

Kanturk or Carrigallen

Paddy O'Rourke

ONE MIGHT wonder what links these two places? Well they both have successful livestock marts and so the story begins for me with my late uncle, James O' Rourke who, despite having moved to Dublin in 1920 at the tender age of fourteen to apprentice to the bar trade, retained a very strong bond both with his siblings, all twelve of them, and the wider community. So when the idea of building a livestock mart in Carrigallen was proposed and share capital was required, he was amongst some of the first people to invest. There after he retained an abiding interest in the progress of the mart, keeping up to speed via the provincial papers he obtained in the city, and by visiting the cattle and pig sales when he was down home.

During the early years of the mart's trading, RTE broadcast a programme each evening called Farm Diary, reporting on livestock prices from around the country. Occasionally they used reports from Carrigallen but they tended to use the report from Kanturk in Co Cork more frequently, whose sale day also occurred on a Wednesday. But this didn't deter uncle James from listening attentively each Wednesday evening in the hope of hearing his beloved Carrigallen mentioned. This necessitated him leaving the bar where he worked (and where no doubt the patrons would prefer to listen to soccer and horse racing results to hearing about the price of dry cows and gilts in Carrigallen), ascending the stairs to his living accommodation. Here he would climb upon an old Bulmers cider crate to reach the radio, which rested on a high shelf; why he never simply had the shelf moved to a more reachable position, I will never know. As his radio was tuned



into RTE for it's entire life, he would just hit the on switch at the stroke of 6:20pm and wait in hope that Carrigallen would be chosen for mention. Invariably his hopes were dashed when the presenter Michael Dillon would launch into a report from Kanturk but this didn't deter him from repeating the exercise each Wednesday, spurred on by the occasional success when Mr Dillon would commence his report with an 'and now for a report from Carrigallen in the county of Leitrim where store bullocks met a steady trade or sows and bonhams were easier than last week'.

In his failing years when climbing the Bulmers crate proved too much for him he would have a member of staff tune in at the beginning of the programme and

call out to them 'Kanturk or Carrigallen'? Only to murmur "feck" if the reply was 'Kanturk'.

Well, if RTE failed uncle James in reporting frequently enough on the goings on his favourite place, Carrigallen mart certainly didn't fail him or his investment and has gone from strength to strength having being established as one of the leading marts celebrating forty six years successful trading next march.

My uncle James has long gone to his reward but his vision and that of many others who contributed in various ways to making the possible has been well rewarded.

Paddy O'Rourke Carrigallen is currently a member of Leitrim County Council and formerly Cathaoirleach.