

LOOK BACK AT LIMERICK (4)

by G. P. Gallivan

Motor Races In Streets

SOCCER also flourished in Limerick in the thirties. Although I was not really a soccer fan I was caught up in the wave of enthusiasm for the young Limerick club, and I remember seeing Drums, Shamrock Rovers, Bray Unknowns and St. James' Gate in action.

The names that I remember best from the Limerick Club were those of McCann and the two Noonans, and I clearly recall the great surge of excitement when Sligo Rovers brought the fabulous Dixie Dean to the Markets Field.

But, oddly enough, my recollections of soccer in Limerick are not so much of the senior club as of the minor and junior ones with games at the Bombing Field and the Dock Road.

The teams that come to mind are Crusaders, Dalcassians and Prospect. I think that Jimmy and Tom Colley played with the latter club, Hilary O'Brien, Gerry Ridd and, I think, Paddy Kelly turned out for Crusaders and I'm sure that Gus Hanley played with Dalcassians.

The old Dock Road was a great place to spend an afternoon in those days. There was always a soccer game in winter and, during the summer months we were never without a cricket match. I read where someone said recently that cricket is a sissy game. Well, it's a game that I've never played and it's certainly leisurely enough but, as for being sissy, I couldn't agree. I know that I wouldn't like to be a wicket-keeper or fielding in the slips when a batsman takes a swipe at the ball.

I suppose that kind of ignorant phraseology will offend cricket purists almost as much as the term "sissy," but I mean well . . . and you just can't please everyone.

MOTOR RACE

The Limerick Motor Race was another great feature of the period. By the way, what was the official title? Was it Grand Prix, Round the Houses, or just Motor Race? Not that it matters . . . a rose would smell as sweet, etc.

But there's one thing that I am certain about . . . it was full of excitement and gripping drama and I for one was sorry to see it discontinued. There

was something heart-catching about the flat, waspish spit of the engines, the screeching of tyres and the skillful juggling of the wheel at corners.

The practices, too, were full of excitement. They were held at five o'clock in the morning and the roads were closed to the public. I was still at school at the time but it was during the summer holidays and I acted as a marshal with my three brothers, Jim, Eddie and Cyril.

In true Limerick fashion it was decided that it would be easier to stay up all night rather than go to bed for a few hours. The result was the inevitable card game, a big supper about 3 a.m. and then, duly fortified, we set out for the practice.

We were positioned at Punch's Cross, an excellent position; the cars came skidding around the bend, drivers battling furiously to avoid the bales of straw and sandbags . . . then away up the Mount Hill in gathering power and a flurry of exhaust.

The races themselves were full of incident; the spectacular driving of Pat Fairfield, the superb nonchalance of Charlie Dobson and the enigmatic brilliance of Whitehead. One also recalls the tragic death of the Duke of Grafton, killed when his car crashed near the Christian Brothers School at Sexton St., the early retirement, due to mechanical trouble, of our idol, Stanley Woods, who was trying his luck at car racing after sweeping the boards as a motor cyclist. And I can't finish about the race without remarking on the roads themselves. Do you remember the thick black marks that stayed on them for months afterwards?

HOCKEY

Hockey is another game that I never played but I saw quite a lot of it in those days. My pals and I would often went to Rosbrien for a football match and then stay on to see Catholic Institute playing hockey on the neighbouring pitch. I particularly remember their lively games with Protestant Young Mens.

I was always impressed by the two goalkeepers, Eddie O'Connor, who was later capped for Ireland, and Sammy Morris. Other names that come to mind

are those of Tom Riordan, Vincent O'Connor and Hugh O'Donnell for Institute, and Watts (I don't know the first name) and the famous Stan de Lacy for Young Men's.

It's funny, too, the way fashion changes in sport. I think that the twenties and thirties must have been an age of showmanship. I remember well, in rugby at any rate, that the players who had been capped for their province or Ireland would always arrive wearing their caps. This ensured them of a round of applause . . . a nice custom that didn't do anyone any harm. Indeed, it might not be a bad idea to revive the custom, as otherwise, what use is there for these caps?

In rowing, too caps, have gone out of fashion and it seems to me that they are not used to the same extent as of yore in cricket. And, speaking of caps, I have often wondered why the G.A.A. have not brought out a regulation cap instead of the ordinary everyday cloth caps. Something like the American baseball cap is what I have in mind . . . but maybe there is a good reason why not . . . anyway, it's just a thought.

ROWING

Another change in rowing is in the matter of flannels. Up to the early thirties white flannels were all the vogue but they have long been pushed out of place by the more serviceable greys. And now I'm on the subject of rowing, another favourite sport of mine.

All my brothers and myself rowed for Limerick Boat Club. My eldest brother, Cyril, was unlucky enough to miss Tommy O'Donnell's history-making senior eight that won the Union Cup in 1927. He had to drop out of the crew because of illness a few weeks before the Cork Regatta. Willy Tracey, Martin McGuire and the late Vin Donovan were, I think, other members of that crew.

The late 'twenties were Boat Club's vintage years. I remember one Limerick regatta where they won seven out of eight events, Shannon Rowing breaking their sequence with a fine crew stroked by the one and

By the time that Jim, Eddie and myself were rowing the pendulum had swung but we still enjoyed every moment of it. Boat Club and Shannon pro-

duced some fine crews around this time and names that I pick at random are the Smith brothers, Tommy Brockert and Kevin Quinn for Shannon, and Jackie Hall, Kevin O'Sullivan and Mick Twomey for Boat Club.

St. Michael's and Athlunkard were each undergoing a lean period but both were to come along in later years and completely reverse the tables. Men like Joe Whelan, Jimmy Sheehan and Stapleton (I forget the first name) were the ones who kept St. Mick's going in hard times, and if I can only remember the Earlies of Athlunkard there is some excuse for me. You see we didn't have much contact with Athlunkard as they trained on the Abbey River and never ventured to our part of the world until three or four days before the regatta. But I can tell you that it was always an occasion when they did. The appearance of Russian fishing trawlers in the English Channel never caused more speculation than the first glimpse of Athlunkard swinging through the arches of the Sarsfield Bridge.

There was an effort for a short time to popularise speedboat racing, but it fell through after a while, though I never failed to wonder at the courage of those enthusiasts who buzzed along at nifty speeds with the bows of their craft well clear of the water. At a later stage I remember Bill Collier and some aviator staging a spectacular bombing manoeuvre on the stretch of water before Glynn's shed. Collier zig-zagged in his speedboat while the aircraft bombed him with flour bags . . . fortunately none of them hit the target.

I can't finish on sport without mention of the famous U.C.C. sides which won the Bateman and Munster Cups around the mid-thirties. Limerick had a special interest as they were captained by Brendan O'Brien, and we were also represented by Clohessy (first name gone), Jim Buekner and Joe Laycock. I remember going down with Martin Bradshaw to see the cups on display in O'Brien's and they made an impressive sight. Yes, all in all, I think that we held our end up in sport, at any rate.

(To be continued).

ODDS AND ENDS

by An Mangaire Sugach

MAKING MISTAKES

THERE are some people who would like to write (in the literary sense, that is) but who never put pen to paper. And do you know why? Because they are afraid of making mistakes.

They are afraid of making

tion more prone to despair than to hope.

Incidentally, we have practically nothing to compare with these authoritative works when it comes to the Irish language, if we except Cormac Ó Cadhlaigh's *Gnás na Gaeilge* and Fr. Gerald O Nolan's "Studies in

ted the mines to the equal danger (both) of friend and foe."

The brackets around the offending words were put there by Mr. Fowler.

Among the examples of literary lapses listed under the

to have anything to do with the interpretation of Acts of Parliament knows how complicated and confusing they can be. As an antidote one could do no better than read Sir Ernest Gowers' "Plain English." Here is one of the examples that Sir Ernest gives of legalistic Eng-