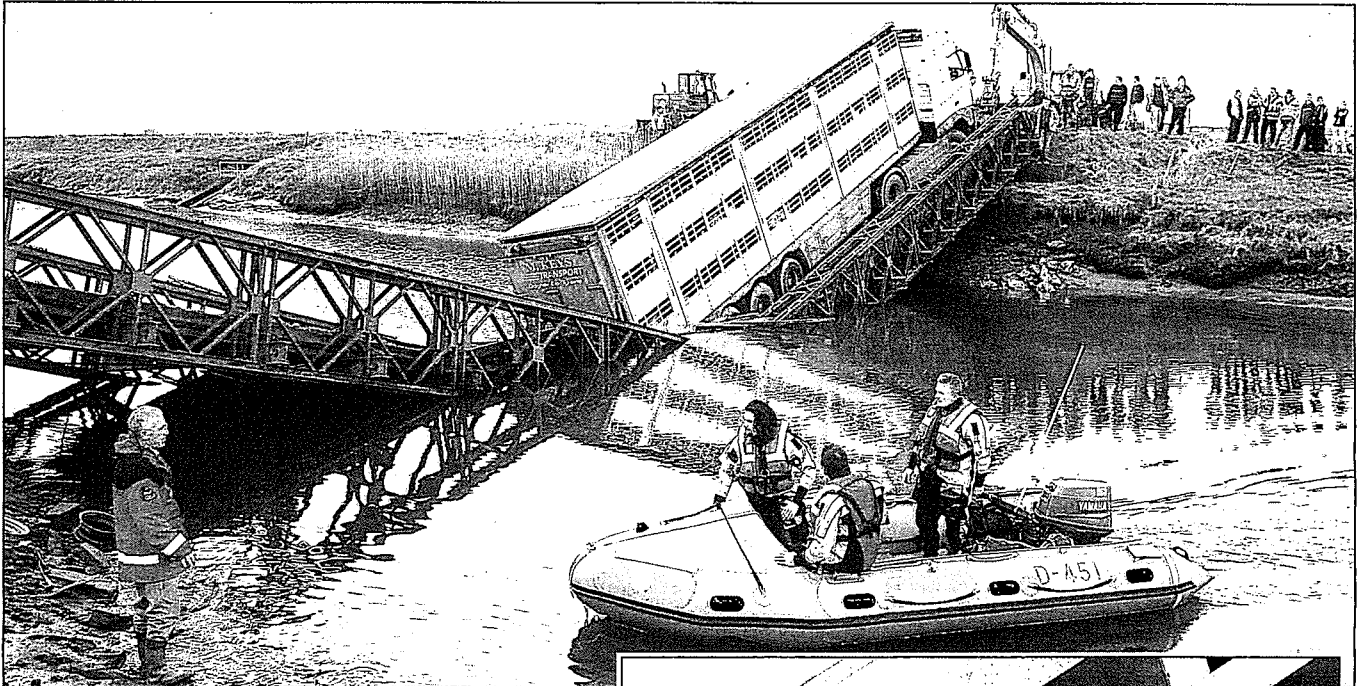


Save Our Bacon!

Race against time - and tide - to rescue 240 pigs trapped in trailer as a bridge collapse dumps them into the water



Against the tide: An aquatic rescue mission is launched on the River Brick

By Kate Chambré

IT BEGAN when a 40-tonne lorry laden with 240 pigs tried to negotiate a bridge with a 12-tonne weight limit in Kerry.

The inevitable collapse triggered a frantic rescue attempt, a race against the incoming tide to haul the hogs clear.

But it was too late for some of them. At least 50 are thought to have drowned after the lorry slid backwards into the waters of the River Brick.

Department of Agriculture and animal welfare officials and emergency units rushed to help the rescue operation, but there was not much anyone could do except wait for a crane to arrive.

Garda Sergeant Brendan Sheehan of Listowel Garda Station, Co. Kerry, told the Irish Daily Mail last night that after nearly six hours they were still waiting for a crane to lift the colossal vehicle from the water.

The incident took place at 11am this morning at Ballinagar, Lixnaw. Nobody

'Accident waiting to happen'

was injured which was the main thing. It basically boils down to the fact that the 40-tonne truck was too heavy for the 12-tonne bridge," he said yesterday.

Another onlooker said: 'Some of the pigs were crushed after the impact, and others then died from drowning. They were scrambling to get out. None of them were released because the tide was coming over on top of them.'

The lorry was transporting the pigs to Cookstown in Co. Tyrone and had started its journey from Causeway in Co. Kerry.

Sgt Sheehan added: 'About 150 locals turned out. The Department of Agriculture, Animal Welfare, County Council, the gardai, and the Fire Brigade. The general reaction was one of shock.'

Last night local Fine Gael TD Jimmy



Clear warning: What driver missed

Deenihan described the incident as 'an accident waiting to happen'.

He said: 'The bridge, which was built by Kerry Co. Council 14 years ago as a "temporary" measure, completely collapsed as an articulated lorry carrying around 200 pigs was crossing over the river on its way from the village of Lixnaw to nearby Ballyduff.'

'The driver of the lorry was not hurt but as the trailer of the lorry lay in the water the incoming tide caused concerns for the welfare of the pigs, which were trapped inside.'

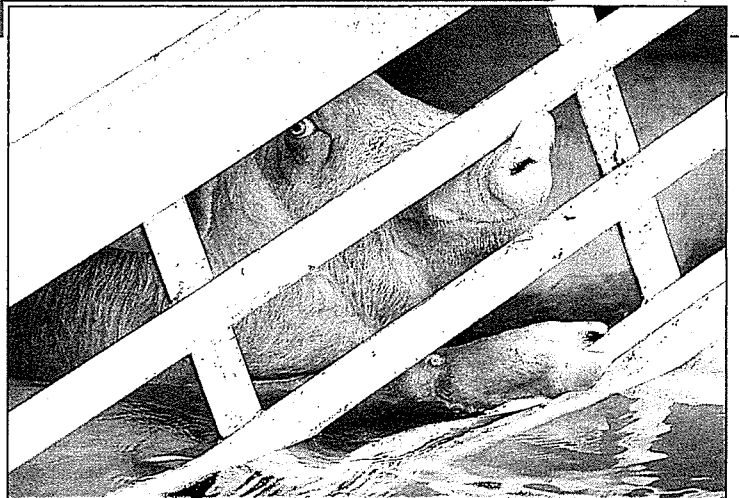
'I have raised the issue of the condition and maintenance of the bridge with Kerry Co. Council on numerous occasions in the past and today's collapse confirmed my worst fears about the bridge.'

'The focus should now be on replacing the bridge, which is a vital link for people in the North Kerry area.'

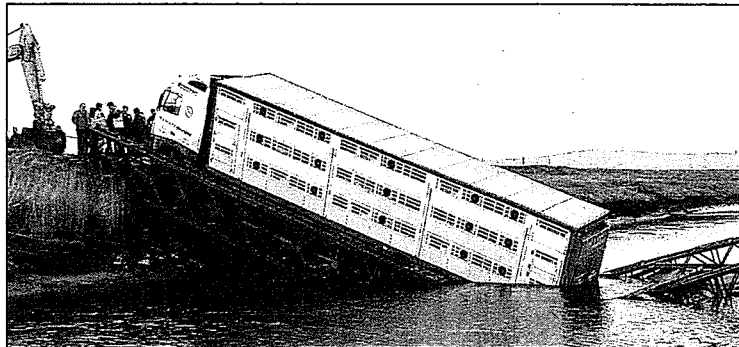
'Kerry Co. Council should now put in place an in-house team to design a bridge appropriate for the level of traffic at this location and should then apply immediately to the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government for emergency funding to provide a new bridge.'

In recent years, Dublin Bus has faced criticism for allowing 10-tonne vehicles to use a bridge with a weight restriction of three tonnes.

The small bridge on the Ratoath Road in Finglas is served by the No 120 route from the city centre.



A bid for freedom: One of the stranded pigs tries frantically to escape a watery grave



Simple arithmetic: A 40-tonne lorry on a bridge with a 12-tonne limit equals disaster