

# NEW HOME FOR LIMERICK SOCCER

Exclusive by JOHN O'SHAUGHNESSY

**LIMERICK CITY chairman, Pat Grace, does not believe in false promises - this week he kept his side of the bargain by clinching a deal with Old Crescent Rugby Club for the purchase of their ten acre site, off the Roxboro Road. For the first time since 1937 Limerick soccer now has a home of its own.**

When Grace announced just before Christmas that he had made moves to purchase a city property with the intention of developing it into a first class stadium, there were many who looked upon it as just another flier.

After all, previous boards had made many such declarations in the past without ever really realising their goal.

But now it has all become a reality. The Crescent Rugby Ground has been finally purchased and all the necessary legal documentation has been processed.

Said Mr. Grace: "When I became involved in soccer some years ago, I intimated that I would never be happy until such time that we had a ground of our own. To be honest, I had an eye on Rathbane for some months and decided to make the final move when it was made known to us that the Markets Field might not be available to City next season."

Should everything go according to schedule - and Grace is in no doubt that it will - then Limerick City will commence their

1984-'85 campaign at the Rathbane pitch. There could even be an official opening in August with a visit from an English club.

Mrs. Anne Grace, the hard working secretary and treasurer of the club, says Rathbane will be much more than a football pitch.

She envisages a super stadium, with all modern facilities - meeting room, TV lounge, reception area and . . . wait for it, family room! It is Mrs. Grace's view that League of Ireland soccer suffers because little is done to encourage the family to attend games.

The proposed family room at Rathbane is aimed at enticing wives and children to come along. "If they get bored watching the match, then they can adjourn to the family room, where TV and games will be provided."

### PLAN

Mrs. Grace said that it was City's plan to marry sport with social life. They also want to promote the game in the county and there will be a special welcome for those from outlying areas. "After all, people who travel a distance are entitled to comfort and we aim to provide that."

The Rathbane ground covers a total of ten acres. Work is to start next month on the re-building of the dressing rooms and clubhouse, followed by fencing the perimeter of the playing pitch.

Limerick City are pleased with the support they have encountered from the local resi-

dents association.

Explained Mr. Grace: "We have put our cards on the table with them and they see the new stadium as an amenity for the area. Their help and assistance is most important to us and we appreciate the support they have already given."

There will be bar facilities available at the venue, and it is hoped to develop a social club. Chairman Grace is determined to make Rathbane into one of the finest soccer stadia in the land.

"We have a three-year development programme and I intend to stick by it. So far, I have fulfilled all the promises I made to Limerick soccer, and I am going to see this one through."

He refused to disclose the purchase price, but my information is that he parted with the best part of £40,000.

The Old Crescent Club have purchased a property in another part of the city.

There is a good deal of work yet to be done at Rathbane, but with the pitch fully drained it should be playable by August.

A training pitch is also to be provided. Limerick City will shortly be launching a drive for new members. "We want to make our club into a family unit and detailed plans will be announced shortly," added Mrs. Grace.

Negotiations took place over the past few months, and City state that Old Crescent were most co-operative.

"Now that we have a base there will be no stopping us," said Mr. Mick Browne, director.

Limerick City must be congratulated on their enterprise.

Meanwhile, there is a strong possibility that Limerick could have two clubs in the



Pat and Ann Grace discuss plans for the development of the Rathbane pitch.

League of Ireland next term. Limerick Utd. have expressed an interest in returning to the fold and have nominated the Markets Field as their home ground.

It has always been a source of concern to local soccer fans that Limerick AFC never had a

home of its own.

When it came to major fixtures they had to go cap in hand to other sporting associations.

The last word to Pat Grace: "Forty-seven years was a long time to wait . . . now the wait is over and it will be all systems go for us."

## County leads in Community Games

By JOHN O'SHAUGHNESSY

THERE ARE certain areas of Limerick city which should wake up and recognise the value of the Community Games, said Mr. Stephen Kearns, who has become the first Limerick-born person to be elected vice-president of the National Games.

The Bord Telecom official condemned the attitude of some Residents Associations who refused to acknowledge the Community Games, and

### Divided

Limerick is divided into 42 areas - "with room for many more."

He denied that it can cost a fortune to participate in the games, adding that it cost Limerick about £5,000 last year.

Most of the Residents Associations who take part are self supporting, and often receive generous sponsorship.

Stephen, who resides in Lynwood Park, had a nomination for presidency in 1984, but declined the offer in order to get more experience as vice president.

Stephen Kearns has been impressed with the structure of the organisation throughout the country, but feels they can make even further progress.

Most sports are catered for - athletics, hurling, Gaelic, soccer, swimming, basketball, gymnastics, table tennis, badminton, handball, pitch and putt, rugby, camogie, cycling, rounders, volleyball, hockey, judo, netball, as well as draughts, modelling, art, etc.

It was eleven years ago when he first became involved in the Games and had the satisfaction of managing the

## St. Mel's given all clear

THE GROUNDSMEN attached to St. Mel's Park in Athlone worked frantically over the past 48 hours and the end result is that they have made the pitch playable for today's FAI Cup 5th round replay between Limerick City and Athlone Town.

Fears had been expressed earlier in the week that the game may not go ahead because of the ground conditions, but an FAI official inspected the ground on Wednesday.

St. Mel's Park was in a very bad state last Sunday week and was reported to have cut up badly again last Sunday when the local St. Mary's took



Pat Herbert, back after missing recent games.



Joe McKenna, at right corner forward.



Brian Carroll, showing great form in midfield.



Dan Fitzgerald, retained at centre forward.

By JOHN O'SHAUGHNESSY

LIMERICK enter next Sunday's National Hurling League game against Wexford at the Gaelic Grounds in the knowledge that one point will give them a place

## Limerick pit skills against Wexford

## Liberties meet Patrickswell

THOSE who claimed that the open draw in last year's county senior hurling championship provided no variety certainly had some food for thought when the draw for the '84 championship was made at Tuesday's meeting of the Co. Board, at Cloughaun Pavilion.

A total of 27 clubs will contest the championship, which means that five were given a bye in the first round.

The principal attraction should be the meeting of reigning champions, Patrickswell and ex-champions, South Liberties.

Newly crowned junior hurling champions, Hospital-Herbertstown, will make their

debut in senior grade against Mungret. On the proposition of Senator Rory Kiely there will be no further draw as the remaining 16 contestants after the first round will play each other in the order that they came out of the hat.

1984 S.H.C. draw:  
Byes-Ballybrown, Boher, Bruree, Bruff, Cappamore, Feoghagh v. Ahane.

St. Patrick's v. Dromin-Athlaca.

Grangah v. Cloughaun, Patrickswell v. South Liberties.

Killeedy v. Ballygarry, Croom v. Old Christians, NCW v. Kilmallock, Fedamore v. Doon, Tournafulla v. Adare, Mungret v. Hospital-Herbertstown, Monaleen v. Kilfinane.