

Radio fan is no mug with record attempt

• by **Rodney Edwards**
• Photo by **Raymond Humphreys**

A Fermanagh man is aiming to get into the Guinness Book of Records for having the biggest collection of radio station mugs.

Radio devotee Richard Stuart from Belcoo now has more than 117 mugs from different radio stations across the United Kingdom. It would make for one heck of a tea party should he ever decide to hold one.

"I enjoy collecting the memorabilia mugs, I like all the different radio station logos on each mug, and they are quite interesting. I don't know anyone else who collects these mugs in Fermanagh, I could be the only one!" says Richard.

The security guard originally from Rochester in Kent started building up his vast ceramic collection during the 80s. "I contacted Capital FM in London and Victor FM in Kent and they give me a couple of mugs. They also gave me T-shirts, stickers, pens and pencils - unfortunately the T-shirts weren't signed by any of the DJs though. Then I got some more mugs from stations like Durham FM, Radio Borders, Swansea Sound, Silk FM, Revolution FM, Essex FM and Q101 FM in Omagh," he said.

Richard decided to move to Fermanagh four years ago with his mother to get away from the "rat race". "It's quite busy in Kent, a lot of people coming and going. But it's nice and quiet here and my mother is closer to my sister who lives in Co. Leitrim, which is handy. And there are plenty of good radio stations to listen to as well - not just in Fermanagh but Leitrim too," he said.

Richard lives and breathes radio and his knowledge of the industry is absolutely astounding.

Before the self-proclaimed "radio anorak" set up home in the county, he fondly remembers the

time he travelled all the way from England to pick up a Downtown Radio mug at their studios in Newtownards. Something he continues to do right around Britain and the Republic. "I hate flying but enjoy travelling. Every time I visit somewhere different I always stop at different radio stations if I haven't been there before to collect a mug. I came over on the ferry to Dublin and got the train up to Belfast and stopped at Downtown Radio. I didn't get to stay long though, it was just a short visit to collect the mug but a very long journey," he laughed.

Unfortunately Richard didn't get a tour of the Downtown studios but he has toured other stations like Pirate FM in Cornwall and Revolution FM near Manchester. "I actually found Revolution FM very interesting because it's situated in a disused pub. The bar is the reception area and also a meeting room and the cellars downstairs have been turned into the studios. I've got a radio handbook and it lists all the local stations in the UK, that's how I send away for mugs or arrange visits, I enjoy visiting radio studios," he said.

And the love of the wireless takes up a lot of Richard's time. "I switch on the radio as soon as I wake up, because we live near the border there's a good reception for Today FM, so I pick that station up each morning. I also listen to Capital FM on Sky for Johnny Vaughn's breakfast show. Then I listen to the radio all day at work - starting with Today FM and Ian Dempsey, Ray D'Arcy, Ray Foley and Tony Fenton. Then I switch it over to RTE's 2FM about half past four and listen to Will Leahy and Nikki Scott. When I work night shifts, I listen to Radio 2 right through the night from midnight with Janice Long and Alex Lester



Richard Stuart with his huge collection of mugs.<

from 3am, they are my favourites," he said.

His love of all things radio first started when he was about 12 years old. "I used to listen to BBC Radio 2 and its DJs Terry Wogan and Jimmy Young. I really enjoyed listening to all the chart music they used to play, like Abba and Bucks Fizz. And way back in the early 1980s I flew in Capital Radio's Flying Eye, it's the plane which flies around London spotting the traffic during the rush hour - it was quite an experience for me. I also took part in Larry Gogan's 'Just a minute' quiz on 2FM and got about four questions right and won a CD. When I worked at a hospital in

Dartford in Kent, I listened to Essex Fm a lot and they had a lunch time feature where you faxed or sent them a letter requesting three songs on a certain day - I got in touch and picked Barry Manilow's 'Copacabana', Ray Parker Junior with 'Ghostbusters' and Bucks Fizz's 'A Piece of the Action'. I like Bucks Fizz a lot actually, I've got all their albums and I've been to a couple of their concerts too. It was these sort of things that got me into radio," said Richard.

Aside from memorising jingles word for word on Today FM and knowing the location of every single radio station in the UK, Richard

also has an encyclopaedic knowledge of all the DJs too. "I regularly read up on all the DJs I tune in to, I look up their profiles on the internet. It's interesting to find out where they come from and all. It's also good to be able to put a face to the voice," he said.

With traditional analogue radio stations facing extinction under proposals put forward by the communications regulator Ofcom, does Richard worry about 'digital killing the radio star'? "If radio ended tomorrow it wouldn't be a travesty, I'd be sorry to see it go but at least I'd still have my mugs!"