

er looks to th local firms

panies who together to sales to keep recessionary at O'Sullivan, president of Cultural & Association. The association reckons there are over 50 businesses in Limerick run by Polish people in Limerick.

Mr Sobiecki - who spoke through his son, Adam, who is returning home to Poland after five years in Limerick, appealed to Polish people and local businesses to contact the Polish Cultural & Business Association at 085-1515990.

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LEADER

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Limerick legend echoed in defeat of the French

■ Garryowen hero Joe O'Connor scored on inaugural rugby match against France in 1909

Mike Dwane

IRELAND celebrated 100 years of international rugby against France by scoring three tries in a rare victory over Les Bleus at Croke Park on Saturday.

The anniversary has special significance for Joe O'Connor, Highfield.

The inaugural Ireland-France game in Dublin on March 20, 1909, also saw the home side score three tries in a 19-8 win, one of them by Joe's uncle and namesake.

Joe O'Connor was the second youngest of seven brothers from St Mary's parish who between them won 37 Munster Senior Cups with Garryowen in the early 20th century. Two, Joe and Jack, went on to represent their country.

But within two years of the win against France on March 20, 1909, Joe O'Connor was dead, laid low by a chest infection. This was long before the electric shower, an era when players would throw overcoats over wet gear and take the train home. His family believes this may be how he got the chest condition which cut him down in his prime.

"I don't think they would have been as aware of the risks back then but they say that's what happened to him, that he could have picked up pneumonia or TB in that way," Joe O'Connor said this week.

"There were seven brothers in all, all sportsmen, but three of them died around the 30-mark. The ones who survived were Brian, who was with Athlunkard Boat Club;

Jack who was an (rugby) international himself; Thade, who had a trial for Ireland; and my father Jim, who was an athlete and the Irish champion over 100

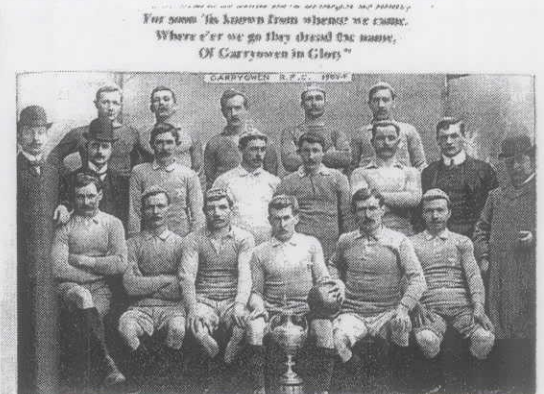
yards." A 1911 newspaper clipping from the family scrapbook described Joe O'Connor as someone "who threw his heart and soul



Joe O'Connor, Highfield, nephew of his illustrious namesake who scored a try against France a century ago, relaxing in Kilkee with the AIL League Division One trophy, AIB Cup, Munster senior and junior cups won by Garryowen in 2007



Account of Joe's funeral in the family scrapbook



Joe, front with ball, and his Garryowen team-mates

into the game and the welfare of the club, a player of pluck and grit, manly and strong, who never took any undue advantage of any opponent and whatever

knocks came his way, he always took them smiling". The obituary notes that Joe O'Connor had "invariably represented his province" for a number of

years and it was "a matter of surprise" that the Garryowen scrumhalf wasn't called into the Irish team sooner.

The France game was Joe O'Connor's first and only cap, illness ruling him out of later selections. But in that game he "had a hand in many of the scores, one of which he gained himself, thus getting his name inscribed on that select scroll of players who scored on their first international", the obituary notes.

His funeral was "one of the largest seen in Limerick... all classes and creeds assembling to pay the last tribute of respect to a worthy citizen and honoured sportsman".

Joe O'Connor this week recalled that his uncle's funeral had been "a huge event with apparently thousands of people at it".

"Those were the very early days of the internationals and in those days they really didn't travel outside of Dublin or Belfast at all to find players. So it was unusual then and he would have been something of an idol in Limerick and they were supposed to have written poems about his death. And it wasn't just the rugby. He was a good athlete and a good oarsman with Athlunkard. Down in the parish in those days, they were very much self-contained in sports, in running, rowing and of course rugby. They didn't bother with any cause or with politics," said Joe, who has himself represented Garryowen, playing with the great Paddy Reid in the late 40s.

Picture perfect: Exhibiton of Limerick bridges opens

Patricia Feehily

A PHOTOGRAPHIC exhibition based on the bridges of Limerick by local landscape architect and landscape photographer, Dave Ryan, will be opened this Thursday evening, February 12, at 7.30pm, at the County Library in Dooradoyle.

Entitled "Limerick-on-Shannon - a Study of Limerick's River Crossings", the exhibition will be opened by Dr Ronald Cox, well known civil engineering historian and the country's leading writer on our engineering heritage.

Dave who lives in Dooradoyle is a native of Mallow, but his family came originally from the Murroe area. He has always been conscious of the importance of heritage and has a particular fasci-



Dave Ryan, Dooradoyle, is holding an exhibition of his photographs of the bridges and river crossings in Limerick at the County Library

taken time to study some of it," he said.

But there is also a practical aspect to his study. "Our built heritage plays a

emphasised."

Limerick, he said, has a very proud bridge heritage spanning centuries. "But many of the river

by swans and it's beautiful," he said. "I also like the Living Bridge. I like the structure. It has a certain dinosaur quality."

Czech woman get suspended jail for running a brothel

LIMERICK COURT

David Hurley

A CZECH woman who pleaded guilty to operating a brothel at a city centre apartment received a six-month suspended jail sentence at Limerick Court this Thursday afternoon. The woman was given 48 hours to leave the city.

Blanka Vapenikova, 24, of no fixed abode, was arrested at 12.25am at an apartment on Harvey's Quay following a week-long Garda surveillance operation. Garda Niall

over a week ago.

Judge O'Donnell imposed a six-month sentence on Ms Vapenikova, suspended for 12 months.

He ordered the forfeiture of the mobile phones and laptop and directed that gardai return the cash seized to Ms Vapenikova to assist her in her travel arrangements out of Limerick.

This Thursday morning when the case was originally called, Mr Herbert asked that the case be adjourned to the afternoon as his client had requested