

Limerick's 120 year tradition of milk processing is all over

■ 'It was a real family place to work - fathers, sons and brothers worked there for decades together'

Donal O'Regan and Eugene Ryan

THE MEN pictured outside the closed Lansdowne milk facility have a total of over 400 years worked together there.

It closed on Friday. The closures will bring to an end the 120 year-old tradition of milk processing in the city and county.

A total of 65 jobs have been lost between Lansdowne where the milk was processed and Clare Street where it was packaged.

The redundancies follow the completion of Glanbia's acquisition of the Limerick-based liquid milk business of Kerry Group earlier this year. This includes the Golden Vale and Dawn brands.

The deal is believed to be worth in the region of €10 million.

A Glanbia spokesperson said: "We have a new state of the art depot in Raheen with 10 employees and 30 vans servicing the mid west region. Glanbia thanks all employees for their support and professionalism since Glanbia CFI acquired the business."

Workers described leaving Lansdowne for the last time on Friday and seeing the gates being



Sad to see the gates closed are former workers in Lansdowne milk facility Richard Liston, Greg McKee, Paddy Kiely Snr (retired) Paddy Kiely (Jnr) Alex Keally, Tony Hartigan, Jose Luiz Seres, Eamonn Stritch and his daughter Hiruth, Ned O'Connor, Daithi Mahon, Mike Earls, Brian Coughlan, Tom Costello, Tom Scanlon and Derek Shine

PICTURE: EUGENE RYAN

locked as a very sad day.

Sixty-year-old Richard Liston, Caherdavin, spent 41 years in Lansdowne.

"I worked for four companies - the condensed milk company, Golden Vale, Kerry and Glanbia

for a couple of weeks

I was in charge of the pasteurisation. My father the late Dick Liston was there before me for 35 years and my brothers Anthony and Michael worked there as well.

"It was a real family place to work - fathers, sons, brothers went in there from the communities of Ballynanty, Killeely, Janesboro and Garryowen. In the forties, fifties and sixties hundreds of people

worked in Lansdowne," said Mr Liston.

As they were tidying up last week the found minutes from meetings belonging to the Cleaves family.

"It is very sad to see

all this history end. They were financial reports from 1890 to 1901. That shows you how far back it goes and it is sad to see another Limerick institution close. It is terrible to see the site derelict," said Mr Liston.

Forty-six-year-old Patrick Kiely, Norwood Park is the last of three generations to work in Lansdowne.

"My dad Paddy worked here and his dad Tom as well. Tom Kiely was there 40 odd years, my dad was there 32 years (he is retired now) and I'm there 28 years straight out of school. Over a 100 years between the three of us.

"My wife isn't working and I've three children - 15, 11 and eight - but I have my mortgage paid off so I'm one of the luckier ones," said Patrick, who can remember when he first started seeing churns of milk dropped in by farmers from vans.

A couple of decades before some elderly farmers can recall bringing in milk with pony and carts.

Daithi Mahon, Corbally worked there for exactly 20 years.

"I would have been working on the bottle machine. We were told on January 19 that Glanbia were trying to buy us then it was subject to the

competition authority. They bought us on April 1 and on April 6 we were informed all our jobs were gone.

"It is very very sad. There are lots of young people with houses and mortgages. There were married couples here as well. It's terrible to see the gates locked. Business is business I know but it's a massive loss," said Mr Mahon.

Earlier this year Glanbia said: "The reality is that the need for consolidation in the dairy processing sector has been well documented and these redundancies, while unfortunate, are necessary if we are to retain our competitiveness and protect the existing business. This decision reflects economic reality and has been made following a detailed review in the context of the current market and trading environment.

"As Ireland's leading milk processor we have a strong commitment to this sector and a solid track record of supporting our brands with innovation and marketing. We will continue to source milk from the Golden Vale region, and are committed to ensuring the Golden Vale and Dawn brands remain competitive in to the future."

News in brief

Robbery at hoax accident

GARDAI are asking the public for help in solving an elaborate robbery which involved the staging of a hoax car accident near Shannon Banks last Saturday.

The incident occurred on June 25 around 12.30am. The injured party was driving from the city towards Ardnacrusha.

As he approached Carmody's Cross he observed a car across the roadway with a male in front of it limping. He also saw two males in dark clothing lying on the grass verge adjacent to the road. Having slowed down, he became suspicious and began to drive away. He was followed by three males on foot and also a dark coloured car. One of the males managed to get into the moving vehicle and forced the driver to stop. He was then attacked and threatened with a knife. He was forced to hand over €400 in cash and a briefcase was also taken. An oncoming vehicle interrupted the robbery and the culprits fled the scene into a dark sports-type saloon car. Anyone with information is asked to contact the Gardai at Ardnacrusha on 061 345136.

Quad bike stolen

A QUAD bike was stolen at an industrial premises in Plassey Industrial Estate between 10am on Thursday June 23 and 1.15am on Friday morning. Thieves broke into the factory and took four FH250 Quad bikes, a grey I for Williams double axle trailer, serial number 5-95743 with a black plastic box container, an ice cream machine and a dinner table. Thieves were disturbed by a man making a delivery to another premises and fled and abandoned a white Mitsubishi van that had been stolen from the premises and loaded with three of the quad bikes, the ice cream machine and the dining table. They escaped in a blue Ford Galaxy registration number 99LK7415 which was also stolen and was towing the stolen trailer and loaded with one of the four quad bikes.

Phone scam warning

THE latest scam in Limerick involved an O2 customer from county Limerick who was contacted by a woman who claimed to be from O2. This woman asked the customer to confirm details in relation to her account. The customer's phone went out of coverage a short time later and she discovered that €150 worth of calls were made in her name during the night. The fraudster in this case used the information that she obtained from the customer to ring customer care and effect a SIM card exchange. The fraudster was then able to make unauthorised calls. Gardai warn not to give out personal details over the phone or on-line and to instead ring the relevant company, or institution to check if the call is genuine. O2 have a system in place whereby they can verify that the call is genuine and in any case where a person becomes suspicious that the caller is not genuine, they should immediately contact the Gardai.

Doonbeg Seafood Festival

THE THIRD annual Doonbeg Seafood Festival will take place from July 15 to 17. The festival, which celebrates the best of Doonbeg seafood, is being officially opened by former Eurovision winner Paul Harrington. Over

Bookshop looks to turn the page on tough times

GAA club to acquire new lands to expand its playing facilities