

Halcyon days of the Oyster Ballroom are back again

■ 'You'll be able to treat her to a bottle of orange and maybe a Club Milk!'

DONAL O'REGAN

AN ERA long gone but certainly not forgotten will be recalled when Brendan Bowyer plays a special concert - Rolling Back The Dromkeen Years - at Cappamore Community Centre on Sunday night, August 30.

The show will recall many happy memories of the famous Oyster Ballroom in Dromkeen, which was one of the most successful venues in the country during the days of the showband boom in the 1960s and 70s.

It was proclaimed as the "largest ballroom in the south" in a special feature in the Limerick Leader to announce its opening on Wednesday, November 19, 1958. Over the next two decades all the top stars performed there including Jim Reeves, Joe Dolan, Dickie Rock and Brendan Bowyer.

Packie (PJ) Hayes, proprietor of the Oyster Ballroom, was renowned for his business acumen and saw a gap in the market for a dance hall in the region. John Barrett, organiser of the concert in Cappamore, said buses from all over would descend on Dromkeen on dance nights.

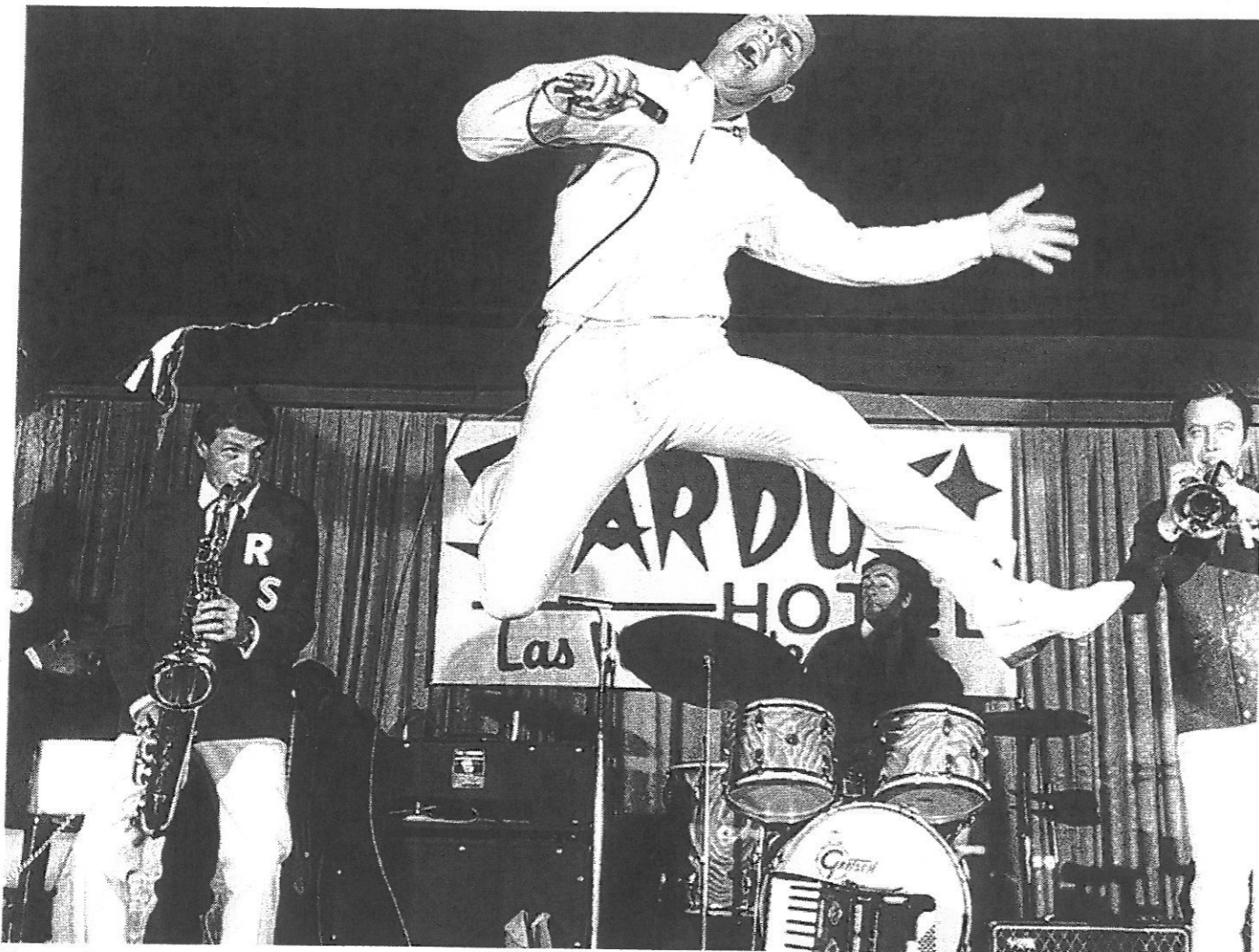
"Many stories about the famous ballroom involved a missed bus and a long walk home!" said John.

A very clever innovation in Dromkeen was the stage as it could be wheeled forwards and backwards depending on the size of the crowd. It could hold up to 3,000.

"We wanted to relive the halcyon days. There was no television, internet, Twitter, Facebook. There was dancing seven nights a week all over the country. There were up to 800 bands making a living.

"Now those glory days are to be celebrated with this special Brendan Bowyer concert in Cappamore. He was undoubtedly the biggest star of that era and recorded the iconic Hucklebuck which became an anthem for the showband days.

Bowyer, a native of Waterford with strong Limerick connections, went on to have many other major hit songs and also carved out a name for himself in Las Vegas.



The great Brendan Bowyer will have the audience reliving their youths at the Rolling Back the Dromkeen Years concert in Cappamore on August 30



The Limerick Leader was the place to find out who was playing and, right, a feature on the opening of the Oyster Ballroom

BRENDAN BOWYER
With members of
THE Royal Showband
THE BAND
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HEARD AT
OYSTER BALLROOM
On Thursday Next.

Oyster Ballroom, Dromkeen

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Parish helps care for nurse who took care of so many

DONAL O'REGAN

A NURSE who cared for the residents in a Caherconlish nursing home is now, sadly, being cared for by the parish.

Sophia Lorence, aged 59, has returned to her native India after being diagnosed with inoperable pancreatic cancer. Sophia has worked in St Michael's nursing home since it opened in 2013 and has touched the lives of everyone she met - locals, residents, their families and colleagues.

Collections in Caherline and Caherconlish churches at the weekend, along with donation boxes in the Millennium Centre and St Michael's have raised over €3,500 to date. Some families of men and women, who Sophia looked after, put hundreds of euros into envelopes.

Sandra Farrell, manager of St Michael's Nursing Home, spoke movingly at a Mass at the weekend having just returned from accompanying Sophia home to India.

"In March 2005, Ireland and Limerick was fortunate to welcome Sophia. Sophia shared her knowledge, spiritual beliefs and practices, love, kindness and warmth to whomever she encountered. Sophia worked in various nursing homes around the area. On January 14, 2013, St Michael's was honoured to recruit Sophia as senior night nurse.

"Sophia has touched so many lives by working at St Michael's both within the nursing home and the wider community," said Sandra, who shared stories with the congregation.

"Sophia is the essence of spirituality, belief and reverence. Sophia nursed, supported, comforted all residents at St Michael's both past and present equally. Sophia had an exceptional gift of supporting residents who were nearing end of life but also supporting and nurturing their grieving families also.

"Every day Sophia would attend Mass in the village where she would actively engage in prayer, lead song with her sweet singing voice. On her way home from Mass she would visit any person sick in the community. She would



Collections were taken up for Sophia Lorence at Masses in Caherconlish and Caherline

administer Holy Communion, spend time comforting them and pray with them. Each day Sophia would then call back into the nursing home on her way home from Mass to administer Holy Communion to all the residents. Sophia always brought back gifts to us from India of altar cloths for

'Sophia touched so many lives by working within the nursing home and wider community'

Sandra Farrell
St Michael's Nursing Home

both this church and our own oratory altar at St Michael's. Her generosity knows no bounds," said Sandra.

Unfortunately Sophia took ill on night duty and was brought in to A&E by her dear friend and colleague Amanda Bond. After various tests and scans Sophia was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer.

"With hearing this devastating news I promised to take Sophia home and to be reunited with her family," said Sandra, who was as good as her word. "The memory I want people to cherish today is my last moments with Sophia in Delhi hospital. When you are feeling angry, lonely and sad about Sophia's illness please smile instead as Sophia is home in her own country, home with her amazing family and she is happy," said Sandra.

8TH AUGUST 2015
LIMERICK LEADER

anthem for the showband days.

Bowyer, a native of Waterford with strong Limerick connections, went on to have many other major hit songs and also carved out a name for himself in Las Vegas.

"He is still singing as well as ever and is now joined on stage by his daughter Aisling and a superb band which, incidentally, is led by Jim Hanley, a native of Cappamore," said John.

Tommy Ryan, of Cappamore

The Limerick Leader was the place to find out who was playing and, right, a feature on the opening of the Oyster Ballroom

Development Association, can't wait for the night.

"Brendan Bowyer was huge all around here and local people are looking forward to a great show. Cappamore Community Centre is an ideal venue for such a concert. There will even be a

mineral bar so you'll be able to treat her to a bottle of orange and maybe a Club Milk!" said Tommy. One of the most famous nights in Dromkeen was when Jim Reeves performed in 1963. Oliver Dillon, Cappamore Historical Society, was a scamp of 16 when he called

down. "I wouldn't have been allowed in anyway but there was more people outside than inside. It was 10 shillings which was a lot of money at the time. The windows were open so you could hear it outside. Afterwards he came out to shake hands with

the fans," said Oliver, who is looking forward to the Brendan Bowyer concert.

"It will be like Reeling in the Years as we relive our youth!" said Oliver.

Contact 087 6123334 for tickets.

Flashback to August 1988: Brendan Bowyer dazzles at the Two Mile Inn

ON August 9, 1988 the evergreen Brendan Bowyer played before a packed house at the Two Mile Inn. It was his first Limerick show in years and Leader editor Alan English, then a junior reporter, was sent along with his notebook.

THE name Brendan Bowyer conveys a certain magic. Many of my generation owe their existence to this living legend. If we are to believe our mothers and fathers, many of them experienced their first tender moments while waltzing to the sweet music of the Royal Showband.

But reared on a musical diet ranging from the Psychedelic Furs to the Screaming Blue Messiahs, the prospect of wriggling like a snake and waddling like a duck doesn't exactly fill me with breathless anticipation.

I arrive well before Brendan and the Big 8 are due to take the stage. Before long I spot the man himself, strolling around in a dazzling green tracksuit. I half expect a posse of screaming 45-year-old women to mob him and rip the tracksuit off his back, but he is quite alone.

The first of the dancers begin to arrive, middle-aged ladies in flowery dresses, their husbands sporting beer bellies long past redemption. But I soon become aware that there are also fans



Wriggling like a snake: Brendan Bowyer wows fans at the Two Mile Inn 27 years ago this week Picture: Owen South

younger than myself. As I begin talking to every age group, it transpires that all of these people, the females in particular, have one thing in common: they all love Brendan Bowyer.

Connie Kiely from Carew Park met her husband Tony at

a Brendan Bowyer dance in the Jetland Ballroom. Connie doesn't go out much, but Brendan is a special case: "I'm mad about him! I've loads of records of his. I was in the hairdressers today and everyone there was trying to get a babysitter to go see Brendan

Bowyer. Ask him to come back to the Two Mile Inn, will you? These discos are no good."

Some of the youngest dancers there were Geraldine Griffin, 20, from Caherdavin; Rena White, 25, from Meelick, and 21-year-old Margaret Peters from

Caherdavin. Geraldine said: "We love his music. We prefer him to U2 any day."

Such devotion to the Bowyer legend was impressive but the girls were still some way behind their more mature counterparts when it came to downright devotion to the man and his music (in that order, I suspect).

My nomination for Brendan's biggest fan on the night went to Marie Punch of Cratloe. She was enjoying the show with Maureen O'Reilly from Dublin, Kathleen McMorrough from California, Helen McCormack from South Circular Road and Helen's daughter Ailish. As Helen commented that Brendan was "bringing us back to our youth", Marie was far less analytical in her appreciation of the gyrating Bowyer. Asked whether she thought her hero was sexy, Marie replied: "He's fabulously sexy and always was! If only we could have got our hands on him years ago!"

"Make sure you print all that," she concluded, dismissing Helen's protestation of "Marie! He's from the Leader!" Meanwhile, Helen's 21-year-old daughter Ailish was confessing that she had been "dragged along", but was "having a ball".

As for myself, I'm prepared to put my credibility on the line by confessing that I too had occasion to use my huckleback shoes.

Big plans for Mungret shrine anniversary

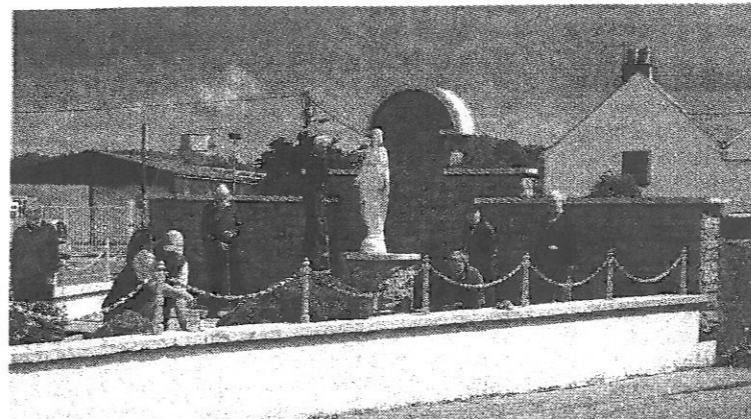
COLM WARD

WORK is under way in earnest at the Marian Shrine in Mungret to have it looking its best in time for the Diamond Jubilee celebrations on Friday, August 14.

The event will mark the 60th anniversary of the unveiling and blessing of the shrine in 1955 and will feature a re-enactment of the

original procession. Engraved medallions will be given at the event to all those present who participated in 1955. In addition, the organisers hope that as many children as possible will take part as they will also celebrate the centenary in 2055.

Those wishing to take part are asked to assemble in Mungret St Pauls GAA club from 6pm on August 14.



Working on the Mungret Shrine, from left, Pa O'Brien, Clem O'Donoghue, Denis O'Brien, Nessian O'Donoghue, Eddie Sheehan, Patsy Gavin and Denis Hehir

engage in prayer, lead song with her sweet singing voice. On her way home from Mass she would visit any person sick in the community. She would

about Sophia's illness please smile instead as Sophia is home in her own country, home with her amazing family and she is happy," said Sandra.



RETAIL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME FOR OWNER/MANAGERS

FOR INDEPENDENT RETAIL OUTLETS IN KILMALLOCK

Information Evening

17th August 2015, 6pm-8pm
Venue: Kilmallock Pastoral Centre

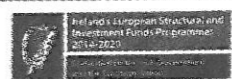
James Burke from James Burke & Assoc. will be in attendance to provide information on the Retail Development Programme.

This programme will consist of 4 full day workshops at Deebert House Hotel (Over 3 Months) and onsite Mentoring/Training. This Programme is targeted at independent store owners/managers.

- Workshop 1: 9th September - Developing Aggressive Sales Growth Strategies
- Workshop 2: 29th September - Negotiation, Branding and Developing World Class Customer Service
- Workshop 3: 21st October - Strategic Retail Management
- Workshop 4: 17th November - Visual Merchandising

Booking is essential. Information session is FREE. If you would like to book a place for 17th August please reserve online at www.localenterprise.ie/limerick email lisa.oneill@limerick.ie or Phone 061 407499

Local Enterprise Office Limerick





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