

BRENDAN O'REGAN - MR SHANNON

A DEDICATION TO EDUCATION

Blackrock College was the Alma Mater of Dr Brendan O'Regan, a past pupil who benefited from the high quality, personalised care offered by staff in the Dublin school.

BLACKROCK College has been at the heart of Irish education since 1860. Today the boarding school home to circa 90 boarders with a staff student ratio of 1:6. The College is located three hours from Ennis

The College, offers a 21st century environment replete with excellent accommodation, a vast array of facilities including sports hall, weights rooms, tennis courts, squash courts, swimming pool, athletics sprint track, table-tennis centre, cricket grounds and 11 sports pitches.

Situated on a 56 acre campus in the heart of a capital city, the College has access to all of the cultural, tourist, sporting and recreational activities available. Blackrock operates a seven-day flexible boarding schedule, with a monthly free week-end.

There are five strands to the experience provided in the boarding school – excellent teaching and learning, supervised and structured study time, friendships that last a lifetime, the pursuit of individual interests and faith formation. Combined together with a culture of pursuing excellence in all areas, the College offers a superb opportunity for young people to grow into mature, caring citizens, imbued with confidence, striving to achieve personally and contributing to our world.



Contact: Blackrock College, Rock Road, Blackrock, Co. Dublin

Tel: 01 288 8681 - Email: registration@blackrockcollege.com

www.blackrockcollege.com



THE JEWEL OF IRISH GOLF

Host Club - Dubai Duty Free Irish Open 2019

Lahinch Golf Club
Lahinch, Co. Clare, Ireland
Tel: +353 65 708 1003
E-mail: info@lahinchgolf.com
www.lahinchgolf.com

WORLD TOP 50 GOLF COURSE

MR SHANNON BLAZED A TRAIL FOR IRELAND

Brendan O'Regan was a giant of 20th century Ireland says **Joe Ó Muirheartaigh** of a man who made a huge impact on the new independent Ireland he grew into and then helped shape across a number of different spheres in his long life.

It was a winter's night in 2000 and as we sat hard by the bar on the high stools in Paddy Casey's pub Sixmilebridge our popular host held court on a range different issues.

It being Munster final week as everyone in the 'Bridge readied themselves for a showdown with Mount Sion from Waterford it was no surprise that there was plenty of hurling being pucked around the bar.

But it wasn't all hurling as Paddy also spoke at length about the other small ball game of golf and his time as a stalwart of Shannon GC and in particular his friendship with Christy O'Connor Jr. His tale about Christy related to when he got an invitation to play in the US Masters — it was to Casey's that he went with the news and that it was Paddy who finally convinced him he had to take up the invitation.

The conversation then returned to hurling when Paddy produced a framed picture of the Clare team in Croke Park in August 1998 — but it wasn't your traditional team shot, instead it was the iconic Sportsfile image of the Clare team standing to attention on the sideline in remembrance of victims of the Omagh bombing the day before.

It was that photo that in its own way brought Paddy around to his next subject, as he disappeared for a few minutes and then produced another framed photo that was the guts of 80 years old.

“

Brendan O'Regan was one of the outstanding figures of 20th century Ireland. A shaper and maker of modern Ireland.

“There he is,” said Paddy, “one of the greatest Irishmen for sure, a great man who did so much to try and bring peace to Northern Ireland and much more”.

It was Brendan O'Regan. Both Paddy Casey and Brendan O'Regan have since passed away, Paddy just a few years after that meeting in 2000 and Brendan in 2008, but Casey's words still hold true.

It's why one unionist politician in the north in Mark Patrick Hederman once said “more than any other individual person he laid the foundations for peaceful co-existence between the different traditions on this island”.

O'Regan was one of the outstanding figures of 20th-century Ireland. A shaper and maker of modern Ireland — as important to industry and aviation as TK Whittaker was to the economic regeneration. Mr Shannon. And well beyond.

He can be mentioned in the same breath as Sean Lemass — the man who more than anyone else grabbed Ireland by the scruff and dragged it into the modern world when he succeeded Eamon de Valera as Taoiseach in 1959.

It's no coincidence that it was Lemass, as Minister for Industry and Commerce, who made Brendan O'Regan into one of his agents for change as Ireland slowly emerged from the isolationism of the Economic War from 1932 to '38.

The visionary in Lemass and top civil servant Tim O'Driscoll recognised the business acumen in O'Regan on their regular meetings in the St Stephen's Green Club in Dublin. O'Regan was in his mid-20s then and manager of the prestigious Dublin social venue.

The term headhunted was foreign to the business lexicon of the day, but that's what happened where O'Regan was concerned, sending him on his way to Foynes Airbase to assume



control of the catering operation there.

From there O'Regan became central to nearly everything positive that happened in the mid-west region.

Rineanna's emergence as the hub of the aviation world when transatlantic services started from there in 1945 had O'Regan's imprint, as did its designation as the first duty free airport that came in the years after the signing of the Customs Free Airport Act in 1947.

It was O'Regan who convinced Sean Lemass to set up Shannon Development as a local autonomous body as distinct from being under the control of the Civil Service structure. Then he headed the company that transformed Shannon into a business hub that was the envy of industrialists around

the world.

Shannon's diamond, before and after Mr de Beer.

“I can remember the staff particularly, because they were a very animated group of people,” recalled O'Regan in retirement. “They recognised the importance of the task that they were doing as helping to create a new Ireland, a dream that had long filled the hearts of Irishmen around the world,” he added.

And, like most great success stories it began from small beginnings, when O'Regan moved from Foynes to Shannon literally overnight as the flyingboats gave way to landplanes.

“It began with a telephone call,” recalled O'Regan, “from Tim O'Driscoll to me who said ‘we have just heard that the

British are going to bring in land planes on Monday, and if you're not able to look after the catering by then we're going to have another handover that won't be so easy'.

"We can do it from the Old Ground," I said. We did it using Maggie McArdle, the Old Ground chef, who was really a wonderful woman. We brought the food in the laundry basket.

"I said to her, 'the best meal you've made Maggie has got to be there. Lobster, salmon, anything you want.' There were about 30 people sitting down for lunch – the 30 people were from the BOAC (British Overseas Airways Corporation).

"It was a very important time in aviation. The aircraft were just about able to cross the Atlantic. I remember the first planes arriving – it was like they were from outer space. I remember how exciting it was when the first American aircraft arrived. They decided it was important enough for the whole crew to march down the middle of the lounge for their lunch, which was a fillet of good Irish steak.

"In the beginning we had one member of staff who worked full-time. Then we had two. Then we had three because it was as busy in the night as it was during the day."

On it went with O'Regan at its core, while always deferring to contribution of those around him.

"The successes I was lucky to have were really the successes of those who worked with me because there was a special drive in Shannon from the beginning," he said in 2002. "It was among the waiters, waitresses, clerical staff and management. We were very proud of what was happening and were anxious to make a go of it.

"My written agreement with the government at the time was to get 25 per cent of the profitability of the organisation they were giving me to set up. I never took it – if I had I would have been a multi-millionaire. They never expected that what they were getting me to do was going to be a profitable operation."

But boom it was, while O'Regan's greatest feature was his ability to look to new horizons. Always. With duty free, the hotel school – the former a world first, the latter a first for Ireland that still blazes a success trail 60 years after its foundation; the Shannon Development story that helped industrialise Ireland for the first time.

"We were the first industrial estate in Ireland," said O'Regan



with pride. "The need was so great, to counteract what was being said at the time. 'Shannon is finished'. Shannon being finished would mean that we had lost out in the air race.

"What existed in the beginning was an offer of the land. There were two offers which related to Lemass' words in which he said 'if you can do what you're talking about you can have the land for a shilling an acre'. The first £50,000 were spent out of the profits of sales and catering.

"It was an American who had an idea for a pin-ball gaming machine. This is what he wanted. We had another operator who was a chinchilla breeder. We took a risk and we made two timber buildings and the two building were put up. We had two industries and then one man came who already knew what he wanted.

"He had seen an artists impression for an industrial zone for 5,000 workers and an adjoining town. He said to me 'and who is going to do that and run it'. I think Jack Lynch was with me

at the time and I said 'the team that has run the restaurant that you have talked highly about are going to do it.'

"And what are they going to do? 'They are going to ensure that anyone who comes succeeds and at least doesn't fail for anything lacking from the Irish'. There was silence. Then he said 'I'm in'. He had made no economic check up. They were producing nuts and bolts for moonshots – the best things that could be used for shooting into the moon. It was the head man of SPS, Tom Hallowell. Almost immediately after that Shannon Diamond came. Once we had got one, we were able to get others."

Seventy five years on, the airport is a monument to O'Regan and the teams of people around him. Shannon Development is another, so too is the hotel school, Duty Free.....

And the key to it all, said O'Regan before he died, was grounded in simplicity itself.

"At Shannon we had a staff there who had a tremendous thing for the concept of Ireland. They were streaming through the lounge to the dining room and the staff knew that they only impression they would get of Ireland was what they got at Shannon. They reacted to it – it was a very friendly airport.

"I remember telling them that on one occasion I went to Los Angeles and I decided I would go across America and stopping at small airports taking a look at them. I was in one airport and a big American with a Texas hat said 'welcome stranger, where do you come from?' At that stage I was feeling a long way from Ireland and I remember telling the staff at Shannon that it lifted my heart and if they could do that to Americans, they would be doing great.

"We were very proud of what was happening and were anxious to make a go of it. In this situation that Shannon is now, this is what has to be done again."

Words of the wise.

Opposite Page: Brendan O'Regan, right, as head of Bord Fáilte in 1973.

Above: Brendan O'Regan in Shannon Airport in 1948 checking a sample from the tray of desserts in the airport restaurant;

Below left: Brendan O'Regan and Eamon de Valera in Shannon Airport; Bottom left: Brendan O'Regan, with umbrella, and Taoiseach Sean Lemass in Shannon Airport in the mid-1960s, while also in the picture, behind Lemass is Minister Donogh O'Malley.



Fáilte Ireland congratulates Brendan O'Regan, a former Chairman of the National Tourism Development Authority, on being named 'Clare's Greatest Person' and commends him on his many great achievements over the years, particularly those for Ireland's tourism industry.





‘THE BEST IS THE BEST’

The Brendan O'Regan story is closely associated with the Old Ground Hotel in Ennis. It was owned by his father James O'Regan, it was where he met his wife, while the hotel was synonymous with the success of Shannon Airport.

THE OLD Ground Hotel, Ennis has a very strong association with Brendan O'Regan. His father, James O'Regan's entry into the hotel business came about by chance.

Brendan recounted in Micheál Ó Muircheartaigh's book 'From Borroloola to Mangerton Mountain: Travels and Stories from Ireland's Most Beloved Broadcaster' the tale of how his father James came to be in possession of the hotel. He said "We were on holidays in Italy when my father met some people who suggested that he should become a Fiat agent on his return; they also mentioned that the 'capital' would be a better location than where he was then operating."

The Fiat deal was made on his return to Ireland and he began looking for a place in the county capital Ennis to open this garage in 1927. "My father found a garage alright, but there was a problem because it was part of a hotel that was then closed down, the only way to get possession of the garage was to buy the hotel as well – it was called The Old Ground Hotel", O'Regan finished. The building was bought for £1,200 and James O'Regan built a garage and show-room on part of the property.

Following the purchase, James O'Regan took the family to France to observe and learn about the hotel business from the French hoteliers. Over the next two years, he renovated and redecored the building and it re-opened as a hotel in

February 1929. The O'Regan family moved in to live in The Old Ground. Brendan's sisters Moira and Jennie took over the management of the hotel following training in Cookery and Domestic Economy.

When Brendan finished school in Blackrock College, he decided to become a hotelier, having been greatly influenced by his father and his father's business at The Old Ground. He started to gain hotel experience, initially working in Wales. Brendan then worked in a hotel in Germany, while the son of the German hotel owner worked at The Old Ground. At this stage, The Old Ground had a year-round restaurant business,

“

My God, if you can do it like that when the chef is off, what will it be like when he is on duty?" "There was no chef of course, the stuff was coming in a laundry basket from The Old Ground".

helped by passing commercial trade.

By 1943, Brendan was working full-time in the Old Ground and at this time he negotiated with The Munster and Leinster Bank to bail his father out of bankruptcy. Brendan was always guided by his father's motto on The Old Ground Hotel notepaper, 'The best is the best'.

In 1945, during Brendan's time working at Rineanna (now Shannon), he was faced with a challenge of providing catering for flying-boat passengers at very short notice. He later enjoyed telling the story of the first lunch served at Rineanna to the BOAC top brass.

"Lord Headfort said to me: 'That's quite extraordinary, we didn't expect anything like that. Could I congratulate your chef?' "I said, 'But he's not on duty today'.

"And he said 'My God, if you can do it like that when the chef is off, what will it be like when he is on duty?' "There was no chef of course, the stuff was coming in a laundry basket from The Old Ground".

Brendan then became responsible for the catering at Rineanna, which didn't have any kitchen equipment, so the catering was run from The Old Ground.

Former employees told of fond memories of their former boss. Mary Kelly (nee Downes), who spent ten years as head chef in The Old Ground, put the secret of his success down



LEGEND OF THE FALLS

Brendan O'Regan managed the Falls Hotel in the late 1930s and early 1940s - an experience that set him on his way to becoming one of Ireland's greatest business pioneers.

THE FALLS Hotel is steeped in history, it was the home of John O'Brien in the early 1700's and it was later passed to Andrew Finucane who resided in Ennistymon House until the early 1800's. Following his death, the house was passed to his brother-in-law William Nugent Macnamara of Doolin.

William Macnamara's grandson Francis, was responsible for turning Ennistymon House into a commercial property in 1936 and Francis's daughter Caitlin, married the Welsh Poet Dylan Thomas, both of whom lived in the house during the first two years of their marriage.

One of our more prouder periods is towards the end of the 1930's, when Francis leased the hotel for five years to Brendan O'Regan. O'Regan ran the hotel during the years of World War Two, and one of his innovations was to supply hot meals in hay boxes to the golfers in nearby Lahinch. Thus pioneering the take away meal!

It was here at The Falls Hotel, that the caterer's energy and verve caught the attention of senior civil servants, and when asked to manage the ailing St Stephen's Green Club in Dublin he successfully turned it into a profitable operation. From there, his talent and energy went on to make such a lasting legacy on tourism and catering in Co Clare.

In our opinion, there is no better person to be named as Clare's Greatest Ever Person.

Above: The Falls Hotel from the late 1930s

Óifig Fiontair Ábúil
Local Enterprise Office

LOCAL ENTERPRISE OFFICE CLARE
FOSTERING A STRONG
ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT

1914 Fostair 100tair Clár

100tair Fostair 100tair Clár

NEW INNOVATION
NEXT CHAPTER

IRELAND'S BEST YOUNG ENTREPRENEUR

For more information visit www.localenterprise.ie/clare or call 065-6821616

European Union
European Regional
Development
Funded by Clare County Council

EMBRACING BRENDAN'S VISION

Brendan O'Regan created the Bunratty Folk Park almost sixty years ago. Today it hosts 400,000 visitors per annum, a testament to his vision. Managing Director of Shannon Heritage **Niall O'Callaghan** is tasked with protecting and enhancing that vision, something he says the company are embracing.

NIALL O'Callaghan is reminded of Brendan O'Regan's legacy each and every working day. As Managing Director of Shannon Heritage, his office is situated in the heart of the Bunratty Castle & Folk Park grounds, indeed he often gets his morning coffee from the fittingly named O'Regan Cafe.

"It is fitting that the O'Regan Cafe is named after such a visionary," says Niall. "This entire facility is Brendan O'Regan's brainchild. This year up to 400,000 visitors will pass through here, enjoying the Bunratty experience. He started all of that almost sixty years ago," he states.

It has been a remarkable journey for a tourist attraction that began with the now world renowned medieval banquets in Bunratty Castle fifty eight years ago.

"Back then Dr O'Regan's original idea had been to create something that would attract flight crews staying overnight in Shannon. Along with Lord Gort they began the banquets and soon discovered the potential for tourists and visitors coming through Shannon and within Ireland itself.

"From there of course the true breadth of his vision was realised in the renovation of Bunratty Castle and the addition of the Folk Park. Remarkably last year the banquets enjoyed one of the best in its now long history, testament to the staff here and the highest of standards he introduced back in 1962, which are still maintained today," reports Niall.

The incredible achievement that is Bunratty Castle and Folk Park remarkably is only a fraction of what Dr Brendan O'Regan brought to the Mid-West Region. The creation of Duty-Free shopping at Shannon Airport is another.

"His legacy is astounding," says Niall. "Today 350 people are employed full time during the peak season at Shannon Heritage tourist attractions. As a direct result of Shannon Heritage's ability to retain visitors in the Mid-West a further 1,460 jobs have been created. A total of 253,000 bednights are also generated by Shannon Heritage, further highlighting the positive economic impact the company brings to the Mid-West," reports Niall.

One of Brendan O'Regan's many strengths was his faith in the people working around him. He valued their ideas, a tradition that Niall O'Callaghan reports is still strong within Shannon Heritage;

"Some of the most successful initiatives here have come from staff. We pride ourselves on seeking their input on how to improve the visitor experience and encouraging creativity. The reintroduction of the Irish Wolfhounds and Red Deer to the Folk Park are perfect examples of that," he says.

The initiatives don't end here. Shannon Heritage has recently unveiled plans for a €6.5m investment in the Bunratty Castle and Folk Park over the next two years.

According to Niall O'Callaghan, this is designed to confirm the facility as one of the top five tourist attractions in Ireland;

"This will be the single biggest investment into the Castle and Folk Park since its inception.

"We will be looking to blend the 21st century technology innovations available into the Castle and Folk Park experience. Interpretation will be at the heart of this investment.

"We are seeking to deliver a truly innovative, creative and immersive visitor experience, with world leading interpretative design. We're looking for the 'wow component', something we are sure Brendan O'Regan would wholeheartedly approve of," Niall concludes.



Right: Niall O'Callaghan, Managing Director, Shannon Heritage with the new Irish Wolfhounds at Bunratty Castle and Folk Park.

SHANNON COLLEGE OF HOTEL MANAGE-

THE INTERNATIONALLY renowned Shannon Hotel College was the brainchild of the father figure of Shannon Airport, Dr. Brendan O'Regan. It was established in 1951, next to the airport, to ensure a ready supply of world-class hoteliers was available for the emerging hotel industry as it seized on the tourism opportunity triggered by the growth then of transatlantic and other international services into Shannon.

For the past 67 years, students have travelled to Shannon from all over the globe to receive a world class education in hotel management. From humble beginnings in 1951, when Shannon College welcomed a modest 18 students to the campus, to this year's record intake of 109 first year students, the College has seen considerable growth. This reflects both the booming tourism industry in Ireland and around the world, as well as the College's unwavering pursuit of excellence. Shannon College now has a student body of over 500 students from 25 countries.

The College offers two Level 8 Business Degrees in Hotel Management, a Bachelor of Business Studies in International Hotel Management and a Bachelor of Commerce in International Hotel Management.

In 2015 Shannon College of Hotel Management amalgamated with NUI Galway. This strategic integration has secured the future of the College and has allowed for expansion of its offerings.

Next September, Shannon College plans to welcome its very first class of Masters Students with the introduction of the MSc in Business and Hospitality. This will be the only University awarded Hospitality Masters in the country and is expected to attract applicants from all over the world.

In 2017 Shannon College of Hotel Management welcomed

50% of all students entering level 8 hotel and hospitality programmes in Ireland. The College maintains a remarkable record of 100% graduate employment, with hotel partners across the globe in countries including China, Dubai, Malay-

sia, Seychelles, USA, Canada, Thailand and Europe.

Below: Shannon Airport Development Company board meeting in April 1965. (L-R) G. Farmer, A. Keenan, GG Walshe, Brendan O'Regan, RC O'Connor, G Buist McKenzie.



Shannon College of Hotel Management
A College of NUI Galway

World Class Education

Business Degrees in International Hotel Management

Msc in Business and Hospitality

100% Employment

www.shannoncollege.com