

# Limerick will never forget Ewan Fenton

By AIDAN CORR

BY the time that Ewan Fenton arrived in this city to take over as player/manager at the Markets Field, Limerick AFC had seen a number of cross-Channel players pass through their books.

None had brought the much sought-after success that the massive support for the team yearned for.

But when Ewan Fenton arrived in the summer of 1960, there was a buzz of anticipation.

Limerick had won the League of Ireland championship for the first time the previous season, they were making their debut in the European Cup and the former Blackpool and Wrexham star had the material to achieve further success.

Ewan was a tough Scot, a brilliant reader of the game whose skill and timing set him apart and he was a winner. He slotted into a Limerick defence that proved to be one of the best on this island during their league title year and immediately brought in the best young local talent he could find.

Recruited in that first season of the Fenton era in Limerick were Pat Lawler and Peter O'Halloran (both now sadly departed), Gerry Trehy, formerly of Reds United, Geraldines' Johnny Ryan, Benny Fitzgerald from Janesboro United, Eddie O'Neill of local side Shelbourne, Martin Clancy (the Shannon rugby star of the '60s), Ballynanty Rovers' Frank McInerney, Paddy Browne who played with Rossa Villa and Reds and two promising youngsters, Al Finucane and Kevin Fitzpatrick.

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To the Family of the Late Ewan Fenton

I was saddened to hear of the passing away of Ewan Fenton, during our careers we came across each other many times at Bloomfield Road and Burnden Park. Ewan was always a formidable opponent but always a gentleman. Ewan like myself is in the history of football having played in the famous 1953 Cup Final, a game which to this day, I do not know how Bolton lost but still it was great to see many of my football pals pick up winners medals.

My condolences to all.  
Kindest regards



Nat Lofthouse  
President - Bolton Wanderers FC

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The following year they finished sixth and in 1962-3 they finished third from the bottom of the table while losing to Cork Hibernians in Flower Lodge in the semi-final of the cup.

Fenton ploughed away at his task and Limerick improved their league position in 63-64, finishing third but it was during the following season that the side began to flourish.

A great cup run saw them reach the final for the first time in their history, and Limerick drew with a fancied Shamrock Rovers 1-1 on a sunny Sunday in April, losing the replay 1-0.

Limerick reached the final again in 1966, losing again to Rovers this time by two goals to nil. Ewan Fenton played in both of these finals and came agonis-

ingly close to adding an FAI Cup medal to his FA Cup medal which he won with Blackpool in 1953.

That game is still regarded as one of the greatest finals of all time. As youngsters we were familiar with the action having watched it over and over again on Pathé News in the local cinemas.

It was probably Ewan Fenton's finest hour and he played a major part in one of the most dramatic finals to a game ever played at the famous Wembley Stadium.

Bolton Wanderers led 3-1 with 25 minutes to go and the legendary Stanley Matthews looked destined to miss out on a cup medal for the third time in his career.

Then Matthews entered the scene. He took a pass from little Ernie Taylor, made ground,

crossed into the box and when Bolton keeper Hanson could only parry the ball, Stan Mortenson squeezed it in off the post 3-2.

There were three minutes to go and Bolton looked to be home and dry. Fenton made ground on the left and forced a free kick. Mortenson took it, goal! 3-3 with only minutes remaining. The crowd were on their feet as Ernie Taylor sent Matthews free again down the right wing. Stan left two defenders in his wake with a deft turn and cut the ball back for Blackpool's South African outside left, Bill Perry to smash the ball past Hanson.

It was the result that everybody in football, apart from the Bolton fans, wanted. That coveted medal was presented to Stanley Matthews after a game to remember.

Ewan Fenton revived those memories for us as youngsters when he came to the Markets Field. He was a class above the rest. His first touch was superb, he could shuffle the ball, shimmy by going down the left wing and sweep his right leg over the ball while taking it forward in the same movement with the left.

We tried to perfect that move after the games on the avenues of the South Circular Road and in Mount Kennett and in Bowman Street. Ewan was our hero and when he led Limerick into their third FAI Cup final in 1971 as manager, there was optimism in this city that the famine years were coming to an end at last.

A scoreless draw in the final was only the first course of a feast that we will never forget. Limerick were brilliant in the replay with Davy Barrett giving the Blues the lead early in the second half and when Hughie Hamilton added a brace, there was no way back for Mick Meagan's Drogheda.

We shouted congratulations at Kevin Fitzpatrick from behind the goals at the Tramway End and he waved back in acknowledgement. Skipper Al Finucane was chaired off the field and we climbed onto the stand and placed a blue and white Limerick hat on RTE commentator Philip Greene's head.

On the way home in the supporters' coach, we responded to the question, 'who's the greatest?' with a loud cheer of 'Andy McEvoy.' Seldom had a Limerick soccer side played with such skill and spirit. Al Finucane, injured during the game, soldiered on and finished up in the forward line. Paddy Short had one of his best ever games on the right wing and the late Tony Meaney gave a superb display on the left hand side of midfield.



Ewan Fenton leads out his Limerick AFC side prior to the FAI Cup Final in Dalymount Park in 1971. From left are Drogheda United players Colin Baxter, Ronnie Whelan Sr. and captain Mick Meagen and Limerick captain, Al Finucane.

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Born in Dundee in Scotland in 1929, Fenton soon went south and joined Blackpool with whom he remained as a

first team player from 1948 to 1958, making 205 appearances.

In 1953 he was a member of the Blackpool side that won the FA Cup, beating Bolton Wanderers in what is still regarded as one of the best finals ever staged at the famous Wembley Stadium.

Ewan joined Wrexham in 1959, played 24 games with that Welsh club and accepted an invitation to take over Limerick AFC from their then secretary, Terry McGowan (of 'come on the Blues' fame) in the summer of 1960.

As League of Ireland champions, Limerick were preparing for their first ever European Cup experience and Fenton

played in both legs of the opening round, losing 5-0 to Young Boys of Berne in Thomond Park and 4-2 in the return game in Switzerland.

Ewan Fenton led Limerick to their first FAI Cup final appearances in 1965 and 1966 and under Ewan's management, Limerick featured in two further European appearances, losing to CSKA of Sofia in 1965 and to Torino of Italy six years later.

His playing days over, Ewan took over as manager of the side and in 1971, he led Limerick AFC to their first ever FAI Cup success, beating Drogheda United 3-0 after a replay at Dalymount Park.

He coached Linfield in Belfast for a short period, leading them to league and cup successes before returning again to Limerick where he coached the senior side right up to the mid 1980s.

A keen golfer, Ewan was a member of Castletroy Golf Club and ran a successful driving school in the city.

His contribution to senior soccer in this city has been enormous and news of his death has been received with genuine sadness. He was one of the most competent players that ever graced the Markets Field and his successes as a manager and coach are marked by his achievements.





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It was an occasion that we will never forget and unashamedly, tears were shed by Limerick fans who had not tasted success since the Shield win in 1953. Ewan Fenton played a major role in that achievement and, typical of his character, he played a very low profile role following the cup win.

Ewan's funeral took place on this Wednesday from Thompson's Funeral Home and with a service in St Mary's Cathedral this Thursday. He was cremated in Mount Jerome in Dublin following the funeral.

Our sympathy is expressed to his wife Vera, son Ewan and grandchildren.

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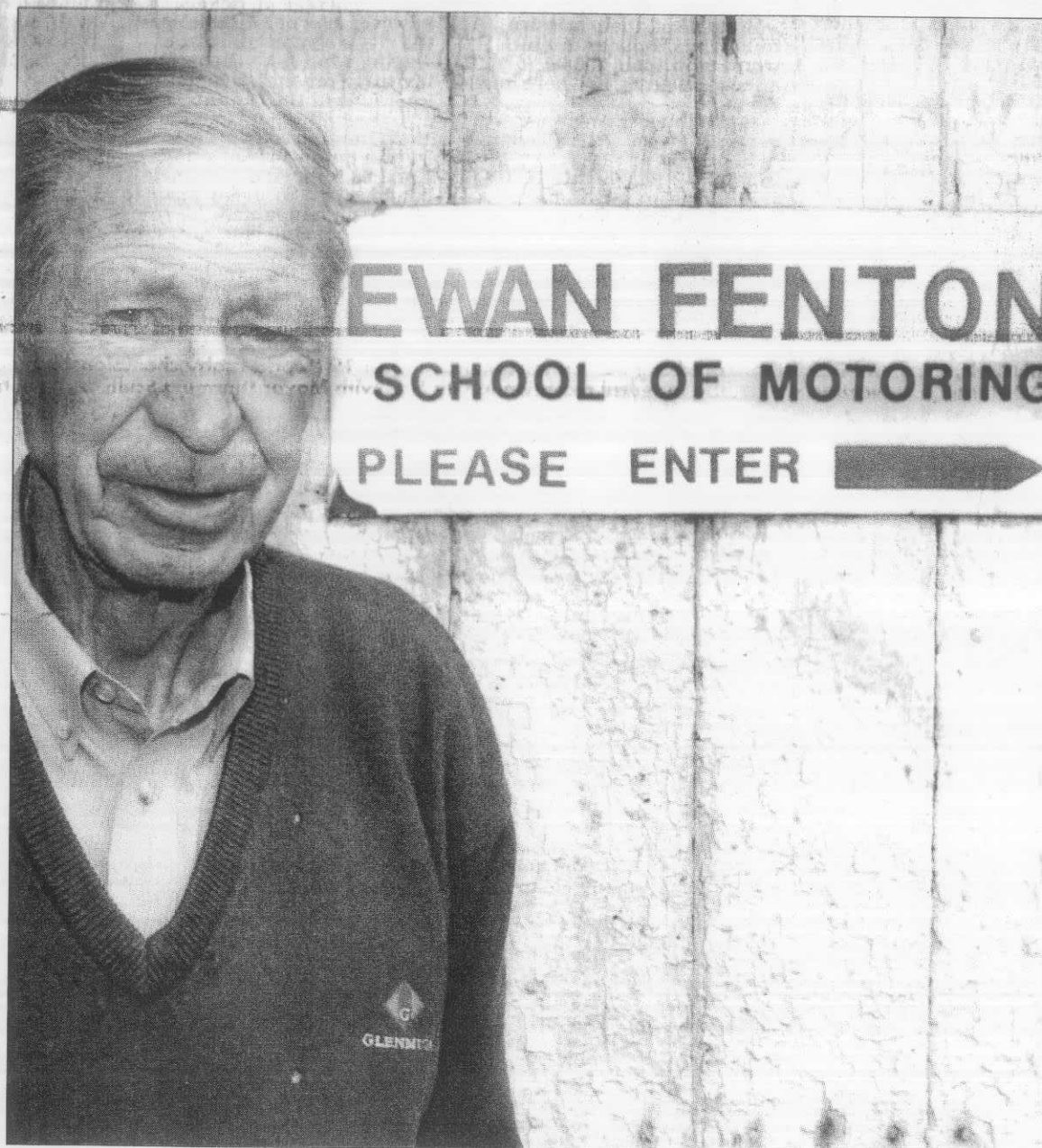
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**Ewan Fenton's finest hour: Ewan, third from left, helps to chair off Blackpool captain Harry Johnson while Stanley Matthews, the star of the victory over Bolton Wanderers in this 1953 FAI Cup final, shares the moment.**



**A recent picture of Ewan Fenton**

**Enjoying the Munster v**

**Kilmallock Point To Point**