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Yeats's Country

by Jim McGarry



W. B. Yeats

'I have spread my dreams under your feet. Tread softly because you tread on my dreams.'

Fifty years after the death of the poet W.B. Yeats, more students than ever tread softly on his dreams. Only Shakespeare has a larger bibliography.

Since his burial in Drumcliff graveyard, more and more pilgrims come to Drumcliff to honour the man acclaimed the greatest lyric poet of this century. He has enshrined the folklore and place-names of County Sligo in modern literature. These pilgrims not only honour the memory of the poet but in doing so achieve a greater knowledge of his writings.

His brother Jack Yeats said he never painted a picture that had not a part of Sligo in it. The poet too acknowledged his debt to Sligo in the formation of his character and art. Many Sligo place names are known to readers who never visited Sligo; Benbulbin, Knocknarea, Dooney Rock, Innisfree, Lough Gill, Glencar and Lissadell.

Bertie Anderson of Colga, in the Prologue he wrote for the Salute to Yeats concert at the opening of the First Yeats International School, described Yeats' legacy to Sligo as follows:- 'What Ayrshire is to Burns, what the Lake District is to Wordsworth, Wessex to Hardy, in some such relationship, in some perhaps even closer relationship, does Sligo stand to Yeats. This woodland of ours, these lakes, this hill-framed, most magical of landscapes - these exist no longer now in themselves alone but have taken on a second, a transmuted life, reflected in the magic mirror of his great art, woven into the very texture of his verse, of his verse at its most musical, at its most haunting.'

The atmosphere of the Sligo in which the poet grew up is best described by Sean O'Faolain in 'an Irish Journey':

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Where was . . .

Gluinaragh or St. Attracta's Knees

by Martin Timoney

In Vol. 18 (pp 10-11) of the J.C. McDonagh Manuscript, written about 1933 and now in Sligo County Library, there is mention, drawing and a photograph, of a site called 'Gluinaraght or St. Attracta's Knees' at which there appears to be a slab bearing a very simple cross and two bullaun depressions. Mr. McDonagh wrote as follows:

'It is known locally as the Saint's House, but it is really a low stone wall surrounding a flat rock which has two saucer-like impressions and a cross made by the intersection of two fissures. The indentations are believed to have been the imprint of St. Attracta's knees and are very regular in their make.'

This place appears to be still frequented by pilgrims, for I found coins and beads etc. in various parts of the enclosure but local residents appear to be very reticent about the stations, if any, performed.

Gluinaraght is the name applied to the little stone enclosure in the townland of Tawnawealon near Brishliev on the Curlew mountains. According to one old resident it lay quite close to one of the roads of primitive times which crossed the Curlews and ran through the western part of the range. . . '

As the manuscript is not clear on the actual location of the site other than that it is on the Curlew Mountains, probably in the townland of Tawnalion or Tawnailaalon,

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'Myths suffuse the air like spray. They fall on the simplest things and cover them like hoarfrost or the shimmering webs that mist the fields in Summer. The eye obscures itself. Objectivity is impossible where so many reliques excite the mind; dolmens, cairns, stone circles, forts, cromlechs, trilithons, all suggestive of events not merely great but superhuman. One look at that flat topped plateau of Knocknarea, one hint of its associations, one glimpse of the enormous cairn surmounting it (as large at close quarters as one of those man-dwarfing slag-heaps of the Black Country) is enough to subdue all disbelief; and since it is one of the first natural objects to catch the eye one approaches this region subject to it even before one has well entered it.

'There was, more than in any other place that I have been of its size, an extraordinary feeling of self-sufficiency. And when I began to consider this, and wonder why it was so, I could only think that this is because there is a variety of classes, and traditions - the best Protestant stock in all Ireland is in Sligo - and because of that surrounding dignity of history and fable which tempts one to liken this little port to some port-city on the Pireaus where the gods

smiled on every hearth or thundered in every storm and no man thought that there existed beyond the hills any world but his own.'

Where then more fitting to hold an annual School to his memory than in the place that inspired him.

It was not until 1959 that a group of four men and three women met in the Art Gallery of Sligo Library for the purpose of forming a Committee to found a permanent memorial to Sligo's greatest son. That was on the 21 May 1959. A Company, without a constitution was set up that night on a capital of thirty shillings, to make plans for the First International Yeats Summer School. All were strangers to the groves of Academie but one amongst them had already discussed such a project with Professor Thomas Rice Henn of St. Catherine's College, Cambridge, who was born in Albert House, Pearse Road, Sligo. To him must be credited the prestige and the major work in its success. Without his imprimatur who would have listened to and joined in that initial Celebration of The First Yeats International Summer School of 1960. It is his Irish Memorial.

Tom Henn is now dead as are all but one of the seven founders of The Yeats Society Sligo. That the memorial born that night of the 21 May 1959 continues to flourish is final proof of the place W.B. Yeats holds in English Literature and the magic spell the many place-names used by his hold for the students of his works. In 1965 the Centenary Year, he wrote of the School, 'but most important of all is the setting, the landscape, the atmosphere of Sligo.'

It has not changed greatly since Yeats' time. The two legended mountains Knocknarea and Ben Bulbin, still dominate the scene. There is hardly a place-name within a ten mile radius that does not appear in the poetry or the plays. No poet in history has such an incomparable background; Stratford and Kilmarnock, Weimer and Verona are Barren compared with this.

Today's controversy as to the burial place of the poet is irrelevant. Cast a cold eye, if you will, future generations will come and stand beside that simple limestone slab in Drumcliff graveyard and having stood, pass by.

'What they undertook to do
They brought to pass;
All things have like a drop of dew
Upon a blade of grass'.

BRICKLIEVE AND KEASH DISCOVERY

IN Sligo's Bricklieve mountains, where place names suggest the environment was once inhabited by sun worshippers, Leo Reagan, Yale graduate and arts education organiser with Sligo-Leitrim V.E.C., is convinced he has made a discovery of international importance, which demonstrates the work of highly intelligent man 3,500 years B.C.

In the great plateau in the Bricklieves there are the remains of 21 cairns, not all passage graves.

Leo noticed on the hillside of Keash a notch about 80 feet across and 40 feet deep. He wondered if there were an alignment connection between

from Sunday Independent (25/6'89)

it and some of the cairns and the behaviour of the sun.

Two years ago on an evening of the summer solstice he stood on top of one of the cairns and watched the sun dip down into Keash and slot perfectly into the notch, its rays aligned with seven cairns.

Cloud was the only feature which could black out the phenomenon.

During last week's solstice the sun dipped into the notch and sent a searing light 17 miles across the cairns. It had

to be observed through smoked glass.

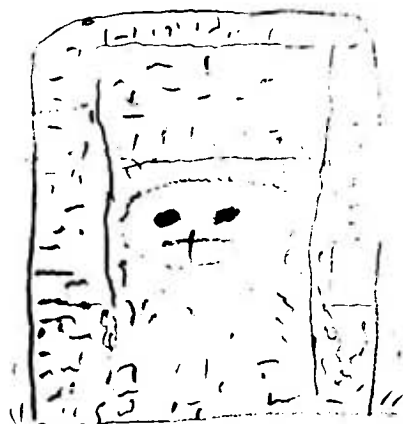
Leo Reagan, who wants to put his findings to specialists in this field, believe he has come across an 'externalised Newgrange' which makes the Pharaohs rate as historical upstarts. He believes Keash predates Newgrange by 400 years.

He sees this area and its phenomenon as unique, one of the prehistoric wonders of the Western world, an elaborate monument to man's knowledge of astronomy, and a guide to his religious beliefs and his concern with the dead.

He is convinced the area could be a major attraction for scholars and tourists. In Newgrange only a few are privileged to watch the manifestations of the solstice because of the confined space. On this mountain, he says, 1,000 could watch and contemplate the life riddles of man who was so concerned with the sun.

Glunaragh or St. Attracta's Knees

(Taunawealon does not exist as a townland name on the maps) its precise location has not been established despite intensive field-work in the approximate area; there appears to be no local recollection of the place. It is hard to accept that less than sixty years after McDonagh was writing, all memory or knowledge of the place could have gone.



**GLUINARAGHT
TAWNAWEALON**

McDonagh's photograph is very small so we really need to find the stone and the place that he is talking about. If the stone is as McDonagh describes it, then it can be compared with a stone in front of the ancient altar at Toomour near Keash which has three bullaun depressionss and three crosses cut in it. Bullaun stones are thought to have been used for crushing metal ore in advance of smelting on early Monastic sites. The cross as drawn by McDonagh is simple and can be compared with crosses at Toumour and Carrowntemple, both in Co. Sligo, and many others throughout the country. As such it would date to the sixth to ninth centuries.

The discovery of the stone would establish the whereabouts of yet another early Christian Monastic enclosure, another part of our heritage. Anyone aware of its whereabouts should contact Martin A. Timoney, Bothar An Corran, Keash.

THE IRELAND'S OWN CO. SLIGO FEATURE (March 1989)

by Neal Farry

The recent Ireland's Own St. Patrick's Day 1989 Annual contained an unheralded but, nevertheless, welcome surprise for Co. Sligo people in the form of a twenty-seven page special Co. Sligo feature. Unfortunately, the cover page of that particular issue gave no indication of the wealth of text, photographic and advertising material contained inside and this commendable compilation of Co. Sligo fact, stories and profiles seems to have missed the notice of a great number of people who would certainly have purchased extra copies had they been forewarned of its publication.

The Editor of Ireland's Own has gratefully acknowledged the assistance given by Messrs. Sean McTernan and Martin Timoney in gathering and recording the material, and through their efforts, anybody who was anybody and anything that was anything in Sligo's varied history have found well-merited recognition. Indeed, much of the submitted material has had to be held over because of lack of space, but it will be used later to enrich the pages of future issues of Ireland's Own.

Among the items included are an unusual P. J. McCall ballad 'Welcome to Sligo,' Co. Sligo Golf Club, the Castles and Abbeys of Sligo, the Port of Sligo, match-making and wakes in Kilmactigue in the early years of the 19th century, Markree Observatory, a survey of Co. Sligo agriculture in 1800, the origin-legend of Sligo Town, brief notes on places throughout the county worthy of a visit, The Hawk's Well Theatre, the holy wells near Sligo City and the beauty of Sligo in an article entitled 'Land of Heart's Desire.' Profiles on the following people are also included: the O'Conors, Lords of Sligo, Kane O'Hara, Charles O'Connor of Belangare, Eva Gore-Booth, John Jinks, T.D., Ambrose O'Higgins, Viceroy of Peru, Pertie Anderson, friend of W.B. Yeats, Countess Markievicz, The Yeats Family, Cecil Ewing, Michael Corcoran, William Bourke Cockran, Hugh Hyacinth McDermott, Terence McDonagh

'The Great Counsellor,' Fergal O'Gara, Charles Phillips, Francis Taaffe, 4th Baron of Ballymote and Viscount of Corran, Bryan Cooper, T.D., Tadhg Dall ÓhUiginn, Dubhaltach MacFírbisigh, Thomas and William Connellan, composers of harp music, Sir George Gabriel Stokes, Mathematician, Charles Anderson Read, Publisher, Owen Connellan, Gaelic scholar, the fiddler Michael Coleman and Mary Colum, wife of Pádraig Colum and associate of James Joyce and P.H. Pearse.

Sligo's remarkable achievements in the fields of Gaelic history and literature are dealt with in a number of articles featuring 'The Annals of the Four Masters' which were patronised by Fergal O'Gara, Lord of Moygara, 'The Great Book of Lecan,' 'The Yellow Book of Lecan,' 'The Book of Genealogies,' 'The Book of Ballymote,' 'The Book of O'Hara' and 'The O'Gara Manuscript.'

The Drumcliffe High Cross and the Moylough Belt are also described.

The range of material covered in, indeed, breathtaking and is a must for anybody who wishes to be introduced to Sligo's past, presented in a form capable of perusal in a period of time less than that required to travel by train from Sligo to Longford.

The information contained in the feature in relation to 'The Book of Ballymote' and 'The Battle of Keshcorran' (971 A.D.) has provoked me to make a number of observations as, no doubt, similar observations are being made by people in other parts of the county on the information in the feature relevant to their own areas.

In the case of 'The Book of Ballymote,' the Ireland's Own accounts appear to be self-contradictory. In one article we are informed that the manuscript acquired its name from Ballymote where it was compiled about 1391 A.D. In this case we are told that the compilers were Solomon O'Droma and Magnus O'Duignan of Shancoe, both of whom laboured under the patronage of

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THE IRELAND'S OWN

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Tomaltach MacDonagh, Lord of Corran. In the 'Around the County' article it is stated that the Book of Ballymote was compiled within the walls of Ballymote Castle about 1391. The contradiction appears in another article entitled 'Ancient Treasures of Sligo,' where we are told that the Book of Ballymote was compiled in the small Franciscan Friary or Abbey, north of the town of Ballymote in 1390 A.D. by Manus Duignan and two others for Tomaltach Og MacDonagh, Lord of Corran an Tir Oilliolla.

In his 'History of Sligo' Vol 11, Archdeacon O'Rorke definitely comes down on the side of Ballymote Castle being the location of the compilation of the manuscript. He quotes an entry at folio 62 to prove that it was written in the castle. This entry was written by one of the scribes, Turlogh Og, son of Hugh O'Connor, King of Connaught who states that he was writing that part of the book in the house of Tomaltach MacDonagh, Lord of Corran. Ballymote historian, J.C. McDonagh tells us that the Franciscan Abbey of Ballymote was founded in 1442 A.D. by three brothers of the O'Coleman family under a mandate from Pope Eugenius IV. Therefore, it is impossible that it could have been used as a scriptorium in 1391 A.D.

If we accept that Tomaltach Mac Donagh, did in fact, use Ballymote Castle as his home, we have no choice but to accept that the Book of Ballymote was compiled within the walls of the Castle. It should be noted that the report of the Board of Works Archaeologists, who excavated Ballymote Castle in 1981 suggests that there was little evidence of prolonged domestic habitation in the Castle. In the light of this opinion perhaps we should consider the possibility that Tomaltach MacDonagh used the castle only as a fortress and had his home elsewhere in the locality. If this was the case then the manuscript could have been compiled in some of the minor MacDonagh castles, or in a more humble habitation.

We must also take into consideration the tradition that exists in the Geevagh area that part of the book may have been compiled at the home of the compiled at the home of Manus O'Duignan, one of the scribes and 'Ollamh' to the MacDonaghs, at Shancoe in that area. J.C. McDonagh says that the work was done by Solomon O'Droma, of Fermanagh, Robert MacSheehy and Manus O'Duignan, who worked under the guidance of Donald MacEgan, whom O'Duignan refers to as 'my tutor.' J.C. McDonagh believes that the book was compiled from a mass of loose manuscripts in the possession of MacEgan. It could be possible that collection and editing of the work could have been carried out in Shancoe.

Archdeacon O'Rorke is in agreement with the 18th century antiquarian, Charles O'Connor, who identifies Ballymote Castle as the location for the manuscripts compilation.

The entry dealing with the Battle of Keshcorran (971 A.D.) in the Ireland's Own feature also contains an item of information that is puzzling. This refers to the exact identity of the combatants in that encounter. In the feature we are told that the battle was fought between the Norsemen and the Connaught Clans and that the Irish were defeated in the struggle after which they buried their dead in the nearby church of Toomour.

J.C. McDonagh was of the opinion that the Vikings never entered the region of Corran and obviously quoting from O'Rorke, he tells us that the battle was fought between the warriors of Connaught, under their King Cathal, and the northern forces of Aileach (Elagh) in Ulster who were led by their chief, Murragh Glunillar (Eagle-Knee) Ua Flaithbheartaigh. King Cathal and several of his chiefs died in the battle. A number of Ulster chiefs also died and all these chiefs, both northern and southern, were interred in Cill Easpaigh Luidhigh in Toomour. Woodmartin tells us that 'Glunillar' of Arleach then plundered the entire province of Connacht without opposition.

DEPARTURE
FROM LIFE

*My God, my time is coming,
I surely know it well,*

*My only joy upon this earth
Is that my soul may with you dwell.
I own I have no love for earth,
For me it was filled with care
My troubles they were many
And my cross was always there.*

2

*Yet God gave me strength and
courage,*

*To guide me o'er life's path,
I know I oft-times offended him
But to me He showed no wrath.
His voice was always coursing,
I felt it in my heart,
And now I feel it often
When from life I'm going to part.*

3

*Oh, Jesus dear, will you be near
When I am called for home?
And leave me not to sigh with fear.
Oh, leave me not alone.
Your presence here will comfort me
When my last agony I must bear,
My recompense, it will be great
If your happiness I may share.*

4

*Yes, my loving Jesus,
You are my one and all,
And when I leave this dreary life
I hope my name you'll call,
And place it in your roll-book
That stands by your heavenly throne
Perfumed by those holy saints
Whom you also call your own.*

5

*So love me, dearest Jesus,
It's for your love I crave,
For hope in all my dreariness
That you my soul may save.
Pardon all my weaknesses
When before you I must stand
And leave to me a little place
Within your Holy Land.*

*Mary A. Flatley,
Late of Battlefield*

A LAND OF MEGALITHIC TOMBS, Part 1

Martin A. Timoney

County Sligo is internationally known because of W.B. Yeats. His headstone at Drumcliffe is visited by thousands yearly. But Sligo is littered with burial places far more ancient and far more impressive, and for which Sligo is also well known the world over. Most obvious is Misgaun Maeve, the most impressive cairn in Ireland, on Knocknarea. It is only one of many burial places dating to the period of our first farmers, the Neolithic period 4600 to 2000 B.C. Radiocarbon dates are converted to real years. At this period megalithic tombs, i.e., tombs built of large rocks, were the burial places of the dead. The current estimate for the total number of megalithic tombs in Sligo is about 250. This includes portal tombs such as at Tawnatruffaun or at Carrickglass, which has a 70 ton capstone, court tombs such as at Creevykeel, and wedge tombs such as at Gortakeeran, as well as the passage tombs of all types.

In a passage tomb a rectangular or cruciform chamber is approached by a passage and these are enclosed within a circular cairn or mound. The chamber usually has a vaulted roof built by corbelling which shows great architectural skill. Radiocarbon dates from passage tombs at Newgrange and Knowth in the Boyne Valley are around 3000 B.C. At Carrowkeel in the Bricklieve Mountains is a cemetery of fourteen cairns, some covering cruciform passage tombs. Some have fine corbelled roofs like Newgrange and Knowth. Part of one was excavated recently as also one at Glen in the Ox Mts. near Ballisodare. Cairns such as those at Keash, Knocknashee, Heapstown and Cairns Hill probably contain passage tombs.

Carrowmore, two miles west of Sligo town, has at least 45 tombs and may have had many more. Carrowmore passage tombs are totally different in appearance. A complete Carrowmore type passage tomb consists of a circular area bounded by a kerb of boulders and a central burial chamber approached by a passage. Proof of a passage reaching from the kerb to the burial chamber has not been established.



Passage tomb, Carrowmore No. 7 with Knocknarea, topped by Misgaun Maeve, in the background. *Photo. M.A. Timoney.*

Carrowmore tombs never had a covering cairn; some had carpets of stone three or four layers deep around the burial chamber.

Carrowmore is the largest megalithic cemetery in Ireland and one of the largest in Western Europe. It spreads into the townlands of Carrowmore, Graigue, Cloverhill, Tobernavene, Oakfield and Barnasrahy. Two years ago The Office of Public Works purchased 25 acres, including at least eight tombs, for the Irish Nation at Carrowmore. Hopefully this is the beginnings of a National Park based on genuine ancient monuments.

Other examples of Carrowmore type passage tombs are to be seen close to St. Anne's R.C. Church in Abbeyquarter in Sligo, north of Inisherone and at Carrowreagh southeast of Ballina.

There has been much debate as to the origins and sequence of passage tombs. Up until the mid-seventies it was generally believed that, having begun somewhere in the Mediterranean area, they spread through Spain and Britany, up the Irish Sea to come into Ireland, established magnificent cemeteries in the Boyne Valley and at Loughcrew in Meath and on Carrowkeel and at Carrowmore, Co. Sligo.

Carrowmore tombs were seen as being the end of the line at about 2000 B.C.

Carrowmore tombs are different. They are simple, lack covering cairns like those of the other cemeteries and are built of split boulders unlike the stone slabs used elsewhere. There is no particular reason why these people had to use the split boulders of Carrowmore. A short move onto the limestone heights of Knocknarea would have provided ready access to slab limestone on an exposed siting which would be the normal for passage tombs.

Many of the tombs at Carrowmore were partially excavated twice during the last century. Recently there has been a major campaign of excavation and study of these tombs and the area where they stand by Swedish archaeologists, Dr. Goran Burenhult (1977-1982) and Mr. Stefan Bergh (1978-1989). Dr. Burenhult got very early radiocarbon dates for the Carrowmore tombs. These extend from 4580 to 3710 B.C. in real years. These dates which are not universally accepted would mean that Carrowmore tombs were being built at least somewhat earlier than the generality of passage tombs if not at the beginning!

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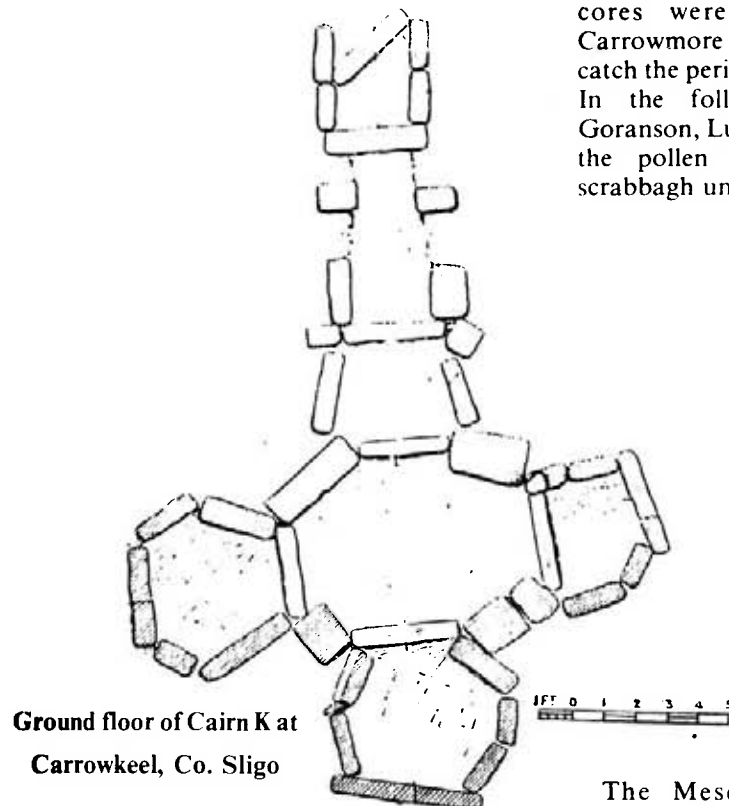
A LAND OF MEGALITHIC TOMBS

CARROWMORE No. 4 is on the Sligo side of the Carrowmore Riding School. Excavation revealed several layers of stones and circles of small boulders around the chamber. There is a short passage which does not reach to the surrounding kerb. During the backfilling of the site in 1979 I left the level of the ground around the chamber and passage a little lower so that they could be better seen. The radiocarbon date from the tomb, 4580 B.C. in real years, if applicable to the construction of the tomb, would make this not only one of the earliest megalithic tombs in Ireland but also one of the earliest in all of Western Europe. This 4580 B.C. date is so early that it would imply a Mesolithic migratory hunter fisher gatherer culture for the people who built the tomb rather than a Neolithic settled pastoralist tillage farming one. The excavator has not convinced archaeologists that the charcoal sample for the date belongs to the time of building the tomb. Pre-tomb activity and a natural forest fire have been given as alternatives. This debate has given Sligo international publicity and more visitors!

Burenhult argues that because of the early dates, the lack of contemporary dwelling places, the lack of pottery and the presence of oyster shell deposits in the tombs he sees some of the people as being Mesolithic rather than Neolithic in background. Mesolithic people had to be nomadic over a large area to collect their food but because of the riches of fish in the seas and lakes and the rich fruits of the forests, nuts, berries, wild fowl, game, eggs, etc., around Knocknarea these peoples were relatively settled and so the rock strewn gravel ridges of Carrowmore became their sacred burial place, long before the Pyramids, Troy or Knossos.

So far this article has concentrated on the 'houses of the dead'. During 1979 we searched for the dwelling places of the builders of Carrowmore. Finding dwelling places has always been difficult but the series of shell middens along the Cullenamore shore of Ballisodare Bay near Strandhill looked promising.

Excavations showed one to be the area of a football pitch and 3m. deep. People ate oysters here from before 3500 B.C. to the time of Christ. Only the finds of oyster shells in some of the Carrowmore tombs, three miles to the east, tenuously linked the two.



Ground floor of Cairn K at
Carrowkeel, Co. Sligo

On Carrowkeel overlooking Lough Arrow there are more than 80 low stone circular enclosures. These may be the dwelling places of the cairn builders. There are several earthen hutsites on Knocknashee. Likewise on Knocknarea are several small circular or oval enclosures. In recent excavations the foundations of huts about 5m. across, whose roofs of thatch or turf had been supported on wooden poles, as well as flint and chert scrapers and arrowheads, a polished stone axe and some pieces of pottery were found. These sites were in use about 3300 B.C. This would be later than the general period of use of Carrowmore. So far we have not found the dwelling places of the builders of the Carrowmore tombs.

Modern science, this time in the form of analysis of the vegetation pollen, held the prospect of settling the debate as to the cultural background of the people who built Carrowmore. Clearance of forest for tillage and the presence of grain pollen could answer many questions. Pollen cores were taken close to Carrowmore but these did not catch the periods of time required. In the following article Dr. Goranson, Lund, Sweden, Tells of the pollen core from Trean-scrabbagh under Carrowkeel.

The Mesolithic Neolithic argument has not yet been settled, and perhaps never will. We do not know if we are dealing with movement of people or of the idea of megalithic tombs. The movement could hardly have been continuously in one direction for hundreds of years. However, along the road much knowledge of Ireland's past has been unearthed, literally, and the county has benefited tremendously from the tourist and occasional employment point of view.

Last year's logo for the 'Sligo is Surprising' campaign seems to be based on Poul nabrone portal tomb in Co. Clare. Either Tawnatruffaun or Carrickglass portal tomb is sufficiently dramatic to serve as a logo for this land of megalithic tombs. Several of the Carrowmore tombs can now be used with pride as a logo for Sligo, because as I write, The Supreme Court has ruled that Sligo County Council can not establish a rubbish dump at Carrowmore.

During his lifetime he became famous for his amazing sense of humour and mastery of the witty phrase. I suppose he could be described as one of the greatest wits who ever dwelled in these parts. Whenever people from about the place met for a fireside discussion, it would be a dull gathering that sometime or other didn't have a quotation from the vast repertoire of witty sayings that belonged to the late **Patrick Gaffney** of Bearvaish, Rathmullen, Ballymote. I've been told that even abroad in foreign lands, when people from this part of the country come together, it wasn't unusual to hear the name of Patrick Gaffney mentioned when a conversation reached the point of humour.

In his youth Patrick was a strong well-built fellow who was destined to embark onto a life of adventure. Sometime before the outbreak of World War I he joined the British Army, and later ended up on the battle-stricken plains of Belgium. In later life he was to describe something about what life was like in the trenches at Flanders. He used to say that not alone had they to do combat with the German forces, but they had to reckon with the forces of vermin, lice, and insects as well. He would talk about the cast-iron discipline obtaining in the ranks at the time, and how a surly look at a staff-sergeant might earn you a spell in the detention quarter.

An incident which involved the commanding officer in his regiment was to take him away from the zones of combat, and was probably responsible for saving his life. He described how the colonel's horse was such a high spirited steed that none of the smiths attached to the regiment were capable of shoeing him. Gaffney who had been brought up with the trade volunteered to have a go, with the result that he shod the animal without difficulty. This action gained for him a farrier's certificate, and he was taken right away to the forge where he became employed shoeing horses for the cavalry.

His sojourn here was to earn for him a title that was to remain with him for the rest of his life. It would seem that the stables where the military kept their horses were

located some distance from the forge where he worked. An Indian stable boy who sometimes took the horses to be shod had acquired a custom of addressing all military people as Lascars. This it later transpired was an old Indian title for a soldier or a sailor. When in later life Gaffney had settled down at home and begun to relate his experiences to his neighbours, he told them the story of the Indian lad and his strange name for a soldier. They, of course had found the title most amusing, with the result that some of them took to addressing him as Lascar Gaffney.

He took over the family farm at Bearvaish and also carried on working as a smith. During the middle decades of the century, he became a familiar figure at fairs and markets in Ballymote town, and enjoyed nothing better than a good banter with the traders and dealers who frequented those gatherings. Those type of people were usually exceptionally glib on the tongue and the exchanges that took place between themselves and Gaffney were often amusing in the extreme.

He always got a gratifying kick out of pitting his wits against those cheeky young officials of the establishment who thought they knew it all. A local man used to tell the story of a fair day when he fobbed off a young Garda who was looking out for sheep dipping certificates, by offering him a dog licence instead of the required certificate. When a difference arose between a neighbour and himself over the division of a boundary fence, the district appraiser was called in to mediate in the dispute. The officer, who incidentally had a reputation for reconciling warring factions, had brought both men together, showed them their respective portion of fence and advised them to have these repaired, saying that 'good fences meant good neighbours'. 'I understand that' replied Gaffney, 'but I'll tell you something mister, I'd sooner be fighting than fencing anyway'. Of course he didn't mean a word of what he said, he just wanted to dent the ego of the great peacemaker somewhat, and maybe take a little bit of the conceit out of him.

Way back in those days when the clergy were exceedingly strict about people working on Sunday, he met up with a priest while drawing water to his cattle on a Sunday evening. The priest proceeded to lecture him about the consequences of breaking the third commandment, and concluded by saying, 'Sunday and Monday seems to be all the same with you'. Quick as wink he retorted, 'Well Father, you must understand that our cattle drink water on Sunday as well as Monday'. The dumbfounded priest didn't utter another word, but slammed shut the door of his car and drove on.

During the fifties he would journey into town travelling by donkey and cart. When some of his cronies remarked how terribly fast transport was becoming, he summed up the situation with this little rhyme:

*The rich man goes by motor car
The poor man goes by train
Gaffney goes on his ass and cart,
and he gets there the same.*

In the declining years of his life, the old man would stroll down the road to his son's forge, almost daily. He still harboured a desire for catching up on the things that were taking place around him, and longed for a discussion with what was then, by and large, a rising generation of younger people. The level and standard of education was also rising, and he gloated at the prospect of confronting those students of the new order. A young fellow who had spent some time in college casually met up with him, one day. This chap was already well aware of Gaffney's prowess in the field of verbal exchange. Among the subjects they discussed were the advantages of a proper education. Gaffney lamented the fact that he left primary school at the age of thirteen years. Your man intervened to say that had he (Gaffney) received a proper education it's above in Dail Eireann he would be. 'Not at all', replied Gaffney, 'it's below in the lunatic asylum I'd be, it's too much I'd know.

THREE HOUSES

Tom McGettrick

The recent reading of three books, *Life by the Liffey* by John O'Donovan, an interesting ramble through life and times in Dublin down the centuries, *Pillars of the House*, an anthology of verse by Irish Poetesses compiled by J.J. Kelly, and *Souperism: Myth or Reality?* written by Desmond Bowen, a study of Catholics and Protestants during the Great Famine, caused me to write the article to which I give the above title. It wasn't the coincidence of my own book selection that brought these publications my way, because in the case of two of the books it was another reader that made me aware that Ballymote and Sligo were mentioned in high places.

In the first book one chapter tells of the Foundling Hospital which concentrated within its walls between the years 1703 and 1832 a large portion of the misery of the neglected and often abandoned children of the poor of Dublin (and they were legion) at that time. There is a footnote to this chapter which states:- Arbella (her own spelling) evidently had a good opinion of herself. When she visited Ballymote, Co. Sligo where her family the Fitzmaurices woned property she caused an obelisk to be erected in her honour on a nearby hill.

The obelisk or round tower on Carrownanty Hill is no longer there. It was an eye-catching landmark. Arbella (Fitzmaurice) Denny spent a long period of widowhood in charge of the Foundling Hospital and her dedicated efforts to improve conditions there were successful, but when she died in 1792 'the old state of affairs returned' as O'Donovan says. The Fitzmaurice connection with Ballymote is already well told of in Arthur Young's *Tour of Ireland* 1776 and elsewhere. It has left marks, some faded, some still well etched in the locality. The Honourable Thomas Fitzmaurice set out in 1774 to make Ballymote the most important centre of the linen industry in the country. He had a large mill (Mill St.) erected, the finest of its kind in Ireland. He had an earthen dam constructed down stream from Ballinascarrow Lake to contain water to power the mill. The dam is still there.

OLD NEIGHBOUR

*By his cottage door on many a day
I see him doodling the time away,
chatting to neighbours on this or
that
or stroking a dog with a friendly pat
As slowly he moves on his daily
round,
sometimes pausing to look around
when pruning a tree with expert
care
or digging in his garden acre.
Regarded as a local historian
who forecasts the weather vagaries
too,
his observatory, the fields and
hedgerows,
the nesting birds, the first cuckoo.
A guide to local field and folk-lore,
the double ditch, the gallows tree,
caretaker of the famine grave-yard,
the disused mass-path, the alter
stone.
In his worn-out tweed and mended
boots
his appearance is rugged and
uncouth,
passing unheeded by societies vain
who fail to see an ageing wisdom,
The prudent eye, the assuring smile,
the philosophy of his seventy years
as patiently he listens to the daily
cares,
the grief and happiness of the
community.*

David McEllin
Jan. '89

High up in the townland of Carrowcawley he built his own mansion 'in the style of a castle' according to Young. This was Earlsfield House - the townland became Earlsfield - a basement house, the first of three such houses which had in their tenants and their associations some part in the making of what is today the history of the locality. There was a story that stones from the ruins of the Franciscan Abbey were being appropriated to build the Fitzmaurice home. This plundering of holy ground brought about a prophetic utterance. When the Abbey and the Castle also were being similarly plundered on other occasions nobody seems to have minded. Earlsfield House early in this century became the Convent of Mercy Nuns.

Cont page 12

MOTHER & DAUGHTERS

*I see new faces on the tree lined hill
always in September when leaves
fall
faces I knew well so long ago
when I walked there with books
attending school,
the same sly smiles and glances of
their eyes
covertly pass between the girls and
boys,
innuendo that their mothers bore
in spring, when these same trees
were young in leaf
and we were saplings to their
roguish guiles.*

Achonry Homes

*The land lay stretched before me
like a lost wilderness;
uncontained lake and flooded river
- the habitat of wintering goose and
swan;
a saturated scene of bog and
marshland,
plateau, promontory and rocky
fields
accommodating abandoned dwellings
- (fungi on a ruined land);
the occupants scattered now
like seeds to the wind
- behind them a blighted past.
Yet inside these pathetic homes
there are clues to identities,
of a former proud community;
austere and moustached men
and ardent women
- the roots of continents,
posing for posterity in faded albums
there a fallen scapular; a prayer to
St. Anthony;
a worm-infested table and chairs;
an old dresser, a piece of broken
delph
that once glittered on its polished
shelf;
a discarded suitcase of frayed
leather
spilling clothes like guts on the
floor,
an old coat hanging on the back of a
door;
the empty hearth - a gaping wound
with black blood seeping from its
chimney breast
where kettles no longer sing
and voices that once echoed
within these crumbling walls
- now reverberate off skyscrapers.*

David McEllin
Nov. '87

MASTER OF WIT

Around this time he struck up a rather unusual relationship with a retired landowner who had farmed extensively in south Sligo during the early years of the century. The ex Lord of the Manor had resided for a time at Gaffney's. The late Michael Murray who lived next door to the Gaffneys said that he often sat by in wide eyed wonderment, listening to this pair of venerable gentlemen reminiscing over, what once had been two vastly different sets of life-styles. The same Michael Murray used to reckon that if the tales and adventures of the Gaffney family were properly documented they would make up not just a book but a very large encyclopaedia.

No charge whatsoever is envisaged to patients requiring any of the Hospice services -Home Care, Residential Care, Day Care or bereavement counselling. The services will be available to the terminally ill, regardless of the country was concerned. Discussions then varied a good deal from to-day's debates, which very often seem to be dominated by the constant use of four letter words. Gaffney was never known to indulge in the use of four letter words nor was he likely to turn vulgar or sarcastic. He would swiftly sum up his opponent, detecting the chinks in his armour, then with a few well chosen words he would swipe him down. It was woe betide the erring young greenhorn who would mistake him for a simple old man. He would most certainly have something very different coming his way.

Patrick Gaffney, humourist and raconteur, and maker of the witty phrase, was born and reared in a little thatched house situated to the rear of what now is Rathmullen Post Office. The premises where the P.O. is located was then used as a Coach-house. As a boy he attended the old Rathmullen School which was situated nearby. Although he used to say that his favourite subject was English Grammar he also reckoned that his teacher Mr. McGowan taught such things as Algebra and Geometry, and had a habit of lashing his lessons home with the use of a stick.

His father, who originally came from Arigna worked here for a period, shoeing the coachman's horses, and acting as a sort of Coachman's attendant, as well as a part-time jarvey. All this was happening at the time when the country's chief transport system consisted mainly of horse-drawn coaches, and when a swift pair of horses and a sturdy pair of candles would take you from the Mail Coach Road to Rathmullen, at night-time, before the candles flickered out.

In later years, the Gaffney family acquired a holding of land

at Bearveash from the Congested Districts Board, and Patrick who married Annie Feehily reared a family of ten children. His death in 1960 at the age of 83 years removed from this part of the country one of the most interesting people to occupy the scene here, during the course of this century, a man whose exceptional talents had made him a legend in his lifetime.

To-day, almost thirty years after his passing the stories and accounts of his incredible wit continue to be told and re-told at firesides up and down the countryside.

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GLOR NA GAEL BALLYMOTE

by Neal Farry

A branch of Glór na nGael for the Ballymote area was set up at a public meeting in the Castle Hotel, Ballymote on Monday November 14th, 1988. The newly formed coiste decided to enter the 1989 National Glór na nGael Competition. The aim of this competition is to find the community that has done most to promote the Irish language at local level. The following work plan was drawn up to be implemented during the year:

- (1) Bilingual Table Quiz.
- (2) Bilingual 25 Drive.
- (3) Irish language St. Patrick's Day Card based on Ballymote.
- (4) Irish language church services for St. Patrick's Day.
- (5) Céilí Gaelach.
- (6) Oíche Airneáin (Rambling night, through the medium of Irish).
- (7) Irish week in the community.
- (8) Ceol ar an tsráid.
- (9) Country walk and picnic.
- (10) Oíche Gaelach (poetry and music).
- (11) Irish language classes for adults.
- (12) Irish Essay Competition.
- (13) Irish Drama.
- (14) Irish language Christmas Cards.

The Bilingual Table Quiz was successfully compered by Sean O hUiginn, O.S. Coill Fhada, who prepared and asked sixty questions in Irish and English to 112 competitors. The bilingual 25 drive attracted thirty-six competitors and plenty of Irish was spoken during the progressive session. Fr. O'Mahony continued the tradition in the parish of including Irish prayers and Irish music in the St. Patrick's Day 11.30 Mass. Members of the coiste organised a collection on behalf of Connradh na Gaeilge on St. Patrick's Day.

The St. Patrick's Day Irish Cards project was very successful. Designs were entered by students in all the parish schools and seven entries were chosen for publication. The winning artists were:- Sharon Haynes, Corran College; Elizabeth Costelloe, Corran College; Gabrielle O'Connor, Convent N.S.;

Geraldine O'Connor, Coláiste Mhuire; Jerome Kerins, Boys' N.S.; Martina Aldridge, Knockminna N.S.; Rachel Fahey, Coláiste Mhuire. 760 of the cards were printed and distributed through the following outlets: Perry's, Cassidy's, Hurley's, Rogers', McDonagh's and Casey's. 200 of the cards were purchased by Ballymote Bank of Ireland Branch and were sent to the Branch's overseas customers.

Glór na nGael was inaugurated in 1961 under the auspices of Cumann na Sagart, the Society of Irish-speaking Priests. Glór na nGael has as its patrons, an tUachtarán Pádraig O hRíghle, and Cardinal Tomás O Fiaich. The Stiúrthóir is an tAthaíir Pádraig O Fiannachta, Colaiste Phádraig, Maynooth.

The objective of Glór na nGael is to have a voice of the Irish language heard throughout Ireland so that we may preserve, strengthen and enrich our sense of community and nationality.

The officers and members of Coiste Bhaile an Mhóta are as follows: Cathaoirleach, Niall O Fearraigh; Leas Chathaoirleach, Gearóid O Casaide; Rúnaí, Máire Ní Shitric; Cisteoirí, Máire Bean Uí Dhodaigh agus Caitlín Bean Uí Dhodaigh; Oifigeach Caidrimh Poiblí, Mícheál O Domhnalláin; Coiste: Pádraig O Bruachóig, Eamonn O Gearráin, Máire Bean Uí Chárthaigh, An Dr Stan O Cathasaigh, Mathilda Bean Uí Chathasaigh, Siorcha Bean Uí Chaoilte, Gráinne Bean Uí Fhearraigh, Máire Ní Chana, Deirdre Nic Eoin, Pádraigín Ní Fhiaich, Aine Ní Fhiaich, Seán O hUiginn.

Seosamh Uasal Mac Donn-acha, the western organiser of Glór na nGael, is professional adviser to the Coiste.

There are Glór na nGael committees in Sligo, Enniscrone and Ballymote. It is envisaged that committees will be organised in all areas of the country in the near future. In the interim, people from the parishes adjoining Ballymote, who are interested in the work of the organisation are welcome to join the Ballymote Coiste.

Excavations at Ballymote Castle

by Neal Farry

The purpose of the excavation was to ensure accuracy in restoring the castle to its former magnificence. The excavation was directed by Mr. P.D. Sweetman, an archaeologist attached to the Office of Public Works.

The excavation showed that the moat was a rather unimpressive feature of the Castle's defences. It was no more than three feet deep at maximum and was probably a river meander that was diverted to run around the castle to form a shallow moat. The moat was excavated at a position immediately outside the southern curtain wall. There was no evidence to suggest that there was a postern gate in this part of the castle.

The foundations of the thick stone walls representing the east and west gate towers were exposed to their present denuded height. A Queen Elizabeth I coin (dated 1590) was found below collapsed masonry in the interior of the east gate tower.

Further excavation took place in the angle towers which exposed wall footings, floor levels and lines of collapse. The following artifacts from medieval times were found during the excavation. (1) A piece of 14th century pottery which was glazed local ware was found in a blocking wall in the south-west tower. (2) A piece of medieval cooking ware was found in the north-west tower. The archaeologists were surprised that so little domestic ware was found in the castle. Although the fortification was used for a great deal of military occupation there was little evidence of settled domestic occupation for long periods.

POLLEN ANALYTICAL INVESTIGATIONS IN TREANSCRABBAGH, CARROWKEEL

11

by Hans Göransson

It is possible to distinguish between different plant and fern genera - and even species - by studying their pollen grains and spores in the microscope. Pollen and spores are preserved in lake mud and peat. Thick layers of such deposits have been built up since the end of the last glaciation about 14,000 years ago. By studying samples from cores of mud, taken in lades or bogs, the past vegetation can be reconstructed. The different genera and species identified and counted during this 'pollen analytical work' are arranged in columns in pollen diagrams.

In the beginning of August 1981, I was invited by Dr. Goran Burenhult to the archaeological excavations at Carrowmore, Co. Sligo, in order to perform samplings in lakes and bogs. On a sunny day my friend, Martin A. Timoney, brought me and my Swedish fellow-worker, Magnus Thelaus, to the bog at Treanscrabbagh in the Bricklieve Mountains. This bog is situated directly to the north of the famous Carrowkeel cemetery with its numerous megalithic tombs. In 1951 Professor Frank Mitchell, of Trinity College, Dublin published a diagram from Treanscrabbagh. That diagram covers the time from the end of the last glaciation up to relatively recent time. Six species, all trees, are represented in the 1951 diagram.

New cores were taken in the Treanscrabbagh bog during our 1981 stay. The cores were analysed by me in Lund, Sweden, and also C14-dated there. The megalithic graves in Carrowkeel were built between c. 3800 B.C. and c. 3300 B.C. ('calibrated C14-dates') that is during Neolithic Time (when man was a farmer). Charcoal below one of the graves in Carrowmore was dated to c. 4700 B.C., a date of Mesolithic age (when man still was a 'hunter-gatherer'). For that reason the pollen analysis of the Treanscrabbagh cores was concentrated on Neolithic Time but also on the last part of the Mesolithic.

In this new diagram 42 different genera and species have been identified. Microscopic charcoal particles have also been counted.

INTERPRETATION

Between c. 5000 B.C. and c. 4000 B.C. the forests in Bricklieve Mountains were extremely rich and dominated by hazel, elm and oak. Bushes like honeysuckle and holly thrived in the glades. During this time a base-rich soil covered the limestone mountains. The pollen diagram discloses, however, that fires were common during the last part of the Mesolithic. Very likely the hunter-gatherer cleared areas of the forest by ring-barking high trees and by controlled burning of the forest ground (bush-burning). In this way grasses and thus, for instance, red deer, were favoured. The increased supply of light favoured hazel and this a rich production of hazel nuts. After these Mesolithic clearings aspen thrived as did bracken and herbs, as did cranesbills, vetches and species of the pink family and the bed-straw family. Heather began to increase.

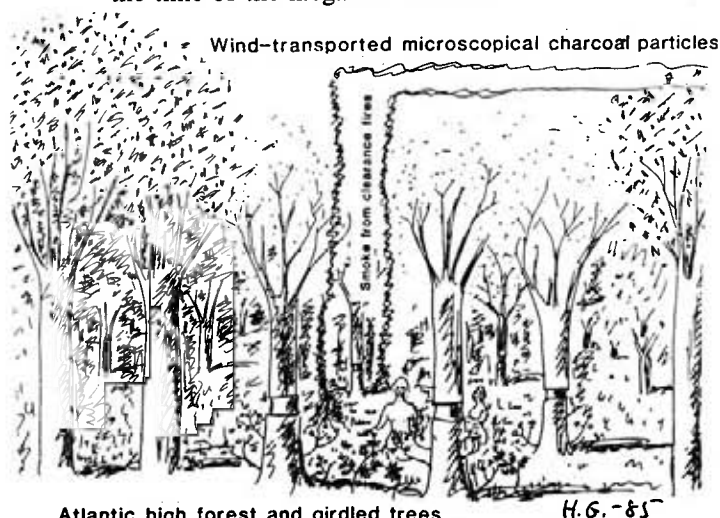
C. 4000 B.C. elm declined, very likely because of factors lying beyond man's control. In recent years we have seen how rapidly elm disease has spread across North Europe from Ireland in the west to southern Sweden in the north east. As this 'elm

decline level' both grasses and ribwort plantain increase enormously in the Carrowkeel area. We can be sure that cows, sheep and probably goats also were by then introduced into western Ireland. Probably the grazing took place at the coast on marsh-land and/or on the fens at lake and river sides during summer time. During the winter the live-stock was driven and herded to the limestone mountains where a good winter pasture was found as happens in the Burren today.

Cultivation of barley and emmer wheat may have started very early in Carrowkeel. These Stone Age cereals, however, spread very few pollen grains to the surroundings. The first very typical wheat pollen grain is found at a level which is about 400 years after than the elm decline level. Future pollen analysis may show the presence of cultivation of cereals 500-600 years earlier. During the middle or later part of Neolithic Time rowan and oak increase distinctly. These trees are light-demanding and they expand when the shading elm diminishes.

In this way, during more than two thousand years the mountains were grazed, during the Mesolithic probably by red deer and from the elm decline level by introduced domestic animals. The megalithic graves were built during the time of maximum grazing in Bricklieve Mountains. Because of this long grazing time the broad-leaved trees were, in the long run, 'consumed'. The base-rich soils were leached; perhaps there was an increase in the precipitation at the end of the forest phase in Bricklieve Mountains. According to both old (Watts 1961) and new C14-datings it has been shown that blanket peat began to form on the former rich mountain ground from c. 2600 B.C. From then on the hills became covered with peat, which during c. 4500 years has grown thicker and thicker and which has partly buried the megalithic graves.

It is, indeed, strange to stand on the heights to the west of Lough Arrow and to look out over the peat covered land of Bricklieve Mountains. What a change since the Stone Age! Instead of a landscape with grazing cows and sheep on green grass amongst hazel scrub and with elm and oak woods, peat covers the whole area. Indeed, the scenery is quite different today than it was during the time of the megalith builders.



Atlantic high forest and girdled trees

Cont from page 9

Towards the middle of the book of poems, *Pillars of the House*, there was one, *The Yellow Moon - A Smuggler's Song*, written by Charlotte Gubbins, born 1825. A brief biographical note indicated that it was taken from her book of poems, *One Day's Journal*, published at the Independent Office, Sligo in 1862. I traced this slim volume to the Library of Trinity College and was very kindly supplied with photocopies of some of the pages.

Blakeny Gubbins was the occupier of all the land around the Castle (including the Castle) and across where the railway now is for some distance. This information is recorded in Griffith's Valuation of Tenements published about 1855. He was in Inspector of Revenue Police, obviously an occupation of considerable status. One of their duties was to seek out and bring poteen makers to justice. Charlotte Gubbins was his wife. The poem referred to above has bearing in a humorous way on her husband's occupation.

It was during Gubbins' occupation of these lands that Castle Lodge was built. It would be easy to assume that it was the barracks of the Revenue Police only that the building on the Gurteen road, which up to recent times was the Church of Ireland Primary School, is recorded as fulfilling that function at time. So one is safe in accepting that Castle Lodge was the private residence of the Gubbins family. It was a stone and mortar building, the stones coming from the towers flanking the entrance to the castle. When Castle Lodge was being partially demolished to accommodate the re-construction of the St. John of God Convent this was obvious. It is the second basement building. Two families associated in different ways with community activity lived at Castle Lodge at different times between the Gubbins era and the brief occupation by the Sisters of Mercy before they moved to Earlsfield House, Daly and Reynolds, the two families. There may be slight doubt about the Dalys, but there is no doubt that they owned part of the land there known then as Esker and the Castle Meadow. An

interesting little item of circumstantial evidence turned up when the demolition was being carried out. This was a mother-of-pearl handled knife with a small silver plaque let in to the side of it with the name A.M. Daly on it. It became the Parochial House when Canon E.M. Conyngton was Parish Priest.

A deed dated 4 October 1878 concerning the trusteeship of the Catholic Church is signed John G. Reynolds, Solicitor, Castle Lodge, Ballymote. John G. Reynolds was the father of Mr. Jimmy and Miss Lettie, still remembered. When he acquired the property of a landed individual named Gumley they moved to the house on Pearse Road, where we remember Mr. Jimmy and Miss Lettie living. Mr. Jimmy was prominent in music and drama. He was the accompanist in May 1897 when Percy French gave a concert in the town. Miss Lettie was closely identified with Sir Horace Plunkett in the co-operative movement. She performed the official opening of Ballymote Creamery on 26 July 1897, and was for a period organiser of home industries for the I.A.O.S.

The next basement house was built when the Rev. John Garrett was rector of Emlafad. The Garretts, Church of Ireland clergymen in Emlafad for more than a hundred years, are told in O'Rourke's History of Sligo, in McDonagh's History of Ballymote and the Parish of Emlafad and with a more searching look at their activities in Desmond Bowen's *Souperism, Myth or Reality*, published in 1970.

The Rev. John Garrett succeeded his father, Rev. William, as Rector of Emlafad in 1806. At that time the Church was on the high ground in the centre of what is now Emlafad graveyard. He died in 1855 so he would have experienced the ravages of the Great Famine around him. He was a man of boundless energy and those who wrote about him did not always agree about the purity of his intentions. Bowen gives him credit for dedication to the welfare of the poor of all creeds while the famine raged. In his appeal for aid to the Mansion House Committee he wrote,

obviously in response to some uncertain epistle from them, 'while you are thinking we are starving'. In a letter of 5 May 1847 he wrote of 600 starving labourers asking him to plead on their behalf.

The Rev. John Garrett had begun in 1818 the building of the church in the centre of the town with its slender, graceful spire, and at the same time the substantial rectory or glebe house which is on the opposite side of the Gurteen road from the creamery. Bowen states that during the Famine 'food was distributed at the Rectory from 6.00a.m. to 9.30p.m. each day', quite an undertaking. There seems to be no doubt that there was considerable activity around this house during the worst experiences of that sad time. It deserves mention too because of an extremely interesting register kept during the whole of the Garrett period and continuing into after years - births, deaths, and some marriages. It is a parish register but has frequently a wider scope than Emlafad. Parish records were not officially kept, as far as I know, until many decades after this one.

In writing about Earlsfield House I mentioned about stones being taken from the Abbey and I have always had the impression that the Abbey was a much bigger building than the ruin indicates. The Loftus Hall (as everyone knows) was the church from the middle of the 18th Century up to the time of the building of the Church of the Immaculate Conception and it was built with stones from the Abbey ruins. About 1862 Ballymote Dispensary Committee had the wall built around the graveyard with stones from the Abbey also. Hundreds of the graves of the poor may have been marked with stones from it. It is not likely they would have been brought in from else where. It was bigger.

I conclude with a few lines from Charlotte Gubbins - describing Ballymote!

..... a little town
In western Erin situate
In its least favoured portion, where
Wide tracts of bog, most desolate,
Present an aspect brown and bare;
Shut in by hills

CANON JAMES K. CASEY

by John C. McTiernan

James Kevin Casey, the 'poet-priest', as he was called, was born in Riverstown on September 26th, 1824. He was the son of James Casey, by his wife, Norah Gethins. On his mother's side he was closely related to Don Patricio Milmo, the nineteenth century Sligo-born Mexican millionaire (q.v.). His mother died in 1863 and his father fifteen years later. Both were buried in Tawnagh cemetery and over their grave a devoted son erected a fine memorial on which is inscribed the following epitaph:

Accept, fond parents, throned above
Life's stormy ocean wild;
This monument of filial love
From your devoted child.
You taught me young to worship God,
And every sin to dread;
Along the path the saints have trod
Your children young you led.
Faith, hope, love and gifts beyond
All else between the poles;
I owe them to your teaching fond,
May Heaven rest your souls.

From his earliest years James Casey gave evidence of a studious disposition, and after some schooling locally he attended a small classical college in Sligo. He entered Maynooth College in August, 1851, and soon gained distinction both for his scholastic ability and his poetic genius. As a student he translated the *Exile of Erin* into Irish verse, and, subsequently, collaborated with Ulick J. Bourke in producing the *College Irish Grammar*.

James Casey was ordained to the priesthood by Dr. Gillooly, Bishop of Elphin, in the old chapel in Sligo in 1857. His first missionary work took him to the parish of Ballygar, County Galway, where he found the people down-trodden and spiritless after the disastrous famine years. The tyrannical and arrogant actions of the local landlords made his task extremely difficult, but Father Casey used every legitimate means at his disposal to improve the material as well as the spiritual lot of his parishioners.

After spending three fruitful years in Ballygar, Father Casey was appointed to the post of Principal of St John's Seminary, Sligo. This was an appointment very much to his liking, and it provided him with numerous outlets for his diverse talents. He took a leading part in all the controversies of his day, and lectured indefatigably against secret societies whose activities in the neighbourhood he so fearlessly condemned. When the construction of Sligo Cathedral was about to commence, Dr Gillooly despatched Father Casey on a fund-raising campaign throughout the length and breadth of the diocese. His eloquence coupled with a strong and simple faith, helped to make his mission highly successful.

In 1873 Father Casey was assigned as pastor to the parish of Athleague, in County Roscommon, and for the first time in his life he found time to devote himself earnestly to poetry. Through this medium he strove for the moral improvement of the people of Ireland, especially in the matter of intemperance. He addressed himself in verse to his fellow countrymen, in some instances over the signature of 'J.K.C.' His first notable metrical composition, *Tyndall on Materialism; a philosophical poem*, was published in 1875. Appearing at a time when the public mind had been aroused by the 'eloquent and trenchant refutation' of Tyndall's materialistic doctrines by Bishop Conroy of Ardagh, it attracted a good deal of attention.

PRINCE RUDOLF & BARONESS MARY

(The Taaffe Connection)

Mary Matthews

On the morning of January 30th, 1889, the bodies of Crown Prince Rudolf of Austria and his mistress, Baroness Mary Vetsera, were discovered by the Prince's valet at the hunting lodge of Mayerling, near Vienna; the subsequent events have provided the basis for numerous books, films and documentaries. Still the mystery remains unsolved - was it a suicide pact, born of the unstable mind of Rudolf, or a vastly complex political plot?

The man who played the key role in the alleged cover-up which followed the discovery of the two bodies was Count Eduard von Taaffe, Prime Minister of Austria - and Baron of Ballymote, Co. Sligo.

The now ruined castle at Ballymote was once the family seat of the Taaffes, granted to Sir William Taaffe by Elizabeth the First 'for services rendered to the Crown', particularly during the siege of Kinsale. These lands of the Barony of Corran formed part of an extensive settlement and Sir William was also endowed with lands at Carlingford, Co. Louth, and in Tipperary.

The fact that the Taaffes were, and remained, Catholic made the generous settlement by the Crown all the more surprising. Their religious beliefs, however, eventually militated against them and they later fled to France, then to Austria. In time, Lord Nicholas Taaffe was conferred with the title of Count of the Holy Roman Empire and appointed Chancellor of Austria-Hungary.

Some of the earlier Taaffes were prolific letter-writers, as is evidenced in 'Memoirs of the Taaffe Family', most of which was compiled in the 1600s. Theobald Taaffe, Lord of Carlingford and Baron of Ballymote, was Envoy Extraordinary to the Austrian Emperor. It would appear that one of his duties was to accompany royal ladies, complete with their dowries, to foreign courts in search of suitable husbands.

In the course of one of these missions, Lord Carlingford wrote to Princess Elizabeth of Austria of a namesake of hers: 'The gout is a cursed persecutor of my quiet, having kept me in bed since my arrival here, but if fasting and praying that I may once more wait on Your Highness may banish it, I shall within two days demand aid from the Emperor and by the next post be able to let you know what my opinion is of this people and the court, where I am resolved to be Solicitor for Princess Elizabeth, from whom I had the honour of a letter, but if I can get her portion into my hands, if she gets not a husband, I'll give it to you, for in my heart I hate a religious, handsome princess, that is to say, a nun'.

Our Thirst for Drink, its Cause and Cure, a long poem in which the drink question is discussed under its various aspects, was published shortly afterwards. Here was a 'masterly and exhaustive dissertation' on the problems of intemperance, and it abounded in passages of great power, graphic descriptions, sound morality and impressive illustrations:

The woes of drink are now on every tongue,
 Those 'woes unnumbered' which I've lately sung, --
 Not all indeed; the tongue of man would fail
 To name, to count or sing them in detail;
 And yet they grow and multiply apace,
 To rob, to ruin and destroy our race;
 To blight prosperity, to nourish crime,
 And kill whole hecatombs before the time!

Intemperance, an ethical poem, described by Archbishop MacHale of Tuam as 'a fine production in the best style of Pope', was equally well received. Here, again, the author considered intemperance under its various aspects and he sought to combat the evil with a vigour and vividness that captivates the reader.

In the Preface to his *Verses on Doctrinal and Devotional Subjects* Father Casey expressed some surprise at the success and popularity of his earlier writings, and confessed that he felt 'as much diffidence' in offering another selection of poems to the public as if a line of his 'had never been printed'. 'Being now myself in the Autumn of life,' he wrote, 'I desire that my readers may meet in these pages the mellow fruit of sober reflection rather than the rich flowers and foliage of a poetic fancy which are naturally to be looked for in the springtime of life.' In common with his earlier writings, this work was favourably commented upon by the critics. John Cardinal Newman was much impressed by its 'clear, easy, musical flow'. Archbishop John Healy of Tuam was equally enthusiastic: 'Its language is clear and simple,' he wrote, 'and a spirit of fervent devotion breathes in every line. It is, I think, admirably calculated to instruct the mind and improve the heart.'

Between 1880 and 1889 Father Casey published several collections of verse. These included *Home Rule Rhymes*, *Temperance Poems* and *Temperance Songs and Lyrics*. Although very few of his writings lacked a strong moralising theme, especially in relation to temperance, this did not prevent him from composing some witty and light-hearted verse, such as *The Toper and his Bottle*:

John Jameson, mavrone, John,
 I love your sight no more;
 I loved you long, but now, John,
 My folly I deplore.
 Your smile was sweet and bright, John,
 Your breath was like the rose;
 But you have been to me, John,
 The cause of all my woes.
 I curse the day I met you, John,
 I curse the luckless hour
 I tasted first your flavoured cup,
 And felt its magic power.
 All life to me was gladness
 Until I saw your face,
 But now my lot is bitterness
 Dishonour and disgrace.

Prince Rudolf & Baroness Mary

On 23rd January 1666, Lord Carlingford again wrote to Princess Elizabeth, apparently with advice regarding a sum of money which the Emperor was about to settle on her, to be disposed of as she wished: 'If His Imperial Majesty be so just and bountiful as I wish, I would not have it converted to the building of churches, nor disposed of within the limits of a cloister; Your Highness is born and ordained for greater and more public actions and your memory to be recorded rather by a posterity of princes than by ecclesiastical shows. Therefore resolve, Madam, to be of the world and make some Prince (of the many who will attempt it) happy'.

It was rumoured for some time after Mayerling that certain vital papers connected with the cover-up were in the possession of the Taaffe family; they appear, however, to have been either lost or destroyed at some stage and the mystery remains.

RATIONALISATION

UNA PRESTON

This is a word we hear very frequently now. Usually it is followed by an announcement of redundancies and a further addition to the unemployment register. What does this rationalisation mean? What it does is to reduce staff, and arrange to do the same work with fewer people. Compensation for those who now find themselves unemployed is the redundancy packet. Can that, however generous it may seem, take the place of steady employment? Human beings are not built for idleness. Mind and body must be occupied for health's sake.

A recent RGDATA report saying that while output and profits have increased unemployment also has increased, points to the fact that modern technology and the use of machinery reduces the need for human labour and is ultimately more profitable.

To be told you are no longer necessary must be humiliating to the employee who has given years of honest service to a firm. There are questions here that must be asked and answered. And one question would surely relate to the rights of workers. They are the wealth creators and their loyalty should entitle them to something more than their wage packet.

Worker participation. A share in the enterprise, even a small one for every year of service plus some say in the running of the firm, would act as a tribute to the human dignity of the worker and could pay huge dividends in terms of loyalty etc to the employer.

CANON JAMES CASEY cont

Practically all his published works ran into several editions, and if collected into one volume would fill close on two thousand octavo pages.

James Casey was one of the most popular of the temperance poets of his day. He was, also, one of the most potent forces at work in resisting and abating the evils of intemperance. He practised the virtue of temperance to an heroic degree from the time he took the Total Abstinence Pledge from Father Mathew himself in Madden's field in 1840. The Gaelic League had his full and loyal support, and he was a fluent Irish speaker. One of his most popular shorter pièces was *The Gaelic Revival*, a poem of close on two hundred lines, which he published in 1903. In it he extols the merits of the native tongue and sings its praises:

It is well nigh half a century since first these words I read,
And yet the sweet old Celtic tongue, thank Heaven, is not dead,
Though banished long from court and camp and driven to abide
With peasants in their humble homes by moor and mountainside;
'Tis living still and vigorous, though persecuted long,
And now comes forth to greet its friends in accents sweet and strong.

Beginning to feel the infirmities of old age, Canon Casey resigned the charge of Athleague parish in 1905. After spending a short time in Dublin, he finally retired to the quiet and picturesque resort of Rosses Point, a place known and beloved by him since his boyhood days. In this haven by the shores of Sligo Bay he spent the last years of his long and fruitful life. The dark clouds of evening were gathering high over Knocknarea one February day in 1909 as James Kevin Casey, then in his eighty-fifth year, was called to his eternal reward.

The qualities of the 'poet-priest' are best described by another Sligionian, Dr John Healy (q.v.), in his *Centenary History of Mayo*:

Father Casey was a sober-minded, didactic poet who fashioned his style on Pope's *Essay on Man*, and similar poetic effusions, in which the flights of the imagination are restrained or made subservient to the higher purposes of reformation and instruction. Father Casey's poems have had a very wide circulation, and have done much to promote the great cause of temperance, of which, during all his life, he has been, both by word and example, the zealous apostle.

THE SINGLE EUROPEAN ACT

Abolition of boundaries - a merging of identities - a single market. Will it work or for how long. Who will gain, who will suffer or be eliminated. Thinking back on our joining The European Common Market, all the ballyhoo that attended it and its after effects, one is tempted to be a bit sceptical about this new European effort.

Eleven countries with separate identities to be moulded into one. What of the backgrounds of these countries - History, Geography, Culture and Heritage. They speak of the removal of trade barriers and tell us there will be free movement of people from one country to another, in short - that we will be one big happy family - A dream that only a super-optimist could see succeeding. We were brain-washed into saying Yes to a Referendum that we did not understand and now we will have to put up with the consequences. What family would willingly take dictation from another family regarding how it managed its affairs and that seems to be now what we are being told to do. Already much of our hard won freedom has been eroded. The Single European Act will take what remains.

They tell us we are Europeans now but they know and we know that we are children of an ancient nation and heirs to its inheritance. We are an intelligent people. We have many undeveloped and under-developed resources which Europe in her struggle for material wealth has lost. Our weakness is lack of belief in ourselves and our ability to make good on our home soil.

1992 offers a challenge. Our young people should accept - take what is offered and use it to develop their own country. It still can offer them a living.

UNA PRESTON

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