

ground) in the early-to-mid-1950s, and we can be reasonably sure that what we have today is more-or-less what they had in 1425.

In 1425, the ruling McNamaras built the castle at the end of a very narrow spit of

land, quietly going to ruin on its little peninsula. Round the decay of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare, the lone and level tidal mud-flats stretched far away, as Shelley may have said. And, over time, the

County Council bother their barney building a road just to oblige Limerick people.)

Bunratty at the time consisted of the castle ruin, the old single-arch bridge and the small pub which was known as (but didn't

catch) as being an Aer Lingus hostess, especially when the airline went back on the Atlantic in 1958 with its swish new Boeing 720s (slightly modified 707s). In fact, Bunratty Castle Entertainers often toured the US as

the rest, actually look out of place. But when a plane takes off at Shannon and roars overhead one is reminded of the *raison d'être* of the whole Bunratty project, and it all seems to make sense.

# The quiet land of Glenroe: and still the memory lingers on . . .

GLENROE, the Irish rural-based soap, soon departs the television screen for the final time.

However, we in Limerick are privileged to have our own version of Ireland's much-loved village and it's here to stay. Well, as far as I can discover, the Limerick version has been around for long enough (the Abbey graveyard in the parish has one headstone dating to 1741), to convince me its not leaving, that it will not pack its bags like Joe Lynch and Mary McEvoy and disappear.

Then again I didn't see the end for the TV soap!

Glenroe, lies on the eastern coastline of our island, about 20 miles from Dublin city centre in the shadow of the Sugar Loaf Mountains and, more importantly, can also be found at one of the most southerly points of County Limerick, underneath the Ballahoura and Galtee Mountains.

The initial evidence of the Limerick village suggests strong resemblances with its television counterpart—a mainly rural area, largely agriculturally based and both lying at the foot of overpowering mountains. The name is the main similarity that will be noticeable to any visitor... or, at least, I believed so.

Somewhat misled, I thought it to be the exact same; however, I now stand corrected: locally it is pronounced, 'Glen-roo'.

The old name for the Limerick equivalent of the village was Darragh, meaning the



Jim O'Connell and James Sheehy helping prepare the locality for the Tidy Towns competition (LL)

parish of the oak-wood, while the present-day meaning translates as the oaks of the red valley or the red glen. It is understood that there was once an ancient and extensive forest of oaks in the valley between the mountain ranges of Ballahoura and Galtee.

At present, the deep valleys and mountain slopes are occupied by vast areas of coniferous trees.

Pity that the forest wasn't ash: many of the local hurling enthusiasts might say, with Michael O'Brien and team-mates moving into the Intermediate grade this season. The intimate little village still carries many a green-and-black reminder of last season's junior final success.

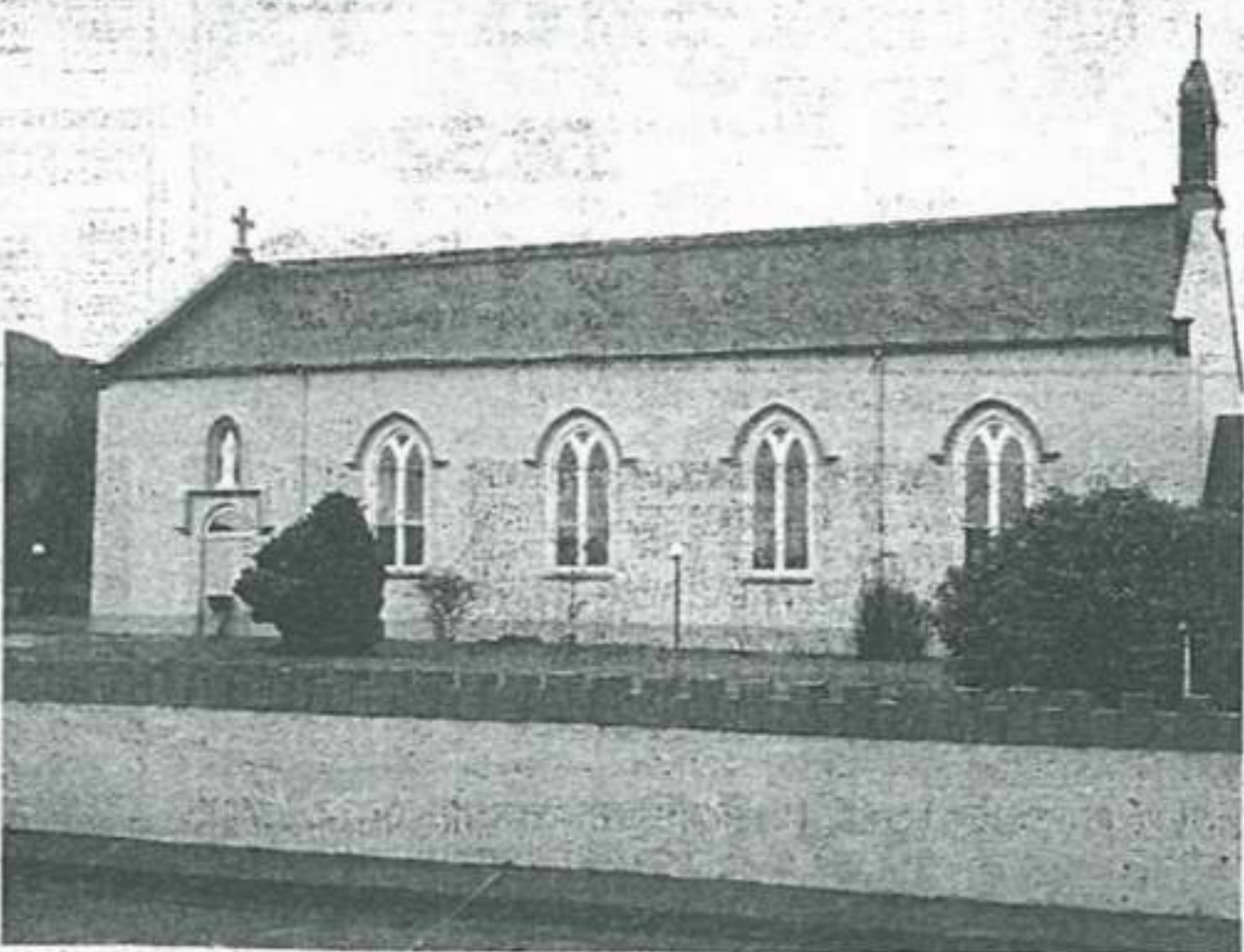
While I think of it, isn't it great that Mike O'Brien can put the name of Glenroe on

GAA match programmes throughout the country and quite amusingly so, I am sure, for those not geographers at heart, to see a Limerick hurler playing for what they imagine to be a fictional soap village.

In the late '80's and early '90's, Glenroe could boost a weekly audience of 1,000 people when filming in the countryside of Wicklow, today the quite Limerick village still only boasts a population of less than 1,000. Nonetheless we all know which disappeared first! Maybe the writers of the TV script should have paid a visit to their Limerick counterpart. Here a visit to the holy well of Toberbreedia in the town land of Ballintober may have helped. The well is known as Chincough Well and was said to cure ailments (not that much could be done for the show). In the past, patients seeking cures could drink water from the well, or milk, which was boiled with moss taken from the well.

As the RTE Glenroe fades from memory, perhaps the Limerick village will for once gain a deserved identity of its own. With the ongoing work, the Tidy Towns Competition could be just one of many outlets for gaining recognition in the future.

Still on Sunday night at 8.30, spare a thought for the "original", or, even better, pay a visit to the unexplored ebbs and flows of the countryside, that is the southeast of the county and also find awaiting you, a pink church!



The pink-painted church which announces that you have arrived in Glenroe. (LL)