



Upland village on the up and up: Knockaderry.

3/1/87

IT MAY be funny to look back on it now, but the fact is that the town commissioners of Newcastle West objected to the construction of the metal bridge at Grange in the first decade of this century. The members called for the erection of a traditional stone bridge, not on engineering grounds, but "so as not to have the money going to England" for the purchase of the steel girders.

And, of course, in the 1970s, the bridge was declared to be unsound, and weight restrictions were imposed. Later, speed restrictions were added. Finally, the County Council replaced the whole lot with a splendid new reinforced concrete structure.

Knockaderry sits on a hill above that bridge, and its sister parish, Clouncagh, nestles in the valley beyond. A rural parish, it boasts a number of unusual assets.

Hatchery

Most people will probably not know that all Castlemahon chickens come from Knockaderry. The hatchery, one of the biggest and most efficient in these islands when completed in 1973, at Grange is where millions of little yellow balls of down first see the light of an antiseptic infra-red day.

Further up the same hill is the former home of the Pierse family (pronounced 'Perse' locally), who were, in their time model farmers, but whose family eccentricity manifested itself most colourfully from time to time. One of the last of them, Lady Heath, was an aviator, who flew the length of Africa before joining a flying circus. She died in London.

The land in Knockaderry is mixed, and some of the people commute to day-jobs in Newcastle West, Castlemahon and further afield. For that reason, the parish is comparatively prosperous even in this bad year.

There is another reason for the prosperity too, and it is this upon which we shall dwell. Perhaps more than any other parish of its size and type, Knockaderry has a spirit of self-help which is put into practice.

Right from its inception in 1981, the

Where self help is a way of life

Community Council set about positive work. With only 300 households in the combined parish, representing a total population of only 1,000, their work would be hard indeed.

The old library was first to receive attention. The place was totally refitted. Fire-lighting, plumbing, heating, new doors and a thorough decorating job created a community centre of which anywhere would be

allowed the community council to do something creative, while making valuable work where none had existed before. From 1984 onward, teams of workers have been systematically redeveloping the parish.

Firstly, the three graveyards were attended to, and this had a very impressive impact. Returning exiles wishing to visit the plots of their ancestors were pleasantly surprised to see that the departed were being respected. It also meant that many young men who would otherwise have had nothing to do had the dignity of employment and an earned wage.

The G.A.A. club, one of the most active in the district, then decided to develop its pitch, and much work has taken place which will have the effect of providing the parish with one of the best venues in the county.

And then the community decided that the roadways needed attention. The surfaces were fine, more or less, but the margins were untidy. So, this year, the youth work concentrated on reseeded, wall repair, landscaping of derelict areas and general care and maintenance. As a result, the village proposes to enter all future Tidy Towns competitions. An ongoing survey by the members of the community council is identifying areas which could do with improvement.

The area is now part of the (069) automatic telephone district, a fact which has brought modern communications to the area.

Emigration

There has been emigration from Knockaderry, of course, and this is very much in evidence during the Christmas season, as friendly greetings are heard at church gate and in local bar. The slight twang of an American or English accent is not uncommon at Knockaderry at this time of year.

But this upland parish retains much of the culture of the area more so than most. This St. Stephen's Day, as any other, the sound of the bodhran was heard heralding the other musicians, as the pyjama and ribbon bedecked men of La an Dreolin wended their magical way.

Men of oak from the hill of oak.

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proud. All of the local clubs and societies utilise it now to the full, and it has rung to the joy of children's concerts and discos, and it has lent a ponderous solemnity to public speaking competitions and debates.

The Youth Employment Scheme