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LOCAL COULD SOON BE A THING OF THE PAST

AWARD WINNER: But our Geraldine couldn't get into the Mad Ass Bar in Belturbet, County Cavan



"I thought opening a pub would be the a safe bet. It was supposed to give me an income for life. But it's all going down the pan."

Sean said the pub trade would be in better shape to survive the economic crash – "only the Government is hitting us from every direction".

Punters

Now Sean runs the pub all by himself, with occasional help from his wife and daughter.

Not that he needed any extra hands when I dropped in on Friday evening. There were 15 punters in the bar, all male, mostly in their 20s and 30s – and mostly unemployed.

Local man Joe McGuigan recog-

nised me from the *Sunday World*. The paper on a Sunday and the odd pint on a Friday are his only treats, he said.

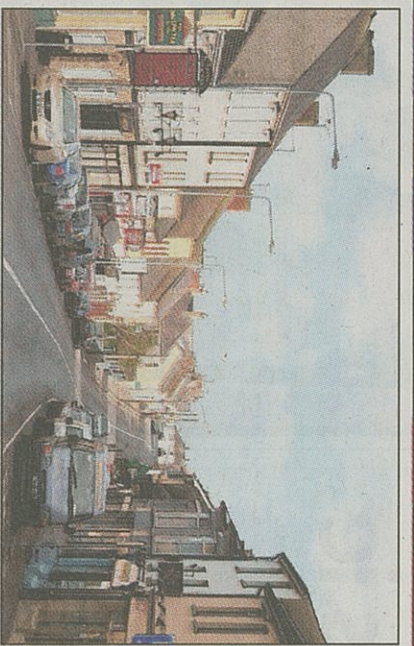
"I could buy a few cans in the office, but what's the point? You'd never meet people if you bought your drinks in the office."

His drinking buddy Sean Fitzpatrick said: "It's good fun in this pub. I come here for the social life."

An off-duty garda from out of town gave the pub the thumbs up because "there's a good crowd here".

"We're all having the craic. It's not the same as drinking at home at all."

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PICTURESQUE: Belturbet is a beautiful town, but pubs are suffering

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