



**WHEN** it comes to putting a team out on the field there's not many who have to worry about when the ferry docks — but that's just one of the challenges that faces west Cork football club Ilen Rovers.

This amalgamation of the two areas of Baltimore and Aghadown that lie either side of the Ilen river happened in 1973.

It is also the home club to players from the islands off Skibbereen namely Cape Clear, Sherkin and Hehir.

In the past, matches on the mainland had to be held up if the 45-minute ferry broke down.

Club Chairman John Holland says it is common

# ILEN BUILD BRIDGES

## MUNSTER WINNERS: ILEN ROVERS, CORK

practice for a speed boat to be sent to collect players.

West Cork is the heartland of Cork football with eight major teams in the region.

But in the space of just 15 years Ilen Rovers went from being a Junior B championship outfit — through Junior A and Intermediate and up to Senior — culminating in reaching the 2007 Cork senior football final.

Beaten by mighty Nemo Rangers that day — the narrow three-point margin

of defeat is one of the best records against Nemo in the last 10 years.

Along the way they were crowned All-Ireland Intermediate club champions in 2004 to mark their 21st anniversary.

### Excited

That run began with their victory in the 1995 Cork Minor championship. So winning the minor county crown title again in 2010 has Ilen Rovers members excited about the future.

“We’d be hoping that they

can emulate the last very successful minor winning team of 15 years ago,” says chairman Holland.

“We make a huge investment in our underage section and it is a constant struggle but one that we are committed to.”

Developing a second club grounds on the other side of the river was vital as Baltimore village is 15 miles away on the other side of the river.

According to Holland: “Developing a pitch on both sides of the river was a key to our success this year.

“Some players had diffi-

culty getting across but this has been addressed now.”

A love of the GAA has literally bridged two communities.

The club is clearly thriving and has a blossoming ladies section as well as underage hurling.

Jason Whooley and Fachtna Collins are Ilen men to have worn the blood and bandages in the past.

And Conor O’Driscoll was on the Cork panel that won Sam Maguire in 2010.

Dan McKeon was on the Cork minor team that reached the 2010 All-Ireland final.