

PAT JESS

The Kilcar complex is totally owned and managed by Údarás Na Gaeltachta: the state development authority which promotes industry in Irish speaking areas. Tom Redington, manager of the Kilcar weaving factory, explains the local characteristic of combining part time farming with factory work.

TOM REDINGTON

Over the last number of years with shorter working hours and more holidays, we now have a break at Easter. We have a week at Easter, a week at Christmas and two, three weeks in the summer, depending, and we might work some Saturdays to make up these weeks. It's usually something can be worked out between the supervisor and the worker if he has, I'm not a farmer I don't know much about it but if somebody wants to save their hay or must do whatever, they want a day or two days off. They can usually agree with the supervisors to work late for so many hours or work Saturday and take a day off.

PAT JESS

Originally Kilcar was a State-owned handloom weaving operation condemned for closure in the '60s. It had been using traditional methods of production warping the yarn by hand before weaving it on handlooms. Handweaving is slow and time consuming. Weavers have worked in this way for generations but a Government commissioned report claimed that output and productivity were too low to be economically viable. The Kilcar community was up in arms when their livelihood was under threat. The local management and workforce fought to get power looms introduced as the only option to closure. The local community which was very dependent on the Kilcar plant fully supported a change to the new methods.

TOM REDINGTON

They played a very big part in fact because we're inclined to forget we're talking about Atkins was 1969/70 that's now 12 years ago, and for the next three or four years it was a coordinated effort because it's no point to say my saying something was on or a few other people with me and we needed the full support of the whole of local community and they were in there pushing all the time. They were chasing from a political angle or from any other angle. In fact at one stage it got to the point where it was a big sell to prove to people locally that this, this was a factory that was out of date and we were going to have to let a lot of people go, but within one or two years, or three years we could be back to where we were again, if this thing took off that we would be back in two shifts and three shifts. Well it took a lot of convincing to convince unions and the people generally that this wasn't some kind of a dream or something, and they did, they accepted this.

PAT JESS

The factory showed that with power looms it could compete in the modern international markets. With political pressure from the community the state authority invested capital in new power looms. A modern spinning factory and dyeing plant were added and more workers were taken on. Kilcar's economic future seemed more secure, but general problems associated with the world recession were compounded by more local problems.

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