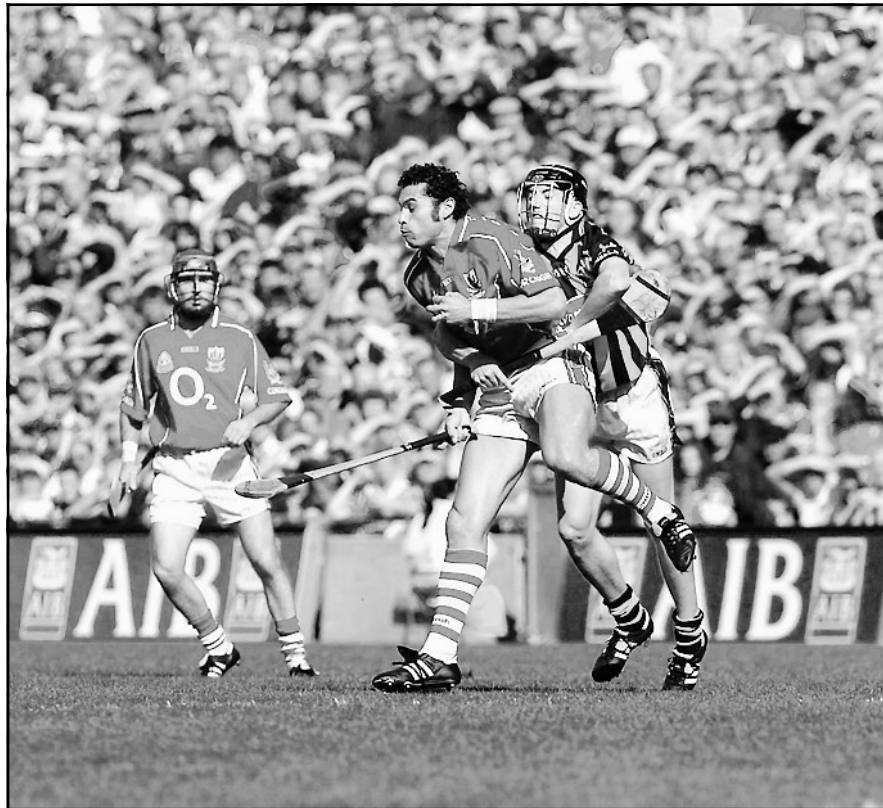


Call for RTÉ programmes to air in UK



ROBERT O'SHEA

The Irish living in Britain are unable to access RTÉ on their TV screens and miss out on events like the All-Ireland finals and the Late Late Show.

Switch TV on for emigrants

By NIAMH HENNESSY

A GROUP of 20-somethings from Cork were sitting around a laptop listening to the All-Ireland hurling final on RTÉ Radio One.

Despite being hurling and football players and having a fully-functional 32-inch television they were unable to watch the game on TV.

You might think this is bizarre in this day and age but the reason they could not watch the game was because they live in England.

The Irish in Britain are unable to access RTÉ on their television screens.

The reason for this is that the national broadcaster's current remit limits the use of public funding to broadcasting in the island of Ireland.

Not having access to RTÉ is a major frustration to thousands of Irish living in Britain who are unable to watch programmes such as *The Late Late Show* and

Questions and Answers from the comfort of their own home.

Cork woman Marie Buckley, who went to live in Manchester 50 years ago, said: "I would be ecstatic if we had RTÉ in Britain."

"Like thousands of others, I was forced to emigrate to England during the 50s in search of work but I still listen to Irish radio as it keeps me in touch with home. I appeal to politicians in Ireland to make my dream come true and bring RTÉ to the Irish people of Britain."

Following the decision to cease broadcasting Sky News Ireland, Irish emigrants have become more frustrated as they are now left with no access to daily Irish news bulletins.

The tide is about to turn, however, following major lobbying to the

Government on behalf of the Irish in Britain.

According to Labour TD Emmet Stagg, a Bill providing for the broadcasting of RTÉ outside Ireland has been fast-tracked to ensure Irish people in Britain will have RTÉ in their homes at the earliest possible date.

RTÉ will then be required to provide Irish emigrants in Britain with a television service under the legislation.

The new responsibilities will mean up-to-date Irish TV services will become widely available to Irish people in Britain — and possibly further afield.

Deputy Stagg said he has met the Taoiseach in private to discuss the fast-tracking.

He said: "A Bill has been published aside from the original Broadcasting Bill and this will be passed by the Dáil in

February. Once passed RTÉ will be permitted to broadcast in Britain."

According to Deputy Stagg, it will cost Irish television license holders just 10c a year to fund the broadcasting of RTÉ in Britain.

The move, however, is expected to cost RTÉ millions of euro and the broadcaster is waiting to see the exact requirements contained in new legislation in order to estimate the cost.

The Broadcasting (Amendment) Bill will require broadcasting services to be provided to Irish communities to mirror the existing schedules of RTÉ and TG4.

It will then be possible for the Broadcasting Commission of Ireland to enter into contracts to provide Irish programming on digital television and radio, as well as on analogue television overseas. When the legisla-

tion is published, RTÉ will have to explore ways of cost-efficiently meeting this new obligation. Reciprocal programme supply agreements with UK broadcasters might be a way of reducing expenses.

Minister for Communications Noel Dempsey has also been keen to move on the issue of broadcast services for the Irish abroad and signalled his intention to legislate for emigrants earlier in the year.

He said: "I fully support the campaign to bring RTÉ to Britain and I will do all I can to make sure it happens."

Deputy Stagg is confident Cork people across Britain will be able to watch rather than listen to their hurling team this year as he believes RTÉ will be broadcasting in Britain by September. All they can do for the moment, however, is wait and see.

IN HER Pole's guide to Cork in last Friday's paper, Agnieszka Soltysiak listed at No. 10 on her 12 things to expect as a foreigner living in Cork: "Everyone is nice and helpful."

Everyone is nice and helpful? This woman goes on to give us the shining example of bus drivers "who will often stop wherever you want and will take their time to explain to you how to get somewhere, without a trace of irritation".

"Our bus drivers? In Cork? Without a trace of irritation?" I found myself wondering. As a daily bus commuter, I have an irrational dislike of bus drivers, many of whom, I am assured, are wonderful people.

But Agnieszka is spot on with some of her other observations: our overuse of the word "like" at the end of a sentence and everything being "grand" or "not too bad".

I'm not entirely convinced Cork people are as friendly to Eastern Europeans as Agnieszka said, but they do seem to be having a better time than the one million Japanese who visit France annually.

Apparently, a dozen or so have to be repatriated every year because they suffer psychiatric breakdowns in the face of Parisian rudeness. Many Japanese, reared in the uber-polite atmosphere of their homeland, are shocked by how upfront the French can be in their gestures and impatience.

I myself was somewhat taken aback by the brusque welcome I received in the French capital some years back. But I tried to go with the flow, another culture and all that.

My very first encounter with a Parisian in Paris was a taxicab driver I hailed down outside Gare du Nord train station. We quickly established that neither of us knew where my hotel was and just when our stand-off was becoming most intense, a passing motorcyclist accidentally took off his wing mirror. I'm not sure how a Japanese person would have reacted but the withering glare he sent after the offender put me into convulsions of laughter and quicksmart on to the pavement. A better introduction to the city I could not have paid for. Having a rude cabbie or waiter is as much a part of the Parisian experience as expecting the

Mona Lisa to be much bigger, paying €8 for a beer and climbing too many medieval steps.

It's also a little rich that Japanese people complain about Parisian's rudeness, when their own culture is one of the most racist in the world. Polite, they are to a fault, but not overly friendly. Nowhere else is it commonplace for an outsider to be referred to as Mister Foreigner — gajjin-san — or where you just have to accept that some hotels will not accommodate non-Japanese (if I sound bitter, I am — this happened to me on several occasions over there in empty-looking hotels when I had few other options available).

According to another article last Friday, this one in the *Irish Examiner*, the Paris Tourist Board is encouraging tourists to give as good as they get when faced with Gallic insolence; they should attempt to out-pout, outshout and outBof! their inhospitable hosts.

I have, somewhat disappointingly and despite that initial confrontation, never found Parisians impolite.

Three visits over the past few years have revealed an unfailingly friendly bunch, even if after more than 300 hours of secondary school French lessons the only words I can definitively recall using in conversation there are "sacre", "bleu" and "embonpoint".

But enough about the French.

To give as good as you get in "friendly" Cork, I add the following to the list of stereotypes the Polish woman gave us.

Sarcasm: Cork's default conversation setting: "I will, yeah." (No); "Noooo!" (Of course); "f***ing brilliant" (crap); "Go on sure, I don't care" (I'd prefer if you didn't); "Your round" (my round); "Come heeyah, I wanna tell you something" (get ready for a dead arm).

Traditional gait: There is something mildly threatening in the way Corkmen walk — one hand in the pocket like a gangster in 1930s Chicago. Ease your mind; there is no gun in his pocket, merely a hole.

Saying goodbye: In an industrial relations dispute, two of the first paths travelled are conciliation and arbitration. If you drop the first two syllables from the word "arbitrator" you are left with "traitor". If you drop the first syllable from the word "conciliator" you have the Cork for "Au revoir".