in the morning and they filled the kitchen with sound as he took his tea. All that was fine; that was the working of nature and nature to Hara was the very soul of existence and his great love.

It would all have been fine, they could all have lived together in perfect harmony if the damn crows had behaved as they should. But near and all as the trees were and the perfect habitation they provided for the crows, there were some who just went and spoiled it all.

Hara's chimney pot became an intense attraction for an

errant couple and the tradition that there was always a couple of crows hovering about his chimney in summer and early spring and even when the fire was on there were some of them using his roof as a resting place.

They bothered Hara as much as untidiness did. Their droppings filled him with uneasiness and three or four times a year he had to mount the roof and clear away the signs of habitation.

He would have tolerated that, too, if that was all they were going to do to him but not the idea. But Hara knew it could be only a matter of time; crows were fiercely persistent and that thwarted couple would be up to their tricks again the following spring. He dug out the remains of the nest and from them on he kept up a steady watch on the chimney.

From then on every crow that used his roof was eyed with great suspicion and he regarded the strutting birds as mortal enemies. Then, if he had his way it is doubtful if his strong ecological notions would have been enough that grove would be likely cut down.

It was fun to watch Hara's

everything out and still the smoke came out where the flue joined the bricks, Hara knew he had a problem. He found it in the shape of a bird's nest or what was left of it behind the flue.

Apparently the birds had tried to build there but the dropped twigs never took a hold and they finally gave up the idea. But Hara knew it could be only a matter of time; crows were fiercely persistent and that thwarted couple would be up to their tricks again the following spring. He dug out the remains of the nest and from them on he kept up a steady watch on the chimney.

From then on every crow that used his roof was eyed with great suspicion and he regarded the strutting birds as mortal enemies. Then, if he had his way it is doubtful if his strong ecological notions would have been enough that grove would be likely cut down.

It was fun to watch Hara's

vigil and those that were in the act got great mileage from the knowing. You could hear him half a mile away shouting at a crow that had just alight on his roof and even in the day of night he was suspicious of the scraping noises he heard above him were the attempt a couple of crows to establish foothold in his chimney pot.

You could be talking to h at his gate and as soon as a c passed overhead the talk stopped and wouldn't resume again until the black bird is gone out of sight. And then couple began to frequent his chimney with greater regularity than before.

It was very early in spring and while Hara knew that nesting season was many ways away, he was convinced that the birds were reconnoitering the place and would be ready with a scheme as soon as the mating call took real hold of them. They were figuring Hara would see them together, and separately, v

Tribute to a card player

were three pence for a rubber (i.e. three games), or a penny for a single game. You'd hear many strange expressions from the players: 'So far so good,' said the old woman when she ate the candle'. Another man would say when there was a forty man on board (i.e. when he was already 40 in a game of 45): 'Moloney was sorry to the pig head and he never ate it'. On the turn of a trump, if it was a diamond, they said: 'Diamond cuts diamond'. And if you had the ace of trumps your partner would say: 'Fáinne oir on you!'

"One young lad who used to play there was, like myself (said Tom), often short of the stake money. He was smoking Woodbines, 2d for five, and this added expense often left

himself broke and unable to continue playing. To her credit, the woman of the house said she'd stake him. She went to the room to get the money, and when she was handing it to the young lad she says she to him: 'This should bring you luck, tis egg money'. Immediately, the lad blurted out: 'I don't know then, what I was working with all night was egg money too!'

Kisteard U Phingín of Herbertstown is a good man to turn a verse. One of the latest poems he wrote was about his friend Tom Carroll, from near Loch Gur, who died almost twelve months ago. The poem is entitled 'A Tribute to a Great 45 Player-Tom Carroll'. The crow I eat carries the

deared him to all who were privileged to play with or against him. On many long winter's nights we played many great games, and when the count would reach three 20's and three 40's you could observe his whole countenance light up with sheer joy and satisfaction. He played those cards as if his whole life depended on the outcome; one trick to go; profound silence; one could hear the proverbial pin drop. Soon it's all over — the victorious and the vanquished. Hand shakes are exchanged across the tale.

'It was an All Ireland', he would exclaim. It was his All Ireland, our All Ireland, and wherever '45 players meet his name will be mentioned with

No more he'll deal the pa of cards, no longer he count the tricks;

No more he'll take his plk among the nine or six: Those hands are cold a the heart of gold a noble mind are still;

No more he'll hear t cuckoo's notes from t hills round Patricksw;

A simple life he did enj how he loved the t card game! With reverend friends a ladies, he always play the same.

With toasted hair he wo declare, 'Men may c but queer moon and stars: But noneshall ever conq the humble pack