

Groanah was collected by Mr. Sean McKeown and taken to Fota Wildlife Park in Cork.

Last week, Groanah startled workers at London Airport when he was discovered he had eaten his way out of his crate in the hold of the aircraft on the flight from South Africa. He was sedated and was unable to travel for some days because he was ill.

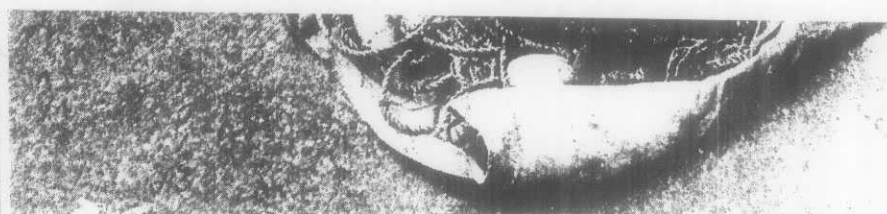
Valued at £750, Groanah was well secured when he arrived in Shannon, where Vet. Inspector, Mr. Thomas J. Bracken, conducted his inspection before allowing him to be removed to Fota, where he will undergo six months' quarantine. After this he will be released into the Fota sanctuary.

Feile plans

THE WOLFE TONE Club has appealed to residents to extend a real Ceard Míle Feilte to visiting teams when Feile na nGael, takes place throughout the county from June 26 to 29.

There will be two under-fourteen hurling teams from Wexford and Armagh and two camogie teams from Tipperary and Wicklow staying and playing in Shannon.

A major clean-up of the town has been arranged for the weeks prior to the arrival of the teams. The Town Commissioners have been asked to ensure that the town will be properly signposted for the occasion.



Net making in Limerick—a skill handed down through generations.

LIMERICK COMMUNITIES by PATRICIA FEEHILY

Limerick's vanishing fishing fraternities

AS FAR AS Tony O'Farrell is concerned, salmon fishing in Limerick today "wouldn't pay for the licence". But that licence is one thing he will never relinquish.

"There has been a licence in the O'Farrell family for 150 years. Whatever happens I'll keep that tradition going", he vows.

Ironically Tony, who runs a thriving fish business in Lower Henry Street, received an order recently from America for 30 tons of salmon.

"We have all the facilities and we're only 25 minutes from Shannon Airport. But the fish just aren't there", he said.

Ruefully

Tony O'Farrell belongs to a tradition which he admits ruefully is "slowly grinding to a halt".

He inherited one of those trades, handed down from father to son, which nurtured whole communities in Limerick for hundreds of years.

A Strand Fisherman himself, he is also descended, on his mother's side, from generations of Abbey Fishermen that historic group who were reported to have been given special privileges during the Williamite sieges and who were later recognised as an incorporate body taking the grand title of "The Abbey Guild of Fishermen".

The story of the Abbey Fishermen's fight against the Ardara Power Station which threatened their livelihoods nearly 60 years ago has been enshrined in Limerick's history. People like Tony O'Farrell still boast proudly of the "Battle of the Tailrace".

But the men of the Abbey with



Rene Cusack: The biggest salmon I ever bought was a 54lb. salmon caught by an Abbey Fisherman, Pat Shanny. . .

their quaint nicknames "Vinegar", "Young Bucks", "Gakes", and "Napoleon"—are gone. The mighty Shannon Scheme which launched the new State on its first dizzying enterprise had its own victims.

Rene Cusack of the Dock Road, whose firm has been buying fish from Limerick fishermen since 1934, says: "The biggest salmon

I ever bought was a 54 lb. salmon caught by an Abbey Fisherman, Pat Shanny".

Rene, who exported to Billingsgate in those years and who still exports smoked salmon, says that fish are now so scarce that he has been forced to go as far as Killybegs for his salmon.

But he takes anything he can get from Coonagh Fishermen and the Strand Fishermen, and he regrets that their way of life has been so affected by "the trawler".

By one boat

"I remember once seeing 372 salmon taken in one day by one boat", he says.

He also remembers the atmosphere of fishing communities in his youth. For all its vicissitudes, it was a happy employment.

"I remember when the salmon fishing was over on July 21st, they went after flounders, and I remember the auctions in Fish Lane where they graded the flounders into "captains", "majors", and "colonels" and they lay there in wicker baskets".

The Fishermen of the Abbey, the Strand and the Lower Shannon were also skilled in net-making, rope-making and boat-building. Those skills still survive in little galvanised sheds around Nolans Cottages and the Mall.

Still made

The ropes are now made of nylon but they are still made, and the famous Shannon "Gangloe", the distinctive fishing boat of Limerick, is still made to non-old specifications.

According to another Limerick Fisherman, Al Mulcahy, the Gangloe was not only distinctive itself but each maker added his own touch. "You could tell who built the boat", he said.

Tony O'Farrell says that he learned to fish himself under the tutelage of men known picturesquely as "Knowlers" and "Storm". One of them had been at the Dardanelles.

He remembers others like "Dead Egg" and "Grey Rat" who got his name from a constant fight with the bailliffs.

More power

"The bailliffs had more power than the guards. If a fisherman's gear was taken his livelihood went down the drain", he said.

There were also "set attitudes" on the river, Tony recalls. Each person knew his place to fish.

"Of course there was rivalry all the time", he admits. "But we held our regattas, and we still hold them and there was great friendship among us all".

Years ago he bought a trawler from BIM and fished for lobster around Loop Head. He once held the only licence for eel fishing on the river and exported to Holland, but even eel stocks have gone so low that "we have been advised to leave them alone for the present".

There are 70 boats still fishing on the Shannon but only a few families like the O'Farrells, the Dorans, the King's and the Tobin's from the traditional fishing families of Limerick, are on them.

The drift nets at the mouth of the Shannon pose an even greater threat to all of them now than the hydro-electric scheme and the damming of the Shannon did 60 years ago to the Abbey fishermen.

Tony O'Farrell sent Shannon Salmon to Boston last year and was amazed to get a massive order in return. "There are jobs there", he said, "if we could guarantee the fish".

The Fishermen, says Tony "are plugging against drift net fishing", and "the ESB has done a lot", but it looks as if they will have to wait until stocks are so depleted that it will no longer be economical for the trawlers he says.

But even if the day does come when Shannon salmon can make a major impact on the local economy again and if the American market can be satisfied the tightly-knit communities like those of the Abbey can never be revived.

The last of them, Nolans Cottages, where the fishermen once laid out the "Captains" and "Colonels", and where a half-finished Gangloe now lies in a shed, has itself become a victim of the Corporation's housing policy.

DEADLINES

In order to ensure publication of advertisements in Weekend Leader, copy should be received not later than 11 a.m. on Tuesday for Display Advertisements, including En-



Tour of Munster sponsored Cycle (from left) Vincent Sponsors), Gerard Deegan, Lisnagry, Pat O'Toole, t Heuston, Lisnagry and Jim Daly.

eginning ne light

Co. Limerick V.E.C., 58 O'Connell Street, Limerick. Tel. (061) 314612. Tuitions free

of charge. Characters and situations in the above article are fictional.

Litter offender's ladylike apology

By LEADER REPORTER

A LIMERICK CITY woman who dropped a cigarette box and wrapper onto the roadway as she passed the Regional Hospital got a polite letter from Limerick County Council asking her not to do so again.

County Manager, Mr. Richard Haslam, told Limerick county councillors at their monthly meeting that the woman then wrote to the council

to apologise.

Council official Mr. Michael O'Connor sent the letter on behalf of the council after he spotted the infringement while driving behind the woman recently. He informed her that she was breaking the law and that in this instance the council would not prosecute.

By return post the woman wrote to Mr. O'Connor saying that she was ashamed of what she did and would not repeat her indiscretion.

