



Dave Browne, Tommy Canty, Damien Patterson and Tony Cremin of Farran Folk pictured in 1970 when they'd literally given up the day jobs to entertain

Local folk heroes took off with TV show slot

■ Exposure on Johnny McEvoy's RTE programme made Farran Folk an overnight hit

THE FARRAN FOLK was formed in Farranshane in Limerick city in 1965 and they became a household name travelling all over the country following their appearance on the Johnny McEvoy Show on RTE in 1970.

Television with its one station was huge and as a result they rubbed shoulders with the jet set and were on first name terms with all the top entertainers.

They recorded a 12 track LP in 1971 at the Eamon Andrews Studio, and a single, that had Avondale, and Rata on the B side.

Their fast-paced career was covered in Spotlight Magazine, Limerick Leader, and other newspapers of the time. Over a ten-year period the group won numerous folk and ballad competitions, and they played at all the top venues of the time. They admired the Dubliners, but they modelled themselves on the Spinners from England. They were four lads as well and they got an LP of their songs to guide them.

To set the scene on what Ireland was like in those far off days, it is necessary to inform the readers on what was making the news that year. In January Taoiseach Sean Lemass travelled to Belfast for historic talks with Northern Ireland Premier Terence O'Neill.

The first Irish Young Scientist was staged in Dublin. In February Sir Roger Casement, was finally given a State funeral in Glasnevin Cemetery Dublin 49 years after his death, by hanging at Pentonville Prison, London for treason, sabotage, and espionage.

In March the Latin Mass was largely replaced by Mass in English for Catholic church-goers.

Butch Moore singing 'Walking the Streets in the Rain', was Ireland's first entry in the Eurovision Song Contest. In April Fine Gael leader James Dillon, stepped down to be replaced by Liam Cosgrave.

In May the first car ferry service between Rosslare and Fishguard began. In June a total of 116 Army lorries were deployed to help transport passengers during a prolonged bus strike.

Damien Patterson was the founding member of the Farran

Folk, (short for Farranshane) and over a recent evening we went down memory lane to recall the stand out moments.

Damien is a good story teller, along the lines of Tom T Hall the great American entertainer. Damien has been living in Newcastle West since 1974, when he took up employment as a designer at Patrick McCormack's Joinery Works in Ardagh.

His grandfather was Joseph Patterson who was a sergeant and a trumpet player in the Munster Fusiliers, and a member of the regiment soccer team that won the Calcutta Cup.

He was a member of the Lyric Orchestra, and Fred Hockedy's father, Fred senior, and Brendan Bowyer's father Stanley who was conductor, were all members.

From this interesting triangle, Damien, and Fred were members of the Farran Folk, and Brendan was helpful in opening some doors for them with his contacts.

The first members with Damien were Sean Meaney, R.I.P. Donal O'Connor, Michael O'Reilly, R.I.P. (who was also Damien's best man at his wedding) and they were formed to enter into a ballad group contest in Greenpark Racecourse.

Donal O'Connor left the group shortly after that and he was replaced by Fred Hockedy, a well-known musician in Limerick at that time.

They were often on the same bill as Tom and Paschal, and Damien recalled a trip to play in Fermoy when they travelled in two Morris Minors, owned by the comic duo.

Damien and some of the others played rugby, and as a result the group were cajoled into playing every Friday night at Garryowen Rugby Club in Dooradoyle.

No payment was given, only a

few drinks as a reward for their efforts. Margaret Raleigh from the city who sang in a Joan Baez style, replaced Sean Meaney and she was a great favourite with the crowd.

In 1966 the new line-up following changes was: Damien, Fred Hockedy, George Brew from Kilkee, in Clare, and another female singer Claire Williams from Bansa, in Tipperary.

Brian Quinn, singer, and mandolin player was also a member for a time. The group won many folk and ballad competitions, which were all the go around the country at that time. They won their first competition in Bruff in 1967 and the cup was presented to them by Ted Russell the Mayor of Limerick.

The group hit the jackpot and qualified for three competition finals on the same night. They chose the competition in Ennistymon, in Clare and they won first prize.

Their prize was presented to them by Paddy Hillery, who later became a TD and then President of Ireland. They also finished second in the Ballinasloe Folk/Ballad Festival in 1967.

In 1969 Shay Healy of RTE fame brought down the RTE outside broadcasting unit to the Kitchen Folk Club at Geary's Hotel, (owned by Mayor Jack Bourke) which was opened by Luke Kelly of the Dubliners, on September 27 1969.

Healy recorded two radio shows, which featured the Farran Folk, and some other artists including Tom Canty who played solo on the night in the folk club.

At this time the line up in the Farran Folk was Fred Hockedy, Damien Patterson, Tony Cremins, and Dave Browne.

In 1970 Tom Canty replaced Fred Hockedy and the group made a big breakthrough by winning the prestigious Kilkenny Beer Festival

Ballad competition.

The Farran Folk had finished in third, and second place the previous years, and other winners included The Johnstons, and Emmet Spiceland groups.

The Kilkenny Beer Festival Ballad competition, was the biggest of its kind in Europe, with over 130 top class acts, competing for the £1,000 first prize.

Two thousand people were present for the final, including their friends from Limerick. Shortly afterwards they fulfilled an engagement in Pat Collins Pub in Adare, which was packed to the rafters, as their fame spread.

Next up for the Farran Folk was to take part in the RTE TV programme called Talent of the 70s. By this time they were well known for their international folk repertoire, with four part harmonising to sea shanties, and some African songs.

This expertise and their range of songs, led to their success on the show, and the group were offered a three month contract to appear on the Johnny McEvoy Show, performing two songs on each show.

In order to fulfil the contract, Damien, Dave, Tony and Tommy, had to give up their day jobs, and security for the bright lights of Dublin. The shows were recorded in the function room at the Cliff Castle Hotel in Dalkey which was owned by the Meaney family from the Monagea Road, Newcastle West.

While there they played at all the top venues, including The Old Shieling, The Embankment, and they played support for the Chieftains, at The Chariot Inn. They also ran a Folk Club in Kilkenny with the Ormond Folk Group at Kettlers Inn every Wednesday night.

The Johnny McEvoy show went out on a Friday night at 9.30pm, after Newsbeat, Lancer, and Nuacht. The last show was shown on Christmas Day 1970, and Tony Browne, the well-known historian from Limerick made their shirts for the show which were much admired. We will continue with the life and times of the Farran Folk in next week's column.

Modern cosmetics usurped goat's milk as cleanser

John B. Keane

OUT IN THE OPEN

WONDERS will never cease. Fans of Jacqueline Onassis will have read where her husband, Aristotle, bought her several cows so that she might have fresh milk in which to bathe. A very touching gesture this and one which shows how enraptured the man is with his wife.

But how about this following tale. As every schoolboy knows, Sonny Canavan of Dirha West is the owner of a herd of 57 goats which grazes the vast herb-abounding ranges of Dirha Bog.

Of the 57, four are pucks. There is the oldest and biggest who comes originally from the Aran Islands and whose name is Roland.

Then there is Rajah and next comes Sultan who will attack anybody who ventures into his soggy domain. Finally there is Romeo who has only recently been pressed into service.

So far so good. For months now Canavan had plans to slaughter the vast majority of the herd's nannies and geldings but recent developments have caused him to change his mind.

One evening last week a prosperous Listowel publican and businessman arrived at the Canavan residence in Dirha West accompanied by a well-known East Limerick horsewoman whose name is a household word in the city of Limerick. Politely Canavan invited them indoors and put down the kettle.

Luckily he had just baked a griddleful of yellow meal pointers. The Limerick lady put down a whole pointer and two mugs of tea with help from no-one and when the repast was over the Listowel man explained her business.

It transpired that the woman was greatly worried about her complexion. She had heard from numerous reliable sources, including some which are medical, that goat's milk is without equal for the betterment of complexions. She was prepared to pay good money for a regular supply.

"What," Canavan asked immediately "is meant by good money?"

"Two pounds a gallon," said the East Limerick woman.

"We're in business," Canavan assured her. The woman explained that the milk was to be left in the publican's freezer, that it would be collected by an employee of the Limerick woman's and finally that nobody was to be told the woman's name, especially John B. Keane.

Fair enough. Canavan did not divulge the woman's name nor indeed do we want it. There may be some readers who will be inclined to discredit this story but believe me, it is absolutely

true.

I spoke to Canavan the beneficial effect of goat's milk on the skin. I must confess somewhat sceptical though I saw a film where Cleopatra was bathing in a huge tub which came from a convenient herd of mares.

"Tell me," I said Canavan, "do you really believe that goat's milk is for the complexion?"

"Sit down," said Canavan in that fatherly way "and I'll tell you no wonder."

Long ago in Ireland according to the sean celt goat's milk was used largely by ladies of quality mixed with lukewarm water and a drop of the had no equal as a softener and stain remover. It was well-known to a woman black with tan before entering the world would emerge after total immersion, as white as snow.

According to Canavan goat's milk would remove wrinkles, freckles and

She had heard from numerous reliable sources...that goat's milk without equal for the betterment of complexion

sorted spots from the faces of women who were affected.

In its pure state it was scourge of warts, pimples. Apparently, it fell out of use with the advent of modern cosmetics, these, aided and abetted by newspaper and television advertising, soon usurped goat's milk altogether. More's the pity because goat's milk is a purely natural product and there is no to import it.

Athea males

FURTHER to our column about Athea last week, we have the many merits of Athea males were outlined there is, this week, a special letter from an old friend.

"What have you against Athea women?" she asked. "They have the finest legs and the finest faces to be found anywhere. They do not make a show of themselves either like the townies. They make their wives and mothers, there is always a handsome home where the woman of the house is from Athea. Signed, an Athea housewife and mother.

Ah my dear woman I believe me, it is absolutely nothing against Athea