

GAA club marks 50th anniversary of win

■ Leader photographers delved into the paper's archives to find these memories of the 1964 county final

DONAL O'REGAN

ONE OF THE oldest GAA clubs in the county is celebrating the 50th anniversary of their last Limerick senior hurling championship on Saturday.

Cappamore GAA - founded on June 3, 1887 - have won five senior titles in their history. The 1964 team was managed by the late, great Jimmy "Butler" Coffey.

Liam Hammersley, current secretary, said over 200 are expected to attend the function in the Ballykisteen Hotel with some travelling home from England.

"There was 30 in the squad between selectors and players. Six are deceased," said Liam.

Also being honoured on the night are the 1994/95 U21 football champions and the 1989 U12 hurling champions.

"There has been a great reaction so far. We have been planning it for a while but we waited until all the hurling was finished for the year," said Liam.

An interesting aspect of their win was, like many clubs at the time, some of their best players couldn't take to the field. A ban on ordained priests or Christian Brothers playing GAA was in place, while men who had returned to the seminary were not released.

So in 1964 Cappamore had a man like Fr Liam Ryan, at the peak of his powers aged 28, cheering from the sidelines instead of hurling on the pitch.

He played in Cappamore's three wins in the fifties, the first of those leading to him being named Limerick captain in 1955. Fr Ryan then became the youngest-ever captain of a Munster championship-winning side, Mackey's Greyhounds in 1955, at just 19. But after being ordained, he had to hang up his hurley.

"In 1964 I was ordained four years so I couldn't play. There was a prohibition against it. You couldn't play until Vatican II.

"I was just home from two years in America so I got to see the semi-final and final. Cappamore beat Kilmallock in the semi-final which was really the county final because Cappamore disposed of Dromcollogher in the final quite easily," said Fr Ryan, who is looking forward to this Saturday, November 15 at 7.30.

"It is nice to remember we were winning county finals at one time," said Fr Ryan, a Professor Emeritus of Sociology in NUI Maynooth.

Another man of the cloth who could have been tagging out was Oola's Fr Donal Cunningham, parish priest in Upperchurch and Drombane, Thurles. There were a number of Oola men on the Cappamore team.

"I played in the semi-final and quarter-final but I was within two years of ordination and had gone back to college when the final was on. In that time there was no way of getting out of college no matter what was on even if you were playing in All-Ireland final.

"We knew that was the case. I missed a county minor final in my first year in Maynooth," said Fr Cunningham, who is hoping to be in Ballykisteen and relive memories of the win.

For more information about the night or to book tickets priced at €30 for the dinner dance contact any of the committee of Cappamore GAA club or



No helmets in those days! The Cappamore team who defeated Dromcollogher in the 1964 Limerick senior hurling championship final by a score line of 5-5 to 1-4



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