

North Clare news

Fitting farewell by Doolin character

by Tara King

THE people of Doolin were in mourning this week following the sudden death of one of the village's best known characters, Mr Jack Garrihy.

Mr Garrihy, who was 87 years of age, passed away last Sunday after attending the Russell memorial service in the local graveyard.

This week, Mr Garrihy's son, Eugene, spoke about his father and the powerful impact he left on the people of Doolin and beyond.

"He was extremely well respected. I met about 20 to 30 men yesterday and it was amazing to see every one of them crying. My father was a great businessman and he had equal respect for everyone. He would show the man on the street the exact same respect he would show the Taoiseach. He was larger than life and he cast a long shadow on everyone who met him. He did so much for Doolin, and it's certainly going to take Doolin, North Clare, and further, a long time to recover from his passing."

Credited as having been the main link between Clare and the Aran Islands, Mr Garrihy was known for trading hay, fish and potatoes with the people of Aran. A pioneer of tourism in North Clare, he also maintained his link with Aran, and eventually went on to become a successful businessman, having set up cruises from Liscannor to the Aran Islands. The business is now run by Mr Garrihy's sons; and the cruise boat, 'The Jack B', is named after Jack and his wife

Biddy, who passed away some years ago.

Doolin Coast Guard's Mattie Shannon, whose son is married to Mr Garrihy's granddaughter, this week described Mr Garrihy as having been a protector of the welfare of Doolin village and credited his unceasing fight for better services in North Clare.

"Jack will be a big loss to the community in Doolin. He was a great character, and was always concerned about Doolin and its welfare. Although he was from a different age, he was very progressive in his thinking and was always keen to move Doolin forward. He was involved in so many organisations and committees, such as the Russell Memorial Committee and the community harbour co-op. He was heavily involved in fighting for renovations to be carried out on the pier in Doolin and had been doing so for over 30 years. Jack was also involved with fundraising and he was a big supporter of Doolin tourism. He loved the community and he regularly fought for the various services that had been promised to the community, such as water and sewerage schemes. He was a great man and will be sadly missed."

A talented singer and storyteller, his passion also extended to that of politics. A staunch political enthusiast, Mr Garrihy was known as the backbone of Fianna Fail in the area, and had remained a firmly loyal supporter even into his later years.

Councillor Richard Nagle, a close friend of Mr Garrihy also shared with The Champion his

memories of one of Doolin's most loved sons.

"Jack was extremely popular and he had a fantastic sense of humour. People who visited Doolin regularly sent him cards. He often received letters and cards from all over the world and needless to say, he was the first person people would ask for the moment they returned to Doolin. Not surprisingly, Jack was often referred to as the King of Doolin. He was such a great ambassador for both North Clare and County Clare and such an extremely generous man as well. He was a great supporter of Fianna Fail and he worked tirelessly and continuously for the party, particularly at election time. He was a man who loved progress and who was very interested in the development of Doolin and North Clare. He was a very close personal friend of mine, and I know he will be deeply missed by everyone that knew him."

At the time of his passing, Mr Garrihy was doing the one thing he loved most - chatting with friends. He had just visited Micho Russell's grave where each year he laid the wreath as part of the Russell Memorial Service, however, this year, he asked his neighbour, Patrick Sweeney, to do the honours on his behalf. Following the service, he accompanied his friends to McDermott's Pub in Doolin where he sat and chatted. As he told them one of his many stories, he suddenly lay his head in his hands.

It was then that Doolin's finest gentleman passed away.