

NEWS

Milltown has the last laugh

• Village 'forgotten' by IDA in 1970s boasts a thriving industrial park

By David Burke

SCORN greeted campaigners for industry in Milltown when almost 50 years ago they asked various State bodies for support. The village was too small, they were told. Industries wanted to locate in bigger centres, laughed the men in suits.

But Milltown has had the last laugh.

Upwards of 150 people now make their living every day in businesses and industries located in the Milltown Industrial Park, and even now in a time of pandemic the local development company is in negotiations with two new partners.

One is a manufacturer, the other is involved in warehousing and distribution, and agreement is expected to be reached soon with both.

As far back as November 1972 a headline in *The Tuam Herald* read "Forgotten' Milltown launches campaign to get new industry".

The report referred to Milltown as the village the IDA 'forgot' to include in its five-year development plan for the West. It disclosed that a 30-acre site for an industrial estate had been bought on the outskirts of the village and would be developed to accommodate several new factories.

The money for the site came from the famous Milltown Carnival. The location was between the soon-to-be-defunct railway station and the main road to Sligo.

But for a long time, progress was slow. Hopes were raised in 1978 with the anticipated sale of 15 acres to the IDA, but then an embargo was slapped on land purchases by the authority.

For the next 17 years the land was rented to a local farmer, but then in 1996 the first site of 2.5 acres was sold for the N17 wholesale warehouse.

The next development was when Harty Transport bought two acres in 1998, and at this stage Galway County Council insisted on a wider plan for the Industrial Park.

Soon after that, Largo Foods, owners of the famous Tayto brand, bought a site for a warehouse and distribution centre, and the die was cast:



MILLTOWN Development Co Secretary Frank Glynn indicates another five acres which will soon house activity.

Milltown was on the transport map.

Situated on the N17 arterial route between Galway and Sligo, and now within a few miles of the M17-M18 motorway, the village became an obvious choice for businesses seeking to avoid the congestion surrounding Galway.

Development Company secretary Frank Glynn told *The Tuam Herald* that distribution managers said they could be on the motorway from a base in Milltown while their trucks were manoeuvring out of an industrial estate in Galway.

Now all the sites in the original industrial park have been sold. Businesses operating there range from the courier giant DHL, which moved from premises in Sligo and Galway in favour of Milltown, to Ocean Harvest, which manufactures animal food supplements from seaweed.

One notable success is Joint-It, a company established by Gary Duffy and Martin Fox. It manufactures and exports jointing and stone paving care products to many European countries, North America and even Kuwait.

The latest development is the construction of a 10,000 square foot building for Reddillift, at present based in rented premises in Barnaderg.

While building work is paused, proprietor Mike Reddington, a native of Greenfields, Headford, and his son Ian hope to forge ahead post-lockdown and move to the new location by autumn.

They have the Toyota forklift



ALMOST fifty years since the plan was hatched, industry is thriving in Milltown's Industrial Park.

franchise for the West, and will carry out sales, repairs and driver training at their new Milltown base.

The story is not over yet. The Development Company owns another site beside the park, about which it is currently in negotiations with three local parties, and has more land on the opposite side of the N17, which it hopes will soon be taken up by significant operations.

While officialdom was slow to recognise the potential of Milltown, Frank Glynn, the veteran secretary of the Development Company, singled out the now-retired County Development Officer, Charles Lynch, for his early support.

He organised a grant and a loan for them when the project was in its embryonic stage, and Frank hopes that when freedom of movement is restored Charles will be able to visit and enjoy this success story.



MADE In Milltown: Joint-It bosses Martin Fox (centre) and Gary Duffy on the factory floor with Frank Glynn.



FOR export: Pallets of Joint-It ready for distribution.



WAITING to resume: the new Reddillift building is due to open in the autumn, lockdown permitting. PHOTOS: DAVID BURKE