



This photo of Farran Folk was taken in July 2014 at the back of Bowles Bar, with King John's Castle in the background. From left to right: Tommy Canty, Tony Cremins, Dave Browne, Damien Patterson

Farran Folk still relish their get-togethers

Occasional reunions of the Limerick folk heroes popular with public as well as band

THE FARRAN FOLK from Limerick city formed in 1965 and became a household name following their appearance on the Johnny McEvoy Show in 1970.

Some of the biggest pop hits of 1965, the year the Farran Folk formed, included The Carnival is Over, (The Seekers) Help! (The Beatles) and Tears, (Ken Dodd). In Ireland the Huckleback from Brendan Bowyer, and the Royal Showband was all the rage. The massive hit had been recorded in just half an hour, as a B side filler. Last week we brought the Farran Folk story from 1965 to 1970 and we continue now up to the present.

On November 6 1970 the Farran Folk received a great honour when they were chosen to play for the world premiere of Richard Harris' film Bloomfield at the Savoy in Limerick.

The leading lights from society were present, including Richard Harris, Lulu, and the Bee Gees, and a free bar was in operation.

A special cake, three feet by two, was ordered to mark the event and served. When they had finished performing the group went upstairs to change, and while doing so they heard a lot of commotion below.

Looking down through the spiral staircase they spotted two of the kitchen staff the worse for wear, scraping the remains of the cake back onto its base. When asked what was to become of the cake they were told that today's cake would be tomorrow's trifle.

After the Johnny McEvoy Show finished on television, Johnny took the show on the road where he played in the Savoy in Limerick.

He also performed the last show to play in the Savoy in Cork City, before it became a shopping arcade, and the Farran Folk featured in these shows.

In 1971 the Farran Folk released a single with Avondale, and Rata, on the B side. They got the words of Avondale, from The Campbell's group in Scotland. They visited the stately home once occupied by Charles Stuart Parnell, to get the feel of the place before they recorded it.

The Farran Folk will always be remembered for their rendition of Avondale which was very popular on all the radio stations at that



Then & Now

with Tom Aherne

time.

Oh have you been to Avondale, and lingered in her lovely vale

Where tall trees whisper low the tale of Avondale's proud eagle

Where pride and ancient glory fade such was the land where he was laid

Like Christ was thirty pieces paid for Avondale's proud eagle

Long years that green and lovely vale has nursed Parnell our grandest Gael

And cursed the land that has betrayed our Avondale's proud eagle.

They followed by releasing a 12 track LP recorded over two days in the Eamon Andrews Studio. The songs were Avondale, Tom Dooley, Tabhair Dom Do Lámh, The Click Song, Whip Jamboree, Sam Hall, Amhrainim Siodraimin, The Famine Song, Asikatali, Lord of the Dance, Blood Red Rose, and Peggy Gordon.

In 1972 Dave Brown, before his departure for Australia, played with the group for a week in the Savoy in Limerick with the internationally famous Joseph Locke.

Also appearing was Eamon Kelly, the famous story teller, and the singing harpist Ruth Bradley and the show was a sell-out every night.

The Farran Folk also played in the Coliseum Theatre in Limerick with the famous Phil Lynott, and the band known as Skid Row. It apparently was the first psychedelic show in Limerick.

The Farran Folk also played in the first two Folk Masses in Limerick, one in the Augustinian Church on O'Connell Street, and the other at the Redemptorist Church in Henry Street.

The group formally finished in the mid 1970s but still keep in touch with regular sessions around the Limerick area.

In 2014 Dave Brown returned to Limerick and the group got together for a reunion session on July 26 at Bowles Bar in Thomondgate.

It turned out to be a memorable night, with relatives, friends, musicians, and fans packing the Treaty Stone venue beside the rippling river Shannon. All the harmonies just fell into place once they started singing and playing.

When the Kitch-Inn folk club in Geary's Hotel Thomas Street Limerick was set up and run by the Farran Folk Group, one Wednesday night in 1969 an American folk singer walked into the club with some US friends.

They were staying in Limerick on holidays for a week, and when they enquired at the hotel to where they might hear some ballads, they were directed to the Folk Club in Geary's Hotel. Joe Hennessy was the American Folk singer, who also worked in Cape Canaveral Florida, on the Lunar Module, preparing for the first Moon landing.

The Farran Folk got talking to Joe, after the show, and they struck up a friendship which has lasted to the present day.

Joe came to Limerick every year for his holidays thereafter for the ballads and the craic.

The Farran Folk were to play at Slattery's Bar in Kildimo, one Saturday night in 1969 and Tony Cremins was not available to play. Joe Hennessy was asked to take his place, which he was delighted to accept.

At the end of the night Damien received the fee which was eight pounds, so he gave Joe his share of the payment which amounted to two pounds. Joe would only agree to take it if he could buy the group a round of drinks which he did.

He put the other Pound note into his guitar case, which he still has to this day. He says this is the only money he earned in Ireland - talking about a fellow having his First Holy Communion money.

Damien was a member of the Newcastle West Ballad group that won several West Scór titles over the years.

In July 2015 he was a guest on A

story and A Song with Pat O'Donovan on West Limerick 102 FM Community Radio. He is very interested in History and he has a lot of memorabilia from the halcyon years of the Farran Folk.

At present Dave Brown is teaching in Perth Australia, following a musical career, travelling around Australia with the Mucky Duck Bush Band. Tony Cremins is doing a course making musical instruments.

Tommy Canty ran a very successful folk club in the Glentworth Hotel in the 1990s, which was called The Full Circle Folk Club. He also had a very successful solo career around Ireland and he brought out some music albums at that time, and he toured Germany and Scandinavia in the 1990s.

Damien and son Mark are architects, in business in Newcastle West, and are presently designing the new Long Court House Hotel that is replacing the Courtney Lodge.

Tommy, Tony, and Damien are still the best of friends, and look forward to getting together as often as possible for a music night.

They are joined by some musician friends namely Brendan O'Sullivan, (fiddle player) Austin Durack, (song writer, and musician) Kevin Barry, (mandolin player and singer) Gerry Conaghan, (banjo player and singer) John Conside, (singer and guitar player) Helen Hassenfuss (flute player and saxophone player) and Sean McMahon, (box player and singer, and no bones about it).

Sean who owns a fish shop has a very funny advert running on local radio, which ends: and no bones about it. The group are looking forward to their next great night together when they will again rattle the rafters.

It was a tough business to be in with a lot of travelling to venues around Ireland. The roads were poor, and the vehicles often broke down, and got punctures. The fees were low, and the record sales not sufficient in a small country to be full time artists. From our conversation I got the feeling from his enthusiastic recall that Damien would do it all over again. Look out for the Farran Folk playing at a venue near you this Christmas, and you will be not disappointed.

Department negligence & goat of bree

John B. Keane

OUT IN THE OPEN

THE problems that beset the goat breeder in rural Ireland are so numerous that a whole book would badly want to be compiled on the subject.

The big goat breeders in the west of Ireland at the present time are Denis Dineen of Cahirciveen with a herd of 30 goats. Denis Clancy of Kiltrush with 50 goats and the redoubtable Sonny Canavan of Dirha West in North Kerry with his herd of 57 goats.

Last week I met Denis Clancy for the first time. He had come over in the ferry to meet Sonny Canavan about whom he had read many times in the Limerick Leader. The idea behind his visit was the formation of a federation of goat breeders. His meeting with Sonny Canavan was highly successful and in a week's time Sonny will cross on the ferry to have a look at Denis Clancy's herd.

I will have the honour of acting as his chauffeur on the occasion.

Denis Clancy made a scathing attack on the Department of Agriculture for their total lack of interest in goat breeding.

"Last year," said Denis, "thousands of goatskin bodhravns were exported from this country to England and America."

"That's right," said Canavan, "I sent some myself."

According to Clancy and Canavan there is a deliberate attempt by the Department of Agriculture to wipe out the fine herds of goats which populate the west of Ireland. I refused to believe this.

"Alright," said Canavan, "will you tell me why there is no artificial insemination service for the goats?"

I was unable to answer that one.

"Or will you tell me," Canavan went on, pressing home his advantage, "why there isn't such a thing as a goat inspector? Goats you know have as many diseases as cows or horses but the vets would only laugh if you asked them to castrate a goat."

"Is this true?" asked Denis Clancy.

"Oh faith you can believe everything that man will tell you," said Denis, "and I'll tell you another thing and that is you won't see goats allowed to enter for cattle shows. You'll never see a goat's face in the farm pages of the Independent."

"Castrating is a serious matter," said Canavan. "Unless there is a proper castrator supplied soon by the Department you'll have nothing but pucks and she goats. You won't get a gelding for love or money and geldings have a finer skin which is the best for making

bodhravns."

"How come," I asked Denis Clancy, "that neither your self nor Canavan is able to castrate a goat which to me sounds a simple job?"

At this they both laughed. "I'd like to see you try it," said Clancy.

"Castrating a goat," said Canavan, "is like putting binding twine through the eye of a needle. Your best of all goat castrators was a cousin of your own by the name of Nolan from around the Glin side."

"Since him there is only botchers. Your proper goat castrator should be started off young with bonhams and then promoted to small rams. He should not be let near a young puck till he has the others done first."

Denis Clancy nodded his complete agreement. "Your proper goat castrator," Canavan went on, "should have a good eye and the right instruments or else there will be nothing but pain and misery for the poor goat who don't know for evermore whether he's a puck of a

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spockoodle."

A spockoodle is the name given to a gelded goat in the west of Ireland.

I will report further on this whole business of goat breeding when I return from Clare.

Meanwhile it is to be hoped that the Department of Agriculture will wake up and take an interest. The burden should not be placed on the goat owners alone.

Letter

THIS WEEK there are several letters from England and America. Since this is not a letters' column I will reproduce only one. It's from Phil Murray of 30 Oakridge Avenue, Kenmore, New York, 14217.

"Dear John B. Keane, we'd like to put in our ten cents worth from Buffalo N.Y., prompted by the Limerick Leader of September the thirtieth and your amusing article on the longest word. Well I may not have the last word in this discussion but think I've the longest and I brought it with me from Rathkeale to United States nineteen years ago.

It's Pneumonultramicroscopicilicovulcanicis, thirty nine letters. The meaning? (God we're awful smart us Rathkealers). It's a