

# A village that refuses to die

By **PATRICIA FEEHILY**

IF ever you're asked to find a village that is the antithesis of rural decline in Ireland, you needn't go any farther than Dromin/Athlacca.

Apart from agriculture, they don't have any industry in Athlacca.

They've seen the quality of rural life disintegrating around them, and they've lost the makings of another good hurling team through

Glór na nGael award.

Treasurer of Dromin/Athlacca GAA club, John Sheehan is proud of their hurling prowess down the years, and even prouder of their fine playing pitch, purchased in 1991 and on which over £100,000 has since been spent.

Muintir na Tíre is as strong in the parish as it was when the late Canon Hayes visited there. Muintir's Pádraig O Loinsigh points to the hall, built mainly by voluntary labour and the proceeds of a parish draw, as one of their greatest achievements.

Carroll.

Dromin/Athlacca each year holds a very successful garden fete, and this year's, probably because of the great weather, was more successful than ever. Secretary, Ann Lynch, who is also the local Ballyhoura representative, was delighted. Her husband, John, incidentally, is master of the Mague Valley foot beagles.

The ICA has been active in the village since 1963. Some of the founder members are still members, including the first president, Bridie Leahy. The current president is Monica

Noonan.

But what attracts most of the women in the village is the weekly sewing class every Thursday night in the hall.

"They come from as far away as Charleville. We don't even have a teacher. We just swop ideas," said Eileen Duhig.

Dromin/Athlacca also has a spiritual dimension. A prayer group started by Sr Mary Carmody, home from the missions in Malaysia in 1972, is still going strong.

"We think it is important to have a group like this out in rural Ireland, where so many young people are

often suicidal," said Corkonian Breda Quinlan, who met her husband, Michael, though the Dromin/Athlacca prayer group.

While there is no employment in the village itself, the tourism industry is beckoning, and it one of a number of villages in South East Limerick being targeted by Ballyhoura Fáilte. With two equestrian centres in the parish, Rathcannon and Collins Equestrian, there are plans to develop Dromin/Athlacca as a centre for equestrian activities.



**Representatives from 21 community groups in the parish of Dromin/Athlacca who say that rural Ireland is alive and well. (CI)**