

# Landmark Good Friday decision 'will be repeated'

Alan Owens

This time last year people were drinking in pubs in Limerick after Limerick Vintners Association got a historic special exemption order to open for business for Good Friday.

And a year on the solicitor who took the case Gearoid McGann believes that in the future if there is another big event or match in Limerick pubs would be allowed open on the Holy Day.

"Once it happens, it is always going to happen. Obviously they only schedule the matches to suit television and this year it didn't suit to put something on, but who knows next year or the year after? You have to get the same special events happening, but of course there is going to be another one someday," he told me.

Recalling last year's events he added: "It was like all of the moons were aligned in the right direction, which was unusual," laughed McGann, who has



Solicitor Gearoid McGann, front, second from right, with the Limerick Vintners Association

represented the Vintners for the past 25 years, was tasked by the group to see if it would be possible to open on Good Friday for the Munster Leinster Magners League match. Crucially, Thomond Park had a 'National Sporting Arena Licence', which meant that it could serve

alcohol during the game, while the pubs outside could not, a fact referred to as "absurd" by Judge Tom O'Donnell in his ruling.

"That had such an impact, because here was the stadium itself, which would be able to serve alcohol no matter

what day it was and it was going to be able to serve on Good Friday," explained Gearoid.

Analysing the licensing laws, Gearoid spotted a loophole that he thought could be exploited.

"This was an area exemption for a special event. You have to satisfy

changing it, he was simply applying what had been passed by the Oireachtas many years ago, but nobody thought then that something like this could happen," explained Gearoid.

"Was it a loophole that the Oireachtas forgot to exclude, we will never know, but it is the only type of exemption that you can get on Good Friday, every other one excludes it, so it was unique in that way."

Although he won't discuss it, because of the nature of the case, it seems possible there may have been pressure to allow a higher-profile solicitor, or "heavy hitter" to take the case. "I said I would do it myself. I thought the opening was there for it. I have been doing the Vintners stuff for 25 years, I am familiar with it, and I knew nobody had tried Good Friday, so I said I would give it a go," he said.

McGann feels strongly that a similar situation will arise again, and lead to pubs opening on Good Friday once more.

## Road widening depends on So

Nick Rabbitts

ANY widening of the road at Punch's Cross is dependent on the completion of a stalled development on the southern exit, councillors have heard.

If a mixed use retail and office development on the site of the former John Moloney Car Sales service station goes ahead, it will mean the road will be widened at Punch's Cross to provide additional traffic lanes and footpaths.

Other developments would include new public lighting, a re-design of the

junctions Prospect Road, pedestrians points. Within the project service C stated:

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