

# 'UP GARRYOWEN!'

by *W.W. Gleeson*

The word, **Garryowen**, has many connotations, e.g. **John's Garden (English translation), being a former district in County Limerick up to 1760; later to be added to the ancient city when that part of the historic wall, connecting the outer Citadel Gate in the grounds of St. John's Hospital with the present Cathedral site, was demolished.**

Again, in Gerald Griffin's **The Collegians**, reference is made to Garryowen, dating back through the centuries.

Famed in song and story, Garryowen, to this day, is also remembered by the long-established rugby club named after it.

Founded in August, 1883, it was the culmination of a non-registered club, aptly named Park Rangers, having its "head-quarters and playing pitch" at the back of the monument — not the O'Connell one, as erroneously so often averred, but the Sir Thomas Spring Rice 120-foot column in the Russell—Memorial (People's) Park.

It was at the inaugural meeting, held at the Catholic Institute, Henry Street, and later adjourned to the Athenaeum in Cecil Street, after various names had been suggested, that Michael Joyce, a river pilot — later to become a Member of Parliament, and Mayor of his native city — told the gathering that as one whose job took him around the navigable world, he had rarely heard the name of Limerick mentioned at any port of call. "But, he added, "should I opt for going ashore to visit a sailors' home or canteen, there I was sure to hear the rousing strains of **Garryowen In Glory**, sung with gusto, by a conglomerate group of sailor lads, to the accompaniment of the non-stop thumping on a piano!"

Having finished his speech amidst applause, J. Fogerty proposed that Park Rangers be known henceforth as Garryowen Football Club. Tom Prendergast seconded, and there was no opposition.

The election, or selection of the 1st. XV. resulted as follows: J.M. O'Sullivan (capt.), J. Fogerty, M. Joyce, T. Prendergast, W. Thomson, J. McCarthy, J. McCauley, J. Hartney, W. Tobin, J. Slattery, M. Gilligan, W.J. Stokes, W. Prendergast, P. Fogerty, J. Guinane, M. Guerin. Thus, these players became the founder-members of the new club.

Three years later (1886) the Munster Cup — blue riband of Irish rugby — was put up for competition. The teams to reach the final were Bandon and Garryowen, and the match ended in a scoreless draw. In the replay, staged at Charleville, the Cork side were victorious, winning by the only score, a try-nil.

Thirty-six years later (1922), memories bring me back to another rugby match, between sides representing Shannon Selected and Young Munster Selected, also played at Charleville. This is how the game came about.

The Civil War was raging. I was one of the 77 Limerick men attached to the 39th. Inf. Battn. National Army, based at the Parochial Hall, Chapel Street, in the North Cork town.

On Tuesday, October 10, at about 10 p.m. six or seven members of the battalion were joking and laughing in the street, with their backs to the barricade fronting the billet.

Suddenly, from the narrow lane directly opposite from where these men stood, came a burst of rifle fire and two of the group fell to the ground wounded.

They were Paddy Hickey, 5, St. Mary's Place, his right forearm shattered by explosive bullet and Rory O'Connor, Ellen Street, who suffered a leg wound. (Fortunately both men later recovered and Cpl. Hickey, after the cessation of hostilities, re-joined his old club, Young Munster, and was the first to use the rallying cry "Up and Under", for the high kick and follow-up).

On the following day, a rugby match, at the instigation of the Commanding Officer, Col. Dave Reynolds, was arranged and which he also refereed, between the sides already mentioned.

Cpl. Joe "Piper" Cullinane captained the Shannon Sel. XV. and Cpl. Denis "Lamb" Hickey led "The Wasps".

From the kick-off to the end of the 80 minutes, it was hell for

leather all the way. Was it ever thus between these two old sides! What was supposed to be a nerve-steadying tonic, as we were led to believe, after the previous night's encounter, turned out to be an explosive and shattering ordeal!

However, "Munsters" scored first, an unconverted try, after which they were in complete command well into the second half, when Shannon were awarded a penalty kick on the half-way line, for an "ungentlemanly indiscretion" on one of its players.

As the full-back was about to take "the high kick and follow-up" I could no longer contain the excitement of that nerve-shattering moment and spontaneously shouted: "Up Garryowen! and let 'em have it".

The response was overwhelming. Our eight forwards tore into the opposition, reminiscent of Fontenoy, as they raced to the spot near the goal line where the ball bounced, and from the loose maul that followed, crossed over and won the touch down for an unconverted try. The game thus ended in a draw. A fair result.

I do hope that if Willie Gleeson reads this paragraph he will be reminded to look through the files of one of the Limerick papers, in which, I understand, there is a record of the fact that he was the man who gave the word Garryowen as a term for the high kick and follow-up to rugby football. I believe he first used it as a rallying cry back in 1922, little suspecting, I am sure, that it would soon become current from Thomond Park to New Zealand.

(Oliver Weldon, *Irish Press*, January, 1957).

As all thirty players marched off the field, they were met by Paymaster, Lieut. Sean Walsh, who informed them — it being pay-day — that they would receive the weekly pay packet, £1-4-6, when they arrived at the dining-hall, where "thirst quenchers" and a sumptuous dinner, specially prepared by Joe Meaney and Martin Lyons, awaited them.

This origin of the rallying cry "Up Garryowen" was published in the **Limerick Leader** and **Limerick Chronicle** during the late 'forties. Reference to it was also mentioned in the **Irish Press**, January 1957. (See box in this article).

Maurice Lenihan in his **History** has given us the familiar words (and their translations) of the old song about Garryowen and its "Boys", led by the famous Johnny Connell. But there is another less well known version of the world-renowned air

## GARRYOWEN IN GLORY

Oh, many a land, once great and grand,  
has bowed to foreign master;  
And many a fight 'gainst tyrants' might  
has sunk in dire disaster.  
But one I hold creation bold:  
one land, one song, one story,  
Still lives, still glows, still thrives and grows,  
'tis Garryowen In Glory.  
'Tis Garryowen, our pride, our own  
proud Garryowen In Glory!

In nature blest, in vendure drest,  
she crests the western waters;  
Oh, fairer far than dawn stars are  
her guileless—hearted daughters.  
Her bare-breast' sons have faced the guns  
in many a battle hoary ...  
Stood man-to-man, in battle's van,  
for Garryowen In Glory.  
'Tis Garryowen, our pride, our own,  
proud Garryowen In Glory!