

The Cut

By Eoin O'Sullivan



Eoin O'Sullivan

Sounds of the 60's



Photo by Patrick O'Sullivan

An old gramophone still in working order being played during the nineties

Imagine being seated under the dim light of the hissing Tilly lamp, conscious of the smell of paraffin oil, embraced by the heat of the glowing log fire and listening to the gramophone. This is a glimpse of what life was like in Kerry during the 60's, perhaps a way of life that will never come our way again. We lived in a rural post office and had little time for entertainment until the blanket of darkness descended.

The wind up gramophone would scratch its way through a batch of old vinyl discs. We would marvel at the reverberation that emanated from the giant horn. The system was invented on November 8 1887 by Emile Berliner, a German immigrant working in Washington D.C. He was the first person to start recording on flat discs; the original records were made of glass, later zinc, and eventually plastic.

Tea was poured, sweet cake shared and whiskey was drunk as the blazing fire cast soft shadows;



Photo by Eoin O'Sullivan

Tuosist Post Office, could be Ireland's oldest family run P.O.?

classics like John McCormack's "Kathleen Mavourneen" and Delia Murphy's "If I Were A Blackbird" filled the kitchen with merriment. Akin to Kristofferson's "cleanest dirty shirt," we would poke through the little tin box for the cleanest dirty needle when the scratching began; it was that little spike that created the smoldering evocative melody which is lost in today's digital sound.

It gave a warm and nostalgic reverberation and created a unique atmosphere. The sizzle after the needle dropped on the record was in itself reminiscent of another era. Billy Joel's "52nd street" was the first commercial album to be released on CD in 1982. This was the beginning of the end for the LP.

When the vinyls were put aside the wireless crammed our lives with dialect and melody from around the world. The old radio was an integral part of many house-holds up to and during the 60's, providing hours of entertainment. Not alone did we enjoy the sponsored programmes, hospital requests and various plays, but we also treasured the dancing in "Take the Floor with Dinjoe" and "Question Time" with Joe Linnane.

Sunday night took us to places and parishes unknown when the



Photo by Eoin O'Sullivan

An old wireless set from the 60's

distinctive voice of Sean Óg O'Cheallachain read the GAA results from around the country. Remarkably this programme has stood the test of time. Another schedule that has survived since the 60's is Céilí House which was broadcast on Saturday nights while shoes were polished and ears scrubbed. "Dear sir or Madam" presented by John O' Donovan gave listeners the chance to air their views without bias or interruption. "Liveline" take note.

We didn't just tune into Radio Eireann, but also to such stations as Radio Luxemburg, Radio Caroline and the BBC. Who could forget Alan Freeman counting down the top twenty on a Sunday evening, or the late night transmissions from the American Forces Network which covered many of the great world heavyweight boxing fights? Moscow, Rome, Pittsburgh, Delhi, Sydney among other stations listed on the short wave band. The language barrier hindered our curiosity.

The wireless was powered by two batteries, one dry and one wet, the latter being taken to the garage every so often for charging. The aerial which was tied to the nearest tree resembled a clothes line and indeed at times acted as one. Having suffered a brief drop in popularity due to television, especially during the 80's the radio is now as popular as ever. If present day TV is anything to go by, then radio has a safe future.



25 year old T.V. set still working perfectly

During the sixties the TV set began to insert a new culture into many homes after electricity became available. Our set arrived around the time Neil Armstrong stepped onto the moon. Televisions were expensive and were mainly rented. It took people years to realize that buying on the HP was a far better option than leasing. Nobody in the business bothered to tell them.

RTE opened at 5.30 p.m. each day and closed at around 11.30pm. With only one channel, options were limited. The box in the early days was compact and strong, just as well as there wasn't a set that didn't get at least a few blows at some stage. Strangely this unsophisticated attempt at repair mostly worked!

I bought my first TV in 1983 at Donagans's in Portlaoise for £500 on the HP. It still works as good as ever today. It has covered six World Cups and over 50 All Ireland finals. It has sorted out countless elections, depicting winners, losers and more recently – bad losers! Its workings are simple, on, off, colour and tuning. Yet for its lack of technology the picture has always remained first class. I'm reminded of Mrs. Joan Lopes from Suffolk in England who bought a Morphy Richards toaster in 1949. It has worked virtually every day since. Only the cable had to be replaced. She could purchase a new one, but would the toast taste any different? I doubt it. Once, things were made to

last, dependability mattered and people couldn't buy replacements. Today we are a wasteful society whose appetite for upgrade and change is unstable.

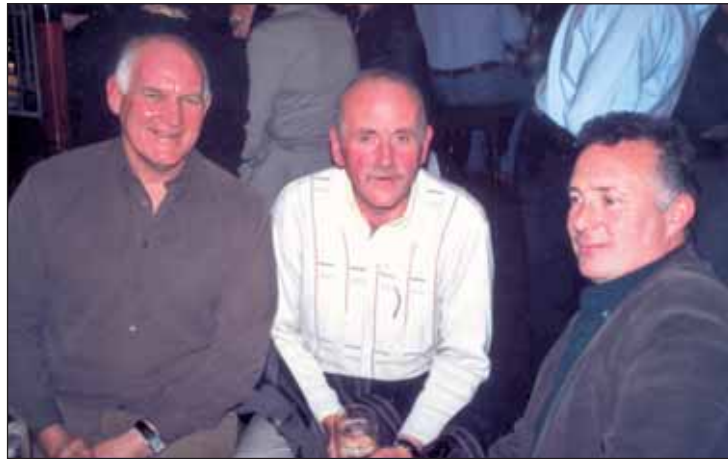
Our post office which still operates in Tuosist Co Kerry is also in danger of extinction. Having been run by four generations of the O' Sullivan's since 1851 it may be the oldest family run P.O. in the country. This appealing fact has been declared on national radio, no competitor has come forward yet.

As well as providing a postal service our store also traded in everything from pot menders to pigs heads. It is an outpost where locals met to exchange news and listen to the latest in local tittle-tattle. It is a place where people draw comfort from the fact that they are not alone. Now these marvelous places of character are disappearing from our villages and countryside at an alarming rate robbing people of a way of life that will never be restored.

Bureaucrats describe such closures as streamlining and going forward. What would they know about the hiss of a Tilly lamp or the scratch of a rusty needle on a cold winter's night in south Kerry?

GREAT SPORTSMAN RETIRES

Garda Mick Lillis a native of Curraclare in the County Clare, a lifelong member of the IPA, recently retired from An Garda Síochána. Mick who worked in Cork, Portlaoise and in latter years, Stradbally, is known in GAA circles countrywide. He has won five county finals with Portlaoise and one county final in Clare with his native club Curraclare. He has managed both the Laois under 21's and the Portlaoise seniors; he was successful with the Palatine Club in Co. Carlow, where he steered them to senior county success in 2006; he has also played at county level with Clare. Mick is a fully trained physiotherapist and has worked closely with football manager Pat Roe when he was in charge of Carlow and Wexford; he is currently training the Offaly footballers.



Noel McCarthy, Tony Conlon and Mick Lillis at the retired members party which was held at Casey's in Portlaoise. Gda Lillis was presented with The IPA statuette on the night to mark his retirement

Joke of the Month

HA HA HA HA HA

A novice joins a monastery and takes a vow of silence: he's allowed to say two words every seven years. After the first seven years, the Prior brings him in and asks for his two words. "Cold floors," he says. They nod and he retires. Seven more years pass. The Prior calls him back and asks for his two words. He clears his throats and says, "Bad food." They nod and the novice retires. Seven more years pass and he is recalled to utter his two words. "I quit," he says. "That's not surprising," the elders say. "You've done nothing but complain since you got here."

HA

HA HA HA