

## ATHLETICS

# The Athea Brothers who took on the world and won

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WHAT RESEARCH tells us is that sibling rivalries often produce great results, but to have one child in a family go on to reach a world stage is fantastic, but what about having two?

You will have to go to the small town of Athea in Limerick to discover the Ahearne brothers, who excelled on the world stage as jumping athletes.

Tim and Dan Ahearne dominated the world of long jump and hop, step and jump (now known as Triple Jump) at the turn of the last century.

The pair grew up alongside their older brothers William and Mick, all of which contributed to the family farm growing up in Athea, County Limerick.

They attended Saint Michael's College in Listowel which provided an outlet for sports within the school, as well as various sports meetings. Both Tim and Dan also played Gaelic Football for local club Athea.

At the age of 18 in 1904, Tim won two competitive jump events in Listowel. Those victories would kick start his road into competition and would drive him on the bigger things.

As he began to build on his success in the years that followed, 1907 would prove to be an exceptional one when he took home the All-Round Championship of Munster in Fermoy, the GAA Long Jump title and a further 16 first prize wins in one year.

However, the Triple Jump at the fourth Summer Olympic Games in London on July 25th, 1908 would prove to be the jewel in the crown for Tim Ahearne.

The Athea man's achievements in



Tim Ahearne in action during his stellar triple jump career.

London was well documented by author and sports writer David Guiney, in his book – Silver, Gold, Bronze.

The event had three Irishmen in the field, Tim Ahearne (Great Britain), Martin Dineen (Great Britain) and Martin Sheridan (USA). Martin Sheridan was born in Mayo, and like many Irish he emigrated to the United States.

The main "contenders" for the event were Eric Larsen (Norway), Calvin Bricker (Canada) and Platt Adams (USA). Larsen cleared 48 feet in the weeks leading up to the games, while Bricker and Platt were national title holders respectively.

A hop skip and a jump and Ahearne found himself laying at the far end of the pit, optimistic. Many minutes followed as officials measured and re-measured the distance.

Tim Ahearne from Athea, County Limerick had set a new Olympic and World record of 48 feet, 11 ¼ inches (14.92 metres) and was crowned Olympic champion! At 22 years old, he was the youngest Gold Medal winner of the 1908 games.

With Olympic Gold in his back-pocket Tim and his brother Dan immigrated to New York with their family in 1909 where the "e" from Ahearne, was dropped.

According to various sources, this was down to a clerical error in the days of "rushed paperwork", hence the variation in the brothers' surnames.

In an almost passing of the guard, Dan Ahearn would begin his own run of success in Athletics with a goal in mind – to become a triple jump world record holder.

In the summer of 1909, he established

several new records for the triple jump, but the Amateur Athletic Union threw them out on technicalities.

In July 1909, he succeeded in getting his name on the record books by creating a new Triple Jump world record with a distance of 50 feet 2 inches.

The brothers dominated at National level. Tim placed second at the US AAU Championships in the triple jump in 1911, 1913-14, and 1916, each time finishing runner-up to Dan who won a total of eight US AAU titles over a period of nine years.

Even though Dan Ahearn was the best Triple Jumper and record holder at the time, he was not naturalised citizen of America as he did not hold US citizenship and therefore could not compete in the 1912 Olympic Games in Stockholm. Meanwhile, Tim decided not to defend his Olympic title for Great Britain.

Dan eventually got to compete on an Olympic stage in Antwerp in 1920 where he represented USA. He finished sixth in the Triple Jump final and performed nowhere near his best. So much so that he's world record for the event remained intact for a further four years.

In the years that followed, Tim returned to his farming roots after his athletics career and settled on a farm in upstate New York, where he raised prize-winning pedigree cattle.

He died in November 1968 aged 83. Based out of Chicago, Dan became a policeman and died on December 20th, 1942 at the age of 54.

Two of Athea's famous sporting sons who jumped for glory and achieved just that, Tim and Dan Ahearne rank among Limerick's greatest Athletes.

## COVID-19

## Limerick Fire and Rescue set up camp at Markets Field

by Jack Neville  
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TO HELP combat the spread of the coronavirus, the Limerick Fire and Rescue services are to use the Markets Field as a base for the foreseeable future.

The grounds previously acted as the home field for Limerick FC when they were plying their trade in the SSE Airtricity Premier Division.

The Garryowen venue has also hosted Munster Schools Rugby Cup fixtures in the recent past and will also act as the home for the Treaty United women's soccer team when and if their season gets underway.

With an initiative to help workers from only interacting with those on the same shifts, the stadium in Garryowen will be used to accommodate a cohort of fighters in conjunction with the existing station on Mulgrave Street, less than 500 metres away from the stadium.

The bi-location will provide additional space if necessary and allow members to only be in contact with co-workers

on similar shifts. Speaking about the new partnership, Gerry McDonnell, Limerick Enterprise Development Partnership CEO said:

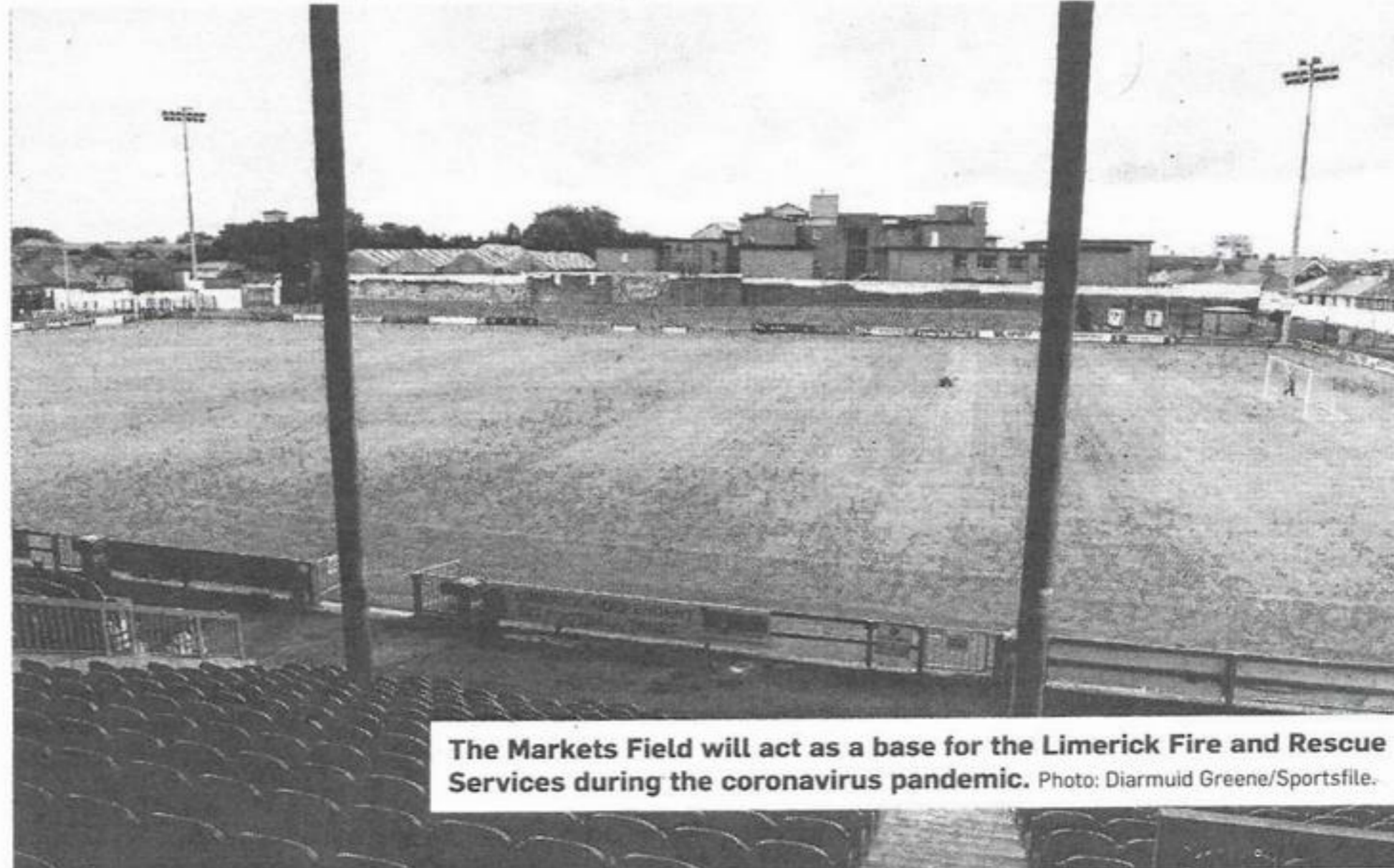
"We are absolutely delighted and thrilled to be able to support Limerick Fire & Rescue Service given this current crisis that we are all going through. They are going to be based there in the Markets Field.

"They will be able to help and serve the community while keeping themselves safe and it is our intention at the LEDP to continue to support both the Limerick Fire & Rescue Service but also anyone else in the community that we can help with."

Stadium Manager at the Markets Fields George Lee says the response from numerous organisations sums up the idea of Sporting Limerick:

"This gives a new a new aspect to the term Sporting Limerick from the point of view of Sporting Limerick putting its shoulder to the wheel when the chips are down.

"We would see ourselves as being very much part of that through helping the effort and by helping the effort, helping our community," Lee said.



The Markets Field will act as a base for the Limerick Fire and Rescue Services during the coronavirus pandemic. Photo: Diarmuid Greene/Sportsfile.