

GOING DOWN YOUR WAY

With Jerome O'Connell



Remembering a time when the world was their Oyster . . .

THE Oyster Ballroom, Dromkeen, where the fox-trot and the waltz packed the floor and rocked the foundations with the music of everone from Larry Cunningham to Big Tom.

Nowadays the East Limerick village stands

quietly on the landscape, with a generation of young people not familiar with the days when the village dance hall had to turn people away from its doors.

"We are a small narrow parish in the east of County Limerick. The parish consists of Dromkeen to the north and Killeely to the south. The southern half of the parish borders Tipperary, bordering the parish of

Emly. Other bordering parishes are our best rivals and include, Pallasgreen (Knockane), Caherline / Caherconlish, Hospital / Herbertstown and Cappamore," that's the description of the area as posted on the website of the local GAA team, Killeely-Dromkeen.

Meandering through the countryside, leaving the main Tipperary road behind, a small An Post sign appears on a pole.

Obviously a post office; however, passing by, what's off the roadside is a thatched cottage. Returning along the same route after a visit to the local church, closer inspection shows that beneath the thatch is Dromkeen Post Office—to be precise the office is actually to the front of the cottage in a little room that was built on for the purpose.

Inside in a cosy little room, Mary McKenna serves the community, as her mother did before her for years.

Like most conversation about Dromkeen's past, The Oyster is to the fore.

"It was built for that purpose and they used to do great work in it. Every Saturday Tommy Ryan used to polish that floor. He would be at it from 10am until about 9pm. It was a lovely floor. To see people waltzing around it was great," she reminisced.

Over 25 years ago, Pakie Hayes was the man behind the venture.

"He was a great man.



•Dromkeen postmistress Mary McKenna with neighbour Annie Corbett (LL)



were gone and they didn't come back. He was really a great man to run a business," said the postmistress, who can remember paying a half-crown on dance night.

Further along the road from the post office is the parish church with its modern bell tower. Erected last year by the people

depicts the "all-seeing eye of God and all people in the embrace of the Trinity". Though modern in nature it bears the original bell of the church.

Dancing apart, Dromkeen is also renowned through the Victoria Cross. Britain's highest award for gallantry was presented to Joseph Brad-

Pte Bradshaw was born in Dromkeen in 1835 and was part of the rifle brigade.

Continuing Dromkeen's standards of excellence, Garda Maeve Hourigan, also of the area, was awarded the best all-round student award, from a class of over 150 graduates from

niture, Dromkeen Food Ingredients Ltd, which is a leading manufacturer of soup stock ingredients for the food industry since the 1980s, and a railway line, remain in the East Limerick village.

However, the locals have not forgotten their past, with a café and car