

THE CORRAN HERALD

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Christmas



IN THE FORTIES

P.J. Duffy

The nineteen forties were undoubtedly a lean period in our country, and although World War II ended in 1945 food rationing continued right on into the next decade. Our young folk often ask the question, "What was Christmas really like in the forties?" Well, my memories of the early forties are rather vague. I was a schoolboy then and one thing I can recall was the dire scarcity of paraffin oil, so badly needed to provide us with light, to do the school homework on the winter evenings. Ration books were the order of the day, and a government announcement that an allotment of a half-ounce of tea per person was coming into force, drew gasping moans of disbelief from the

Christmas in the forties was to see the surfacing of the porter spree

vast majority of the country's inhabitants, who rightly figured that this paltry allowance would bring about a massive cut back in the consumption of their favourite beverage.

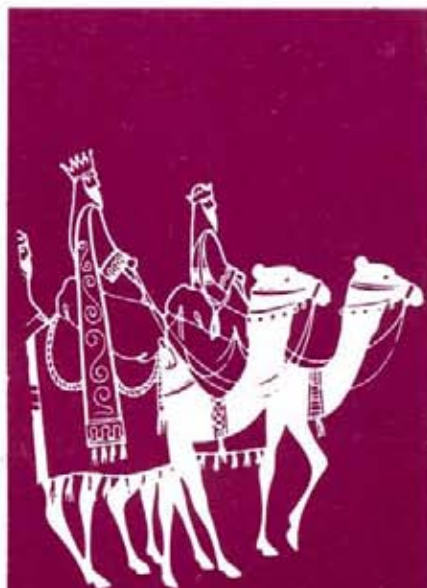
However, when it came to celebrating Christmas the great scarcity did not deter people in the rural areas from making the most of the festive season. In the weeks leading up to Christmas small quantities of foodstuff difficult to obtain were conserved and held over for the parties and sprees, always characteristic of this time of year. The boxty parties which were usually held during the time of potato digging now extended right through the advent period and

onto Christmas time. Potatoes were plentiful, and although flour was scarce and brown in colour, this did not deter housewives and their helpers from turning out some very good boxty bread. This kind of party could often turn out to be a merry occasion with not only boxty on offer, but a good splash of booze as well.

I have been told that this kind of hoo-ley was not new to the Christmas scene, and that it had been carried out on a grand scale up until the early decades of the century. The acute food scarcity had now brought about a speedy revival of an age old Christmas celebration.

Christmas in the forties was to see the surfacing of another type of party, the porter spree. This would seem to have been a sort of glorified revival, at least for the Christmas period, of the old shebeen system of socialising. There was a voluntary getting together of a group of people, mostly middle aged men and also a number of younger stalwarts who needed no introduction to the great elixir of life. All concerned chipped in with a contribution of about ten shillings per head towards the purchase of a quarter barrel of stout and some spirits.

On the night of the party the keg would usually be placed on a stool in an outhouse, where it would be topped and a couple of reliable gentlemen put in charge. The drink was siphoned off into pint size mugs and trollyed to the kitchen where a music and dancing session would be in progress. There were always plenty of musicians around, most



*The members of
Ballymote Heritage
Group
and the Editor of
The Corran Herald
James Flanagan
would like to wish all our
readers, contributors and
advertisers a very happy
and peaceful Christmas
and a prosperous New
Year*

**Nollaig Shona
Dhíbh Go Leir**

of them ready and willing to provide first class entertainment. Popular instruments of the day included the old fashioned melodian and the bodhran. Sets and half-sets of lancers were tapped out on the kitchen floor and all persons present took turns in and out between dances to go the room for refreshments. This is where the ladies came into focus with an all out effort at catering and washing up. Other party pieces included ballad singing, step dancing, story telling etc.

These Christmas parties were usually carried out in an orderly manner, with an

almost complete absence of rowdyism, or over indulgence in alcohol. The owner of the house had laid down a sort of golden rule that the maximum amount of alcohol allotted to any one person be five mugs of porter. The crowd usually dispersed and headed for home at around cock-crow in the morning.

That so many of the parties had been so orderly conducted has been attributed to the fact that the terrible war raging in Europe had a subduing effect on our entire population.

Later on in the fifties the attitude of

our young people changed dramatically, and disorderly scenes were sometimes witnessed at country-house parties. Petty little acts of blackguardism were seeping in, and honest-to-goodness country people were introduced to substances like red pepper and itching powder at the parties. These substances were usually brought into the country by people returning from abroad. The older generation were completely taken aback by this kind of behaviour.

The use of red pepper was an extremely dangerous action especially when placed in cotton wool and left to smoulder at a door entrance. It gave out an intoxicating fume that irritated the throat and chest and caused utter confusion within the congested country houses, often putting an end to the party.

Another substance which came into play during this period was itching powder. Although not nearly as dangerous as red pepper it caused irritation of the skin which often nearly drove its victims to distraction.

The porter spree more or less died out with the forties. It was a fixture that was really suited to this particular juncture in time. It brought people together for a bit of recreation when they needed something to cheer them up. The vast majority of them, I feel sure, enjoyed every minute of it.

The average Irishman enjoyed his pint of porter and solemnly believed in a philosophy, that one hour of crowded glory was preferable to a lifetime of misery.

BUNNINADDEN NATIONAL SCHOOL 1958



Back Row from left

Mary Mc Loughlin, Kathleen Brennan, Mairéad Hannon, Patricia Gorman, Nancy Scanlon, Mary Teresa Mulholland, Kathleen Rogers, Nessa Mc Guinn, Ita Healy, Carmel Davey, Kathleen Killoran, Peggy Roddy.

Front Row from Left

Letty Hannon, Maureen Scanlon, Mary Elizabeth Doohan, Annie Mary Scanlon, Philomena Mulholland, Martha Davey, Mary Killoran.

Sharon's

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S. Johnson M.P.S.I.

Lord Edward St., Ballymote

071 - 83515

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THE THIRD ANNUAL HERITAGE WEEKEND in Ballymote had as its highpoint a special Mass in honour of the 550th anniversary of the local Franciscan friary. This Mass, at which the chief concelebrant was Most Rev. Dr. Thomas Flynn, Bishop of Achonry, was held in the parish church on the afternoon of Sunday, August 2nd, 1992. In 1688 a special chalice was ordered for use in the friary by the then Guardian, Fr. Anthony Mc Donagh. The photo above shows this same chalice being held by Bishop Flynn. [See Tom Mc Gettrick's 'Three Chalice' in this issue.]

A Dead Loss

It was a fine warm evening in June many many years ago. The evening chores were finished, the hay-making finished for the day. A group of the lads gathered at the crossroads for a chat. In those days there was no T.V., no videos and no disco.

The lads began to discuss among them what they could or would do to relieve the boredom. Many suggestions were offered, but all failed to be taken up. Then out of the blue came a proposal, "we will make a bodhran". All were in favour, but where would the main ingredient come from, it being the skin of a

goat about a year and a half old, ideal stuff.

There was a personer living at the East end of the village and he owned a suitable animal. Well! However, either by design or by accident the goat died and was buried in the bog nearby, naturally the old man felt a great loss.

After about a week the carcass was exhumed, and due to the horrible stench it had to be skinned under water. The skin was washed and shaved and was treated with some sort of powder to season or cure it. It was then spread on a barn door to dry out, but a passing hungry dog took the skin away. There ended the sad story of that Bodhran.



KIELTY'S Rock Bar



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Ballymote

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*Christmas Wishes
to all our cutomers
from*

*Des &
Margaret Kielty*

May Hunt

wishes all her
**FRIENDS AND
RELATIVES,**
and also all in
**Northwest & Mid-
West Radio,**

a
*Happy Christmas and a
Prosperous New Year.*

THE AFRICAN CONNECTION



Pictured above are Fr. Liam McDermott and the writer of 'The African Connection', Mr. Jack Martin

In this 550th Anniversary year of the Franciscans in Ballymote, it is only right to mention one of our own..... a Ballymote Franciscan who has made history in Africa. Fr. Liam McDermott was appointed the First Provincial to the first South African Province which was set up in 1985.

Fr. Liam was born in Ballymote in 1934. Educated in the Convent National School by the nuns and later by Mr. Cassidy and Mr Barnes in the local boys' school. There was no secondary education in Ballymote then for boys without going to a boarding school, so Mr. Barnes prepared the students for whatever scholarships were available. Fr. Liam won a scholarship to Multyfarnham and went there.

After five years there he decided to join the Franciscans and went to the novitiate in Killarney, where he spent

a year and was professed as a Franciscan on 8th September 1954. From there he went to Galway and attended the University for three years, studying Greek, Latin, and Mathematics. He made his final profession in Galway on December 8th 1957. From there he went to St. Anthony's College in Louvain to study philosophy. In 1959 he went to Rome to study theology and was ordained there on 17th February 1963. That same year he was sent to South Africa as curate in Sharpeville where he worked for fifteen years. Sharpeville in those days (three years after the shooting) was quite tense and being a white priest he had to have a special permit which allowed him to be in the town from 7.00am to 7.00pm. He was not allowed to be in town after dark. Sick calls however were attended to and that curfew was ignored. This permit had to be renewed every three months, which was one way of ensuring that the bearer caused no trouble. Before taking up his position in Sharpeville he had to go to Lesoto to learn Sotho. When he returned to

Sharpeville and apart from permits and what have you, it was just ordinary parish work for the next fifteen years. He also helped people with permits to live and work in the area.

JACK MARTIN

In 1978 Fr. Liam was elected regional superior of the Franciscans in the Transval area of South Africa. In 1985 the first South African province was set up and he was appointed the first provincial and held that post until 1991.

Fr. Liam was on vacation in Ballymote this year and it was his one regret that he could not be with us during the Heritage Week-end celebrations, seeing that he is the only connection with the Franciscan past; but during his holiday at home he got word that he was transferred to Zambia and must be in South Africa for the end of July; but I'm sure he was truly with us in spirit. *

MEEHAN'S FOODSTORE

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***Christmas Greetings !
to all our
Customers & Friends***

Time Brings Changes

MRS. MARY WHITE

We are thirty years living in Collooney now. When we rented the little storey-and-a-half house in Tubberbride for ten shillings/fifty pence weekly, from Farrells in April '62, Jim McGarry owned a lovely bungalow on the opposite side of the road, and G.W.I. had moved from Tubbercurry to Old Street Collooney, where McMahon's is now.

Kerins were our immediate neighbours. They were kind and patient with us as we drew our daily water from their taps. John Kelly R.I.P. never tired of mowing the lawns and pampering the attractive shrubs and hedges at McGarry's house. Tenants came

"Cars were parked bumper to bumper up and down the town."

and went from the bungalow, Ewan O'Flynn and his family moved to Lucan, Breege Haran/O'Donnahue moved to Limerick. Maggie Keogh and her husband Michael R.I.P. lived around the corner between Kerins and us. A little farther up the hill but still in Tubberbride, Charlie and Mrs. Burke continue to live. Their family have flown the nest. G.W.I. employed between three and four hundred men using all the floors of the multi-storey buildings in the yard. The hooter could be heard for miles around several times a day. Cars were parked bumper to bumper up and down the town.

John and Mrs. Broe R.I.P. ran a unique business for many years offering everything from fresh sandwiches for the G.W.I. men to antiques, jewellery and groceries. The Broe buildings remain the same, and a new Thrift shop is currently being established. Thanks to the County Council and the Department of the Environment the abandoned plot between Broes and the hill-top has been transformed into the most attractive flood lit grotto in the North West. The stone work and engineering is a credit to the workers and a pleasure to the beholders. Out of the ashes of a few little houses between Broes and McGovern's came the four lovely two storey houses inhabited by Mellee, Sweeney, McLoughlin and Duggan families. McGovern Florists was grocery then, and Gillooley's, now Johnny Macs' Bar, with John Francis O'Rourke and Joe O'Neill, may they rest in peace, was the 'in' pub for the joinery workers to wash the saw dust and noise away. Bretts and Breslins lived where Innisfree Crystal is now.

Jim and Eileen Gilligan and Jim McGarry commanded the double, maybe treble, buildings top of the hill corner with flourishing clothing and footwear business and private residence.

In one of the four little houses between McGarry's and G.W.I. Willie Burke R.I.P. tapped away at his shoe-maker business with a smile and a job done for everyone who called. Now another beautiful two storey house, credit to the builder Stephen Sweeney stands there. The Old Street is now a very new and attractive street indeed, but the hill remains the same, and even before there was any mention of a by-pass road many motorists shied away from the Hill and opted for the longer way around.

Back to Tubberbride. Council workers often boarded up my window and door, took me down the road a few hundred yards while they blasted the rock removing a bad bend between Kerins and McGarry's. Four of our five children were born during the eight years we lived at Tubberbride. We had outlived the advantages of the small, low-rented house, and I had a path paved into the new estate, now Kiernan Avenue, watching every progressive step— windows and doors fitted, the glass 'Xed', the wooden fences erected, but the allocation was delayed because of the sudden death of the contractor Mr. McHugh R.I.P. Eventually in August 1970 we moved into our new house, No 6. By pure coincidence, because we drew the numbers from a hat, there was a G.W.I. employee under each roof of the twelve semi-detached houses; John Hannon, Jim Scanlon, Mick White, Owen Watters, John Breslin, Paddy Callaghan. The Hannons and Scanlons moved on, and the other four families are still in residence.

Around the same time G.W.I. from Old Street to the huge factory and Sports Complex on the Boyle Road, but changes were only beginning. Overtime in G.W.I. which often ran to 10.00pm and Saturdays in the old factory, was drastically reduced, and even the dinner hour was cut to accommodate the workers who preferred to be off earlier in the evenings. In 1986 G.W.I. closed with the loss of four hundred jobs. Mangan's Cash and Carry use part of the buildings, and Collooney Community purchased the Sports/Teeling Centre.

"The by-Pass showed no mercy as it ploughed..."

There are several lovely new houses at Tubberbride now, and our little love nest has been redesigned and enlarged. But the by-pass road had no mercy as it ploughed through McGarry's bungalow and the water-holding-tree, (from which Tubberbride got its name), hiding most of the houses and leaving McGarry's golden privet and Cherry Blossom high and dry but still beautiful on the other side of the New Road. 🌲 🌲

My Town

Noelle Healy, Cletta

Come and walk with me as I travel through my hometown, Ballymote. It has a population of 1,100. It is situated in the limestone plains of Corran and we will rest under the shadow of the cone-shaped hills of Kesh-corran.

BALLYMOTE means the town of the moat. It gets its name because of the Norman Castle situated on the outskirts of the town. This castle was built in about the year 1300 by Richard De Burgo, second Earl of Ulster who was known as the Red Earl. The site of the Castle was known as Átha Cliath an Chorrainn—the ford hurdles of Corran.

The area within the walls is 150ft. square. The walls are about ten feet thick. The castle was owned by O'Connors, McDermotts and the Taafes at different times. It was here that the Book of Ballymote was compiled in about 1491.

There are many historic buildings in Ballymote. The oldest building in Ballymote is EMLAGHFAD CHURCH. The parish of Emlaghfad was established by Saint Colmcille when he

built the Abbey and appointed Saint Enda as its Abbot. The monks continued to live in Emlaghfad until about 1605. The Abbey was taken over by the Established Church in 1615. It remained as a Protestant church until the present church on the Rock which was begun in 1818 by the Rev. John Garret was completed in 1848 at a cost of £2,500.

THE FRANCISCAN ABBEY was founded in 1442 by three brothers named Patrick, Andrew and Philip O'Coleman. The Pope's bush tiara is still there to be seen sculptured over the door of the Western gable.

EARLSFIELD HOUSE was founded in Ballymote in about 1775 by the Fitzmaurices. The builders of this house tried to take some stones from the Franciscan Abbey. The Parish Priest disagreed and said that they were taking stones from a consecrated building and that they would one day return to a consecrated building. Earlsfield House is now owned by the Sisters of Mercy.

The COURTHOUSE was built in 1813 at a cost of £600. It was the only one of its kind in the country.

GLEBE HOUSE was built in about 1825 by Rev. John Garrett as his place of residence. It is now owned by Dr. Scully and her family and is called Eagle House.

In about 1760 Lord Shelbourne established a linen industry in Ballymote. He installed twenty one looms but it was not a success until Thomas Fitzmaurice took it over in 1774. He erected a bleach mill at Mill Street and provided a mill race. Mill Street is now called Grattan Street.

Now dear reader, perhaps you tire as I relate all this history to you, but each town has its own story and its own pride.

For me, Ballymote is the best. Why not come into one of our local restaurants, gaily decorated and we'll taste some hot buns and freshly brewed coffee.

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&
A Prosperous New Year.*

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CHRISTMAS GREETINGS FROM MICHAEL,
PATRICIA & STAFF

Founded on a ROCK

A document in the Public Record Office of Ireland begins:

"JAMES BY THE GRACE OF GOD, OF ENGLAND, SCOTLAND, FRANCE AND IRELAND, KING, DEFENDER OF THE FAITH, TO ALL TO WHOM OUR PRESENT LETTER SHALL COME, GREETING, ETC.."

After a surfeit of pompous verbosity and frequent aforesaid, the aforesaid King grants to Sir James Fullerton the right to hold fairs and markets in Ballymote on certain specified dates."

James the First was King 1603 - 1625 and the permission was given in the 14th year of his reign. That dates Ballymote's markets and fairs. The right continued through a succession of landlords down to the Fitzmaurices whose names are associated with their efforts to establish the linen industry in the second half of the 18th century.

Sir Robert Gore-Booth became the landlord of Ballymote in 1834. The Fitzmaurice interest in it had come to an end with the failure of the linen industry. They had interests elsewhere and they made a deal with Gore-Booth. He, whether for the welfare of his new tenants or to recoup some of his outlay on the property, drew up a set of rules, the title of which was:

RULES FOR THE BETTER REGULATION OF BALLYMOTE MARKET.

The Markethouse, on the Rock, was built by the Fitzmaurices and had a central role in the rules. It had weighing equipment and storage space. There was a weighmaster and he had 'assistants'. There was a butter taster and this is an occupation that time and progress have made obsolete. Creameries were still many years into the future. Ballymote, one of the earliest in the country, opened in July 1897. Butter, made by the farmers' wives, was an important item among the market's commodities. The taster could accept, downgrade or reject butter and stamped it accordingly. Some house-

Tom Mc Gettrick wives were known

for the quality of their product and they often got ready sale in the local shops. After each market a cart left for Sligo laden with firkins. Sligo port sent out considerable amounts of butter.

The market opened promptly at 8.00am in Summer and 9.00am in Winter. These are a sample of the weighing charges and there were charges also for storage:-

A firkin of Butter	2d.
A sack of Corn	1d.
Tasting butter /firkin	3d.
A dead Pig	2d.
Draft of wool per cwt.	6d.
Creel or bag of Potatoes	1d.

The fairs of our time were held on the first Tuesday and Wednesday of each month, the pig fair on Tuesday and the cattle on Wednesday. Fullerton was given permission for two fairs, one in May and one in August. The pig fair was usually concentrated on the Rock and the cattle fair, on peak days, might spread over most of the town. The bulk of the cattle sold went to the station to be railed for export or to go to the large

farms of the midlands. Some went by road to the northern station at Collooney and two drovers could have between fifty and a hundred cattle to drive. Cattle droving was an occupation of the time.

*To Meath of the pastures
From wet hills by the sea,
Through Leitrim and Longford
Go my cattle and me.*

There was a 'custom gap' between Cryans and Tighes at the entrance to Teeling St. and tolls were collected there on all cattle going to the station or by road.

The Gore-Booths were the last landlords of the town before the Land Acts got rid of landlordism and they were succeeded by the Ballymote Electric Lighting and Town Improvements Co. One might say it saw the curtains drawn on many of the old domestic ways of the town.

The citizens in our own time saw the fairs give way to the new system of the cattle mart and heard the squeals of the last bonhams on the Rock. There are no turkeys weighed in the Markethouse at Christmas now, nor second-hand clothes bought off the Ceannt from Ballaghadereen. There's no dillisk or rock or conversation lozenges or 'peggy's leg' anymore.

There may be a few hundred of "Early York yet, but it's no wonder the 'averages' in the rural schools went down.

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**Season's greetings to all our
customers and friends**

Ancient Irish Cures

P.J.Duffy

Nowadays, with the advent of modern medicine we seem to have little or no regard for those people who still practice ancient methods of healing. Yet, there was a time in our country when the vast majority of the people depended solely on them. Indeed right up to and during the early decades of this century various forms of healing were widely in use right across the countryside. Our ancestors had, it seems, a cure for every type of ailment under the sun. Most of these were handed down from father to son right down through to succeeding generations.

For the vast majority of people who practiced the various methods of healing, theirs was a sacred inheritance, not to be spurned or taken lightly, but rather to be religiously cherished and used compassionately in the interests of all people.

Very often, what you found when you went searching for a cure, was an ordinary – looking plain individual who went about his or her daily chores, in a quiet and unassuming way, but who always found time to attend to those people who were ill or in distress. Unique, amongst all of those people who effected cures, was of course the faith healer. he was to all intents and purposes, a very rare species.

The seventh consecutive son or daughter born into a family would automatically become a healer, even before reaching the age of adolescence. Stranger still is the fact that the seventh child of a seventh child, born in this order, would inherit extraordinary powers of healing. Evidence of this fact can still be found at the present time. What is even more significant is the fact that the number seven has extraordinary implications in the make up of the human form. For example genes from the human body can be carried forward through seven successive gen-

erations, affecting the individual biologically for better or for worse. There is a story told of a father of six sons whose wife was expecting another child. During the course of a conversation with another woman, he mentioned something about being awaiting the arrival of the doctor. She anxiously enquired what was wrong. "Nothing very much", replied he. "My wife is expecting again and we're hoping for a son, for he will be a doctor." The son duly arrived, and if the story is true, he left behind him a record in healing that might match any doctor.

Another example of the power to cure being inherited through circumstance, is the fact that if a person never set eyes on their father, they would automatically be endowed with the ability to cure a troublesome throat and mouth infection known as Thrush. Many of us have witnessed instances of this form of healing in our lifetime.

The majority of people who practiced the various forms of healing, did not have the slightest idea as to their origins. It was just something that was handed down to them from a previous generation, and they carried on, simply because they thought it was their duty to do so.

According to some old folk whom I have talked to, the practice goes back to remote times in our history, when our race had little or no medical remedies to combat the ravaging disease epidemics that they were subjected to from time to time. What we must understand here is the fact that living conditions were then very primitive and people found it necessary to reside in large settlements, mostly for protection from warring tribes. There are stories told of infected people having to be isolated from settlements and thrown into places of isolation. According to some of the stories, the unfortunate victims of some of these plagues

were often visited by a spirit, who not only cured them, but also gave to them the power to cure others, and subsequently pass their gift on to a new generation.

Most of us have, at sometime during our lifetime, listened to stories and accounts of the powers and magical acts said to have been brought by Druids, wizards, siblings and canny folk in ancient Ireland. We have only to look back to the end of the last century, and listen to stories being told about the late Biddy Early who lived at Feakle in County Clare. This remarkable woman was said to have extraordinary powers bestowed on her, after being visited by a strange lady while she lay on her sick bed suffering from pneumonia. The visitor was said to have handed her a green twisted shaped

**Scanlon's
Corner House
O'Connell St
Ballymote**



071- 83777



**Christmas Greetings to
all our customers and
friends.**

bottle, and vested within its funnel was the power to cure all kinds of ailments, and also the power to cast spells.

When we examine the stories relating to Christian Ireland, we hear stories of cures been carried out at places like spring wells. Definitely in olden times the spring well was regarded as something very sacred, and a symbol of great purity. The monks of old always built their monasteries near hand to a good spring well. They blessed the well and baptised the offspring of the faithful with the waters of these sacred fountains. Many people laid claim to the fact that they had their ailments cured while visiting these holy places.

In rural Ireland it was regarded as a bad omen to deny anybody access to a spring well or to abuse or pollute it.

Operating alongside the various forms of faith healing you had those people who compounded traditional prescriptions and remedies which were widely in use down through the centuries. These people prepared and put together mixtures which made up ointments, plasters, poultices and lotions.

Like the other healers they too, devoted a fair share of their time and talents towards helping out their fellows in distress.

The ingredients that went towards making up these preparations were always a closely guarded secret and nobody would dare venture to enquire what they contained. Some of the people who were responsible for assembling the ingredients and blending them together were known as herbalists. They collected herbs and plants from the soil, and sometimes boiled them in milk, for oral consumption. Again, the herbs would be seasoned and ground to make plasters for applying to external parts of the body.

Whatever about advances in the field of modern medicine we will continue to be fascinated with the various forms of traditional healing, especially the ones involving faith or spiritual healing. The people who carried them out were at all times greatly respected, and seemed to be surrounded by a certain amount of mystique. Some of them we were so familiar with that we literally took them for granted.

There was the seventh son who was usually associated with curing ringworm, a skin infection which formed in circular patches and affected various

parts of the body. He carried out his cure by drawing a circle with his finger around the area of infection. He then blew his breath on the spot and recited a couple of prayers.

We had the man with a cure for a pain in the head. In olden times this used to be known as head fever. He simply tied a cloth band tightly around the head and recited some prayers. After a couple of minutes he removed the band and noted the measurement of the head on its circumference. You paid three visits to this healer, and each time he took note of the head measurement. On the final visit he pronounced you cured, that was if the size of the head had reduced considerably since the first visit.

You'd got the man with cure for stomach and bowel worms. His cure was certainly a remarkable one. It came about after he packed a half-pint glass tightly with oatmeal. He then stretched a piece of linen cloth across the top of the glass and tied it firmly with string. His patient was obliged to strip off all clothing from the abdomen. The healer then placed the glassful of oatmeal tightly against the stomach and while doing so recited recited prayers. After a couple of minutes he would take the glass from the body and place it on a table where he would remove the cloth and point to a number of minute openings inside the hard packed oatmeal which had been eaten away by worms. On the second visit to this healer, there should be a noticeable cut back in the consumption of meal in the glass. Then on the third and final visit you were declared cured if the meal in the glass went untouched.

Most of us are well aware of the fact that faith healing in Ireland was by no means a man's prerogative. There were many well known women healers who were never found wanting when it came to relieving sick people. We had the woman who cured a nasty infection of the mouth and throat known today as thrush, but in her day it was called foul-mouth. Thankfully there are people still around who carry out this type of healing.

There once lived a woman in our area who could remove a dust from the eye, by placing a bowl of water on a small table. She would ask her subject to stand beside the bowl while she recited some prayers. Seconds later the

dust could be seen floating in the water.

One of the strangest forms of therapy to be practiced in rural Ireland and which still continues to a certain extent is the ancient cure for whooping-cough. The consumption of ferret's leavings by the victims of this contagious chest and throat complaint has, it seems, been around for a very long time. The ferret, an uncanny little animal, belongs to the weasel family, and as we know the weasel in our part of the country has long been regarded as a strange and mysterious creature. Many people still believe that it is an unlucky omen to harm or kill the weasel.

Back in the late forties and early fifties we kept a ferret at our place for the purpose of catching rabbits. The animal was usually muzzled and let loose into the burrows where he routed the rabbits out into nets placed at the openings. All this was happening when there was a price and a market for rabbits.

I still clearly remember the severe outbreaks of whooping cough that occurred during those years and the worried parents of children arriving at our house in search of ferrets leavings. Many of them had set aside medical prescriptions, sincerely believing that this was the most effective cure.

During this time we were obliged to keep the ferret's quarters clean, and the animal itself well groomed. A glass dish filled with milk would be placed within its cage. Although it might already have taken enough food, it would at most times be willing to sample a fresh complement. The remainder would then be poured into a bottle and handed over to the visitor.

When queried later, about the effects of the bottle's contents the reply would usually be "There was a noticeable improvement, shortly after the child took its first sip."

Finally there is one more kind of cure that I might like to mention here. It is one some of our readers might find interesting, if not downright bizarre. This is one of a number of ancient cures for a burn, which anybody can acquire, simply by licking the body of a tiny speckled bellied lizard, which is often found in trenches and bogholes or else damp stonewalls, as it is an amphibious creature and can adapt

accordingly. In olden times this miniature reptile was known in Irish folklore as a mankeeper. The reptile, like the weasel had a rather weird reputation, and often featured in strange stories going back to biblical times. Very few people would take the risk of going near to a lizard, not to mention touching it with the tongue. But there were those courageous ones who took the risk and as a result became healers. To carry out his cure the healer was then obliged to lick the burned flesh of some unfortunate victim, and a rapid process of healing was said to follow suit.

Thankfully the need never arose where I myself found it necessary to visit a faith healer, but I have on separate occasions taken a number of people to their place of residence in pursuit of cures. The result at all times seemed satisfactory, and at no time did I hear mention of a complaint.

Something else worth noting in relation to the faith healing practice is its numerical code system — the seventh child; the seventh generation; the seventh child of a seventh child; three visits to a healer; three prayers recited during each visit. Visits, if possible occurring on the third and seventh days of the week. you can see that the odd numbers of three and seven figure prominently here.

After we examine all the facts, we have to agree that the healer belonged to a remarkable category of people. A people who in their time devoted their time and talents towards helping oth-

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Back Row L-R:

Nora Brennan, Patricia O'Brien, Mary McNamara, Terese Brennan, Marie Morahan, Mary Haran, Martha Davey,

Front Row: L-R

Maria Cahill, Julie Hogan, Mary Jo Gallagher, Philomena Walsh, Patricia Leonard, Elna Gallagher, Angela Walsh, Josephine McCarrick,

ers, and in almost all cases, achieving results that defied human explanation.

He was very much a product of his time. His was a noble calling. He had this unique gift bestowed on him, and he understood there was a moral obligation to carry it out at all times and eventually pass it to a new generation. ★ ★

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The West's Awake Still

MARY O'DONNELL

Do the people of the West of Ireland ever stop to think, that we have given two presidents to Ireland in the persons of Dr. Douglas Hyde, our very first president and Mrs Mary Robinson, our present one. Since our state is so very young, isn't this something we should be very proud of!

Dr. Douglas Hyde was the first to bear the title of Uachtarán na hÉireann and the first occupant of 'Árás and Uachtaráin'. He was born in Castlerea in 1860 to Rev. Arthur Hyde, Protestant Rector of Tibohine, Frenchpark, Co Roscommon and his wife Elizabeth Orson-Oldfield. He had two older brothers, Arthur and Oldfield and a younger sister, Annette. He spent the first seven years of his life in Killmacrann, Co. Sligo, in the Glebe House now owned and occupied by Philip and Bríd Martin and family.

In 1867 his father was appointed Rector at Tibohine Church, Portahard, Frenchpark and it was here Dr. Hyde spent his youth and teenage years.

Frenchpark, at this time, was an Irish speaking area and it was during these years he came to know the country people round his home and learned to speak and love their language, their folklore and their Irish customs.

He was educated by his father 'til

1880 when he was highly successful in his entrance examination to Trinity College, Dublin, where he graduated with a gold medal in Modern History in 1884, and his Law Degree LL.D in 1888.

He was was a fluent linguist and a man who loved music and painting but his first and last interest was the preservation of the Gaelic language and culture which he believed would break down the political and religious divides of his time.

In 1893 he co-founded 'Conradh na Gaeilge' and became its first president. He wrote poetry, essays and recorded folk-tales under the headings, 'Leabhar Scéalaigheachta' and 'Beside the Fire'. He was Professor of Modern Irish in U.C.D. from 1909 to 1932.

By agreement of the major political parties, he was offered and accepted the first Presidency of Ireland on 25th June 1938 and served until 1945. He died on 12th June 1949 and was buried with other members of his family in the grounds of Portahard Church of Ireland, where his father was Rector.

Today, the church has been developed as an Exhibition and Information Centre in memory of Dr. Hyde. This centre has achieved much in blending together the beliefs and culture of our country and promotes great social contact between North and South. Many of the works which Dr. Hyde collected are now housed in the centre as well as charts, maps and photographs and a twenty four minute video tape 'Love Songs of Connaught'. It captures the spirit of Dr. Hyde's dream and preserves a record of one life dedicated to one vision. Many other items of historic interest are also housed at the centre which is open from May to September.

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Three Chalices

Tom Mc Gettrick

On Sunday August 2nd. the Anton McDonogh (Anthony McDonagh) Chalice was raised at the Consecration of the Mass in Ballymote's Church of the Immaculate Conception. It was in celebration of the 550th anniversary of the Franciscan Abbey, the ruins of which occupy a prominent position in the ancient graveyard nearby. The Chalice bearing the date 1688 had come home. Anthony McDonagh at different times between 1680 and 1703 is referred to under the title Guardian of the Franciscan Friary of Ballymote. It would be more than surmise to conclude that many of those who now rest in the graves in and around that venerable pile would have raised their eyes to that same Chalice when Friar Anthony celebrated Mass in a building which at some rock on a sheltered hillside or in a private home where the monks, already scattered, were so often given shelter.

In 1942 the 500th anniversary of the coming of the Franciscans to Ballymote was celebrated with spiritual dignity and edifying ceremony as happened fifty years later in 1992. On this earlier occasion the Chalice at the Mass was brought to Ballymote by Friars from the Franciscan Monastery at Merchant's Quay. It did not have any particular association with Ballymote. It was known as the O'Queely Chalice. The Sligo Champion in its issue 28/11/42 states "The Chalice used was the De Burgo Chalice presented to the Most Rev. Dr. Malachi McQueely, Archbishop of Tuam in 1647 -etc." This

statement needs correcting - the facts are as follows:-

The DeBurgo Chalice and the O'Quelly (O'not Mac) Chalice were two different vessels and that gives a reason for the title above, Three Chalices. The full title of the first one was the De Burgo/O'Malley chalice. It was made in 1494 and it is now prominently displayed in all its radiant beauty in the National Museum. It was not in Ballymote.

The O'Quelly Chalice was made for the Archbishop in 1640. He died in 1645 and Dr. O'Rourke, Sligo's historian, tells the story of his death as a "martial prelate" leading his Confederate soldiers in an effort to retake Sligo in that year.

It is not necessary to write the whole story. In 1924 both Chalices came up for sale at Christies in London, and those involved knew that art collectors would be there in force. But the National Museum and friends of the Franciscans had been alerted in time. The Museum secured the De Burgo/O'Malley Chalice for £1,200 and the O'Quelly Chalice was bought for £460 and taken back to the Franciscan Fathers at Merchant's Quay.

So much for the three Chalices that have come forward in the search for Ballymote's authentic relic - The Anton McDonagh Chalice.



Jimmy Healy R.I.P. (centre), Laville, Ballymote, Patrick Duffy R.I.P. (right), Ballinascarrow, Ballymote, photographed in the castle grounds Ballymote, just before setting out on Canon Quinn's parade commemorating the Battle of the Curlews. Somebody around Ballymote might be able to identify the man on the left of the picture. He seems familiar but I cannot put a name on him.

P.J.Duffy.



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