

# Limerick's 'Fastnet virgin' hailed a hero

Limerick County Council to honour Ger O'Rourke

by Pamela Duncan  
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WHEN Limerick businessman Gerard O'Rourke crossed the finishing line in the Fastnet Yacht Race with his entry Chieftain, he became the first Irishman to have won the trophy.

Yet, Mr O'Rourke hardly seems ruffled by his major achievement.

"I'm very happy," the

said this Tuesday.

Other Limerick crew members who spent 55 hours on board during the race included Ger's daughter Deirdre, who acted as pit, and Foynes native, Adrian O'Connor, watch leader.

The race sees competitors sail from Cowes on the Isle of Wight, around the

are to honour Ger O'Rourke, who will be officially recognised at a civic reception in County Hall, on Monday, September 24, at 4.30pm.

"The 608-mile event is one of toughest offshore sailing races in the world and this victory is a major sporting success for Limerick and Ireland", Kevin Sheahan, chairperson of Limerick County Council, commented.

Mr Sheahan said that the council were delighted to be holding a civic reception to recognise this significant and momentous achievement, the highest accolade at the disposal of Limerick County Council for any individual, group or organisation.

"Limerick and its sports men and women are known the world over and have been a source of pride

for the county for many years. Ger O'Rourke's success further enhances Limerick's proud sporting tradition and ability to compete at the top level nationally and internationally."

Mr O'Rourke, a former Limerick Sports Star Of the Year, was also named Cork Dry Gin Sailor of the Year

earlier this year.

In winning the Fastnet race, considered one of the world's classic offshore races, Mr O'Rourke adds to his impressive list of victories that started with a class win in the 2005 Rolex Sydney to Hobart Race, and an outright win in this year's Fortis IRC Nationals.



Ger O'Rourke, owner of Chieftain, overall winner receives a Rolex Yacht-Master timepiece from Roger Maingot MD of Rolex UK at the Fastnet Race prizegiving at the Royal Citadel Barracks in Plymouth. Photo: Rolex/Carlo Borlenghi.

Limerick-based property developer said modestly, when contacted by the Limerick Post.

When he was handed the Fastnet trophy on Friday, he was the first Irishman in the 82 year history of the competition to receive the award. Even more impressively, this is the first time that Ger and his 12 person crew attempted the 608 mile race. "I was a Fastnet virgin," he laughs.

So what did Ger and his crew do to celebrate?

"We had a few drinks on Thursday when the result was confirmed and again on Friday, when we got the trophy. I'm still recovering - well I'm recovered now, more or less," he

Fastnet Rock off the Southwest of Ireland and back to Plymouth. It has taken place bi-annually since 1925.

Of the 300 boats that started, only 71 finished.

Mr O'Rourke, who has been racing for 20 years, says that the challenge of sailing is what drives him to return to it.

"The adrenaline rush that you get when you're sailing on a big sea, the risk factor, the challenges you face engineering wise, mechanically and marine...I suppose in one word it's the challenge," he says.

Limerick County Council have also acknowledged the great achievement of the Chieftain crew and

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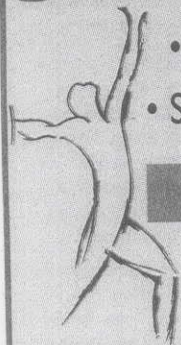


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