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Poteen making in Ireland

by P.J.Duffy



The art of poteen making is something that has been with us for hundreds of years. Some historians reckon that it goes back to the time when the Scottish Celts discovered how to brew various types of beverages from malted barley. One thing, however, is quite certain, and that is the fact that the Scots have always been to the fore when it comes to producing high-quality spirits. The ability to make poteen probably reached Celtic Ireland by way of Ulster long before Christianity. The Druids, we are told, used to make a drink from honey and herbs, which had a mild alcoholic base. It was called mead and it is reasonable to assume that the mixture consisted of a measure of poteen.

Like our religious beliefs, poteen making has withstood and resisted all efforts by legislation and law enforcers, to stamp it out down

through the years. The Brehon law-makers did their utmost to curb it, so did Poyning's legislators. It was not until 1829 when Sir Robert Peel formed his famous police force, the R.I.C., and dispatched its officers to barracks in the remote parts of the country, that legislators made any headway in enforcing the law. This measure coupled with Fr. Mathew's temperance movement finally succeeded in reducing the abuse of all types of alcohol, throughout the country.

Poteen, Potheen, Póitín— the term derives from pot or potted, according to some folk. They maintain that it was customary to place a little skillet pot under the drip of the condensed spirit, in days gone by, and when the measure was full 'the poteen' was emptied into a much larger container. It was said that it was preferable to collect the spirit

Novel and Romance: The Odyssey to Tom Jones'

By

Dr. Hubert Mc Dermott.

A REVIEW BY VINCENT
TIGHE

When Marshall Mc Luhan, in the early sixties, foretold the end of the "Gutenberg Galaxy"—a society dominated by the written word— many believed that the television screen would replace the written page as a social, cultural and communication medium. This has not happened. Not only have television and the written word learned to co-exist happily, but television seems to have stimulated a new interest in the written word. Never before in the history of mankind were so many books published, bought and read by so many people. That the majority of these books are 'fiction' or novels may raise eyebrows in the best of circles, among people unaware of the long and noble pedigree of which the novel can boast. A study of this pedigree, traced back to its very roots, by Hubert Mc Dermott, is essential reading for serious students of the novel. For the ordinary reader, who reads novels for pleasure, Dr. Mc. Dermott's work will deepen and enhance his/her understanding of the craft of the novelist, sharpen his critical faculties

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into a metal container rather than one made of tin, as this helped to preserve the flavour.

An old Irish policeman had an entirely different translation for the meaning of the word poteen. He used to reckon that the word derived from potion, meaning a "draught of liquor or poison". Certainly, if not taken in moderation, poteen could be both of these things. For many people it was the great "elixir of life". They sincerely believed it cured their ills and those of their livestock. It was used as a rub to ease the pain of rheumatism. It was recommended for all kinds of distress and depression especially during times of bereavement. For all that, the spirit often proved to be fatal when taken in large quantities, or if the stuff was not properly distilled.

The first step to be taken in preparation for a distilling operation or 'a run' as it used to be called, was to make ready a couple of barrells of wash. A recipe of malted barley, apples, yeast, and sugar was left to ferment in wooden barrells until such time as fermentation had reached its peak. Then the 'night of the run' was arranged, and a quantity of 'good stone turf' was laid by close to the fire, which would be placed under the still. If at all possible, it was essential to have your outfit located nearhand to a spring well, as this ensured a proper supply of 'cooling water'. The greatest single operation in the field of poteen making used to be known as the 'Christmas run' when an all out effort used to be made to meet the demands of the festive season.

Few of those people involved were fully equipped with a proper distilling apparatus, and used instead an old creamery milk can for a still, and a down pipe from an eve-run for a worm. These were of course the crudest type of utensils.

The proper still was a broader,

much lower type of vessel, and was usually made from the underneath part of a steel drum. This would be fitted with a properly secured head, and a coiled copper worm which was soldered to the head. The worm conducted the steam through a cooling system, which was a trough filled with water, and the condensed steam dripped into a container at the outer end. To produce the real product, it was essential that the spirit be run twice through the condensing system.

Much of this distilling work used to be carried out at nighttime, and often went on into the small hours of the morning. The spirit was usually carried to a safe location in crockery jars, and later filled into bottles to be ready for consumption. The whole undertaking was a risky adventure and those people who carried it out did so because they got a gratifying kick out of making their own "little dropeen of whiskey"

Disgruntled individuals often made reports to police stations, and this often resulted in raids being carried out, and culprits being landed in court and fined. Not so very long ago I had a conversation with a man who told me of his feelings, when surprised during one of these raids, and caught in possession of a quantity of poteen. Although well aware of the risks involved, he was completely taken aback when confronted with the law and there and then concluded that he had been spied upon.

One of the last of the great poteen-makers who ever dwelled in these parts was a man named Barney Mc Dermott who resided at Killavil. Barney was a man of many talents, the most outstanding one being, the ability to produce "*as fine a drop of the crature as you ever tasted*". It wasn't unusual at a gathering or party to hear a client ask for a "*dropeen of Barney's brew*". There was an old saying around:

"For a chill or a flu, try a drop of Barney's brew".

Barney, whose house was situated well in off the main highway, was said to have got his recipe for making good poteen from a travelling tinsmith named Nephin who travelled extensively along the west coast of the country and was said to have roots at Blacksod Bay in Co. Mayo. This remote part of rural Ireland was well known as distillers' country, and anything a man from that part of our land didn't know about poteen making wasn't really worth knowing. This was also the man who was supposed to have assembled Barney's distilling apparatus. Some people would insist that the secret of his success lay in the flavouring juices of a certain type of crab-apple he added to his wash mixture. Barney, who was a tenant on the Phibbs estate, was at that time in possession of a piece of very fertile ground which he used for growing the plump barley grain, so essential for good distilling results.

Many people of the day did their best to find out what kind of ingredients he used in preparing his barrells of wash, but Barney stubbornly refused to divulge the secrets of his trade. A landlord who tasted the spirit at a "Harvest Thanksgiving" function, also made overtures but Barney who was a staunch member of the Fenian movement had little time for landlords. Thinking the secret lay in the distilling apparatus, the landlord tracked down the tinsmith and got him to make a similar outfit, but as a person with a palate for 'the real thing' might say "*he failed to produce the dropeen that tasted just right*".

Apart altogether from his distilling escapades, Barney's lifestyle was equally flamboyant. He often held wild parties at his dwellinghouse which had a big kitchen where two sets could be danced together. One of those parties was to become the

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setting for the title of a popular hornpipe when a travelling musician named it "Barney's Frolic"

Barney's adventurous lifestyle was to become his undoing. His parties and distilling brought nothing but misfortune onto himself and his family. Perhaps he was too generous with his spirits, for he gave much of it away to poor people who could not afford to pay for it. In the end he lost everything, including his house and farm and was forced to move to Ballymote town where he died at a relatively early age, in the beginning of this century.

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Heritage Weekend '91

Plans for the second annual Heritage Weekend to be held in Ballymote are now at an advanced stage.

Last Summer's event was an outstanding success and it's highly acclaimed pattern of lectures alternating with outings will be repeated this year.

Tell your friends to come — you and they will not be disappointed.

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and give a newer and deeper enjoyment of this, the most popular of contemporary literary forms. To the unconverted — those who dismiss the novel as, at best, a harmless timewaster, or at worst, a sinister influence on impressionable minds — the book under review shows that the novel offers a unique insight into man as he lives in a highly complex society and has done so in its literary ancestors from the time of Homer.

Dr. Mc Dermott presents us with a well-reasoned, convincing and well illustrated argument concerning the development of the novel from its beginnings, not in the eighteenth century, as we were led to believe in school, but embryonically, in the 'Odyssey' of Homer and in quite an advanced state in a book called 'The Satyricon' written by Petronius, while Nero fiddled over burning Rome.

Dr. Mc Dermott points out that 'The Satyricon' was a unique work of realistic fiction written as a parody, not just on the excesses of contemporary romantic fiction, but on the romanticism of Homer's 'Odyssey'. Trimalchio, a character in 'The Satyricon', is quoted as making arrangements for his own funeral.

"After all it's a big mistake to have nice houses just for when you're alive and not to worry about the one we have to live in for much longer....I'll make sure in my will that I don't get done down, once I'm dead. I'll put one of my freedmen in charge of my tomb to look after it and not let people run up and defecate on my monument."

Trimalchio's epitaph, written by himself reads:

"A SELF MADE MAN

HE LEFT AN ESTATE OF 30,000,000
AND NEVER HEARD A PHILOSOPHER"

With quotations aplenty in this vein, who can remain unconvinced that Dr. Mc Dermott has not discovered an ancestry for contemporary

fiction. Indeed, the whole book is a voyage of discovery, a quest, and I, for one, am unable to resist a book that presents clues, discovers connections and establishes relationships among works of fiction over a time span of 2000 years. The aim of Dr. Mc. Dermott's book is "to demonstrate that fiction has developed from Homer along a continuum on which, undoubtedly, the novels of Fielding and Richardson represent a distinct highlight, but not a separate beginning." In demonstrating this development of fiction 'Novel and Romance' flies in the face of popularly held theories that assume the invention of the novel by Defoe, Richardson and Fielding in the mid-eighteenth century and on the evidence of Dr. Mc Dermott's book these theories stand corrected.

While 'Novel and Romance' might not be considered suitable bedtime reading, it is certainly not just another boring work of scholarship to be quoted ad nauseam by undergraduates studying the novel. 'Novel and Romance' proves yet again that a scholarly work, accurate and informative, is permitted to be interesting, entertaining and even amusing. I recommend that you read it; if £18 appears a bit too pricey I'm sure 'Novel and Romance: The Odyssey to Tom Jones' will be shortly available in your local library.

DR. HUBERT MC DERMOTT is Assistant Professor of English at University College Galway. He is a member of the Governing Body of U.C.G., and of the National Council for Educational Awards. Hubert is a native of Marren Park, Ballymote. He attended Ballymote Convent of Mercy Infant school, Ballymote Boy's N.S. and Gormanston College, Co. Meath. He read English at U.C.G. and his postgraduate research was carried out at the University of Ulster, Coleraine. He is married with three children.

James Francis Cunningham

John Mc Ternan

James Francis Cunningham, B.L., Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society and one time British Colonial Secretary, was born at Moyrush, Bunninadden, in 1861. As a young man he taught school as an Assistant to Michael Doyle in Ballymote, and campaigned for Thomas Sexton, the Nationalist candidate, in the famous South Sligo election of 1880. He later taught school at Achill for a time before his dismissal for his activities in the Land League Movement. After a short period on the staff of the 'Freeman's Journal' in Dublin, he bade adieu to his homeland and crossed to England.

Cunningham settled in London where he worked by day and attended school by night. He studied a wide range of subjects at the Kings College and excelled both at the classics and at modern languages. Subsequently, he took up the study of law, passed his examinations at the Middle Temple and was admitted a law student. He studied at Gray's Inn and duly qualified as a barrister.

Meanwhile, James Cunningham had joined the British Civil Service and volunteered for service in Africa. His administrative ability and talents were such that he made rapid progress in the colonial service. For a time he was private secretary to Cecil Rhodes, of South African fame, and in 1894 he was appointed editor of the official gazette. Subsequently, he filled the post of Colonial Secretary for British West Africa, enjoying the highest rank and pay in the colonial service. In 1899 he was appointed chief British Commissioner for the delimitation of the Anglo-Portuguese

boundary in British Colonial Africa. Later, in August of that year, he received the appointment of Secretary to Sir Harry Johnston's special mission to Uganda. In 1901 he was made judicial officer in that region and in the following year became Registrar-General of births, deaths, and marriages. Shortly afterwards he became Secretary to the Uganda Administration.

James Cunningham retired from the colonial service in 1912. After a short visit to his birthplace at Moyrush he returned to London and practised at the Bar with much success for a number of years. During all his time abroad he closely followed the trend of events at home in Ireland. His sympathies lay with the Nationalist cause, and in 1916 his was one of the loudest voices raised in England protesting at the execution of the leaders of the Rising. He also publicly and very ably denounced the arrest and sentence of Roger Casement, and in doing so he drew down the wrath of Sir Basil Thompson, Chief Police Commissioner of London. As Casement had exposed the conditions in the Belgian Congo so also did Cunningham fearlessly unmask the conditions of slavery in East Africa. He did all one man could do to right them, so much so that he was known in Uganda as 'the white man's God'.

He showed his concern for the welfare of those unfortunate people in his book *'Uganda and its Peoples: Notes on the Protectorate of Uganda, especially the Anthropology and Ethnology of its Indigenous Races'*, published in London in 1905. He dedicated this voluminous and well illustrated publication to Sir Harry

Johnston, Consul-General for the Uganda Protectorate, under whom the Sligoman had spent "nine years apprenticeship in administrative work. In the course of his introduction the author makes the following observation: "Anyone can rule a country who has sufficient force at his disposal but he who understands the people, their customs, manners and ambitions can govern them successfully" He also visited the Vatican on several occasions petitioning the reigning pontiff to send missionaries into that part of Africa to christianize and educate the natives.

For many years after his return to London from the colonial service, Cunningham acted as Parliamentary Correspondent for the 'Sligo Champion'. His weekly column, entitled 'London Notes' and written in the best journalistic traditions, contained in addition to parliamentary reports, items of general interest together with the activities of fellow Sligionians in the metropolis. Through his friendship with many prominent Irish M.P.'s at Westminster, and especially O'Dowd and Thomas Scanlan he was well briefed on the progress of events in Ireland and this was reflected in his weekly column.

James Francis Cunningham died at his residence at Southsea, Hants, on Oct. 22nd, 1937, aged seventy-six years. In a tribute to his memory, published in the 'Sligo Champion', an anonymous admirer concluded his affectionate remarks as follows:

"I feel sure that James Cunningham's last glimpse of Erin through the haze of oncoming death was of Moyrush, a long golden road and a home of memories at the end of it."

History of the Diocese of Achonry

PART 11 THE NEW RELIGIOUS ORDERS

MOST REV. DR. THOMAS FLYNN

This article was first presented at the Heritage Weekend in Ballymote on August 5th 1990.

When Malachy of Armagh was Papal Legate from 1140 - 1148 he introduced the Cistercians and the Augustinians to Ireland. These orders were very popular and founded their houses in or beside many of the old Celtic monasteries and sites. Cistercian influence in this diocese would be mostly felt from their abbey in Boyle which was founded in 1161 and from here many Bishops came to Achonry. The Augustinian canons founded an important monastery in Ballysadare and also a house in Kilmanagh. In the 15th century there were Augustinian nuns in St. Mary's, Achonry who were associated with the Kilcreevanthy convent in Co. Galway. Augustinian nuns were also in Killaraght and in 1423, Corpus Christi Abbey, Benada was established as an Augustinian hermitage. The military orders followed the Anglo/Norman invasion and Temple House was first a house of the Knights Templars from 1216 - 1270 before their suppression and replacement by the Knights Hospitallers, known as Frates.

Premonstratensian canons arrived in Ireland from Scotland before 1300 and a daughter house was established in Glanduff, Attymass by the Trinitarians in Lough Key. The Franciscans were probably the first mendicant order to settle in Ireland and the Jordans established a Franciscan friary in Straide in 1240; this was burned in 1252 and after rebuilding the Dominicans occupied it until the death of Fr.

Clarke in 1841. Soon after 1540 the Franciscans had another house in Killeden but this may not have lasted very long.

The Carmelites had a monastery in Knockmore and the Costellos founded Orlar Abbey for the Dominicans in 1434. Orlar Abbey became the novitiate for the Western region and remained so until it was destroyed in Cromwellian times. There were also Dominican foundations at Meelick and at Cloonameehan which was founded in 1488. The Third Order Regular of St. Francis were a very popular order in the West and they had a very strong community life. Their members did pastoral work in the surrounding parishes and taught in their schools. They had a well ordered monastery at Court Abbey and a smaller house nearby at Kilkemin.

Ballymote was a large and important Third Order convent which was continuously represented at provincial and intermediate chapters from 1169 to 1845. Two of the best known names associated with the Ballymote Franciscans are Andrew Dunleavy, Prefect of the Irish College, Paris and Anthony Trench who was Provincial of the Franciscans from 1770 to 1776.

Under Norman influence the Kings tried to control the appointment of Bishops and King Henry 111 showed his annoyance when the Achonry chapter had not sought a licence for the election of Cormac O Tarpa about 1120 and

when Elias O Clumain retired to Boyle Abbey on age grounds, in 1248 the chapter sought and procured a licence for the election of Thomas O Miachan. In the 13th and early 14th centuries it seems that the diocesan chapter made the appointments under royal licence. But after the Bruce invasion and the Battle of Athenry in 1316 English power was greatly diminished in the West of Ireland and the western dioceses then slipped out of royal control and the papacy began making diocesan appointments. This created problems of its own because, by reason of difficult communications at the time, many false claims were made about vacancies and about the state of health of the incumbents.

In papal calendars and patent rolls, we have a full list of the bishops of Achonry from 1152 when Maelruan O Ruain was appointed Bishop. In 1325 King Edward 111 proposed that the dioceses of Tuam, Annaghdown, Achonry and Kilmacduagh would be united. Two years later Pope XX11 sanctioned this. There was much opposition to it, however. A complaint from Annaghdown led to a papal enquiry and the Achonry chapter appealed to the Pope to abandon or dissolve the union because the distances between the churches and the ungovernable character of the Irish made it impossible for them to share in the election of an Archbishop. Their plea was successful, and it would appear that no attempt has

been made since then to alter the boundaries of the diocese.

We have a letter which Pope Julius wrote to King Henry VII when Eugene O'Flanagan was appointed Bishop of Achonry on December 22nd, 1508. Part of the letter goes as follows:-

"Therefore my dearest son, since it is a virtuous thing to show kind favour to the Ministers of God and that they strive by word and deed for the glory of the eternal King we pray for peace in your Kingdom, and with due deliberation confirm the appointment of Eugene, insofar as he is being elected and give the above named Church into his care. He has from us, and with the favour of the Apostolic See, these letters of recommendation in virtue of which we ask you to help him with your gracious favour in carrying out and fulfilling his work so that this Eugene who has been chosen may be able, whilst supported by the protection of your high office, to carry out the pastoral duties entrusted to him, with God's help, and hence win for you the gift of eternal life and a deserving act of gratitude from us."

From this it is clear that, at that stage at any rate, appointments were made by the Pope. He was succeeded in 1522 by Cormac, a Franciscan and he in turn in 1547 by Thomas O'Fihil, who had been Abbot of the Augustinian monastery of Mayo and when he was transferred to Leighlin in 1555 he was succeeded by Cormac O'Coyn. This Cormac died in October 1561 and he was succeeded by Eugene O'Hart who was a nephew of Cormac O'Coyn and Provincial of the Dominican Order in Ireland. He was attending the Council of Trent when he was appointed Bishop. In 1568 when the Archbishop of Armagh, Dr. Creagh was in prison, Eugene O'Hart was appointed Administrator of the diocese of Armagh. Then in 1575 he was given special faculties, not only for Achonry diocese but also for the

whole province of Tuam. Eugene O'Hart was recommended for the diocese of Achonry by Fr. David Woulfe, a Jesuit, who had been sent to Ireland as Apostolic delegate in 1560 and who had received a special instruction from the Holy See to select the most worthy members of the clergy for promotion to the various dioceses. In his letter of recommendation, he states:

"the Cathedral church of Achonry is at present used as a fortress by the gentry of the neighbourhood and does not retain one vestige of the semblance of religion and I am convinced that the aforesaid Eugene, by his good example and holy life, and with the aid of his friends, would be able to take back that church"

The practice of the Catholic faith became very difficult when Bingham was appointed Administrator of Connaught. He was appointed by Elizabeth and he was animated with the hatred of the Catholic faith. In Doweras narrative published by the Celtic Society in 1849 mention is made of an excursion of Bingham's to the Episcopal town of Achonry. It says:

"he passed the mountain not far from the Abbey called Benada and he camped at night at Achonry, a town of the Bishop O'Hart" He arrested Eugene O'Hart and sent him a prisoner to Dublin Castle. Sir John Perrott was then Lord Deputy and he commissioned the Protestant Archbishop of Armagh, Dr. Long, to visit him. In his letter to the Lord Deputy, Dr. Long states:

"that Eugene O'Hart has come to acknowledge his blindness and prostrates himself before Her Majesty and

resigns his Bishopric and religion."

Whatever the formula was to which Eugene O'Hart is said to have agreed, in 1587 he was one of the seven Bishops who met in Ulster to promulgate the decrees of the Council of Trent and in 1591 Eugene O'Connor who was the Protestant Bishop of Killala was appointed by the Queen as Administrator of Achonry. O'Connor, however, was an old friend of O'Harts. They had been at school together and O'Connor allowed O'Hart quiet possession of the diocese of Achonry but O'Hart had to pay him 180 marks annually which was the recognised income of the diocese at the time. O'Hart died in 1603 being 100 years old and was buried in his Cathedral near the high altar on the gospel side.

The death of Eugene O'Hart is a fitting place to end this presentation of the history of the diocese of Achonry because we will have to wait until 1715 - one hundred and twelve years later before the next catholic bishop of the diocese was appointed. And most parishes have written accounts-in parish magazines-of the close down and take over of the monasteries. Perhaps, someday, someone will put these accounts together and that could provide sufficient material for at least another talk. ♦

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Ad multos annos

Memorabilia - Cecil A. King

by Neal Farry

"Yet if it does not seem a moment's thought
Our stitching and unstitching has been naught"
W.B. Yeats

Painstaking creative crafting with little account taken of sweat, fatigue, years, days, hours and minutes, delving deeply into his reserves of experience and yet making a poem that sparkles with the freshness of an impromptu statement in which he has

*"the earth and the sky and the
water,*

Remade life a casket of gold"

all comprise the creative modus operandi of the poet Yeats. If we apply Yeats' criteria to Cecil King's prose autobiography we must concede that King's story has all the compelling immediacy of 'The Fiddler of Dooney' and 'The Ballad of Father Gilligan'

Cecil King's autobiography which he self-deprecatingly calls 'Memorabilia' is presented in a fast-flowing style in which clarity of expression, decisive interpretation of events and a relaxed literary structure are the hallmarks. The book is presented with the unstructured ease of a fireside chat.

The author insists that his book is not an autobiography but a series of random reminiscences, recorded in conversational style, from a life devoted to provincial journalism over a period of more than sixty years. He may protest that there was nothing in his career to distinguish him from other newspaper reporters of his time but his "Musings" which seem "like a moment's thought" are the integrated memoirs of a highly integrated and well adjusted personality whose "stitching and unstitching" was done in Ballymote, Sligo, Grange, Collooney, Derry and in

every County Donegal town and village from 1908 to the present day.

Cecil King was born in Emmet St., Ballymote on the 19th of April 1908 in the house now occupied by the Hogge family. His father James King, was an R.I.C. sergeant from Co. Roscommon. His mother was Eleanor Kelly. The midwife at his birth was Nurse Bohan, the mother of Baby and Dotie Bohan. The Kings lived in Ballymote until 1912 when Sgt. King was transferred to Sligo. In 1914 they moved to Grange and some time later Sgt. King was transferred to Collooney where they were stationed until 1922. After the disbanding of the R.I.C. the Kings moved to Strabane. Cecil was the sixth child in a family of ten. There were two girls and eight boys. In Collooney he attended Camphill school where Master Henry Rooney taught.

After leaving national school Cecil studied at the School of Short-hand and Commerce in Wine St. Sligo and at Hughes' Academy in Derry. In 1926, at the age of seventeen, he became a reporter with the Derry Journal. He married Alice Fox in Buncrana in 1936. Cecil purchased the Donegal Democrat in 1948 and the family moved to Ballyshannon. He retired from the position of Managing-Director in 1977 and was elected President of the Company. Mr King continues to take an active interest in management and he contributes articles to the 'Democrat' on a regular basis.

What makes Cecil King's story special is not that he has a successful career but that he lived his life with remarkable intensity, taking an

abiding interest in the people, places and institutions he came across as he plied his trade all over the north-west. His account of life in Collooney and Grange in the second decade of the century will be of immense interest to Co. Sligo people. His description of the domestic, social and professional life of a policeman and his family prior to the Treaty in 1921 constitutes a valuable social historical document. Stories of poteen making in Innishmurray Island, of pranks and characters like Mick Feeney of Collooney make compelling reading. In fact, Mr. King's book is a must for all Collooney people. In all, Collooney's social and political history during the 'Troubles' receives eighteen pages of detailed treatment. Among his classmates at Camphill were Philip Rooney, author of 'Captain Boycott', Canon Jack McGarry and local solicitor, Mr. Jim McGarry.

Mr King's account of the Civil War battle of Collooney, where Frank O'Beirne featured so prominently, is told with a high degree of accuracy and dramatic atmosphere. An incident in the conflict involving Baby Bohan of Ballymote will be of interest to Ballymote people. Because of his family situation, Mr. King shares with us a very special insight into the almost impossible dilemma facing R.I.C. men during the war of independence. He is justifiably proud of the part played by the police in establishing more tolerable social conditions for the people of the country in general and he draws our attention to the remarkable role played by R.I.C. families in

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providing candidates for the Catholic priesthood throughout the country.

As a reporter in Derry Cecil was intimately involved in every aspect of social and political life in the city and its hinterland of counties Derry, Tyrone and Donegal. In spite of the sectarian divide he found that there was an atmosphere of peace and calm in the city. The R.U.C. in the city was largely under Catholic control while the city council was under Protestant control. He discusses the contrasting cultural emphasis of Feis Doire Columbkille and Londerry Feis. We get a vibrant account of céilís and of commercial dancing. The account of dancing protocol customary at the time will be interesting to people today and the fiery condemnations of jazz music by the Catholic clergy in the twenties and thirties will be puzzling to modern young people. Cecil's adventure among the Protestant Apprentice Boys during an August 12th celebration shows how easily a person could find himself in the wrong place at the wrong time.

When J.J. Mc Carroll of the Derry Journal was the Nationalist M.P. for Derry at Stormont, King frequently took shorthand notes in the North's Parliament on behalf of the Nationalist party. During this period he became acquainted with Cahir Healy and the Prime Minister, Lord Craigavon.

As part of his professional duties Cecil covered sporting fixtures, ecclesiastical gatherings, funerals, court cases and social events of all types. His picture of the war years in Derry is interesting from the point of view of social history. He rubbed shoulders on a regular basis with many bishops and clergy and, indeed, had a special interest in ecclesiastical affairs. With great pride we are told that the diocese of Raphoe has a unique distinction in

Irish Church history since three bishops from that diocese succeeded one another in the Primatial See of Armagh. These prelates were Cardinal Daniel Mc Gettigan (1870 - 1887), Cardinal Michael Logue (1887 - 1924) and Cardinal Patrick O'Donnell (1924 - 1927). The return of the Franciscan Minors to Donegal at Rosnowlagh in 1946 made a lasting impression on the author and his article describing the event is an obvious labour of love.

In spite of his special interest in the church and although he was a self-confessed 'penny catholicism' Catholic, Mr King did not suffer from any obsequious obsession with "men of the cloth". He has no hesitation in telling us that Dr. Neil Farren, Bishop of Derry (1939 - 1973) had an impetuous nature, was a law unto himself and would brook no interference with anything he ordained. Cecil was deeply embittered when Dr Farren forbade all Catholic drama groups in his diocese from participating in a Derry Theatre guild which involved dramatic societies from both sides of the sectarian divide on the grounds that this type of social movement could lead to mixed marriages. The author was a founder of the guild and his personal appeal to Dr. Farren to reconsider his attitude was rejected. Cecil was also critical of the Derry Journal policy of annually publishing an editorial, at the behest of Dr. Farren to "pour syrup" on the "academic brilliance" of the examination results of St. Columb's College, Derry. With characteristic fair-mindedness, Mr King describes Dr. Farren as vibrant, outgoing, zealous, and filled with concern for the spiritual and temporal well-being of his people. He also tells us that Dr. Farren regarded highly the office of bishop, a fact which made him appear ultra authoritative.

Mr. King is also scathing in his criticism of the Unionist powers -

that-be in Derry, who succeeded, during the war, in having a brother of his, Geoffrey King, transferred from his government position as Derry's Air-Raid-Precautions-Officer, simply because he was a Catholic. Furthermore he castigates Unionist politicians and journalists who publicly maintained an anti-Catholic policy so as to toe the Orange Order line while privately they were on excellent social terms with their fellow-citizens of the Catholic persuasion. He blames the Irish Free State Government for copper-fastening partition through its over-zealous approach to Customs rules and regulations at border crossing points.

On two occasions he found himself in trouble with the British and Irish authorities respectively. Firstly he was carpeted by a British Army tribunal for unwittingly breaching security regulations in relaying a naval incident in Donegal Bay by telephone to Belfast. Secondly we learn how his verbatim reporting of a speech in Ballyshannon by General Eoin O Duffy of the Blueshirts led to O'Duffy's arrest on the charge that he publicly advocated the assassination of Prime Minister De Valera. After taking legal advice Cecil refused to give evidence to the Irish Military Tribunal in the O'Duffy case on the grounds that he would be acting contrary to journalistic practice. O'Duffy was subsequently released.

In his book Mr King describes local fishing, railway and fire disasters and the appalling sea mine explosion at Ballymanus beach, Co. Donegal which killed nineteen young men. The development of Donegal's railways and seaports receives comprehensive coverage.

In May 1932 the author had an opportunity to display his journalistic acumen when, by virtue of quick thinking and initiative, he became the first reporter to meet Amelia Earhart at Elaghbeg, Co

Donegal, when the intrepid airwoman had completed an epic solo transatlantic flight from Newfoundland. Amelia gave him her only exclusive interview and all pressmen, Irish and foreign, had to interview the Derry Journal man for information about the flight.

When Cecil King took over the Donegal Democrat in 1948 he and his family moved to Ballyshannon where he presided over a business success-story that saw the development of the Democrat to the respected status it enjoys today as a weekly newspaper and as a job-printing concern.

Although he decided to commit the Democrat to support the Fianna Fáil party editorially he displays considerable independence of mind severely criticising Eamonn De Valera's vision of Ireland steeped in Gaelic mysticism and he approves of Paddy "The Cope" Gallagher's frank remark that "the Irish language won't fill many bellies". He dislikes what he sees as De Valera's efforts to cultivate a 'legendary' image of himself. He cannot understand why Dev. did not head the Treaty delegation to London in 1921 and he suggests that the Civil War occurred "largely at the bidding of De Valera."

Of interest to Ballymote people will be the tribute paid by Mr King to his friend and fellow Ballymote

man, Chris Mc Donagh, founder of the Donegal Historical Society and manager of the Ballybofey Bank of Ireland branch. He credits Mc Donagh with reviving the "O'Donnell dynasty" and the naming of a "successor in title".

Some of the opinions expressed by Mr King in his concluding chapter will not find many assentors among the younger generation of today. He considers co-education as having led to a new and dangerous challenge to the strength of moral fibre. He regrets that the father is no longer regarded as the breadwinner and he deplores the fact that there are in excess of one hundred thousand married women in employment in the country, the majority of them state employees. He says that many of these wives and mothers have abandoned the home in a crazy seeking after munificent living.

Cecil King is unequivocal in his condemnation of I.R.A. violence and he was particularly saddened at the murders of two of his friends, Judge Rory Conaghan in Belfast and Earl Mountbatten in Mullaghmore. He expresses the opinion that many of our emigrants abandoned Ireland in her hour of need just as the Earls of Ulster had done in 1607. He castigates the children of these emigrants for unthinkingly giving financial support to the Provo cam-

paign of violence in Ireland, Britain and Europe.

One of his most thought-provoking ideas is an attack on the "what might have been" school of Irish Nationalist history who view the defeat at Kinsale (1601) as a tragedy for Ireland. Mr King suggests that the routing of clan prowess at Kinsale was a blessing in disguise for Ireland because the O'Neills and the O'Donnells were mostly a type of aristocracy, proud and arrogant and dominated by irresistible desires for personal kudos. He numbers Michael Collins, P.J. McGilligan (E.S.B. pioneer), Paddy Hogan, first Irish Minister for Agriculture and Sean Lemass as men of vision who were prepared to make a practical contribution to the construction of the State.

While we may disagree with much of what Mr King has to say, we must concede that he has formed his opinions from evidence gleaned during an energetic, productive life experienced in a developing country over eighty years of the most momentous and revolutionary century in the history of mankind and his conscientious recording of the events of his time gives him a justified claim to authority in many fields.

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EARTHEN BURIAL MOUNDS ON THE KNOCKNAREA PENINSULA, CO. SLIGO

Martin A. Timoney

In 1967 - 1969 the writer undertook a detailed field survey of the peninsula between Sligo Bay and Ballisodare Bay. (Fig 1)

Known locally as Cuil Iorra, the area is well known because of the Carrowmore Megalithic cemetery and "Misgaun Maeve", the great unopened cairn in Knocknarea which presumably covers a passage grave. It has become even more widely known because of the excavations and surveys by Burenhult, the Swedish archaeologist, during the 1977 to 1982 period and the subsequent publicity, and also because of the 'Carrowmore domestic rubbish dump controversy' between 1983 and 1989.

The 1967 - 1969 survey was carried out as an undergraduate thesis. It recognised that several of the earth-works were not classifiable as ringforts or raths which are habitation sites but were in fact earthen barrows of various types and periods. A total of seventeen barrows were located. Details of the seventeen barrows are to be found in the fourth (final) report of the Carrowmore excavations by Dr. G. Burenhult, pp 319 - 325, published in 1984 in Stockholm. Since then the availability of aerial photography would add a few others, some of them ploughed down and showing no signs above the ground level.

As yet no national survey of barrows has taken place. There have been several local studies which have reported a wide variety of barrow types. Where local studies have taken place, as here, classification can establish a few dominant types. These removed, the remainder, forming a miscellaneous group, often consists of as many types as specimens.

The variety of barrow types indicates a continuity of settlement for a long period on the peninsula, perhaps throughout the entire prehistoric period.

Neither has there been any planned programme of excavation of barrows and as a result their dating on superficial grounds is at best somewhat speculative. Some bowl barrows have been shown to be passage graves of the Neolithic or cemetery cairns of the Bronze Age or, in some cases, both.

Two types, ring-barrows, and bowl-barrows emerge as dominant types on the peninsula, but that achieved, the remainder are almost unique examples of their type. Two barrows, those in Cummeen, are demesne monuments of the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries.

The most numerous barrow type in this area is the ring-barrow i.e. a barrow having a bank of approxi-

mately equal height to the central mound, and there being no break in the bank or the fosse. These ring-barrows form a fairly unified group varying only in the size of the barrow-proper.

Some ring-barrows date to the Early Iron Age. The Ballybeg, Seafeld 11 and Carrowmore 1 Ring-barrows in particular are similar to that at Grannagh, Co Galway, which is dated to the Early Iron Age (Rynne 1970, 10)

Bowl barrows, so-called because they are like an upturned pudding bowl, are to be seen in Barnasrahy, Culleenamore and Tobernaven. Some have a surrounding ditch-and-bank arrangement and the writer spent six weeks in 1977 excavating such a barrow at Knocknashammer, (see photo) just south-east of the Carrowmore Megalithic Cemetery. Here a small mound, 11m. in diameter and 1.40m. high,



Fig. 1 Earthen burial sites on the Knocknarea peninsula. The wavy line marks the limit of the survey area.



surrounded by a round-bottomed fosse and a slight bank, was sited on an east-west ridge on the opposite side of the road to the Cloverhill 'cist'. Gravel excavation had removed the ridge to the east of the mound, leaving it at the top of a 15m. high, gravel cliff. Some disturbance had taken place on the east side of the monument. It was feared that further quarrying would remove the mounds.

Its pre-excitation appearance suggested that the monument had been formed by scarping the side of the high point of the gravel ridge and by levelling off its top; excavation, however revealed that the monument was, in the main, artificially constructed. Beneath the sod, a layer of earth overlay an uneven mantle of largish stones. Beneath this was another layer of earth and an

earlier mantle of largish stone, beneath which was the undisturbed glacial gravel. The two mantles of stones merged towards the edge of the mound where a well-constructed retaining wall, four to six courses high, remained at some places (elsewhere it had collapsed into the fosse). Perhaps this retaining wall was intended to prevent the top layer of soil falling into the ditch.

At the centre of the mound, in the earth layer between the two mantles of stones, two partly disarticulated burials were found, laid on a NE-SW axis in a poorly, if at all, prepared grave. One skull, that of a male of 20-30 years, was found beneath the pelvis of the lower most skeleton while the other, that of a female of 30-40 years, was found about 30cm. away from the nearest piece of bone. None of the bones of the spinal column, rib-cage, hands or feet was found. There were no accompanying grave goods nor any artifacts by which the monument can be dated.

The distribution of the barrows is confined to an area within and to the west of the Carrowmore Megalithic cemetery. This would suggest that the area of sanctity for Neolithic peoples in Carrowmore remained generally the same for Earlier Bronze Age and Iron Age peoples also.

There is a dense grouping of seven barrows Nos. 2 to 8 fig1, in the vicinity of the Ransboro, recte Wrensboro, church, three of which are ring barrows. Clustering of barrows is to be seen in several areas of County Sligo, particularly in Deechomade on the Bunninadden side of Ballymote and on Rathdooney Beg and in Derroon on the Northeast side of the town. Most obvious are 'The Mother and Child' on Rathdooney Beg. Both 'The Mother' and 'The Child' are bowl barrows. However while standing on 'The Mother' this writer recognised the presence of a third barrow, a ring-barrow, very close to 'The Child'. What do we call this? 'The Grandchild' perhaps, as it is probably Iron Age and the other two may well be Bronze Age.



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A month in New England

Fr. Pat Rogers, C.P. (Ballymote)

How far did we get, last time we were talking about travels in America? I think we had nearly completed our route from the Pacific to the Atlantic, but were still heading East, on the last leg of the journey. To be precise, we were motoring along the 300-mile 'Turnpike' or 'Pikeway' (toll motorway) that goes from Niagara Falls right across upper New York State, bypassing major cities like Buffalo, Syracuse, Rochester and the state capital, Albany. It was the fourth of July and already past lunchtime when I got to the great Connecticut river that separates the states of New York and Massachusetts. A quick sandwich and beer in a fast-food restaurant, within sight of the great bridge at Springfield, after which would come the final 200 miles of my long trans-States Odyssey.

Across the bridge lay New England, that north-easterly section of America that was first colonized by the Pilgrim fathers who sailed from Plymouth in 1661 early in the reign of Charles II. I felt like musing about the history of the territory, but there was no time to waste if I was to reach my parish in Boston at a respectable hour. So, back on the road and pay the toll for the Massachusetts Turnpike. Driving was easy on account of the very light traffic on the highway, since most Americans celebrate Independence Day at home or at their local community parades. But mechanical problems loomed up. The fourteen year old jalopy was now showing signs of its age and I could not travel for long above 55mph without getting warning lights about temperature and oil-pressure. This was going to spoil that scenic stretch through the Berkshire hills in Western Massachusetts. Instead of eyeing the lovely wooded slopes and the



finger-slim lakes alongside the highway, I kept a worried eye on the oil-gauge. Any stops made were for cooling the motor rather than for the scenery! But eventually I topped the final hill and saw a city stretched alongside a faint sparkle of broad water. The city-scape was Boston, so the water could only be.... the Atlantic, my own ocean!

Quick consultation of the map told me to head south along the Boston Beltway, and exit at turn-off 16 for the suburb of Milton. Then the usual enquiries at a filling-station, for directions to the address I was looking for. Huffing and chuffing, the old car valiantly lumbered those last few miles, seeming to gasp with relief when we finally pulled up outside a church. We had reached the parish of St. Elizabeth where I would spend the next four weeks on relief work for the pastor, Msgr. Thomas Finnegan. According to the speedometer, we were 3,500 miles from the start of our journey. The cheerful old house keeper who let me into the Rectory was Bairbre, originally from Roundstone in Connemara. No sooner had she put tea on the table than she began to narrate - in fluent, rapid Gaeilge - how she came over to America forty five years ago, and had never been home since! And how pleased the parishioners would be to have an Irish

priest for the month, since so many of them were emigrants like herself. And naming a whole list of Galway and Sligo people wondering did I know any of them. I stammered my answers in much more hesitant Irish, ashamed that I had forgotten so much while she seemed to remember everything.

Monsignor was propped in an arm-chair, his right leg encased in plaster from hip to toe. "Hip replacement" he explained - "can't do much for the next few weeks except direct operations from the bed." He outlined the various duties, which included week-end Masses and hospital chaplaincy visits on two days each week. "But you'll have enough time to get to know Boston well. And other parts of New England, if you have the interest." Good! Exactly the mixture one hopes to find on a holiday 'supply': enough pastoral work to make one feel useful, and enough free time to explore the area. In the next month, I had my crash-course on the history and geography of New England's six States: Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New Hampshire, Maine and Vermont.

It's not difficult for a priest to contact Irish people in an American parish. As soon as they hear your accent, they'll come up to you after Mass and introduce themselves, tell you where they're from - and probably invite you to dine at their home and meet the family. In my first Sunday sermon in Milton, I must have mentioned Ballymote, because a young man came to tell me he was Hubert Clark from Tubbercurry; and was I related to a family called Rogers in Ballymote who had a shop at the bottom of the hill? It turned out he knew my father well and had often bought goods in our shop, before he and his brother

emigrated in the early 70's. At dinner in Hubert's house the following evening I heard many hilarious stories of his early years in the States, just a jump ahead of the immigration people, before he met his American wife and legalized his residency.

In Boston's city centre, they have 'marked out a walk called the 'Freedom Trail' that takes you past the city's oldest buildings, including some that go back to before the War of Independence (1775-78). Moored to a jetty near Le Faneuil hall is an old sailing-ship, recalling the 'Boston Tea-Party' of 1775, where some angry citizens followed the advice of John Quincy Adams and threw an English cargo of tea into the harbour rather than pay the extra tax decreed by parliament in London. "No taxation without representation!" -the settlers' protest was the basic democratic principle to emerge from the war. They also show you Beacon Hill, where the warning lights flashed out that English troops were on the move, and sent Paul Revere on his ten-mile midnight ride to Lexington, alerting the citizen militia to arms, to fight for their freedom. It all makes for an interesting atmosphere. Nowhere in the eastern U.S.A., not even in Philadelphia, are there so many reminders of the early colonial period, as in Boston. Then you go to see the ivy-covered college that was Alma Mater to the likes of John F. Kennedy, Henry Kissinger and John Kenneth Galbraith; Harvard University, founded some 300 years ago on a small bequest from the Anglican

clergyman, John Harvard. Alongside it, all vibrant modernity, is the brawny mass of M.I.T.- the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. On the other side of the river Charles is the Jesuit-run Boston college, one of the great Catholic universities in America.

With all its interesting places, its dynamic economy and its sea-shore location near great amenities like Cape Cod, the Blue Hills to the south and the Berkshires to the west, it's no wonder that many emigrants from Ireland chose to settle in Boston rather than wander farther into the American continent. In Roxbury and some other low-income suburbs, I met with various young Irish lads and girls who were still without work-permits and hoped for some kind of amnesty to rectify their situation. They had every intention of staying on.

One sunny Sunday, I made the three-hour sailing trip across eighty miles of Massachusetts harbour to picturesque Provincetown, on the very tip of Cape Cod, the first place where the Pilgrim Fathers' ship, the 'Mayflower', touched land in America. The aim was to visit with Dara and Crona Barrett, two charming nieces from Kerry who were working in Provincetown - legitimately, let me add! - for the Summer. While they and their friends showed me the sights, they also gave me further insights into the joys and tribulations of the recent wave of Irish immigrants.

If space allowed, I would lead you farther afield, on an economy tour through New Hampshire's lakelands and into the green, hilly pastures of Vermont; then out to lovely Burlington on the shores of hundred-mile-long Lake Champlain and on to the Canadian border near Quebec. We could do a looping detour through the wilder beauty of Maine on the rugged atlantic coast, then back south to Boston. Or we might try the more sedate southerly tour through the farmland of Connecticut and the richly-endowed towns and lavish architecture of the smallest State, Rhode Island. We would wander the cliff-walk in yacht-bedecked Newport, past the mansions of the Astors and the Vanderbilts and other financial giants who lived by the motto "if you've got it let it show!" The recent film "Reversal of Fortune" (about Klaus von Bulow who was accused of putting his wife into a coma) was set in this luxurious background. In short, to all those places recommended by the good Monsignor, for those spaces between duties in the parish and the hospital.

But space does not, so I desist. My thanks to the editor for allowing me to take you even this far on what was, for me, the journey of a lifetime. And to fortune - or rather, Providence - for giving me the opportunity to make the trip in the first place. And to Mgr. Finnegan, who actually paid me to do it! On another occasion, we might do some travel in the highlands of Kenya and meet some of the missionaries and others with whom I associated in the years I spent there. 🍀

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