

Limerick *life*

Wednesday, Oct 19, 2016

OUR CITY | OUR WORD | IN PRINT

Issue 12 Vol 01

FREE

HUSBAND, FATHER, SON, HERO.

Anthony Foley 1973-2016



DAVID RALEIGH

THE Irish Ambassador to France has lent her support to the family of Munster rugby legend Anthony Foley to try to fast-track the repatriation of his remains to Limerick following his sudden death in Paris last weekend.

At the time of going to print, sources in the French capital suggested it could take more than a week before a postmortem takes place, after which the body of the Munster head coach will be released to his family for his funeral.

No details have been released about the circumstances surrounding Mr Foley's death in his hotel room, sometime between Saturday night and Sunday morning last, however it is expected a post-mortem will confirm he died of natural causes.

Geraldine Byrne Nason, the Paris-based Ambassador to France, has visited the Novotel hotel where the rugby legend's father Brendan, and Munster CEO Garrett Fitzgerald have remained.

Meanwhile, authorities in Ireland and France are liaising with one another to return Mr Foley's remains as quickly as possible.

Munster rugby top brass are expected to hold a press conference in Limerick this Wednesday, to brief the media on whether the team will play their European Rugby Champions Cup clash with Glasgow Warriors fixed for 1pm at Thomond Park, next Saturday.

At the time of going to print tickets for the match were still being sold via the Munster Rugby website.

A rugby source told Limerick Life: "There is no mention of the game been postponed as yet. The word from Glasgow seems to be, that they would not put any pressure on Munster to play the tie. It'll be up to the (Foley) family I believe to give their blessing for the match to go ahead."

A Munster Rugby spokesperson said: "There is no update at this point."

Meanwhile, a makeshift shrine of red jerseys,

scarfs, hats, teddy bears, and floral tributes, grows by the hour at the gates of Thomond Park, as sports fans from around the country come to the home of Munster rugby to pay their respects and remember their hero "Axel".

Flags are also flying at half-mast at local authority buildings in the city and county as a mark of respect for the rugby giant.

Books of Condolence at local authority offices at City Hall, County Hall, Kilmallock Newcastle West and Rathkeale will remain open to the public "at least until the end of the month", a council spokesperson told Limerick Life.

"The council's online book of condolences has over 4,000 signatures," the spokesperson added. Mr Foley's family released a statement on Monday.

"With Anthony's passing, we have ultimately lost an amazing, adoring and loving father and husband; an equally caring, loyal and devoted son and brother; a central and go-to figure for the wider Foley and Hogan families. Our anguish at the sudden loss of Anthony is bottomless.

"We have been plunged deep into an incomprehensible darkness and sense of loss that we must work our way through over the coming days, weeks, months and years."

Mr Foley's family has requested privacy as they come to terms with the loss of the Munster icon.

Mr Foley, 42, is survived by his wife, Olive, their two young sons, Tony, 11, and Dan, eight, his parents Brendan and Sheila, and his sisters, Orla and Rosie.

His childhood friend and Munster and Ireland colleague, Keith Wood, was one of scores of rugby legends worldwide to pay tribute this week. Wood said Anthony was 'the smartest rugby player I have had the honour of playing with and against. Heart, honesty, determination and teamwork. These are words that are rarely ascribable to individuals but they sit very comfortably on the shoulders of Anthony Foley.'

see pages 2-8

T H E
HUB

bike for life

2017 MODELS NOW IN STOCK...

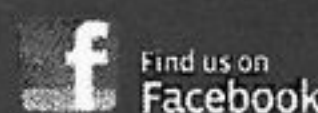
CANNONDALE | CUBE | LAPIERRE
BH | FOCUS | CERVELO | LOOK

- BIKE SERVICE CENTRE ~ FULL REPAIR SERVICE
- BIKE FITTING ~ GET PROPERLY FITTED TO YOUR BIKE AND FEEL THE DIFFERENCE
- WINTER CLOTHING NOW IN STOCK ~ STAY WARM AND DRY THIS WINTER

GIFT VOUCHERS AVAILABLE

DEPOSITS TAKEN FOR CHRISTMAS

BIKE TO WORK SCHEME ~ Save up to 52%



www.thehubbikes.ie



T: 061 324444 E: info@thehubbikes.ie

Coonagh Cross, Ennis Road, Limerick. V94 EF83

This Boy's Life

**BRIAN
CARROLL**
EDITOR



Welcome to this our 12th edition. It's been a terribly sad week in Limerick City. Last Sunday week, hundreds of people queued down O'Connell Street for hours just to share a few minutes with Paul O'Connell and have him sign his book, *The Battle*.

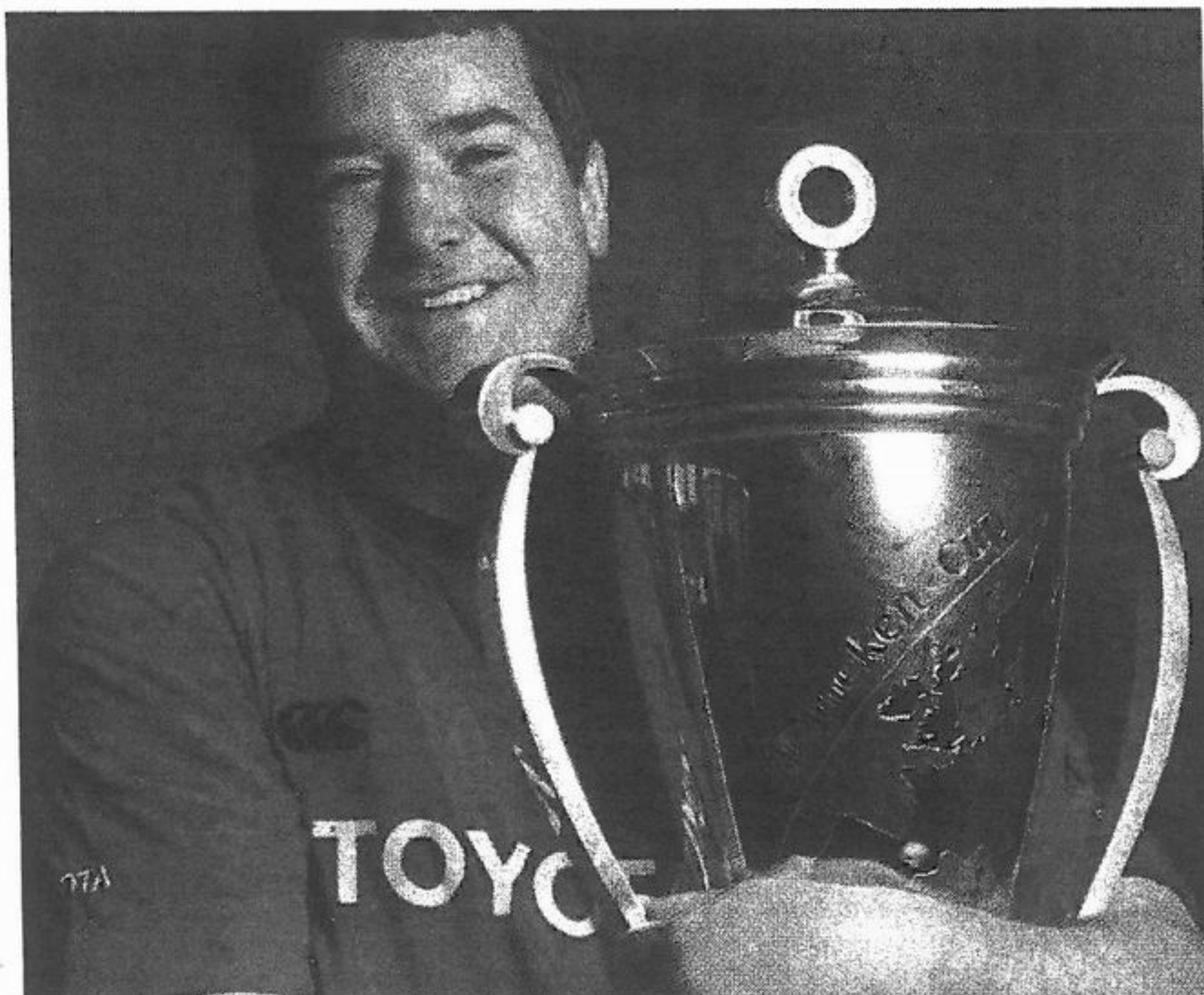
Exactly a week later, scores of people were gathering outside Thomond Park to pin Munster scarves and jerseys to the gates, in honour of another legend, Anthony Foley, as news filtered through from Paris that he had been found dead in his hotel room. Our world can and does change in an instant.

"With Anthony's passing, we have ultimately lost an amazing, adoring and loving father and husband; an equally caring, loyal and devoted son and brother; a central and go-to figure for the wider Foley and Hogan families. Our anguish at the sudden loss of Anthony is bottomless," the Foley family said in a statement released on Monday.

"We have been plunged deep into an incomprehensible darkness and sense of loss that we must work our way through over the coming days, weeks, months and years."

Anthony Foley would have been 43 this month. His wife of 17 years, Olive, and their two young sons, Tony, 11, and Dan, eight, will have the consolation of knowing that Anthony Foley's name will live on for however long rugby is played in this city. They will have the solace of knowing that he was a man respected by all, and loved by so many. From the legendary Limerick rugby commentator, Len Dineen, to international giants of the game like the Australian, Michael Lynagh, tears were shed and tributes offered.

He wasn't just the son of Brendan Foley - a member of the famous side who slayed the All-Blacks in 1978. He wasn't just the man who captained Munster to their first ever Heineken



Cup triumph in 2006, after so many years of painful defeats. He wasn't just Munster Head Coach. He was the embodiment of what makes Limerick the home of rugby. It's been often stated that

while doctors and lawyers played the game in Dublin, in Limerick it was a working class sport where hard men pulled no punches and gave a few as well. Foley was forged out of that muddy amateur era. Not because he was working class - he was a boarder at St Munchin's - but because he harnessed his raw talent, subsumed himself in the professional era, and sacrificed all to achieve a goal few thought possible, and most - including himself at one point - thought laughable: winning

the Heineken Cup.

In his 2008 memoir 'Axel', he recalls how, in the early days of his Munster career, the players were asked to state their goals. When Keith Wood - his childhood friend since the age of seven -

said his goal was to win the Heineken Cup, this was greeted by 'giggles'. In the end it was men like Wood and Mick Galwey and Alan Quinlan, and ultimately, Foley, who made this laughable dream a reality. After 15 years of the competition, Sky Sports picked their best team, and Foley was at No. 8 - ahead of English favourites such as Lawrence Dallaglio. The great golfer Ben Hogan once said: "If you can't outplay them, outwork them." Foley had bundles of natural talent, but he outworked others who were more gifted.

In his memoir, Foley repeatedly uses the word 'alickadoos' to describe the officials and fans who surrounded Leinster in the early days of his career. It was these same 'alickadoos' who prevented his father from winning more than 11 caps for Ireland. It was these same 'alickadoos' who continuously picked Leinster players over Limerick ones, even those like Anthony Foley who had won five AIL titles with Shannon. All that has changed. Foley went on to win 62 caps for his country - but only because, in the words of Len Dineen, he had 'a chip on either shoulder'. Asked once how he'd liked to be remembered, Foley replied: "I'd like to be seen as a stubborn player, one who wouldn't give in."

In the first decade of the new Millennium, when Limerick was being badly portrayed in the national press, it was the determination and leadership of our sportsmen - O'Connell, Wood and Foley predominantly - who helped all of us in Limerick keep a sense of faith about who we really are as a city and a people.

Cormac Liddy, who was sports editor of the Limerick Leader for 21 years, writes about Foley today and makes a suggestion which I hope will be considered by the powers that be. Cormac writes: "A statue or bust of persons who have served Limerick with distinction should be erected in our new pedestrianised streets. Let us start with Anthony who brought so much joy to so many in such an all too short lifetime."

eireagle.com
by Citylink



Limerick to Dublin Airport Non-stop

In only 2hrs 30mins 16 Daily Services

*Promotional fare. Available online only when purchased as part of a return ticket.

from only
€15*
each way

Book at www.eireagle.com
Tel: 091 564164

"He'll always be alive in my heart. I just don't want to let him go."

DAVID RALEIGH

HARDENED Munster men, more used to roaring on their rugby heroes into battle, openly wept outside the hallowed turf of Thomond Park at the loss of their leader, friend, and comrade "Axel" Foley. The sports-ground cauldron, which echoes the famous roar of the home fans on match day remained silent as fathers and sons, and mothers and daughters, mourned at the growing shrine of jerseys, scarfs and hats, left at the gates of the stadium, in memory of the Munster Head Coach. While playing schoolboy rugby for St Munchin's College, Foley's teammates, inspired by the cult 1980s Beverly Hills Cop movie trilogy, gave him his nickname - Axel. Anthony Foley, much like the tenacious "Detective Axel Foley", played by Hollywood star Eddie Murphy, was always one step ahead of the pack. Another local rugby legend,

Noel "Buddha" Healy, President of Shannon Rugby Club, who also wore the red jersey, wept as he paid a heartfelt tribute to his "mentor". Breaking down, the 57-year old said of Foley: "He'll always be alive in my heart. He was a very good friend, and I just don't want to let him go. Words can't say it...I miss him." Releasing a long intake of breath, he added: "He'll always be a part of this club, and for as long as I breathe, Anthony Foley's name will be synonymous with this club, I promise you that... He was a legend." Sitting beneath a photograph of Foley in Shannon RFC, Healy paused and looked up at Axel smiling back at him: "As a player, and off the field, he was huge, a superb guy. He was a man that I looked up to, even though I was a lot older than him. He instilled that respect in players on the field. He was just a fantastic guy to be around, and a great friend." Healy said he had didn't agree with Foley's appointment as Director of Munster Rugby, as he felt it diminished his strength as a forwards coach, a role



he took on when Rassi Erasmus took over the role of Director. "I slagged him about it, but I said it was a role he should never have got, genuinely. I said that as a friend. What he should have stuck to was coaching the forwards and that's what he knew best, and unfortunately we're not going to see the best for the forwards, because when

Rassi Erasmus came in - I won't say Anthony was demoted, but he became the forwards coach, and that's where Munster would have thrived." Healy was driving on an errand last Sunday when he received the news his fellow rugby warrior had died. "I nearly crashed the van. I just broke down. I cried and cried. I just couldn't believe what I was

hearing. Anthony was out walking around Paris with the lads, not on the beer, but chilling out before the big match. He went up to bed and missed breakfast the following morning.

"The boys made a joke that he was looking for a lie-in. But, a little later, when he didn't show, someone was summoned to go to his room to get him up. Unfortunately he didn't get up. It's not right, he was only 42 years of age. He was a fit man, he went to bed thinking about a European cup game, planning the downfall of Racing Metro and his good friend Ronan O'Gara, and then not to be here the next day."

Buddha said he and his wife spent the rest of Sunday with Foley's mother Shelia, at her home in Kilmaloe, Co Clare. "To see Shelia Foley - I can empathise, because I lost my son-in-law to cancer two and a half years ago. Shelia is a lost soul and I know Brendan will absolutely be lost without Anthony. Our condolences at Shannon Rugby Club have to be passed onto the family. It's wrong...It's all wrong," Healy, cut

from the raw emotion of the past 24 hours, added his personal condolences to former Munster and Ireland rugby coach Declan Kidney and his family, at the loss of his wife Ann, who passed away in Marymount Hospice, last Tuesday.

Mayor of Limerick, Kieran O'Hanlon remarked: "The people of Limerick and Munster are devastated. Our thoughts and prayers are foremost with Anthony's family, his wife and children. We have to be there to support them in every way we can. It's sad to say we are looking back on the young life of Anthony Foley. He gave so much joy and happiness to us all."

An emotional Minister for Finance, Michael Noonan, who socialised with Foley and his family a few weeks ago, also paid tribute: "It's a very sad, shocking, sad day. He was a great person. He wasn't loquacious; a man of few words, but solid as a rock, and you could always depend on him. I would like to offer my sympathies to his family, his sisters, his parents; but especially to Olive and his two little boys."

Price Promise

We will not be beaten on price

If you find the same product cheaper in any store in Limerick we will match the price & give you

€30 Cash Back

T&Cs apply.



NOW ONLY
€699

PowerPoint

Stainless Steel American
Fridge Freezer



NOW ONLY
€299

Indesit
7KG 1400 Spin
Washing Machine



NOW ONLY
€199

Indesit
Vented Dryer



NOW ONLY
€299

Bosch
12 Place A+ Dishwasher



NOW ONLY
€1129

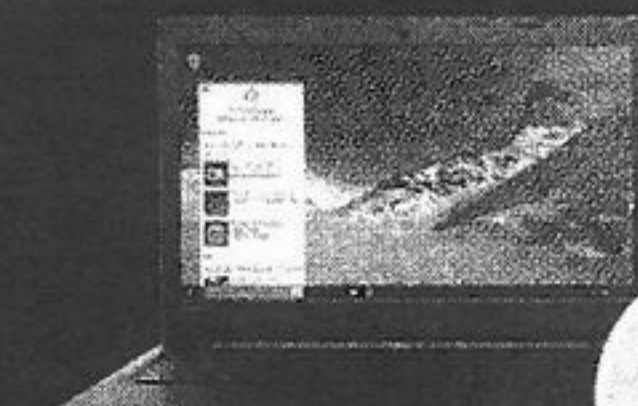
Panasonic
58" 4K Smart LED TV



NOW ONLY
€649

SAMSUNG

49" Full HD Smart LED TV



NOW ONLY
€369

lenovo
15.6" 4GB Core i3 Laptop



NOW ONLY
€199

ASUS
10" 2GB/16GB
Quad Core Tablet



Soundstore
For Everything Electrical

DELTA RETAIL PARK, BALLYSIMON ROAD, LIMERICK. 061 436640

CORK 021 4220850/021 4343377 | WATERFORD 051 859532 | TRALEE 066 7194274

Opening Hours Mon - Sat 9.30am - 6pm, Friday 9.30am - 8pm, Sunday 2pm - 6pm

www.soundstore.ie

100% IRISH OWNED

Axel: always the piano shifter

GREG O SHAUGHNESSY



TEN years ago in Cardiff, Anthony Foley raised the European Cup above his head with that big cheeky trademark grin. The Millennium Stadium erupted, Limerick erupted and grown men shed tears of joy as they hugged each other in the street.

Sadly, just a decade later, the tears are back, but these tears are of a very different kind as we struggle to comprehend how Anthony Foley could have been plucked from among us in the night at the impossibly early age of 42.

The man they called Axel, who embodied the very essence of all that is good about Munster rugby, about Limerick rugby, has been taken without warning, leaving a heartbroken family and a sense of bewilderment not only in Limerick, not only in Munster, not only in Ireland but across the entire world.

That's the measure of the man and his influence in rugby, a man regarded as an equal and a friend by great players such as Brian O'Driscoll, Jonny Wilkinson and Dan Carter. Tough as nails on the pitch, soft as butter off it, even his fiercest rivals conceded that while Foley might have run through them (or over them) like a speeding truck,

he was also the first to seek them out for a pint after the game.

Leave it on the pitch.

As Clive Woodward put it, "shocked and so sad to hear about death of Anthony Foley. A true legend & a man who had total respect of teammates & opposition".

He was also the first to offer advice and support to young players, as Robbie Henshaw revealed this week. Nervous about making his first appearance in an Irish shirt, and worried that the giant American opposition would be looking for a fresh young scalp, he asked Foley for advice.

"Put a hole in someone," was the typically laconic reply.

That was Foley. Always the piano-shifter, never the ruck inspector, as the Caveman, Sebastian Chabal, found out, to his shock and to the huge delight of Thomond Park when Foley, O'Connell and O'Callaghan steamrolled him backwards thirty yards.

But Foley was also the man to settle things down when things were tight and the clock was running down. He was the man to bring on for those last five or ten excruciating minutes of up-the-jumper rugby, moving it on phase by phase, soaking up the hard hits, recycling it until at last the whistle blew, or perhaps, with a little luck, until somebody smuggled the ball over the line for the clincher.

"Feeling numb and alone with only thoughts of this remarkable man," tweeted Peter Stringer. My protector on the field, I



Frankie Sheahan posted this photo of Anthony Foley with former Munster rugby players at a 50th birthday party for Mick Galwey. This picture was taken a week before Foley's untimely death.

will miss you forever Axel. RIP".

But inside the tough exterior, there was a rugby brain unmatched anywhere. Foley knew all there was to be known about his sport, as befitted a man who had excelled at every level: school, club, province and country. As befitted the son of Brendan, a great Irish international, and brother of Rosie, who also represented her country.

Anthony Foley had five All-Ireland League medals with Shannon. A European Cup medal, a Celtic League medal and a Celtic Cup medal with Munster. A Triple Crown.

He had 62 international caps as you might expect from somebody who virtually grew up in the Shannon dressing room.

Foley was steeped in it, as they say, and yet he retained the sort of humility that marked him out as a truly great Munster figure. He never sought the limelight, never bragged, never disrespected his opponents off the field. The body language in front of the camera said everything about him.

And still the question comes back: how can this be right?

How can such a sporting giant be gone so suddenly and so young?

How can a man who epitomised not only the spirit of Munster rugby, but the very essence of sport in Limerick, disappear so suddenly and with no warning as if at the click of a finger?

More to the point, how can a father, a husband, a brother, a son and a mentor to so many vanish just like that?

It's almost beyond comprehension how these things can happen, even though they happen every day, and yet when it happens to a man like Anthony Foley we find ourselves struggling for words to explain what has happened.

It defeats understanding.

Foley's passing deprives Munster of a warrior, a sporting hero and a man who, in a fairer world would have gone on to contribute many more decades of wisdom, guile and vision to the sport he loved so much.

How poignant that he should have slipped away in Paris on the eve of a match between Munster and Racing 92, coached by his great friend and former team-mate, Ronan O'Gara, whose tweet reveals his deep affection and sense of loss.

"Alone on the couch with Jess. Heartbroken. We have lost an incredible man. Too sad to tweet further. Sleep well Axel. We love you...xxx"

The gates of Thomond Park have become an impromptu shrine to a fallen hero. It's our simplest way of offering condolence, and expressing genuine sorrow.

"We have been plunged deep into an incomprehensible darkness"

THE FAMILY REACTION

SARAH O'DWYER

THEIR words carried a resonance for all of us numbed by the death of a Munster and Irish rugby legend.

But for the family, the pain goes beyond sport and celebrity and cuts to the core of family life. While the rest of us lost a legend, the Foley family lost a father, a son, a husband, and a brother.

The Foley family released a statement on Monday thanking the public for their support and sympathies, and spoke about Anthony the family man, as well as the rugby stalwart the public knew.

"With Anthony's passing, we have ultimately lost an amazing, adoring and loving father and husband; an equally caring, loyal and devoted son and brother; a central and go-to figure for the wider Foley and Hogan families. Our anguish at the sudden

loss of Anthony is bottomless.

"We have been plunged deep into an incomprehensible darkness and sense of loss that we must work our way through over the coming days, weeks, months and years."

Anthony Foley met his wife Olive through his sister Orla, when the two were in boarding school together. The first memory Olive has of Anthony is as an enormous rugby player, panned out on the couch, being served sandwiches by his mother, while she and her classmates, along with Orla, squeezed on to the other couch waiting for a lift back to school.

Orla insists that Anthony was always animated when Olive was in the house, to the point of being chatty. "All I remember was being smitten from the start," he recalled in his memoir.

He also mentions in his book that his mother and sister were very keen on the match, as his parents knew her parents, and they set about setting up the pair. Orla and his mother Sheila lied to Olive, telling her they

were taking her on a shopping trip, but instead took her to Musgrave Park to her first rugby match.

They made themselves scarce after the game, giving Anthony the opportunity to use, what he described as the immortal chat-up line. "Are you coming back on the bus?" She agreed, but didn't seem to realise they would be making a few pit-stops along the way, or that she would be forced into singing at the front of the bus. That was the day they became an item.

Anthony said that Olive brought him out of himself, with her being into music, dancing, and amateur drama, but it took her six months to realise what he did for a living. He recalls one memory in particular when Olive announced to Trudy Gatland and Anna Clohessy that Anthony needed to get himself 'a nice job in a bank'. Look how that panned out!

Six months after that they got engaged on St. Stephen's Day 1998, when Anthony proposed in Reddan's Bar, Killaloe.

Woody and Axel: inseparable since sharing a home as children in 1979

CHILDHOOD

MAL KEAVENEY

KEITH Wood and Anthony Foley were childhood friends in Killaloe.

Both of their dads, Gordon and Brendan, were Irish international rugby players, so it was only fitting that the two youngsters would become best mates when Brendan and Sheila Foley moved their family to Killaloe from Murroe in 1979.

The Foley's shared a home with the Wood's during a period when the former were renovating their newly acquired public house.

While rugby was to the fore, Keith and Anthony played all types of sport, including gaelic football, hurling and tennis.

In the ultimate tribute, Keith Wood recalled in his foreword to Anthony's autobiography 'Axel': "Anthony is the smartest rugby player I have had the honour of playing with and against."

"There were more talented, more skillful players, but none maximised their talent so fully. Anthony did the right thing on a rugby field because he understood the game. He rarely had to think about what to do; he knew what to do. "Heart, honesty, determination and teamwork. These are words that are rarely ascribable to individuals but they sit very

comfortably on the shoulders of Anthony Foley."

In an honest recall, Anthony Foley rated his "Old Man" as his only one true hero.

Anthony wasn't at his dad's most famous outing, playing with Munster in the 12-0 win over the All Blacks at Thomond Park in 1978.

"The day before the game was my fifth birthday. There wasn't much point trying to explain to me that this was an all-ticket match and the Munster Branch didn't give players free tickets, or that it was midweek and therefore Dad would be working up until lunchtime and not home beforehand. All I knew was that there was a game at Thomond Park, and when Dad was playing at Thomond Park, I went with him.

"Why should this day be and different? The toys really came out of the cot."

Around the same time, Brendan Foley captained Shannon to back-to-back Munster Senior Cup wins.

The Shannon RFC pavilion has plenty of pictures from this era with father-and-son, with club legend Frankie Flynn singing "There is an Isle."

Three of the Shannon pack – Brendan Foley, Colm Tucker and Gerry McLoughlin – were capped for Ireland. (A fourth, Noel Ryan was unlucky not to have been picked).

It was a fair achievement from the men of 'the parish.'

"I loved him. He was a great friend"

Legendary Voice of Limerick rugby, Len Dineen, tells David Raleigh, how traveling to Paris to commentate on Munster's European cup game ended with him reporting the death of a life-long friend

LEN DINEEN



THE voice of Limerick rugby, Len Dineen, walked into Charles De Gaulle airport last Saturday alongside his friend and legendary Munster Head Coach, Anthony Foley. Both men had travelled to the French capital on board the Munster rugby team flight, which had left Cork an hour and forty minutes earlier.

They were in Paris to work, and if either of them wanted to enjoy the party atmosphere of another European rugby triumph like the glory days of old, there was little else for them to do, but to prepare in their own unique way for the following day's game against Racing 92 and get an early night.

On Saturday evening at the Hotel Novotel, "Axel" Foley helped plot a strategy to defeat Ronan O'Gara's French stars. Dineen was busy too, setting up his live



satellite radio commentary link and practicing his pronunciations of the Racing squad.

"We spoke briefly in Charles De Gaulle. We had both been on the team plane, it was a commercial flight. After we landed I wished him well for the game, and he just smiled back. That was the last time I spoke to Anthony," Dineen told Limerick Life.

The somewhat unlikely pairing remained close over the years, despite Foley's unapologetic displeasure at having to play the media game.

"Some say he was abrasive, but he was a typical Lim-

erick man...he had a chip on both shoulders," Dineen laughed, despite the genuinely honest appraisal of his friend.

"You have to be a bit bitter, do you know what I mean? You have to have an edge if you're going to be a winner. Anthony didn't suffer fools, but once you got through that armour, you were a friend for life."

For the past number of years, both men would hook up for chats and coffee after the weekly Munster press conference had broken up, but this had ended abruptly last April when Foley was replaced as Director of Mun-

ster Rugby by former South African flanker Rassie Erasmus, with Foley assuming the position of Head Coach.

"Two weeks ago, he led the press conference instead of Rassie and we had another chat afterwards. I asked him was he happy with the coaching situation and he said it was sitting OK with him. He said he was under less pressure. He joked the only thing he missed was having the weekly cup of coffee with myself," the Live 95FM broadcaster recalled, his voice choked.

Dineen revealed how he "went numb" upon hearing his dear friend had passed away. It was, he remarked, the lowest point in his 40-year career as a sports journalist.

Sitting in his press seat in an empty Stade Yves du Manoir last Sunday morning, the passionate rugby commentator's voice shook with grief as he relayed the news of Foley's death to those listening intently to their radios back in Limerick.

"I'm talking to you from an empty stadium. I'm in shock, I'm completely numb...just devastated," he said.

Reflecting on their friendship, which started 20 years previously when Foley first emerged as a future star while playing schoolboy rugby for St Munchin's College, Dineen offered: "We knew each other very well, and my son, Len jnr, would have played golf with him regularly. His parents Brendan and Sheila are so proud of him. He was a great family man."

As he prepared to fly home from France Monday afternoon, this time without his former ally, he fondly remembered the bond they both shared: "You know, I don't think I have a photograph of us together, but he wasn't like the younger generation of players who are into their selfies. If I had asked him to pose for one, I'm in no doubt he'd have said to me, 'F**k off Dineen', but he'd have said it in a nice way, through a bit lip."

"I loved him. He was a great friend."

Killaloe in mourning for adopted son

SANDRA QUINN
in Killaloe

THERE'S a part of Killaloe known locally as Foley's Hill. Ever since the family moved here when Anthony was seven years old, the Foley family have been ingrained in the fabric of this beautiful tourist village.

In the wake of Anthony Foley's untimely death on October 16, just two weeks before he was due to turn 43, there was a palpable sense of shock and disbelief amongst locals as they huddled in hushed conversation beneath the dark and sombre clouds hanging over his hometown.

Residents and business people struggled to come to terms with the news that the Munster coach, who

lived here with his wife Olive and two young sons Tony and Dan, was no longer with us.

People spoke fondly about how despite his status within the rugby world, Anthony never lost sight of where he came from and always had great time for the people of Killaloe and for supporting local causes.

In his own words in his memoir, Anthony described Killaloe as a "brilliant place to grow up" with "higgledy-piggledy streets on a hill that slopes down to the broad and beautiful Shannon."

"There were no traffic lights when I was a kid. We had the freedom of the town and its surrounds. [...] On warm days, it was straight down to the Pier Head or the stone bridge across to Ballina."

At the end of the chapter about

his early days in Killaloe, he fittingly said: "When I look back now though, I realise I had only one true hero. And he's still my hero. My old man," Anthony's father Brendan - part of the famous All-Black slaying side of 1978 - was in Paris with him the day he passed away. Since Anthony was a child of eight, he had been watching rugby videos with his father, gathering the game intelligence which differentiated him from so many of his peers on the rugby pitch. Anthony had continued the tradition with his own sons, showing them old Heineken Cup games - not in a boastful way, but to pass on lessons to the next generation.

Staff members in Lakeside Leisure Centre where Anthony was a member and where his children were attending swimming lessons told Limerick Life that they still couldn't

get their heads around the news.

"It's a shock to the community and to the staff here, he's been a member here for more than ten years, since he moved here really," a staff member said.

Anthony would have come to the gym and Jacuzzi three or four times a week and would always say hello and make time to crack a joke with the staff and other gym members.

"When he came in here, he could do his own thing or he could chat to others, no one would bother him or want to talk about work - I think that's why he liked it," the assistant manager who is from the area told Limerick Life.

Anthony was last in the gym last Wednesday and staff members said that his death is so surreal that they are still expecting him to walk through the door.

Visibly upset, staff members described him as an unassuming gentleman who always remembered his roots.

"He was a real family man, he'd come in and use the bike, the treadmill and cross trainer before going to the jacuzzi and his boys would join him for a swim," the staff said, adding that for such a big man, he never did weights.

"He was the son of Munster, he really was," the manager added.

Anthony would have been a regular in John Daly's shop as well, where he would have brought his two boys for a few treats after their training sessions - he was known to have a particular weakness for a big bag of Minstrels and staff in there said that it will be strange not to see him darken their door again.

Staff members from Planet Tri said that Anthony would have bought bikes for his two young sons in there and that he always stopped in for a chat and was very friendly.

"We will close up while the funeral is on as a mark of respect. His death was a shock for everyone. It is still hard to believe, it is a big loss and we want to express our sympathies to his family," staff members said.

Catherine Fahy, owner of The Killaloe Hotel & Spa in Kincora Harbour, expressed her deepest sympathies to the Foley family saying that a huge sense of loss pervaded the community.

"A lot of the staff members knew the family really well and there is a real sense of personal loss for someone who was an iconic hero to so many," she said.

12

CULTURAL JEWELS
OF LIMERICKBrought to you by *Ivans* - The Fresh Food EmporiumFrances
Condell

Pages 29-31



'But because it is my native land and my home is there'

CORMAC LIDDY



TO be a gentleman and a legend is a unique achievement but such was true of Anthony Foley whose death on Sunday numbed the sporting world and for those of a certain vintage it evoked memories of another famous death of a Limerickman on a Sunday.

Back in March 1968 Donogh O'Malley, the former TD and Minister, died suddenly while campaigning in a by-election in county Clare.

He was then aged 48.

Donogh was at his peak when he died and he also played for Shannon as well as for Munster, Connacht and Ulster - a unique achievement. Now another Shannon great has left us at only 42 years of age - a man who gave and would surely have continued to give his life to rugby. But most of all Anthony was a family man and his death is a major blow for his wife Olive and sons Tony and Dan, to whom our deepest sympathy is extended.

I could not claim to have known Anthony Foley well but I knew him as a sporting icon whom I interviewed on many an occasion. It was his kindness I remember most because frequently I would ring him at home on a Sunday after a Munster win or defeat at Thomond Park.

But it was as a Shannon player I knew him best. In the days when match reports included the "played wells" I have no doubt that if I had been doing my job properly he would have been included in every report.

He was fearless on the pitch and modest off it. The bigger the occasion the more he seemed to relish the challenge and especially in local derbies against Young



Munster and Garryowen. Tough as nails when in action but first to shake the hand of an opponent at the end and then, in that great rugby tradition of the good old days, a couple of pints would be shared with team mates and, more importantly, the opponents. All week tributes have been pouring in from all over the world.

Anthony loved talking rugby. He was passionate about every aspect of the game and unlike many others he was always willing to give something back to the sport which gave him so much joy and heartbreak. When I would ask a stupid question he would smile and attempt to gloss over my ignorance. He could also leave you with a withering look which was also part of his make-up.

Being the son of a legend is not, I would think, an

easy path to follow and Anthony began his sporting life as an accomplished hurler. His father would have been happy with that but he must have been overjoyed when Anthony turned to rugby at St Munchin's College. He quickly built up a reputation and he was named captain of the school junior team in 1989 and went on to lead the side in two senior finals.

Picked as a schools' international, he shone for Ireland at that level. It was automatic for him to join Shannon. His list of achievements with the club are well known - not least four AIL titles. Then came glory for Munster, captaining the province to Heineken Cup glory in 2006. His talent was evident on the international stage from the very beginning - scoring a try for Ireland on his debut against England.

In addition to reporting on his performances I always found him willing to comment on a game. He was always courteous and would always return a call if he missed my call to him in those pre-mobile phone days.

In my first column for this newspaper I suggested that a statue or bust of persons who had served Limerick with distinction should be erected in our new pavement only streets. Let us start with Anthony who brought so much joy to so many in a such an all too short lifetime.

As a sports journalist I was more associated with Brendan Foley, a modest giant of a man whose only dislike in life is talking about his own achievements. He, too, is a very modest legend. I never heard him gloat about his successes and I am sure that in the years to come he, his wife Sheila, and their two daughters, Rosie, who played many times for Ireland, and Orla will find the strength to bear his loss as he would wish to be remembered... as a family man first, and then as a sporting icon.

Brendan and the late Moss Keane were second rows on the famous Munster team that beat the All Blacks on October 31st 1978. He did, of course, play for Ireland at a time when a Munster player had to be three times better than a Leinster or Ulster player to be recognised.

Shannon, though, was his place of worship and after a hugely successful career he continued his involvement with the club which has given so much to Irish rugby.

May Anthony's soul rest in peace. The words of the Shannon anthem said it all "farewell, farewell". Thanks for the memories, Anthony, your playing and leadership talents will never be forgotten.

*Cormac Liddy spent 41 years with the Limerick Leader, of which the last 21 were as sports editor.

FAMILY TIES

MAL KEAVENEY

IT WASN'T only Anthony that kept the Foley family in the sporting headlines.

Many years earlier dad Brendan starred in Munster's famous victory over the All-Blacks at Thomond Park in 1978, an event well chronicled ever since. He was also capped 11 times at international level with Ireland.

Anthony's sister Rosie was a serious sportsperson in her own right, captaining Munster and representing Ireland at Rugby 39 times, including a number of World Cups.

In 2014, Rosie realised her childhood dream by swimming the English Channel, ranked as the "Everest of Open Water Swimming."

The mother of three set off from Shakespeare's beach near Dover accompanied by her pilot boat 'Optimistic' with Paul Foreman at the helm.

Rosie's husband Pat Minogue and good friend Fionnuala Walsh, who completed her own Channel swim in 2012, acted as her support team.

She completed the mammoth feat - the channel is 35km wide at its narrowest point - in under 16 hours across one of the world's busiest shipping lanes. She undertook the challenge with fellow swimmer James Lynch,

also from Clare. In advance of the undertaking, she swam the length of Lough Derg in preparation.

Rosie is a qualified swim teacher, tutor, water safety instructor and examiner and has an honours degree in Physical Education & Geography and holds a Master's degree in Science from the University of Limerick.

She teaches physical education and geography in St Anne's Community College in Killaloe, Co Clare.

For the last while UL Bohemians have dominated and shaped women's Irish rugby, winning nearly every national title in sight. Yet only a few years before the start of that domination they didn't even exist until a certain Rosie Foley saw to it that they did.

Rosie, at 43, is a year older than her late brother.

"My parents didn't show any distinction between us being boys and girls. We got to do everything we wanted to do and a lot of the time our parents did it with us. If we were learning how to windsurf in the activity centre in Killaloe mum and dad were out in a kayak watching on. We played a thing called crazy football in Killaloe where you played Gaelic football with a rugby ball for charity. The girls could catch and kick but the boys could only kick the ball along the ground."

Brendan and Sheila Foley also have another daughter Orla, who is three years younger than Anthony.

SHANNON RUGBY CLUB

ANTHONY Foley played in all 48 matches with Shannon RFC in the club's historic four-in-a-row All-Ireland league triumphs in the mid-1990s.

Foley won five AIL titles in total with Shannon, including captaining the side to the 1997/98 championship win. He also collected three Munster Senior Cups.

In perfectly worded statement, Shannon RFC said: "We in Shannon RFC are at a loss to comprehend the tragedy of the passing of one of our quintessential club legends, Anthony Foley."

"Anthony was a hero that spanned generations and his loss will be felt throughout the rugby world."

"Shannon rugby club was in Anthony's blood from the day he was born. Despite the fact that he went on to become one of Munster and Ireland's greatest ever servants, the club was always close to his heart."

Through the glorious years of the All Ireland League Anthony was one of the driving forces of the team that dominated Irish Rugby.

Despite the fact that we have lost one of our club heroes and the rugby world has lost one of its greats, we are very



conscious of the fact that a family have lost a father, a husband, a brother and a son.

"To his wife Olive and his two children, his parents Brendan and Sheila, his sisters Rosie and Orla and his extended family and friends we offer our deepest sympathies."

Shannon RFC opened a book of condolence on Monday and it will remain available for signing throughout the week. From the outset, there was a steady stream of visitors to the club keen to share their memories and express their sympathies.

Club president Noel Healy, who played alongside Foley, commented: "I lost one of my dearest friends today, at 42 years of age. I'm still trying to come to terms with it."

"My deepest sympathies go to his wife

Olive and his family and his friends."

With nine AIL titles, Shannon RFC remains Ireland's most successful club.

Anthony made 88 All-Ireland League appearances with his club.

The legendary number 8 began his career with St. Munchin's College, with whom he won a coveted Munster Schools Junior Cup as a truly inspirational captain in 1989.

"Anthony was a proud past pupil of St. Munchin's and we were equally proud to count him among our alumni," the school said. "As a student he was an immense leader. He captained our Junior Cup winning team of 1989 and our Senior Cup teams in 1991 and '92, both of whom reached the finals. We have lost a legend of the game."

Foley would have turned 43 at the end of this month.