

TOURISM FILLIP BY AIR FLORIDA

BY EUGENE PHELAN

TOURISM in the Mid-West Region will receive a much-needed boost next month when Air Florida begin operating through Shannon.

Two flights a week will arrive in Shannon bringing a total of 658 people assuming that the flights are full.

This, of course, is good news for Shannon Airport which had a disastrous year in 1980.

At a reception in the Limerick Inn last weekend to announce details of the Air Florida schedule, Mr. Liam Sheehan, airport director said that last year traffic fell by 20 per cent. "But this year as from 10 days our traffic improved by 7 per cent," he told the gathering which was made up mainly of travel agents and press representatives.

During a short address, Mr. Sheehan said that he hoped the strong dollar and sterling would help make Ireland a destination to be looked at by American tourists.

Direct

Along with incoming flights there will also be two flights leaving Shannon direct to Miami each week and not surprisingly great interest has been shown by the public as the fares are extremely competitive.

The Apex low season double return to Miami is £285, which is exceptional value, while it will be £315 in the high season.

According to Mr. Louis Mullen, director of sales, Ireland, they are cheaper than all their rivals; it will cost an adult £215 to fly from Shannon to Miami in high season, and only £195 in a low season. A round trip will cost double.

Although high season applies from May 1st to September 30, Air Florida have decided for a special introductory period that the low season be extended until July 31st.

It is also worth noting that an adult can fly first class on what is termed a "one way round trip double" for £300. First class passengers will also be offered commentary Super-Standard rail travel to and from Limerick, including the bus connection to Shannon Airport.

£75 Apex low season fare is £205 while in the high season it is £315. Conditions for the Apex fare require fare 21 days advance purchase and tickets to be issued



Mr. Louis Mullen.

within 14 days of reservation.

Air Florida founded in 1972, are extremely progressive company who started scheduled services to London on April 3rd.

They have now decided to start in Shannon with the first flight from Miami due on June 5th, with the first departure the following day.

According to Mr. Mullen, they have started in Shannon because of the demand. He told the Limerick Leader that they intend running their schedule all the year round.

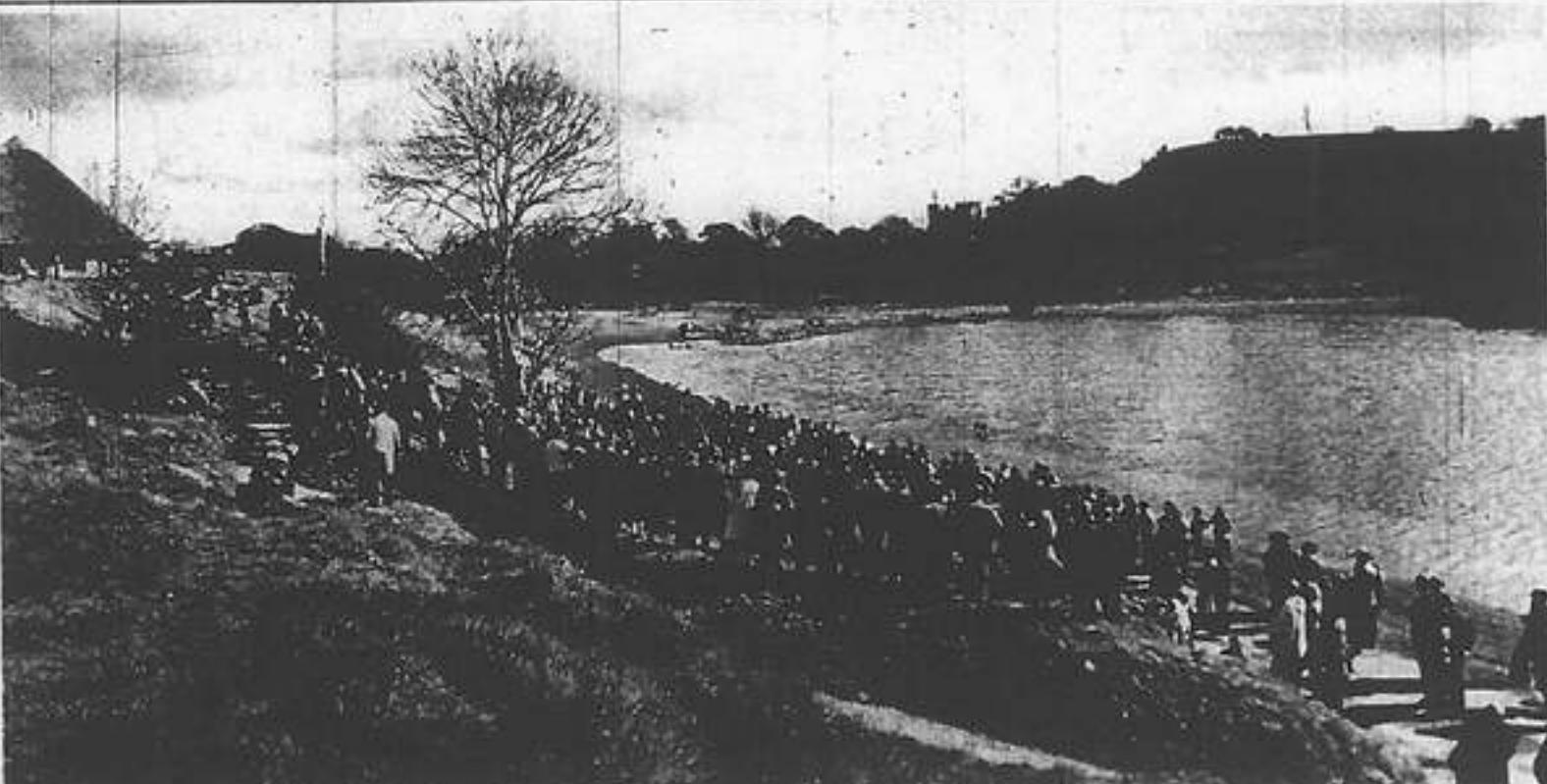
Confident

At the function, Mayor Clem Casey said that he was sure that the promotion would be a wonderful success. Florida was, he said, a "household word in the region". He also confirmed that Air Florida would be well represented.

Mr. Louis Byrne, speaking on behalf of local travel agents, said that the decision of Air Florida to set up in Shannon was a vote of confidence for the airport and the region. He pointed out that this was the third American airline to set up in Shannon in recent times.

At present Air Florida's office is at Suite 212 at the Burlington Hotel, Leeson Street, Dublin 4. Sales and reservations activities will be administered from this office for Ireland under the supervision of Mr. Mullen. Reporting to Mr. Mullen is Miss Patricia Daly, reservations and sales office manager for Ireland.

Air Florida will be setting up a permanent office in Dublin shortly. It is understood that they have just purchased a premises.



Lough Gur during the official opening of the interpretive centre.

Pictures: DERMOT LYNCH



Relaxing during the opening ceremony: Fr. Keogh (left) and Rev. Snow, who blessed the centre.



Attending the official opening.



From left: Carmel Cregan, Collette O'Donoghue, Marion Bourke and Joan O'Connell, all from Grange.



An H-Blocks demonstration arriving at the opening of the centre at Lough Gur.



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Linking the Stone Age and Space Age

BY VINCE MORAN

THE Limerick region took a significant leap forward in the tourist industry last weekend when a Stone Age interpretive centre – one of the foremost of its kind in these islands – was formally opened by Tourism Minister, Mr. Des O'Malley at Lough Gur.

The occasion, held in brilliant sunshine, was witnessed by a large gathering of people, including city and county councillors and officials, and tourism and development association representatives.

The Minister, in his address, traced the archaeological development of Lough Gur from as far back as 5,000 BC where man lived by fishing in the lake and said that the area embraced several millennia from prehistoric to early Christian to medieval times.

Together

Mr. O'Malley said: "This visitor centre links the past and present together by allowing this generation to understand and appreciate the lifestyle of the people who inhabited this ground thousands of years ago."

"We share a common humanity with those people, even though our understanding of them is not complete."

"Early man's life was often violent and hard but his ingenuity is beyond question – the homes he built, the dedications and ceremonies he observed, the calendar he followed, the calculations he made, the great stone circles he erected, all prove that he was not an aimless individual but rather a thinker, a worker and above all a planner and a creator."

"This centre is a symbol of the common quest that men share to read out to the past in order to better understand the present. It is, therefore, a valuable project and contributes greatly both to the educational understanding of the area and also to the tourism potential of the region."

"I am confident that it will attract a great number of people interested in knowing more about the fascinating history that lies here all about us."

"The development at Lough Gur is regarded by many archaeologists as the most important Stone Age habitation site in this island."

"Other sites possess individual houses but nowhere else has there been found a more extensive Neolithic habitation as in Lough Gur."

A great number of largely prehistoric monuments around the shores of the lake and its major shores of the lake and the major importance of these monuments were Stone Age dwelling places, Mr. O'Malley said.

"Among the monuments to be found were megalithic tombs, cairns, stone circles, standing stones, stone forts, stone age habitations, burial mounds and lake dwellings."

Mr. O'Malley added that interpretive centres properly sited and developed, added significantly to the visitors' experience of Ireland. They allowed the visitor to see and study aspects of the local environment, heritage, social history, architecture and geography.

"The need for facilities such as this one at Lough Gur has been well substantiated in studies in recent years," the Minister concluded.

"Because of the importance of Lough Gur, both as an ancient area and as an important archaeological area, it was decided some years ago that it would be good to have an interpretive centre which would help to explain the archaeology of the area."

"I know that Limerick County Council showed direct interest in the Lough Gur development as far back as 1953 and their commissioning of a report of the area in 1965 really gave a major boost to the development."

Monuments

"It is perfectly in sympathy with the surrounding countryside, it is not dependent on the weather and it is responding to a growing need from people who want to know more about the living past."

"In this respect I believe this interpretive centre will help to attract more visitors to the region."



The Minister for Tourism, Mr. O'Malley, unveils a plaque. Also included are Cllr. Liam Hickey, chairman, Co. Council; Mr. Tony Brazil, chairman, Shannonside, and Mr. Dick Haslam, co. manager.

Amby McMahon, senior executive engineer, Mr. Paddy Hinchy, executive engineer, the team of craftsmen and workmen, and county manager, Mr. Dick Haslam, who showed "great interest" in the project.

Bord Fáilte, Shannonside (who will staff the interpretive centre), the Office of Public Works, the Limerick Tourism Committee, An Taisce, the Burren and Doolin Game Club and the Game Protection Society were also acknowledged for their efforts in making the lake, which is a wild life sanctuary.

Mr. Tony Brazil, chairman of Shannonside Tourism, said that attention was now being paid to our great inland resource, the countryside, partly to relieve tourism pressure on our coast and cities and partly to bring the economic benefits of tourism to rural areas.

No doubt

Lough Gur, he said, had a daunting task in attracting visitors to its facilities but he had no doubt that this brilliantly designed centre, its general presentation and the staff who would man it, would win over parents and children, tourists and scholars.

Mr. Tony Brazil, said: "I would appeal especially to the tourist accommodation sector in Limerick and indeed throughout the region to encourage their visitors to come out to Lough Gur and spend some time here to enjoy this centre and its hinterland."

This centre will make a major contribution to increasing tourism in Limerick and at the same time, it widens the choice of important day visitor attractions available in this region, to the tourist, the Irish holidaymaker and the local community.

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"Our heritage of physical antiquities such as Lough Gur, coupled with our lively tradition of music and literature, make us an ideal venue for the discerning tourist."

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They have been directly involved since then, financially and otherwise, in the development here at Lough Gur and their enthusiasm and commitment was a major factor in the realisation of the progress achieved.

"I think it is only proper therefore that they should be recognised for their work and efforts. This does not mean of course that there were not other bodies who were very active also – in the vanguard of which were the Lough Gur Development Association and the Limerick Tourist Council."

"The Lough Gur development is yet another link in this chain which brings us instantly across several milieus of history. Further still, in Limerick city in fact, we have the Hunt Collection of Celtic and European Treasures; a masterly legacy of poor craftsmen and their skills stretching from the Bronze Age up to the 18th century."

"Then, at Craggaunowen near the town, we have the Celtic lake dwelling reflecting the life style, our culture, our art, around 700 BC. And, of course, as Burren we have the imaginative Folk Park and the reconstructed Irish village of the 19th century."

"The tourism strength of this region lies in these and other unique product attractions and they will be followed by other imaginative ideas all based on a unique historical theme."

Concluding the Shannonside chief said it was encouraging to see local voluntary groups believing in their locality in an area of special interest. Their commitment and fervour should be an inspiration to all.

Mr. Niall Miller, Bord Fáilte, proposed a vote of thanks to the Minister for opening the centre and this was seconded by Professor O'Kelly.

ROTARY 'BREAKS WALL OF MISTRUST'

BY LEADER REPORTER

THE Northern part of Ireland has endured a period of savagery unprecedented outside the realms of open warfare. Limerick Rotarians were told on Monday by their national governor, Mr. Ted Granger.

He said that members of the Rotary Club around Ireland were daily breaking down the wall of misunderstanding and distrust by their acts of fellowship and service to those different from them.

Mr. Granger, who is from Ulster, outside Belfast, was accompanied by Mr. Michael Murphy.

"As we look around this country of ours, how particularly apt and appropriate is this theme, widen your Rotary horizon," he said.

"Let us not disguise the fact, or close our eyes to the fact, that all is not well within our own country.

Once-proud

"Terrible things have happened and continue to happen, that besmirch the fair name of Ireland. In terms far removed from the once proud title of 'Land of Saints and Scholars'."

A few months ago, I was greatly impressed and moved by the ceremony of the parade of flags at the Rotary International Assembly in Boca Raton, Florida, U.S.A. 154 countries and geographical regions were represented and though some of them held widely differing viewpoints, they were nevertheless able to meet in the fellowship and friendship of Rotary.

"During the past 12 years the Northern part of our country has endured a period of savagery unprecedented outside the realms of open warfare. Our people are sorely afflicted, divided as they are, by fears and suspicions upon which troubles feed and thrive. Whether each of us as individuals understand or not to the people involved, these fears and suspicions are very real."

"Our Rotary movement has opened to it only a limited amount of action we can take, to do what we can in the atmosphere of peace and harmony. One clear function of Rotary is always seeking opportunities to give service. But I would make it clear from this meeting that Rotary in Ireland takes no part whatever in religious or political controversies."

"There are no borders dividing Rotary or Rotarians in District 116. Our district covers the whole of Ireland and if we fall as a movement to keep aloof from the controversy, sadly associated with religious and political matters in Ireland, we would bring about the downfall of Rotary in Ireland, without achieving any real result."

"Every Irishman has his own particular viewpoint and conviction sincerely held. We do not pretend that as Rotarians we are different in this respect. But we are different insofar as being privileged to belong to Rotary, we can still meet in the finest spirit of friendship, fellowship and service and I hope, in an atmosphere of trust."

Influence

"Rotary offers no magic or quick solution to the problems of Ireland, but Rotarians – undivided Rotarians – wherever they may be, by their acts of fellowship and service are daily breaking down the wall of misunderstanding and distrust. They are not alone in these efforts and they derive much encouragement from the knowledge that our country abounds with thousands of other men and women also of goodwill who join them in spirit in the quest for peace."

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H-Blocks

Prior to the ceremonies, which were presided over by Mr. Tom Hayes, county development officer, an H-Blocks rally, led by Mr. Gordon Hayes and Mr. Joe Harrington, showed support for the movement from the Bridgetown and Limerick H-Blocks committees.

They proposed the following resolution to the Government to take action to settle the H-Blocks dispute:

"That the Government should immediately commence negotiations with the H-Blocks movement to find a peaceful solution to the dispute."

The resolution was adopted by a large crowd of supporters.



A section of the very large crowd.