Index

Remembering James Hannan

Michael Hannan (grandson of James Hannan)

JAMES Hannan, one of seven children of Thomas and Mary Catherine Hannan of Emlanaughton, Ballymote, grew up in the shadow and aftermath of the Great Famine of 1845-48. The people and landscape were still scarred by its effects and tears filled many a stream that flowed into the soft surrounding bog.

With no future on the land, in a climate of poverty and hardship, the only choice for the destitute was the workhouse or the emigrant ship.

James with his brother set their sights towards the commercial world, eventually setting up their own businesses on Lord Edward Street in 1879, while still in their middle twenties.

Canon Tighe died in 1876. Ballymote was then and in the following years in a state of severe deep depression as a result of bad weather, following two years of potato crop failure.

Canon Finn his successor, in an emotional letter published in the "Sligo Champion" 3rd Jan 1880 described the situation of the town and his parish so well: "on the edge of a famine catastrophe".

In 1879 Davitt and Parnell set up the Land League, a movement that quickly spread through the country, opening up a branch in Ballymote in 1880. This was seen as a beacon of light and hope against the injustices of the land laws, which gave no rights to the tenants, and a justice system tilted in favour of the landlord.

Tenants suffered the pleasure of the landlord, and were directed in which way to cast their votes. Any improvements to the home or good husbandry of their land met with an increased rent. Having no rights, they faced the possibility of eviction by unscrupulous landlords, without mercy, to the perils of the roadside.

James Hannan, J.P., C.C. (c1855-1929). First elected County Councillor for Ballymote 1899-1920. Remembered in this Centenary Year of Sligo County Council.

There was a breed of people known as "land grabber" or "flunky," waiting to capitalise on the misfortune of unfortunate evicted tenants, in order to gain a home for themselves.

The Land League sought to address these issues. James and his brother Matthew, were not able to isolate themselves from the problems and concern in their community and were quick to join the new organisation, the Irish Land League.

James Hannan's name appeared as a regular committee member by the following July, moving up the ranks to the position of Vice President and President.

The Parish priest usually held the position as League Chairman, with other priests of the parish also being members. For the following forty years James Hannan devoted his energies to his local Ballymote branch, also holding the position of treasurer in the governing body of the South Sligo Executive, which often took him to other centres.

He was to be seen at the head of the League demonstrations in support of unfortunate evicted tenants and against the re-possession of their farms by so called "grabbers."

He was also closely involved and to the front of many political rallies in the town and county, with gatherings of many thousands of people, in front of the platforms on which stood their Nationalist leaders and Members of Parliament.

His brother Matthew held the position of joint honorary secretary.

James established a second shop on Teeling Street, and in 1891 married Ellen, one of a family of ten Hayden children from Carrick-on-Shannon, setting up home in Gaol Street where they had a family of seven sons.

Matthew had an hotel and store. He married Ellen's sister, Mary, in 1894 and they had a family of one daughter and three sons, two of whom died as infants..

By 1895 James Hannan's stature and position in the community was acknowledged when he was sworn in as a Justice of the Peace for the County of Sligo, a position not often offered to Catholics.

The Irish National Federation, Ballymote branch, passed a resolution "That we congratulate our worthy V.P., Mr James Hannan on his elevation to the Bench. His impartially as President and V.P. of this branch of the I.N.F., is a sure guarantee that he will hold the scales of Justice evenly between man and man."

Perhaps the next biggest highlight for James came in 1899 when he was selected as a candidate in the first County Council elections by the Nationalist convention held in Ballymote, which drew the spotlight of the media with the events that led up to it, known as the "Sledge hammer incident."

The Convention was called for by P.A.McHugh M.P., Mayor of Sligo, John O'Dowd, and Wm O'Brien.

The Courthouse being the only suitable place to accommodate over one hundred delegates, an application was made to the Sub-Sheriff for its use. In answer to their request the Court keeper at Ballymote received the following telegram, "To Court Keeper, Ballymote. Mayor McHugh cannot have Courthouse to-morrow. Sheriff."

This refusal created bad feelings, and a confrontation the Mayor had not wished for. Further negotiations were still not able to obtain its use, so next morning when the Mayor and his colleagues arrived on the early train from Sligo, Mr Hawksby, the Courthouse keeper still refused the delegates entry.

The Mayor turning to John Gilmartin, the secretary of the Ballymote branch, said, "get me a sledge hammer" and addressing the delegates standing by added, "I am not going to ask you to do a thing I would not do myself, and I am going to take on myself the responsibility of this business."

Meanwhile "a sledge hammer" was brought and the Mayor, with his second stroke, smashed in the Courthouse door. "This action served notice that with the coming of the new County Councils, the power and arrogance of the old ascendancy had become a thing of the past".

This incident highlighted the convention, bringing much fame and admiration to the Mayor for his action, especially from the Irish Community in Britain.

James Hannan was nominated a candidate, and went on to win his seat on the County Council for Ballymote, where he served six full terms until his retirement. He contributed fully in the Council business and debates on various issues of the county, including the problem of the drainage of the Owenmore River.

He was a member of many of its

committees, including the Agricultural and Technical Instruction Committee. In one of its reports its Chairman commended him for carrying out a potato experiment of both manural and variety tests, putting it on record "I am indebted to Mr James Hannan, Ballymote." Which due to the uncongenial weather during the spring, kept back the working of the land for this crop, causing delay in planting and consequently telling against the crop.

He appears to have shown a keen interest in the many aspects of agriculture, during his career. He was a member of the Ballymote Creamery Board and a founding member of the Co-Operative Movement, where he served as an honorary secretary, and promoted the advantages of combining its orders to avail of bulk buying discounts for coal by the cargo load.

His interest in sport revolves on the youth within the town where he was on the sports committee, and was a fundraiser for a ball alley considered necessary to occupy the young men's energy.

He took an interest in the Ballymote Coursing Club, started by his brother Matthew. Between them they owned several greyhounds.

Matthew Hannan also served six terms as a District Councillor for Carrick-banagher. The two brothers were once described as "two of the most popular politicians and Nationalists of Connaught."

Unfortunately the dark clouds of change in the aftermath of the Easter Rising of 1916 brought atrocities on all sides, creating a country in turmoil with itself. The British landlord class sold their estates to return to the safety of their own country.

The Parke's estate of Oldrock farm was one such place, which contained all the horrors of a cruel and merciless land regime with evictions and harassment of its tenants.

This farm was one of the most contentious issues throughout the years on the agenda of the Land League seeking justice for its tenants. Never was so much recorded on any one issue than that of Oldrock farm.

Two of the many references to Oldrock farm from the League reports published in the Sligo Champion 18th April 1908: "That we call on those who are aiding and abetting the ranchers in the Parish, especially Oldrock, to come before our next meeting, otherwise the branch will not be accountable for what occurs afterwards."

"That we hereby warn the shopkeepers of Buninadden and Ballymote to be careful when supplying goods and we notice graziers pets of Cloonahension and Oldrock, as they failed to comply with the rules of the United Irish League."

Statements of this kind were a typical part of the published branch reports of their meetings.

Yet Matthew Hannan bought Oldrock farm, for whatever reason we will never know. It was a badly advised move, as he knew full well the problems attached from his many years in the League.

"It was owing to the League that the whole string of land Acts of the past thirty years were inscribed on the statue book, and by determination that the great land question would be resolved by returning it to the people through the Congested District board with the powers conferred on it by the 1909 Act".

Oldrock farm was always a contentious issue of both the Bunninadden and Ballymote branches of the League, in their forty years of existence calling for the re-distribution of its land.

As news of Matthew Hannan's purchase of Oldrock farm, was whispered throughout the district, much unpleasantness and confrontation followed.

Demonstrators gathered and marched outside the farm gates, causing damage to its property. Death threats were also made to Matthew Hannan and his family, and his hotel and store in Ballymote were boycotted.

These events finally culminated in a shooting fracas outside the hotel where Judge Wakely was staying, the night before the Quarter Sessions Court, in Ballymote ; and where several of those arrested were to appear.

Finally, "A settlement was finally reached in connection to the Oldrock farm, which had given rise to so much ill-feeling, thanks to the intervention of Rev Fr Quinn P.P., Bunnninadden: being amicably settled where Matthew Hannan had agreed to surrender the farm at the price he paid for it, plus interest."

The toll as a result of these events, played heavily on Matthew Hannan and his family and on his health, pre-empting the sale of the hotel in 1919, followed by his retirement to Dublin with his family.

James Hannan and his family must have suffered much pain during the period of this incident, where his position, credibility, honour or integrity was never questioned.

But with this unfortunate episode, came also bad fortune in illness of two of James's sons who both contacted T.B

In Jan 1920 his second eldest son Michael, who had been sent to convalesce in Colorado died. Sadly for the family, he was buried there.

Another younger son Walter, a solicitor's apprentice in Sligo who was in a Dublin sanatorium, died in April 1921, also of T.B., an illness without boundaries that struck at will so many families of the area.

In 1920 James Hannan quietly decided to follow his brother Matthew to Dublin and sold his main drapery shop on Teeling Street to O'Dowds, retaining his other shop on Lord Edward Street, and so ending the Hannan dynasty in Ballymote.

James Hannan's heart always remained where his roots were in Ballymote, returning at every opportunity, for business, visiting family and friends or on the sad occasions of many a bereavement, to which his name can be found on the published attendance lists of most funerals during his years in Ballymote.

Sligo Champion: 21st April 1929. "Regretted Death": "The death took place in Dublin at the weekend of James Hannan, late of Ballymote, and when the news of his passing reached the town where he had spent so many years, it caused a painful shock to his many friends. Some years ago Mr Hannan occupied a prominent position in the commercial life of Ballymote and was one of the most highly respected inhabitants. His remains were removed to Ballymote Catholic Church on Sunday evening last, and the funeral took place on Monday to the family burial ground at Carrownanty. The attendance at the obsequies was representative of all classes and creeds, and its huge dimensions were a fitting tribute to the memory of a man who was so universally and deservedly respected. To his relatives we respectfully tender an expression of our sincere sympathy in their great bereavement."

But let the final tribute to his memory be from the Ballymote Notes of the Sligo Champion 29th Dec 1919:

"Christmas Ballymote" I heard it often said that "the older the fiddle, the sweeter the tune," but whether this could be tuned to refer to business houses I will have my readers guess ; but I at any rate say that the house of Mr J. Hannan J.P., is improving with the years and may be relied on to supply the best of everything in up to date drapery, millinery, etc.. Anyone acquainted with the proprietor as I am would not wonder at this. As he is one of the most deservedly estimable men in town ; who while giving his lots of customers the best that money can buy, is ever ready to assist any movement for the betterment of the community. As a magistrate he is impartial and honest and his feelings if any lean towards mercy's-side."

• *P.S.: In the research for this article from the Sligo Champion, I was very conscious of the contributions made, especially by, Patrick A. McHugh, John O'Dowd and John Gilmartin, who gave strong Nationalist leadership, and so much un-selfishly of themselves. They were colleagues of James Hannan on the I.N.F. Executive, the Sligo Co.Council and also served with him on many of the different committees and bodies for the betterment of the community.*

Ladyewell in Lancashire and the Irish connection

Frank Tivnan

SINCE Anglo-Saxon times, people have come on pilgrimage to the Well and Shrine of Fernyhalgh, a few miles outside Preston, North of England.

The name 'Fernyhalgh' comes from the Anglo-Saxon compound word 'Ferny' meaning remote or ancient and 'halgh' meaning shrine. Fernyhalgh is pronounced 'Farayuff' in modern parlance.

In the 7th century the well and shrine were Christianised and dedicated to St. Mary–St. Patrick did the same to many wells in Ireland.

Little seems to be known about the Marian Shrine of Ladywell or Fernyhalgh between the 7th and early 12th centuries.

Around the 1100's a wealthy sea merchant named Fergus Maguire was returning home to his native Fermanagh. Fergus was a younger son of Chief Maguire of Fermanagh. Early during his homeward voyage, Fergus and his crew got into difficulties–the outrageous stormy weather tossed the heavily-laden galley and threatened the lives of those on board. No matter how much they strove to move the galley along, the fierce gales prevented them from moving. Eventually, the crew lost heart and threw down their oars and resigned themselves to death. Not so with the brave young Maguire–Fergus in the name of God continued to man the helm until the cruel sea wrenched it from his hands. Immediately he fell down on his knees and implored God to help him. He made a vow to his maker that in the event of their being saved he would do some great deed for the church.

The storm did not abate, but slowly the galley and crew were ushered to a safe and sheltered bay near Liverpool. That night as Fergus slept he had a vision. A voice from heaven said to him: "Go to Fernyhalgh and there you will find a crabapple tree with coreless fruit hanging over a shrine. There build me a chapel!" Next morning Fergus asked the natives of Liverpool about the Shrine of Fernyhalgh. No one ever heard of it.

Leaving the galley and crew in the hands of his foster father, Fergus set out to locate Fernyhalgh. For many weeks he trudged the length and breadth of Lancashire. He met many strange people, some of whom made a laugh of him.

On a cold November evening, Fergus halted at the gates of a small farmhouse. the lady of the house was standing at the gate pier and appeared to be waiting anxiously for someone.

Young Maguire greeted the lady and eventually she told that her cowgirl had taken the cows to pasture, but, that she was very late in returning. Fergus offered to help, but the lady said she would manage fine. Anyway, she kindly invited Fergus into the kitchen and offered him some refreshments and a little rest.

When the cow girl returned with the animals, the lady of the house reprimanded her for being so late. The cow girl quickly said that it was not her fault, as the Donn Cow, never satisfied, stayed away, and that she found her at Fernyhalgh.

Fergus could not believe his luck. The two ladies told him that Fernyhalgh was only three miles from there. On noticing that Hilda, the cow girl, had a crabapple branch with some apples in her hand, Fergus opened the apples and found they were coreless, exactly as he had been told in the vision.

The following morning, Maguire and Hilda set off for Fernyhalgh. When they reached the well, Fergus was convinced that it was the right place and falling on is knees he gave thanks to God and Our Lady. As he looked around for a suitable place to build a chapel, he noticed a large flat stone on the ground. On turning it up he saw a lightly carved figure of the Madonna and Child. Immediately it dawned on Maguire that Our Lady had been honoured on this spot and she wished to have this place known and loved in her honour. From that time onwards people flocked in their thousands to Mary's Shrine.

In 1547, the first year of the reign of Henry VIII's delicate son Edward VI, an Act of Parliament gave the crown all chantries and free chapels with all the monies destined for obits, anniversaries and church lights. The chapel at Fernyhalgh was destroyed and its bell, furniture and money were confiscated. Like the Shrine of Our Lady of Osmotherley in neighbouring Yorkshire, the destruction of Fernyhalgh Shrine did not stop the loyal faithful from visiting Our Lady's Well. The remoteness of the well was a distinct advantage and many graces and little miracles were granted to the staunch and religious pilgrims.

During the reign of Catholic King James II, Ladyewell House was built as a Mass Centre for the people of the district. Ladyewell House is still there and a visit to it is a must for today's pilgrims.

In 1913 there was a fierce drought in the area around Fernyhalgh. The Well of Our Lady was the only well that did not dry up. In the reliquary section of Ladyewell House there is very a curious mission altar. It was made of wood by a Mr. Burgers in 1560 and could be folded to form an ordinary sideboard, an important feature during the Penal Times in England.

St. Edmund Campion, St. Edmund Arrowsmith and Blessed John Woodcock offered Holy Mass on the Mission Altar.

The most recent acquisitions of Ladyewell House are the authenticated relics of St. Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury, martyred in 1170.

Ladyewell is essentially a much needed place of prayer and peace–a place hallowed by millions of Christians. It is a great spiritual facility, far from the madding crowd.

It is hoped that Our Lady's Shrine and Well at Fernyhalgh will become a great centre of devotion.

The Fernyhalgh or Ladyewell Marian Shrine

Exploration of the Caves of Keash, 1901

NARRATIVE OF THE INVESTIGATIONS : R.J. Ussher

ON the 5th of April, 1901, Dr. Scharff and Mr. Praeger visited Kesh, examined the series of caves, and made a preliminary survey of the principal cavern and its galleries. Arrangements were made with Mr. Luke Hannan, the occupier of the land, who subsequently gave every facility, and provided workmen.

On the 14th of May, Dr. Scharff, Mr. Coffey, and myself proceeded to the place, and first made trial-pits in the largest cavern, situated at the northern end of the cliff-range, but not meeting with fossil remains of any consequence, a large cave further south was next selected–the Coffey Cave, as it has been called. A trench having been sunk across its mouth, the excavation was continued for three days.

(1). There was an upper stratum of dark brown earth, from six inches to a foot in depth, which contained charcoal and bones of domestic animals, a point of Red Deer's antler, a human tooth, and a few relics of the crannog type.

(2). Beneath this was a bed of limestone blocks cemented together with calcareous deposit, varying from a foot to three feet in depth. In this were many land-shells and bones of small mammalia : among these Dr. Scharff has recognised the remains of the Arctic Lemming, of which this stratum as well as the next yielded a considerable number.

(3). A stratum of clay lay beneath the last, and contained limestone blocks as well as glacial boulders; this was excavated to a depth of six feet from the surface. As it became evident that the further excavation of the Coffey Cave would involve much labour by reason of the large number of limestone blocks, which formed a breccia in the second stratum, the work was provisionally abandoned at this point, in favour of a smaller cave, much further south, and on a somewhat higher level. This was named the Plunkett Cave, after Mr. Plunkett, of Enniskillen, who aided the Committee in its selection during a brief visit. Professor Cole also visited the scene of the work at this time, and subsequently Mr. Lamplugh, who made special observations on the glacial phenomena.

Digging was now commenced on the 18th of May, in the open entrance of the Plunkett Cave, where, after broken bones of Ox, Goat, and Pig had been found, a molar of Bear turned up, which gave indication that the cave had been a den of this animal.

The Plunkett Cave, like the others, pierces the cliff approximately at right angles, and after running a straight course into the hill for more than 50 feet, it is intersected by a gallery, the right branch of which forms a tunnel for 24 feet, and then expands into a lofty hall, called the Sloping Chamber, with further continuations, which are unexplored. Another branch, named the Water-Gallery, starts from the Sloping Chamber, and runs a long course still further into the heart of the mountain; it is parallel with the Plunkett Cave. Our excavations were continued through the latter, then through the gallery to the right and Sloping Chamber for 36 feet, and finally into the Water-Gallery for a distance of 20 feet when it narrowed too much to admit the wheelbarrow.

The contents were worked out in benches of two feet from front to back and from side to side of the cave; the upper stratum being first removed and then the second to a depth from the surface of about 3 feet At this depth the clay was found to be unpropitious, as it continued to be at all greater depths. Each barrowful was brought outside the cave's mouth and searched by daylight; and the relics found in each stratum were packed up separately, with a label that indicated their position.

After five weeks' work, the funds of the Committee being spent, the operations were discontinued on the 2nd of August, but without nearly exhausting the group of caves, of which the portions excavated form but a small part. Several other cavities in the fine series of the Keshcorran cliffs will no doubt amply repay exploration.

Deposits of the Plunkett Cave

(1). The uppermost stratum, found in all parts of the cave, was seldom more and was usually less than a foot in depth; its staple consisted of a loose earth, dark in colour when unmixed, but usually infiltrated with calcareous tufa, which gave it a grey appearance, and which occasionally formed horizontal seams in the stratum. This white tufa increased in the inner galleries, so that it sometimes resembled mortar, and it supplanted the earthy material on the surface of the Water-Gallery, where it was inter-stratified with a bed of charcoal. The latter material constantly occurred in greater or less quantity in the upper stratum, and was accompanied by other relics of man, as well as by a few human bones, marine shells, and numerous bones of domestic animals. A few bones of Red Deer and Bear also occurred in the upper stratum, and in the right-hand gallery a metatarsus of Reindeer was found sunk in this deposit; beneath its level there was plenty of charcoal, and this seems sufficient to show that the Reindeer survived in Ireland until the human period. In all the galleries explored, the Ox, Goat, Pig, and Horse were numerously represented, the bones of the latter indicating a small race, not unlike the Connemara pony. Remains of Sheep were less frequent, but were well distributed. Of Ass there were five instances, and two of Dog near the cave's mouth. The remains of the above animals were, as a rule, in a fragmentary state.

The implements found in the upper stratum consisted of a large stone celt, a bronze pin with a ring to it, and portion of a little iron saw of peculiar make, all of which occurred near the entrance, but within the cave; near the end of the principal gallery there was another bronze pin, wanting the ring, and an iron rod, 6½ inches long. No flint implements were recognised.

(2). Immediately underlying the first stratum was a second, which was clearly defined from it, being a clay of ochreous tint, more or less sandy towards its upper horizon, but becoming more tenacious the deeper we dug into it. It passed at the sides of the cave into a yellow clay, of which there were accumulations at the cave's mouth, while beds of sand occurred in other places. Fragments of limestone and chert were numerous in this second stratum, pebbles and rounded, worn stones. As such, however, are also to be found upon the mountain above, those met with in the interior of the cave were probably introduced through fissures, enlarged by drainage from overhead.

The animal remains in the second

stratum were confined to its upper portion; its deeper layers proved to be barren of fossils. Traces of man were accordingly few and doubtful in this clay, and consisted of some bits of charcoal; bones of domestic animals were also very few, one of Ox, one of Sheep, and two of Goat being assigned to this stratum. It must, however, be remembered that, as no stalagmite floor protected it, there was a danger of some such objects having been intruded into the clay by the disturbance caused by burrowing animals, e.g. Foxes and Rabbits; and for these reasons the distribution of the latter animals' remains are not treated as of importance.

The characteristic animal of this second stratum was the Brown Bear, whose remains were found in every part of the cave, most numerously in the gallery to the right, which afforded the first refuge from the light of day, and they extended into the Water-Gallery.

A femur of the Arctic Lemming was found in the clay at the mouth of the cave; while in seven places remains of Red Deer occurred, and in eight or more places bones of Hare, both of them in the clay of the principal gallery.

Remains of Pig were met with in the second stratum in the principal cave, and though they were much more numerously distributed in the upper stratum, these three instances in the clay can hardly have been due to accidental intrusion; they would indicate the greater antiquity of the Swine, whether wild or domesticated, than of the Horse, Ox, and Goat.

In at least two places bones of Wolf occurred in the clay in the centre of the main gallery.

There was one deposit at the entrance to the cave, which, though it contained no animal remains, might have thrown light on the relative ages of the latter, if it could have been correlated with the principal strata; namely, a bed of glacial gravel. This was deep and very limited in extent, and lay outside the low, narrow entrance, termed the Doorway, at which point it was narrowest. At about five feet below the surface it ceased, and was underlaid by a sandy clay, with angular chert fragments, while this glacial gravel contained worn stones and striated boulders of the peculiar rounded form of glaciated blocks. Some of these were too large to have been introduced through the cave from pot-holes in the hill over it, and consequently Mr. Lamplugh regards the glacial gravel as a deposit that was washed into the mouth of the cave from without.

The only specimens of crystalline stalagmite found were a block and cone of this ancient form of stalagmite; these were found in the clay in the second stratum in the Water-Gallery.

• *The above account of explorations of the Caves of Keash in an extract from The Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy, Volume XXXII, Section B, Part IV, 1903. The Coffey Cave is the ninth cave from the northern end, while the Plunkett Cave is the first of a small group further south. The Corran Herald is grateful to Mr. John Perry T.D. for use of his copy of this volume of the Transactions of the RIA.*

Photograph taken during the concelebrated Mass in the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Ballymote (Sligo Champion 27/03/81) to mark the 50th Anniversary of Monsighor O'Hara's Ordination. Supplied by Jack Martin

Cruachan

Jim McGarry

Where the plain of Coman stretches to the dawnlight
Slopes Cruachan to the sky.

FEW, if any, of the Royal Residences of ancient Ireland are so neglected by the authorities, the student and the tourist as is Cruachan, the ancient capital of Connacht. None is more worthy of notice or more rewarding on examination. Cruachan was the residence of the Kings of Connacht from long before the Christian era. Today it pinpoints in its monuments one of the most dramatic meeting points of paganism and Christianity. For there where a bullock scratches against a red granite Standing Stone lie the remains of Daithi, the last pagan monarch of Ireland, the nephew of Nial of the Nine Hostages, who first brought St. Patrick as a slave to Ireland, and the uncle of Laoghaire, that High King of Ireland who received St. Patrick at Tara. A short distance away where farmers dip their sheep in the water of the Well of Ogulla, St. Patrick baptised the daughters of the High King, the first two Irish Christian Virgins to go to meet their new-found God.

It was on a March day of brilliant sunshine that I first visited Cruachan. The bracing air on the summit of Rath Cruachan itself stimulated the mind with memories of the myths, legends and literature centred on the precincts of this once royal palace of Maeve, the Warrior Queen of Connacht two thousand years ago. Once it boasted a wall thirteen feet in width at the base, surrounded by five concentric ramparts. Now a grass grown mound, dominating the countryside, is all that is left of the palace of the Kings of Connacht from long before the time of Christ.

No one can dispute the regality of its lofty eminence, nor its strategic position, with fertile hills sloping all round to the plain of Magh Ai. The striking similarity of its elevated position to Tara, Aileach, Emain Macha and Cashel is more than a coincidence. But there the similarity ends because while all the others are well publicised, officially protected and popular with students and others, Cruachan is neglected.

It is difficult to understand this state of affairs because it was here that Maeve plotted and planned the disastrous Cattle Raid of Cooley that forms the central theme in the Ulster Cycle of Irish Saga–The Tain Bo Cuailgne. In that epic of the first century, Cu Chulainn, the epitome of Gaelic Chivalry, the greatest of all heroes in that heroic age, is the central figure–a fitting counterpart for the Amazonian Maeve. Of lesser stature, but still of heroic mould, is Ferdia, who was suborned by the cajolery of Maeve with wine, flattery, threat of satire and finally the promise of the hand of the fair Findabair, Maeve's lovely daughter, to fight his boyhood friend Cu Chulainn.

Where in literature is there an incident to match the scene of the Fight of the Ford of the two friends for its profound tragedy? Or for Chivalry, where can one match the gesture of Cu Chulainn in protecting his enemy, Maeve, in her exhaustion? It is no wonder that the Tain Bo Cuailgne challenged writers from the earliest times to the present day when we find the great W.B. Yeats using the death of its hero as the theme of two of his best verse plays. Various versions of the Tain Bo Cuailgne are found in The Book of the Dun Cow and the Book of Leinster both of the 12th century and in the 14th century Yellow Book of Lecan. They were all copied from older manuscripts, now lost. But they all tell the story of Cu Culainn's defence of Ulster, alone, against Maeve's army.

And it was on this very spot that the argument arose between Maeve and her husband, Ailill, that set in motion the train of events that led to the Cattle Raid.

While only a short distance to the right at Rath na Dtarbh, the culmination in anticlimax of the Raid took place. For it was here, local tradition says, that the Brown Bull of Cuailgne killed the Whithorned Bull of Connacht and set off for Cuailgne with the carcass of the dead bull on his horns. The Tain Bo Cuailgne ends as it begins with the two Bulls.

So within a stone's throw we have the scenes of the beginning and end of the first national epic, that most famous Cattle Raid in any literature–conjuring up the names of Maeve and Ailill, Cu Chulainn and Emer, Ferdia and Findabair, Conor MacNessa and Fergus MacRoy and many of the other names in Celtic mythology.

I followed the fragmented track of an ancient road, perhaps the one on which the fair Findabair looking out from her bower at Rath Cruachan saw Laoghaire the Triumphant, Connall the Victorious and the Immortal Cu Chulainn approach the Palace. The Ulster heroes had come for Maeve to decide which of them was entitled to receive the Hero's Portion as told in 'The Feast of Brichiu', another saga of the Ulster Cycle.

This path led me to Roilig na Riogh, the most famous royal burial ground in Ireland. Here, most of the Kings of the royal line of Heremon and three of the Tuatha de Danann queens who gave their names to Ireland, Eire, Banba and Fodhla –are alleged to be buried. There, too, according to historians, Conn of the Hundred Battles and the restless, warlike Maeve are buried. Tradition however places Maeve's grave high up on Knocknarea in County Sligo. A peculiar local tradition supported by the physical contours, is that the graveyard was divided into four parts for the Four Provinces of Ireland.

On a mound just outside the royal burial ground is the famous Cairrthe Dhearg or Lia Dhearg under which Daithi the last pagan monarch of Ireland was buried early in the fifth century. He was killed by lightning at the foot of the Alps and his body carried back to Ireland by his devoted soldiers. In that land of limestone, the red granite Standing Stone is starkly incongruous. According to tradition, it too, was brought back by Daithi's soldiers from the Continent. It is the only Standing Stone in Ireland whose origin is authenticated.

Descending the high ridge of land from pagan Rath Cruachan I arrived, in the failing light, at the Holy Well of Ogulla which figures so prominently in the records of St. Patrick's visit to Connacht. It was here St. Patrick camped the night before his visit to the Court of Rath Cruachan. As the sun was rising the following morning, the Saint and his followers were sitting on the giant boulders around the Well of Clebach as it was then called–the same boulders that still stand guardian around that beautifully secluded fountain. While chanting their office, they saw two maidens coming down the slope towards the Well. Both had long hair streaming in the wind–one golden, the other auburn. They were attended by Handmaidens and two aged Druids. St. Patrick soon learned that they were Eithne the Fair and Fidelm the Ruddy, daughters of Laoghaire, the Ard Ri and that it was their custom to bathe daily in Clebach Well. The story of their encounter with the Saint, their conversion and immediate death is one of the most extraordinary episodes in the Saint's life.

The Royal Virgins were buried near the Well where later, a Church was erected named Ogulla–the Church of the Virgins. In time, Clebach's Well became known as The Well of Ogulla, as it is today.

Sitting on one of the giant boulders, mute guardians of the Well, listening to the noisy water escaping through a narrow opening and looking back to Rath Cruachan, a verse from Stephen Gwynn's splendid war song came to mind:

Patrick is dead, and Ossian
Long to his rest is gone;
But the words and the deeds of heroes
Linger in twilight on.

Lady Morgan (Sydney Owenson)

Maire McDonnell Garvey

SYDNEY Owenson was born on Christmas day in 1785 in Dublin. She was baptised a month later and christened Sydney. Her godmother Mary Anne Hardiman was a cousin of the Historian James Hardiman. Her father (originally Mac Owen) changed his name to Robert Owenson, as he was an actor. Sydney said in her Memoirs (vol. 1) that she was the granddaughter of Sir Malby Crofton. There is nothing to prove this. She tells us that her mother was an English Protestant from Shrewsbury who had a negative assessment of Ireland 'as the land of potatoes and papists'. Her father claimed kinship to ancient Irish families. Sydney chose to study Irish culture. Her Irish grandmother was known in Tirawley, Co. Mayo as Clairseach na Vallagh, or, The Village Harp, for the superior qualities of her musical abilities.

In 1807 Sydney visited Longford House where she was a governess to young Malby Crofton. Previous to this she had been governess in Featherstone House in Dominic Street, Dublin. Here she found letters of Swift and Alexander Pope. She made use of these in her first novel–St. Clair. She made a great impression on the local residents of Longford House which was situated a few miles west of Ballisadare, south west of Sligo town.

Sydney wrote her book "The Wild Irish Girl" while she stayed with the Croftons. She made a great impression on the local residents, as she was gay, vivacious, smart and young. She steeped herself in the essentially romantic atmosphere of gloomy caverns with roaring breakers of the Atlantic (like those at Aughris). She visited ruined abbeys and eventually she got an introduction to Joseph Cooper Walker who helped her with her inquiries. Walker's "Essay on Irish Dress" was a good help to her.

Sydney based her book on a curious circumstance in her own life. She first intended to call her book the "Princess of Innismore". A young man fell in love with Sydney and when his father heard about it he was upset. He had no money, no profession and was just plain idle. She had no money either His father called on Sydney and begged her to use her influence to stop all this nonsense. She however had no feelings for his son at all. But the father assisted her father with counsel and money and indeed Sydney admitted to herself that he too was in love with her. But she had no intention of marrying either the father or the son. After the book was published Sydney was identified as Glorvina the principal character. The traits of the Prince of Innismore were the actual traits of a well known Connacht man–the Prince of Coolavin.

The success of that book lay in the fact that it told much about the social conditions, the manners, customs, literature and antiquities of Ireland. It was a pleading against the wrongs and the injustice to which the Irish people were subjected. When her book was published it seemed to set a seal on her literary reputation. She set out in 1806 and travelled the west of Ireland. There she gathered impressions, scenes, and incidents which she worked into two volumes called "Patriotic Sketches." Here she deals with political thorny problems of that time.

Sydney Owenson

Sir Thomas Charles Morgan

Her father lived at Drumcondra and after the death of his wife Sydney was sent to Madame Terson's great French Huguenot school. Oliver Goldsmith's youngest sister (a little plain old lady) lived with a brother in Aungier St. and the Owensons visited them there. In the Crofton Memories there is a detailed account of the relationship of Sydney Owenson and the Croftons. Her letter to Sir Malby Crofton and his reply reveals much of their history and the esteem in which they held each other.

There is no doubt that Sydney was looked upon with suspicion by the authorities in Dublin Castle. It was as if she were an Irish terrorist on the run. This came from her nationalist sympathies which she expressed in her novels. She was the first Irish writer of the nineteenth century to express the passion and commitment of those Anglo-Irish who espoused the Nationalist cause. Religion, hatred of radicalism and family loyalties were dear to her. It must be remembered that the Declaration of Independence of the United states of America had just been signed. Thomas Paine's Rights of Man were circulating in England. But eighteenth century Ireland saw poverty and mud cabins and the people were forbidden their religion, language and lands. The Anglo-Irish enjoyed their spoils. They re-built Dublin as a capital. The Fishamble Street Music Hall was opened in time for Handel's visit to Dublin 1741. As the demand for the music hall did not last Robert Owenson opened Fishamble Street as a National Theatre. It was the era of the Volunteers (1774-1784). An overture was performed and Lady Morgan said the overture consisted of Irish airs. This hall was used for political meetings, state lotteries, lectures, riots and masquerades. In 1792 it had to be rebuilt after the floor collapsed. Robert Owenson held plays in Country houses, like Edgeworthstown,

Kirwan Lane Theatre, and Hardiman Library in U.C.G. Wolfe Tone attended many of them.

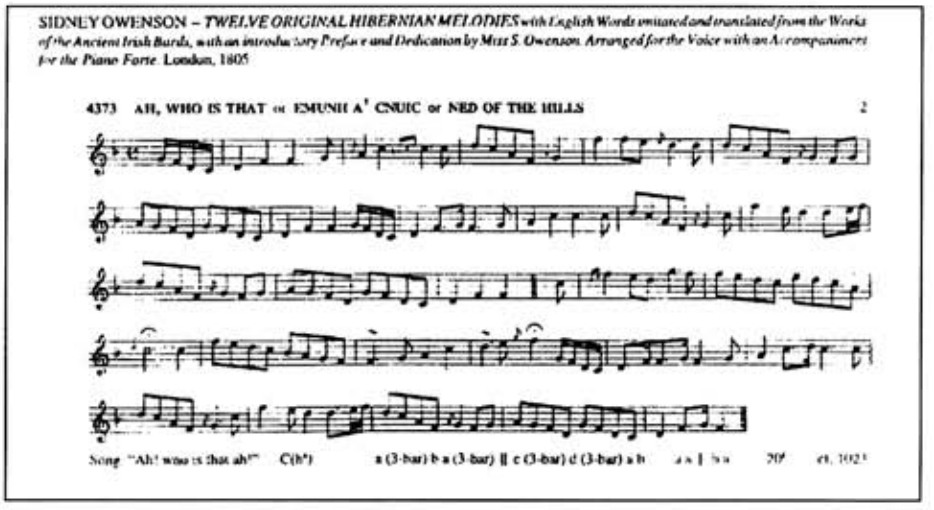
As well as being a writer Lady Morgan played the Irish Harp. John Egan of Dublin made this in 1805. She published a small collection of Twelve Irish Melodies in 1909. Having been a sincere admirer of O'Carolan she got a splendid bas-relief made by Hogan the sculptor and had it placed in the northern aisle of St. Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin.

In 1809, Thomas Charles Morgan M.D., lost his wife and was left with a daughter known as 'Nannie'. Sydney eventually married him. Their marriage proved a wonderful success and was a remarkably happy one. Their first year was 'stormy', but the domestic atmosphere eventually cleared. They found a house in Kildare street with a pretentious front. (There is now a new brass plaque on the wall of No. 25). Lady Morgan put the house in order in one and a half years.

Lady Morgan became a famous hostess, and for fifteen years she conducted Dublin's only salon. From the Lord Lieutenant to the lowest person on her list all were welcome. In her drawing room and boudoir she was surrounded by the trophies of her travels: engravings, books, and portraits. She bedecked herself in strange gorgeous costumes like Celtic cloaks and Tara Brooches. Among her guests were Lord Cloncurry, Archibald Hamilton Rowan, Richard Lawlor Shiel , Thomas Wyse, William Henry Curran. Parties continued at Kildare Street. Paganni and others came. When the British Association met in Dublin in 1835, she entertained in their honour. Leigh Hunt published a friendly characterisation of her in his poem - The Bluestocking Revels.

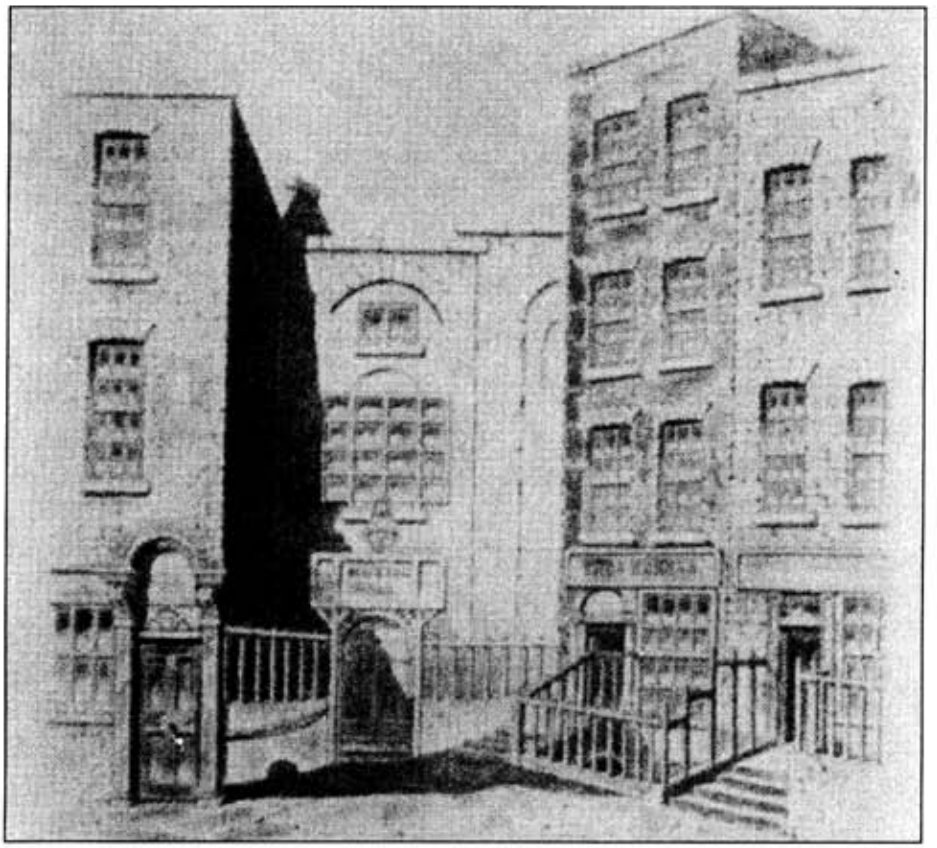
And dear Lady Morgan! Look, Look how she comes
With her pulses all beating for freedom like drums
So Irish, so modish, so mixtish, so wild
So committing herself as she talks, like a child.
So trim yet so easy, polite, yet big hearted,
That truth and she, try all she can won't be parted.
She'll put on your fashions, your latest new air
And then talk so frankly she'll make you all stare."

When Lord Morgan was not well Sydney decided he should spend his last years in his own country. They left for London in 1837.


SIDNEY OWENSON – *TWELVE ORIGINAL HIBERNIAN MELODIES with English Words* [illegible] *Arranged for the Voice with an Accompaniment for the Piano Forte.* London, 1805

4373 AH, WHO IS THAT OH EMUNH A' CNUIC OR NED OF THE HILLS

The above air is really Éamon an Chnoic, a very old traditional air. Lady Morgan took twelve of these and arranged them for piano and harp. She did not compose them. Her love of traditional airs was outstanding. This I took from Fleischmann's Sources of Irish Music published in 1998.



It was here Sydney Owenson's father took over the Fishamble St. Music Hall when it failed to be a success after some years. He called it the Fishamble Street Theatre

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Crofton Memoirs — by Henry Crofton, 1911

Mother and daughter with the healing touch

Supplied by Dan Healy

GROWING up In rural Ireland Margaret Healy dreamt of being a nun. But when she was told she would not make it she turned to another caring profession, nursing.

But in Ireland you had to pay to train be a nurse. So at 20 Margaret opted to train as a nurse in Exmouth.

It was 1937 and when she arrived in Exeter from Sligo; she was penniless.

She said: "I only had a few Irish pennies but I needed to catch a bus to Central Station and then a train to Exmouth.

"I got on the bus and the conductor said not to worry about the fare Those were the days."

Prospective nurses had to spend two years' training at the cottage hospital in Exmouth before they were allowed to work in the main hospital.

Margaret said: "I was terrified when I arrived but the matron was a lovely woman.

"My first few days I was a bag of nerves. I dropped the tea tray and broke all the cups.

"The training started at rock bottom with sweeping and dusting.

"You were closely supervised all the time."

The day started with breakfast and registration at 6.40a.m. Apart from a two-hour break. the day continued until 9pm, but only if the work was finished.

Margaret said: "I very rarely left at 9pm, it was always much later."

The one day off a month was spent on Exmouth seafront in a special hut just for the nurses.

Margaret said: "They were wonderful times. We worked hard but also had fun."

After two years she started her proper training at the Royal Devon & Exeter Hospital when it was based at Southernhay

She said: "They were great, long wards of 46 beds."

Margaret spent the war years at Southernhay rising through the ranks to staff nurse.

"I loved the work. I felt very confident. There was terrific spirit. The patients used to appreciate us and some brought in chickens as presents.

"I wouldn't have missed it for the world."

But she admits she was often frightened because of the bombings.

"When the sirens went off we had to go on to the wards with the patients.

"A bomb was dropped right outside on the tennis court. If was terrifying. I still tremble now.

"I used to see them bringing people in and one night I was sent with a patient to Oxford in a blacked out ambulance."

After the war she moved to Paignton, then went to Wakefield to look alter her sister who was ill. If was there she met her husband, John Dundon, and decided to settle in West Yorkshire. But she admits her heart was always in Exeter and when they could the family spent their holidays in Devon.

And it was her love of the county which led to her daughter Ann moving to Exeter.

As an artist Ann, 43, jumped at the chance of taking a job with South West Arts in Exeter.

She had been working on community projects in London but, although she enjoyed it, the pull from the Westcountry was far too strong.

"I've always had a soft spot for Devon. because of mum's stories and the happy holidays we had here."

As arts and crafts officer she spent five years getting to know local artists.

"I saw immense good work, particularly in the area of public art. Art that has a direct impact on the people's lives and their environment.

"I found that work fascinating and when a job came up designing the interior of a new cancer centre at Derriford I took it.

"It brought together everything from my background. I was familiar with hospitals and healthcare because of mum and I could combine it with my love of these arts.

"I spent two years working with the architect and the artists. But I was getting more and more away from the artistic background and becoming more administrative."

But before she had a chance to get bored, fate again intervened and the job as leading resident artist with Exeter Healthcare Arts, based at the Royal Devon & Exeter Hospital, came up.

"It's like being home again. It is no longer at Southernhay but it is still the RD&E where mum spent many happy

years. I can use all the things I care about –from mum's medical influences to my love of art and architecture."

Ann and Exeter Health Care Arts strongly believe that the environment can help or hinder a patient's recovery.

Ann has consulted the staff, patients and visitors at six wards.

"They have all talked about disorientation and needing a feeling of hospitality. Most have mentioned using landscapes that are familiar to them or remind them of home."

Her mum agrees: "In my day hospitals weren't the nicest of environments, just green walls. I think having art in hospitals is absolutely fantastic."

Projects include Points of View, which is made up of patients' views of Exeter, and turning one corridor into changing images of the River Lyme.

But the work closest to Ann's heart will be for Clyst, the stroke ward: "My father had a stroke three years ago and mum is his main carer. She is still nursing.

"I hope I will get advice from them. Mum has always been an inspiration to me. Her love of caring is something I want to carry on as an artist. Florence Nightingale said patients needed light and air and I am hoping art can bring that light and air to the RD&E."

• *Margaret Dundon is a sister of Dan Healy of Cloonamonagh and Dublin. Dan has featured in previous issues of the Corran Herald. He is well known for his love of Irish music. His latest CD "Whispering Strains from the Past" is in conjunction with Maire Garvey's book "A Traditional Journey from Erriss to Mullaghban (1660-1995)". Maire is author of "Lady Morgan" in this issue.*

Hunting and the Sligo Hunt

Neil Henry

HUNTING is probably the oldest established sport in Ireland. It is the hunting of a fox or hare with a pack of hounds who follow scent which is the smell left in passing by an animal. Hunting is described by Oscar Wilde as "The pursuit of the inedible by the unspeakable". A pack usually consists of 10 to 18 couple of hounds.

Foxhounds which are large and fast are the type of hound used to hunt foxes. Harriers, which are smaller, are used to hunt hares. Harriers are also used as foot packs. Daniel O'Connell was a follower of foot hounds when he used to return form Westminister to Kerry after fighting for Catholic Emancipation.

The coats worn by the huntsman and master of foxhounds are red or officially known as Pinque and the coats worn by the huntsman and master of harriers are green. The followers or the field as they are called, wear black jackets with the hunt colour on the collar. Each hunt club has a different colour collar.

There is now one pack of hounds in County Sligo. In the past there were three. They hunt throughout the county with a number of meets in Donegal. There is no pack of hounds in counties Leitrim, Donegal, Mayo or Roscommon. To many of the followers of the hunt, the challenge and joy of riding a horse over fences and country is their main interest in hunting. It is also an excellent way of training a young horse. As industry hunting provides a great market for a large proportion of our half bred sport horses, which have an excellent temperament for hunting.

The huntsman carries a hunting horn and leads his hound to the cover. He puts his hounds in to draw the cover. Very quickly he is told by the hounds if there is a fox present as they give tongue or speak when they find scent. Very quickly after this the fox leaves the cover and the chase begins. The hounds follow the scent and try to hold it as long as possible. Some days scent is good, other days scent is very bad It is mythical to watch hounds follow the scent of a fox, something we cannot smell or see and a hound's sense of smell is 1,000 times keener than ours. The field (those who follow the hunt on horseback) are led by the field-master who decides where and where not to go. Hunting is totally dependent on the goodwill of the farmers over whose lands they hunt Fortunately there is sufficient goodwill to allow a lot of hunting. The hunting season starts in October and ends in early March.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth century packs were kept by individual landlords. The O'Hara Harriers hunted the Ballymote and South Sligo region. By the early twentieth Century packs were maintained by voluntary subscription and became the property of the hunt club. In 1948 the South Sligo hunt Club was formed, with joint masters Mr. James Dorran and Col. E.F Cooper and in 1966 the County Sligo Hunt and the South Sligo Hunt Club joined to form the County Sligo Harriers which we have today. First joint masters were Mr. Jan Prins and Mr. Frank McGarry.

In 1982 Mr. Prins and Mr. McGarry retired. Since then Muriel Siberry, Kieran Horan and Derek Pugh have acted as joint masters, with Kieran Horan as huntsman for ten years before he retired in 1996. The hounds were hunted by Tony McGloin until 1998. Since then they are hunted by Liam McAlinden who is the present huntsman.

Followers of the County Sligo Harriers who have gone to the happy hunting ground include the late great Dr. Frank O'Hart, recently deceased Mr. Patrick Healy, Derroon Stud, Mr. Michael Scully, Ballymote, Mr. James O'Grady, Ballinacarrow, and Mrs. McCready-Bryan, Ballymote and Rathbarron.

To conclude a quotation from William Butler Yeats:-

Saddle and ride, I heard a man say
Out of Ben Bulbin and Knocknarea
All those tragic characters ride
But turn from Rosses, crawling tide,
The meet's upon the mountain side.

Kieran Horan and Neil Henry in 1995

Left to right: Neil Henry (whipper in), Liam Filan (brother of Shane of Westlife fame) and Dorothy McAlinden. The boy to the right of her is Stephen Fox and to his left is Jarlath Hunt.

An officer and a gentleman

Jack Martin

THESE few words epitomise in no small way what the late Vincent Jordan was. He was in every sense of the word a gentleman, and his mild and gentle manner was one of his greatest attributes. As an officer in the F.C.A. he was well known to all ranks and his judgement in military matters was admired and praised by all.

I knew him for years when he was on his bicycle delivering the mail from the Post Office in Ballinacarrow which was managed by his good wife Nellie and himself in an expert fashion. They both were loved and respected by all who knew them.

In the early days he was a member of the then L.D.F. and when the F.C.A. took over he was still a serving member of the new group.

In 1955 I joined the F.C.A. ranks, and when I went on my first camp to Finner I met Vincent again. We became fast friends. He was then my Platoon Sergeant and I can picture him still in his wool uniform and brown boots and 'jam pots" they being short brown leggings. We attended many annual camps, some in Finner, some in Galway, and the last ones in Fort Dunree, Co. Donegal. During my time in the F.C.A. I attended 28 annual camps and Vincent was on board for all or most of them. While in camp he was concerned for the welfare of the members, and any little extra comforts that could be got he did not delay in looking for and getting them. He was a fatherly figure to the young recruits who were in their initial camp, and he encouraged them to write to their parents and tell how they were getting on.

As the years progressed promotion came on stream. Vincent underwent and passed an officer's course. Some years later he was promoted to the rank of Commandant and became Officer Commanding the C Coy, the 19th Battalion, while I was made Battalion Sergeant Major. I retired in 1983 and Vincent retired some years after me.

We met together again, both members of the Ballymote Heritage group and the chat when we got a chance was all about the good times we enjoyed in the F.C.A.

He was "confined to barracks" at home while he was very ill. I called to see him and was amazed to find him in good spirits even though he had been so very ill, a great indication of the fighting spirit which he possessed. He was gravely ill again and was taken to the St. John of God nursing home in Ballymote. I called a few times to see him and he welcomed me and again we talked of old times.

Wednesday 31st May I called to see him again. I shook his hand and held it for a while: it was nice and warm. I stayed for a short time. I did not know then that that shake hands was in reality good-bye: Vincent died that evening, like the old soldier "he only faded away". I was proud to have seen him before he died; he did not of course know me. Lots of people attended his two funerals and there was also a large military presence, which indicated the high esteem he was held in by all who knew him.

He was truly an "Officer and a Gentleman". May his good soul rest in peace and may the brown clay of Kilvarnet rest lightly on his breast.

The first Dail – photo courtesy Maisie McGovern

The Holiday Home

Mary White

IT was a thatched cottage with two rooms and a kitchen, one chimney, three windows on the front of the house, none anywhere else. The two exterior doors were small. Every one entered head first by the back door only because it was so low. The front door was never opened because the kitchen floor space behind it was used for storage.

The kitchen was dark. The one little window set in the deep low wall was no bigger than a shoebox. The floor was flagged which was regarded as 'Up-Market' compared to rough concrete. The multicoloured irregular sized flags were nice, smooth surfaced and easily kept clean. The low ceiling was boarded, no smoky rafters, and the loft above the kitchen was also used for storage, not that any of us ever spent much time up there because there was no way up except by cumbersome rickety home made ladder. It was black dark on the loft with grass or weeds or maybe they were flowers that had gone astray for the want of sunlight and showers, whatever they were they grew from the underside of the thatch and were shrouded in cobwebs. The only treasures we perceived on the loft were broken baskets and a spinning wheel, but we were afraid to take them down for further examination.

The open hearth was enormous, spanning the whole gable width of the kitchen except for the narrow door, which led to the upper room. A crane crook hung over the big turf fire with lots of sooty pokers, thongs, and pot-hooks hanging from it, surrounded by black metal kettles, three-legged pots and baking ovens. A small wall oil lamp half flooded the kitchen with yellow light at night. I say half flooded, because the lamp hung over the table which cast a shadow over the floor.

Built into the back wall of the kitchen was a pooch bed, which was large enough for two adults or a few children. There was great storage space under the pooch bed, where shoes and Wellingtons were kept dry and warm, and when cats or dogs were allowed inside that was where they bedded down also.

The house had all the hallmarks of a man living alone for a very long time. The wooden dresser was beginning to sag, but the brown platters, basins, jugs, mugs, and plates were still there. Two churns, one old with dash and spades, the other new, small and round, stood neatly behind the front door surrounded by creels of turf and sacks of meal. The wooden partition separating the kitchen from the lower room was laden down with donkey tacklings, collars, hames, bridles, ropes and chains.

The lower room, which sported the second tiny window, was used as a dairy, with huge crocks of milk waiting to be churned. The upper room had a fireplace back to back with the kitchen hearth. There was a glass case filled with beautiful antique delfware standing in a corner of the room and beside it was a dainty little round table which was fast losing its colour in the dark damp room. On the table beside an old gramophone which was falling apart was a box of warped records, all His Masters Voice, but long since silent. Six lovely pictures, larger than the third little window, hung from the uneven and flaky green walls. but alas they also were past restoring.

Of course you couldn't drive your car or even your cart up to the door of this house because it was built in the valley, in a place called Glenkillamey, about three hundred years ago, and the nearest road, which is also the only road, is about six fields away from the house.

Some good progressive people marked a Pass, down the heathery slopes by the edge of the mountain stream, which cannot be seen but the noise of which would awaken the dead especially at night. It is not easy to imagine a swamp on the side of a mountain but in order to break the climb or the fall depending on whether you were coming or going the Pass, hung a left, or took a sharp turn to cross a third field before returning again to the very edge of the noisy mountain stream, on down the heathery slopes hop, skip, and trip to the one flag bridge which crossed the river at the gate. There was always a pause at the gate, first to look back at the almost perpendicular Pass, marvel at your skillful manoeuvring of it and the artful way with which you avoided falling into the river, and then face in the direction of the house which you couldn't see but hey presto there it was after you climbed the two hilly fields called the brae, breath-taking experiences but worth every minute of it.

We laughed and shouted so much as we navigated this Pass with our holiday luggage in toe that the whole neighbourhood knew when the Townies had arrived.

The ruins of the holiday home may be seen in the middle of this March 2000 photo.

The Hawksbys of Ballymote

John C. McTernan

THE Hawksbys were a well known family in Ballymote throughout the 19th and into the early 20th century. They were descended from one George Hawksby of Skreeny, Manorhamilton, and his wife, Frances Armstrong (nee Jackson) of Sligo. Initially, the family resided in Holborn Street and were in possession of a farm at Munninane in Ahamlish which was leased in 1801 from Thomas Barber for a period of 61 years. At a later date George and his family moved to Ballymote and in 1831 leased houses and plots adjacent to the Courthouse, already in his possession, from the Hon. John Fitzmaurice at a yearly rent of £1. 7. 8d. The eldest son, John Hawksby, who operated a drapery business in Boyle, inherited his father's interest in the said properties and in 1862 transferred it to his younger brother, Jackson, in return for a once off payment of £75 sterling.

Jackson Hawksby was born in Sligo in February, 1785, and in his youth was apprenticed to the weaving trade in Ballymote. In 1815 as a young man "of good morals and virtuous qualities", he was appointed Parish Clerk on the recommendation of Rev. John Garrett, Vicar of Emlaghfad. He was also given charge of a school in which children were instructed in the 'English tongue'. In 1818-'19 the Grand Jury appointed him 'Gaoler' or 'Governor' of the newly opened Bridewell and subsequently 'Court Keeper' at an annual salary of £12. A decade earlier he had married Ann Weir, the daughter of James Weir, a farmer in the parish of Drumcliffe. By her he had a large family, five sons (two of whom died in infancy) and four daughters. Following Ann's death in 1837, he married secondly Harriet Smallman who died in 1862 without issue

Jackson Hawsby lived to the ripe old age of 85 and died in April, 1870. He was buried in Emlaghfad churchyard where a tombstone marks his final resting place, that of his second wife and other members of the family. At the time of his death he was in possession of four houses and accompanying plots adjacent to the Courthouse as well as a 23-acre farm at Emlaghfad, set to undertenants. His Will, an interesting document, reads as follows :-

"I, Jackson Hawksby of Ballymote in the County of Sligo, Bridewell & Court House Keeper of Ballymote aforesaid– being of sound mind and memory, thanks be to the Almighty God for the same, do now make this my last Will & Testament, hereby revoking all former Wills by me made. First, I bequeath my body to the ground and my Soul to the most High God who gave it.

I next order and Will that my beloved Wife Harriet Hawksby shall be paid the sum of Thirty Pounds Stg., yearly and every year during her natural life the same to be paid off my Freehold property in Emlafad and in the Town of Ballymote in the County of Sligo, by my grandson Jackson Hawksby.

It is my anxious wish and Request that my said wife should live with my beloved grandson Jackson Hawksby, but this is quite as my said wife may herself choose to do, should she remove from him, I order her to have her own bed and bedding, her chest of Drawers, and the small mahogany table having the drawer and folding leaf, also half a dozen of mahogany chairs, together with a copper Kettle and other kitchen furniture. I further order and direct, that she my said wife H. shall be empowered to draw the sum of Fifty Pounds Stg., out of the Provincial Bank of Sligo, being part of a larger sum therein lodged by me and that her receipt shall be sufficient discharge to the Bank for the sum so paid to her by the Bank, also that she shall have her Trunks & Chests & Bedstead.

I next leave and bequeath to my said grandson Jackson Hawksby aforesaid, my Farm & land which I hold from and under my very honored and good Landlord William Phibbs Esq. of Seafield in as full and ample a manner as the said Farm is now held and enjoyed by me, together with my Houses & Plotts in the Town of Ballymote aforesaid, which I hold by virtue of a Lease from Lord Viscount Kirkwall now Earl of Orkneys also from Sir Robert Gore Booth Bart. and likewise the house & Plott of ground being part of the lands of Stone Park or Abbey Garden.

I also leave and bequeath to said Grandson the entire of my stock of Cattle and Horses with Carts, Tackling, Jaunting Car, Gig & Harness and also all and entire of my Household Furniture, with the special exception of the articles aforesaid, which I order & leave to my Said beloved wife Harriett.

further order and direct, that my said grandson Jackson Hawksby, shall cloathe or pay for chothing his Brothers Francis & George Hawksby during their term of apprenticeship, not exceeding the sum of Five Pounds yearly each and that he shall pay the sum of Ten Pounds to each of his three cousins, viz., Mary A. Hawksby, Robert Hawksby & Anne Hawksby, the children of my beloved son James Hawksby. I also order, will & direct that the like sum of Ten Pounds shall be paid by my said grandson Jackson to my Granddaughter, Anne Hawksby, the only surviving child of my beloved son John, deceased, said Anne Hawksby now residing in Brooklyn in the United States of America aged about ten or eleven years.

I also leave and bequeath to my grandson John Hawksby the sum of One Pound Sterlg., to be paid to him by my said Grandson Jackson Hawksby.

I order and will that he shall likewise pay to his sister Anne Jane Hawksby on her marriage the sum of Twenty Pounds Sterlg., and that should he the said Jackson Hawksby die without leaving lawful Issue, I order and direct that the Freehold property now by me bequeathed to him shall be as follows Viz., my Farm in Emlafad to my grandson Robert Hawksby, my Houses and Plotts as granted by the Earl of Orkney formerly Lord Viscount Kirkwall, to my grandson Francis Hawksby, & my houses and Plotts as granted by Lease from Sir

Jackson Hawksby, The Elder

Robert Gore Booth Bart. to my grandson George Hawksby, & my house in Stone Park & the Division of ground therein called Abbygarden to be given to my grandson John Hawksby same as I now hold it.

I order and direct that my said grandson Jackson Hawksby shall pay to my daughter Mary now Mrs. Bashford, the sum of Five Pounds to buy a mourning dress after my decease should she survive me.

I further, order, will and direct that my said grandson Jackson Hawksby, shall take special care to provide for the comfortable and carefull keeping & maintenance of my said beloved wife according to this my Will and Testament and that he my said grandson Jackson Hawksby shall be her heir and possessor of all the property she may be possessed of at the time of her Death, should he survive her, but still hoping & Praying that he will comfortably care for & provide for her during her lifetime as I have done, Should he survive her.

I order and Direct, that my said grandson Jackson and the Superintendent Wesleyan Minister of the Sligo Circuit for the time being shall be my Executors to this my last Will & Testament–and that my said grandson, shall be my Residuary Legatee to this my said Will, hereby as I have already setforth herein, I do now revoke by me all other Wills made by me.

Signed Sealed and published & declared by me in the presence of the Witnesses hereunto subscribed this 13th day of Decem. in the year of our Lord One Thousand Eight Hundred & Sixty-One.

JACKSON HAWKSBY

Witnessed by
JOHN MORRISON
STUART IRWIN
BARTHW. COGHLAN

Jackson Hawksby's eldest son, George (1807-1859), married Ellen Young of Ballisodare and had issue five sons and one daughter. His brother, James, qualified as a medical doctor and practiced in Ballyfarnon where he died in 1847.

Jackson Hawksby, junior, son of George and grandson of Jackson, senior, was born in Ballymote in 1841 and at the age of eighteen succeeded his grandfather as Courthouse Keeper and Petty Sessions Clerk at Ballymote. He had as sureties Edward Pollock, Solicitor, and Blakeney Gubbins, a Sub-Inspector of the Revenue Police. In 1863 he married his cousin, Elizabeth Ballam, daughter of John Ballam of Ballyfarnon, and by her had a large family, seven of whom died in infancy. His only surviving son, George Frederick, predeceased him by two years.

Jackson Hawsby, junior, an efficient and popular official, was a well known figure in his native town over a long period, and resided, as his grandfather before him, in the house adjoining the the Courthouse. On his death in July, 1912, at the age of 72 years, he had the distinction of being the oldest, in terms of service, Clerk of Petty Sessions in Ireland. Two spinster daughters, Anne Jane, who died in 1955 and Mary Elizabeth who departed this life in July, 1957, were the last of the Hawksby family of Ballymote.

Footnote: The P.R.O. N.I. (Belfast) contains a number of items relating to the Hawksby family which have been consulted in the preparation of this article. The collection also contains two items of a general nature, namely :- An Account Book (1843- 1913) which relates to the operation of the Courthouse and a bound Notebook detailing charges brought and fines imposed in the Petty Sessions Court. The Account Book also contains a number of memos of a personal nature.

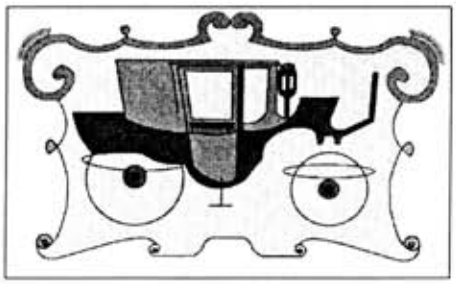
CLOGHOGUE NATIONAL SCHOOL 1890

Included are: Mr. Luke Nangle, Teacher, Miss B. Nangle and Miss White, Assistant Teachers, with pupils at Cloghogue National School. Picture courtesy Claire Walsh

The O'Hara Carriages Museum Project

Jane Vial, Project Leader

THE official opening of The Carriages Workshop on 4th April 2000 in the old Keash Inn marked another milestone towards a Museum in Ballymote. The old pub has been transformed into an elegant and spacious workshop. This workshop is reviving and passing on to young local trainees a multitude of carriage-building crafts while constructing replicas of the O'Hara family carriages for public use in the Ballymote Town Park and the south Sligo environs. These authentically crafted carriages will be available for fishing trips, local heritage visits, weddings and parties as well as for carriage driving. It is envisaged that the Carriages Workshop will develop into a sustainable local business.



The O'Hara Carriages Museum Project logo is based on a nineteenth-century brougham. Designed by Brigit Baudry and Jean-Louis Baudry, Céis Corran Studio, Keash.

The Carriages Workshop is the second FÁS Local Initiative Training Project undertaken by the Ballymote Community Enterprise Committee towards the creation of a Museum. The O'Hara Carriages Museum Project, under way since October 1998, is developing the concept and exhibits. The Museum will open in 2003 in the Town Park, Ballymote currently being developed under a FÁS Community Employment scheme.

At the opening, Deputy John Perry, Chairman of the Ballymote Community Enterprise Committee, said that he would do all that is necessary to secure the return of the O'Hara carriages from Dublin and make the Museum a success. Councillors Eamonn Scanlon and Alfie Parke echoed these sentiments as both also pledged to support the project.

Such political will is vital for the Museum as it faces some tough challenges, not least of which is its location. To attract visitors in sufficient numbers to Ballymote, off the highways and just out of Sligo Town, will be tough. A marketing survey about to commence will gauge potential visitors' numbers for what Ballymote is offering.

The centrepiece of the Museum will be O'Hara family carriages. Dermot O'Hara and Anthony Kitchen respectively will lend for display two side-cars at Annaghmore and a governess cart at Newpark. The main collection of seven nineteenth century carriages were donated to the State in 1952 by Dermot's father, the late Donal O'Hara, and are now in the National Museum of Ireland in Dublin. The Museum has tentatively agreed to lend these to Ballymote long-term.

Together these vehicles form a significant collection of original Irish carriages with a provenance traceable back to a single family. It is unusual to find carriages in their entirety and with clear ownership, such as these, because of the difficulties of maintaining large obsolete vehicles such as carriages and steam engines. Often carriages will decay and their parts will be replaced or used to create new vehicles. The authenticity of the O'Hara collection will be a major drawcard, especially for carriage enthusiasts.

In the museum the O'Hara vehicles will be portrayed in the wider context of the social, cultural and economic history of transport in Co. Sligo during the period of carriage usage (c1750-c1950). Engaging and interactive displays will explore the great variety of horse-drawn vehicles used for transport, sport and leisure. The many skills involved in carriage manufacture will be portrayed, as well as the development of the railways from the 1840s and the arrival of the motorcar in the county. Throughout this socially inclusive history of transport will run the story of the Gaelic O'Hara family and their estate.

The Museum, therefore, will offer a unique combination of a facility devoted both to social history, research and care of original transport artifacts of Co. Sligo, and the restoration and building of replica carriages for entertainment and carriage driving. This theme of transport and sport has been chosen carefully to complement the activities of other local museums such as Gurteen's Coleman Heritage Centre and Riverstown's Agricultural and Folk Park.

Carriage Builder Paddy Egan and craftsman Sean Healy creating a wheel in the Carriages Workshop. Photo Tim Kelly

Two major challenges now face the Enterprise Committee. Firstly, it will need to create a contemporary space for display and care of valuable original artifacts. It will also need to be flexible enough to respond to the changing needs of a community museum. The second, and more significant challenge, is to ensure that the Museum is sustainable in the long-term, so that the community is not left with a white elephant sitting in its Town Park.

The National Museum's conditions for the loan of the carriages are a blueprint for a museum building. They require it be:

- a temperature and light-controlled environment
- a secure environment
- staffed professionally
- open all year long.

Such requirements are now standard for contemporary museums and without these in place, the Museum's operations would be severely curtailed. Once met, Ballymote will be in a position to display a wide a range of material including, potentially, the original 13th century Book of Ballymote. It is certainly intended to display a facsimile copy of the Book.

Satisfying the National Museum and other potential lenders and donors is very important, but to create a building flexible enough to respond to changing needs is vital. Museums are built to last, but often are too small, not allowing for exhibition, storage or staff expansion, and rooms intended for public usage are all too soon occupied by staff or crates. The Enterprise Committee is committed to building a museum large enough to respond to changing times.

The second challenge for the Committee is to sustain the Museum as a viable cultural institution of national significance in the county. This is the hard bit, as, by their very nature, museums tend to gobble up funds without generating much in return.

The 1980s and 1990s saw global expansion of museums and heritage centres, and the new Millennium continues to spawn cultural institutions. While there is obviously a demand for their services, museums operate in a competitive leisure sector of cinemas, sporting venues and fast food outlets. Too often museums open, or re-open, with great fanfare, only to have to curtail services soon after due to lack of visitors. There is no magic to guaranteeing sustainability, but museums can go a long way to being efficient by pitching themselves realistically.

The Museum's core functions of exhibitions and research tend not to generate money, rather it will need to be paid for on an on-going basis, either by grants or sponsorship. These costs can be kept down by a policy of manageable growth, particularly of the collections, thus reducing high costs of storage, insurance and collection management staff.

While encouraging donors and generating goodwill is vital for the Museum, Ballymote has to be selective in restricting its acceptance of gifts or loans to those that fit a collection policy. Well-intentioned gifts that come with conditions such as "must be on display for my lifetime" or other strings attached can hobble an institution's ability to change displays. Clear collection policies, including borrowing items for display, save money and have the advantage of being able to meet changing circumstances more easily.

Successful modern museums are expected to provide an all-encompassing visitor experience and this is where The O'Hara Carriages Museum must concentrate its efforts to encourage visitors to return. Exhibitions, lectures and other activities will be linked into first, second and third level curricula, along with a range of income-generating services and activities such as carriage rides, carriage-driving facilities, miniature railway, an Internet Café, Tourist Office, shop, cinema/auditorium etc. It is envisaged that some of these latter services will be contracted out, thus keeping core museum staff costs down.

Artisans workshops will encourage specialist craftspeople, such as blacksmiths, harness makers, carriage painters and upholsterers, to set up business in Ballymote and help make the town the carriage capital of Ireland. To this end, the inaugural Ballymote Carriage Day on 8th July attracting carriage drivers nation-wide was successfully organised by John Perry.

Planning a Museum from scratch, as this is, is a luxury and the lead-in for this project allows time to try and avoid some common and costly pitfalls. A feasibility study and business plan, due to be completed by the end of summer, will, hopefully, leave open the way for building to commence next year.

O'Hara Carriages Museum Project, Railway Station, Ballymote, Phone 071-83992

Carriages Workshop, Keash Inn, Ballymote, Phone 071-89370

Also see website at: www.can.ie for progress reports

The Museum will be built in the Town Park, Ballymote shown here under development March 2000. Photo Tim Kelly

CHILDRENS CORNER

Evening Star

Anonymous

"Father what are the mounds on the hill?"
"They were built by the evening star".
"But how can a star build a mound?"

WELL a long time ago there was a man who came from across the sea with the power of the gods. He travelled far until he came to this place and it was here he began to build. He built all the mounds on the hills. All of them an attempt at perfection.

At this time, the sun only lived for half of the year, and it reached its zenith during the middle of what we call summer and then it set. Not to return until half a year had passed. During the dark time there was only the moon to watch over the sleeping plants. It was a sad time and even though it tried the moon could not make anything grow and so it was a silent time when foul dreams haunted the land and nightmares ran free of their sunlight bonds. This man however came from a land of year round sun and knew its secrets. It is said that his knowledge was so powerful that even now the whisper of his name held more power than the most famous Druids could control.

It took him many years to build the last mound, as it had to be perfect or else his plan would not work. There could be no cracks in the walls, no joints or fissures, only smooth circles and overlapped walls. He built the floor of earth and small pebbles to echo the small plants that live between the trees of the forest. Then he made a tunnel of large rocks, which opened out, into a circular room like the little stream that flows into the lake and is lost. After this he covered it with rocks, stones and pebbles like the many shaped leaves of the trees which shelter the earth and keep it safe from the winds.

When it was completed he waited. Many months passed until the sun reached its highest and its light was strongest. During the last hours of the light he sat at the back of his chamber beneath the mound and began to chant secret word s never before heard in this land. Slowly as the light fell into the sea its yellow brightness crept along the tunnel and into the room, fingering the rocks as it moved around the circle and upwards to the roof. It moved faster and faster seeking an escape from the cold rocks. Trapped it could not return or it would burn itself out of existence and so it raced like a demented creature around and around, burning the man' s clothes as it spun about his solid form. Slowly it stopped, realising the futility of its flight; it dispersed within the room. The room was filled and the man slept in the warm glow of the trapped light.

That year the darkness came again but the man lived happily in his mound with the light, as the world beyond lay leeched of colour and lonely for the brightness. Gradually he tamed the light and made it do his bidding. It warmed his clothes, cooked his food and hid its brilliance to stop from blinding him as he slept. The man's soul was being corrupted by his power, the next year he trapped more light, and the year after and the year after. Until one year he had trapped it all and the sun sat in the sky a black lonely sphere.

When the cold was at its peak all the animals gathered to watch the sun appear but it did not. All they could see was a star-less sphere where once the sun had shone. The plants began to die as did the animals, soon all that was left was a few creatures who spent their time wading in decay looking for things to eat and after a few years even these vanished. The bogs grew and the smell of death was everywhere. The land stopped fighting the sea and let itself crumble into the black water. Clouds no longer played in the sky but raced across the black curtain not wishing to see the what remained of the once beautiful earth.

The man in the mound remained oblivious; he had the light and was the ruler of the world. What did he care? But one day the world beyond intruded on his happiness. A strange noise filled the mound, a sort of hissing sound, the room grew dim and the smell of salt filled the air. The sea had reached the mountaintop and was pouring down the tunnel into the mound. The man remembered the darkness of the water and realised that it would destroy his light. He ran outside to see the world and only then did he realise what he had done. The silent dark with its putrid smell sickened him. How had he been so selfish, he had been so enthralled by the light that he had forgotten the world, but now he saw the suffering he had caused and was deeply saddened.

He knew he had to return the earth to its former state but how?. He must release the light, but he could not do so at once or the world would surely burn without the protection of the rocks and the sacred words. Quickly he built up stones at the entrance to the mound blocking it closed and then he began to dig, tunnelling his way to the other mounds. It took him a year to reach the first mound and from here he released some of the light. After another year he reached the next mound and released more light. After 19 years he had reached all the mounds and released all the light. He crawled to the surface exhausted by his work but was dismayed to find that the world was still dead. Nothing would grow and decay was the only thing to prosper. The sea crept forward and the land lay hidden. The man wandered the earth in despair of what he had done until one day he came across a little flower the last thing left alive on the earth and he said to it, why is it that life does not return. The little flower replied "Every summer the dark returns and the creatures fear it will never leave, so life hides in seeds and deep slumbers waiting for death".

The man was very upset by this and he spoke to the sun, he asked it to shine all year around so the creatures would believe it would never leave again. The sun however said that it could not as the dark would be very angry and 'would surely try to destroy it. So the man returned to his mound and thought, what can I do?

While in his mound he noticed a dim light, it was not of the sun but something else. Something he had not seen before, a sort of cold silver light. "I am the evening star" it said, "I was trapped when you stole the sun. I am the keeper of shadows, he who dwells at the gate between light and dark, shining as the two exist in twilight and only seen once a year". Then I shall join with you said the man and we will shine always.

So they flew into the sky and when mid year came about they spoke with the light and the dark during the twilight when they were equals. With the little star's help the man convinced the light and dark to divide the year into months, weeks, days and nights. The days were to be ruled by the light and the night by the dark. The star was to appear toward the end of the day to herald the coming of night and to remain in the sky to prove to the animals that the day would return.

The Coming of the Cinema to Ballymote town

P.J. Duffy

BACK in the nineteen-thirties silent films were shown in Ballymote commercially, for the first time, in the old Hibernian Hall, and also at the Loftus Hall.

What viewers then saw on screen were mostly old detective stories like Blackmail, and tales from Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's collection, adapted for screen by producers like Alfred Hitchcock, who later became known as "The Master of Suspense". These were among the first batch of movies people in this part of the country were accustomed to seeing at that time.

One of the first people to spin a roll of film and project it onto a screen in these parts, was the late Frank McDonagh, a businessman and bicycle mechanic who resided at O'Connell Street, Ballymote, in the premises now in the ownership of John Doddy.

As was the procedure in later years, the programme for entertaining viewers was usually divided into three or more sections commencing with a strip of farcical comedy which put the audience in good mood for the main story of the evening. This often starred veteran Hollywood actors of the day, like Douglas Fairbanks, and Italian born Alfonzo Valentine, who was known as "The Lady Killer" of the screen and played leading roles in films like "Sea Hawk".

There would be a serial shown which very often left the viewers in a state of eagerness to return to see what would happen in the next episode.

Later into the thirties, came films with sound tracks and these became known as "The Talkies". Some of the first pieces of film to be shown in technicolour here were strips from Walt Disney's outrageous "World of Fantasy".

During the nineteen-forties a gentleman named Dennis Conroy came to Ballymote and continued to show films at the old Hibernian Hall. It later transpired he was a fully qualified electrician and radio engineer who hailed from Co. Longford. The place then became known as the Hibernian Cinema, and an afternoon matinee was held there, mostly on Sundays.

With the arrival of the talkies many more films were coming on stream with the result that space accommodation inside this old building was becoming more and more restricted.

In the fall of 1947 those people involved in running the operation decided that something definite would have to be done in order to provide adequate accommodation for the large numbers of people who were now becoming regular cinema goers.

A number of business people were approached with a view towards forming a company, and providing the town with a new cinema.

At their very first meeting all of those people present agreed there was enormous potential for such a venture. A number of authorised persons were elected to a board of management, in what became known as "The Ballymote Cinema Co. Ltd".

They included Batty Cryan and Jack Conroy whose brother Denis had been


1951

The Abbey Cinema
BALLYMOTE

MRS. LOUIS D'ALTON
— PRESENTS —
THE IRISH PLAYERS
In the Repertoire of Abbey Theatre and West End Plays.

Friday, 9th November—
SHADOW AND SUBSTANCE
(By Paul Vincent Carroll)

Saturday, 10th November—
NIGHT MUST FALL
(By Emlyn Williams)

Sunday, November 11th, Matinee at 3.30 p.m.—
THE RISING OF THE MOON

Sunday, November 11th, at 8.30 p.m.—
PEG O' MY HEART
(By T. Hartley Manon)

FULL VARIETY PROGRAMME.

Monday, 12th November.
Jeff Chandler, Marta Toren, Marina Berti in—
DEPORTED
Also Episode 11 Serial—KING OF THE ROCKET MEN.

Tuesday & Wednesday, 13th & 14th November.
Ann Sothern, Zachary Scott, Gigi Perreau in—
SHADOWS ON THE WALL

Thursday & Friday, 15th & 16th November.
June Haver, Ray Bolger, Gordon MacRae in—
LOOK FOR THE SILVER LINING

Mrs Louis D'Alton, who presented The Irish Players, was at that time the widow of Louis D'Alton. He was a well known playwright who also produced O'Casey plays at the Abbey Theatre, Dublin. She later married actor John Cowley and played the part of Minnie Brennan in "The Riordans", the series where her new busband played the part of Tom Riordan. Frank O'Donovan played Batty Brennan in "The Riordans". He also appeared at the Abbey Cinema, Ballymote, in the company of Paul Goldin and Hal Roach.

involved in running the cinema up until this time. Also included was Mrs. Linda Begley whose husband was a well known businessman with large industrial stakes in Ballymote town and its hinterland and also had a short time before become the owner of his own private aeroplane.

A suitable site was acquired at Rathnakelliga. Plans were set out and in the spring of 1948 construction work got under way on the new building which cost £25,000. The contractors were Messrs. McManus & Co. from Tipperary.

In the autumn of 1949 the new Abbey Cinema opened its doors for the first time to receive an enthusiastic public who flocked in to fill the luxury seating accommodation, arranged in slanting rows, that stretched from the balcony right down past the main body of the building and stopped short of reaching the stage front.

The completed building was not just a cinema but a modern theatre as well, fitted out with a spacious stage and roomy side accommodation, where acting artists could arrange their gear, change their costumes and apply their make-up before coming on stage.

Local folk were now to become acquainted with the names of the leading actors of the day and see on the big screen, the enormous amount of effort and talent that went into the making of a film. Many of those people come to mind as I write: Errol Flynn, Bob Hope, John Wayne, Cary Grant and Clark Gable, who was called "The King of Hollywood" by cinema-goers around the world. And from the ladies' section, you'd get names like Rita Hayworth, Grace Kelly, Lana Turner, Marilyn Monroe and Judy Garland. All of those people were to become legends in their own lifetime.

The great comic stars would come on screen to do their own hilarious sketches. Among the big names were actors like Charlie Chaplain, who was known as the "Clown of Hollywood", Laurel and Hardy, Abbott and Costello, Hopalong Cassidy and Mickey Rooney who was called the "The Playboy of Hollywood".

The greatest attraction of all were the long films, many of them based on stories which were written by prominent authors. The ones with the big names were usually shown twice nightly over the course of a week and drew huge crowds. Listed among the more popular ones were titles like "The Greatest Show on Earth", "Gone With the Wind" and "The Quiet Man" whose scenes and actions were shot on location along the west coast of our own little country, and starred top Hollywood actors like Maureen O'Hara and John Wayne. These films were called blockbusters.

Plays and variety shows also took place in the Abbey Cinema during the period of the nineteen-fifties, and notable names from the theatre world would come along to spice up the entertainment.

Jimmy O'Dea and Maureen Potter would sometimes take a seasonal break from their long-running shows in Dublin's Gaiety Theatre and move on to the country areas to entertain people there. During this time, they came west to Ballymote town for a week's stay.

Maureen Potter was then a hugely popular figure who was well known to theatre goers, and was popular throughout the entire country because of her successful radio shows which were broadcast frequently over Radio Eireann.

In 1936, which was less than two decades before her appearance here, she had acted on stage at a Berlin theatre. Her audience on the night included Hitler, Goering and other top ranking Nazi leaders.

Professional actors, many of whom were associated with theatre groups, and also did occasional travelling shows, would come along and find accommodation for a sequence of three-act plays and short interim sketches. Most of those people were brilliant artists and included men like George Daniels and William Costello whose acting groups were all stage performers.

Veteran comedian Jack Cruise came along to add his own special brand of humour to the scene. He usually kept his audience in shrieks of laughter with short witty yarns, spiced up with harmless references to courting and company-keeping, subjects which were almost unmentionable then. He later commented that he loved performing before West of Ireland audiences, because it was so easy to make them laugh.

Hypnotist Paul Golden gave an amazing exhibition of mind-control when he arrived to do a show at the cinema. His entourage included well-known comedian Hal Roach and Frank O'Donovan, who later on played the part of Batty Brennan in that very popular programme called "The Riordans".

The vast majority of people living in this part of the country never saw a hypnotist in their lives, and remained spellbound in their seats, as he performed a whole series of mind-boggling acts.

There was a number of people who would not go next-or-near the show because they believed that hypnotism was inspired by witchcraft, and came about through the direct influence of the devil. But there were hundreds who braved it, and throughout the week the place was packed to capacity each night.

Paul Golden was not the only hypnotist to visit Ballymote. A gentleman named "Mandrake" came along a couple of years later, and he also held his audiences spellbound with such acts as, propping up a hypnotised girl with two brooms, and then removing the two brooms to leave her suspended horizontally in mid-air.

Then to prove to his audience that he was not a stooge, he obtained a hoop, walked alongside the hypnotised girl and allowed her body to pass through the hoop, showing all and sundry there were no invisible trappings.

The establishment of a modern cinema cum theatre was a notable achievement for a small-sized town like Ballymote, taking place, as it did, in the middle years of the last century.

It was a post-war era when people had come through a period of great uncertainty and insecurity. Those involved in the undertaking took incredible risks, but they ventured and succeeded and brought an entire community into a marvellous age of enlightenment.

The coming of the big screen opened up a whole new horizon. It rolled back the curtains, and gave viewers a broad insight into events taking place in the vast world outside.

While much of the action taking place on the screen was quite entertaining, other items such as Universal News were highly educational as well.

The whole episode had come about when many people, especially those residing in rural areas, were still existing in an age of innocence where their thinking was often swayed by the logic and influence of the simple man.

There was the story of the little man who was brought to the cinema for the first time, by his daughter who was home from England. She had hired a car to take her parents along for a night out at "the pictures". Before entering the building her father had gone for a few drinks and was obviously in good humour by the time he arrived there.

Laurel and Hardy came on screen and got up to their usual ridiculous antics. The little man became hysterical with laughter, and commented "Well be gad, there'll be crack in town tonight wherever them pair of gentlemen are staying". His daughter nudged him in the side and told him to be quiet, that the pair were not real men. "What are you talking about?" he retorted, "Aren't they plain to be seen!"

Yet another funny incident occurred during the showing of a cowboy film, when a fast-moving stampede of horses and riders were moving swiftly forward

on the screen. An elderly man who was seated halfway down the body of the building rose to his feet and shouted "Halt". The poor fellow obviously believed he was going to be run-over.

Perhaps we should pause here for a moment, and reflect on those people who managed and staffed the Abbey Cinema during its very successful years of existence.

Much of the credit relating to its success must go to the Cryan family of Teeling Street and their technician Denis Conroy who selected and orchestrated the showing of films, also floor manager the late John McNulty who supervised and handled the large crowds that often turned out when important films and stage shows were coming up.

It is indeed gratifying to state that during the period of its entire existence no serious altercations ever took place either inside or outside the building.

Although the establishment of this modern place of entertainment ushered in the age of progress in this part of the country, it was indeed ironic that the same onward surge of progress would subsequently bring about its demise when the coming of television to almost every household in the country resulted in its closure, in the early 1970's.

It is interesting to note that at the time of writing some of those special people from the world of entertainment are still hale and hearty and very much in circulation. Maureen Potter, Hal Roach and Paul Golden are still with us.

Although nowadays, they are mainly retired from showbusiness, they do appear on chat shows from time to time mostly to reminisce with people like Gay Byrne and Pat Kenny, when snippets of film relating to past performances are usually flashed up.

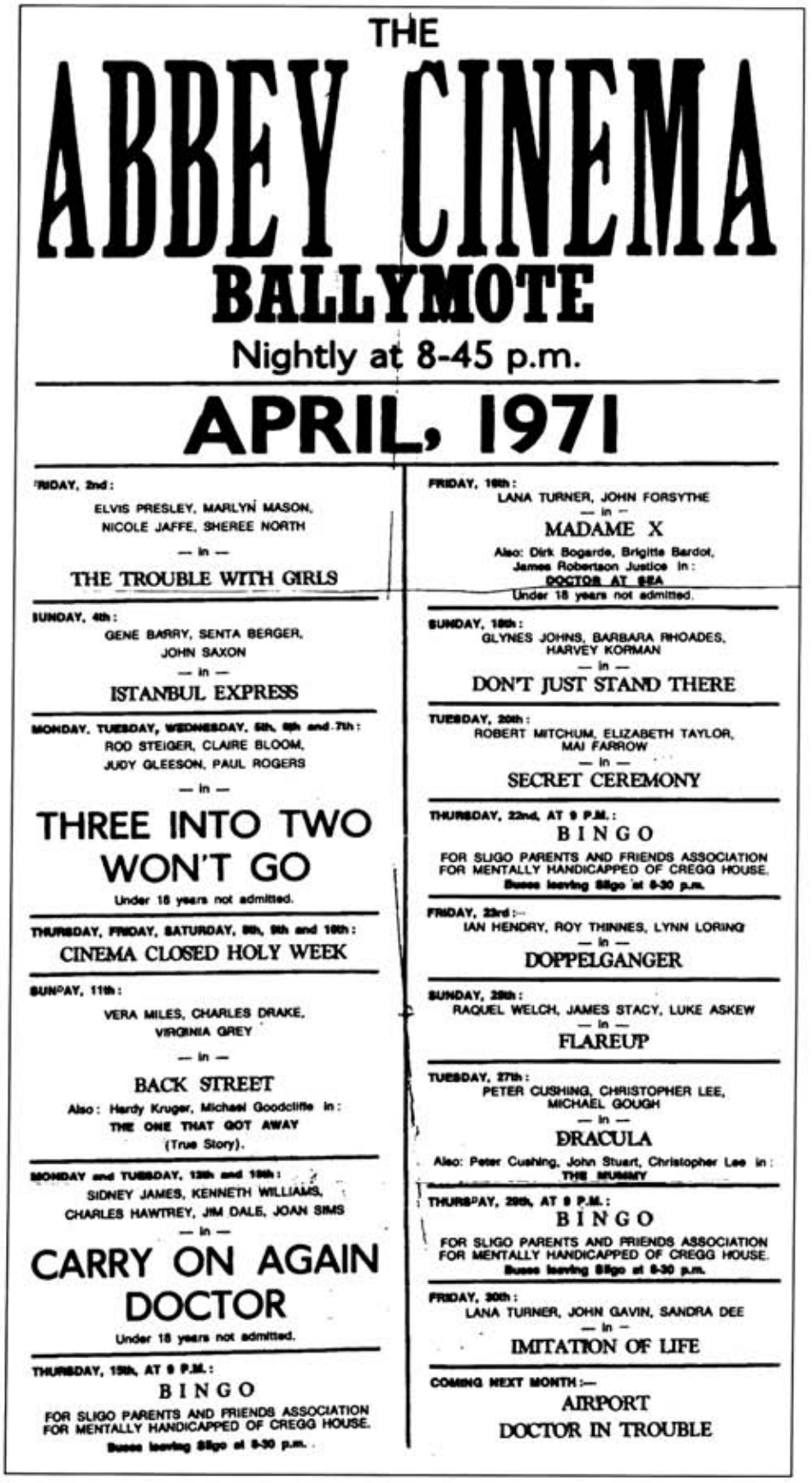
In the interval that has occurred since their historical appearance in this town, a whole new generation of people has arrived on the scene, and when they tune in to today's tv programmes, most of them are fascinated to learn that those legends of screen and theatre, once appeared in the flesh at Ballymote's great Abbey Cinema.

This fine building was initially designed to accommodate 550 people. It was spacious, well laid out, and there was easy access to its very comfortable seating arrangement.

People of my generation, who are still around, now look back with a good deal of nostalgia, to those memorable nights when you could purchase a ticket to a seat in the balcony for two shillings and sixpence.

If you chose a seat halfway down the building, it would cost one shilling and eight pence, and if you moved nearer to the front you could sit yourself down for the modest sum of ten old pence, and in those days the front seats were seldom empty.

Finally, if you had taken your ladyfriend out for a night at the movies you could afford to buy her a drink before entering the cinema. You could buy her a bag of sweets on your way in, then purchase two tickets for seats in the balcony, and have a sizeable bit of change left over out of your little red ten shilling note.



THE

ABBEY CINEMA

BALLYMOTE

Nightly at 8-45 p.m.

APRIL, 1971

RIDAY, 2nd:
ELVIS PRESLEY, MARLYN MASON, NICOLE JAFFE, SHEREE NORTH
— in —
THE TROUBLE WITH GIRLS

SUNDAY, 4th:
GENE BARRY, SENTA BERGER, JOHN SAXON
— in —
ISTANBUL EXPRESS

MONDAY, TUESDAY, WEDNESDAY, 5th, 6th and 7th:
ROD STEIGER, CLAIRE BLOOM, JUDY GLEESON, PAUL ROGERS
— in —
THREE INTO TWO WON'T GO
Under 18 years not admitted.

THURSDAY, FRIDAY, SATURDAY, 8th, 9th and 10th:
CINEMA CLOSED HOLY WEEK

SUNDAY, 11th:
VERA MILES, CHARLES DRAKE, VIRGINIA GREY
— in —
BACK STREET
Also: Hardy Kruger, Michael Goodcliffe in:
THE ONE THAT GOT AWAY
(True Story).

MONDAY and TUESDAY, 12th and 13th:
SIDNEY JAMES, KENNETH WILLIAMS, CHARLES HAWTREY, JIM DALE, JOAN SIMS
— in —
CARRY ON AGAIN DOCTOR
Under 18 years not admitted.

THURSDAY, 15th, AT 9 P.M.:
BINGO
FOR SLIGO PARENTS AND FRIENDS ASSOCIATION FOR MENTALLY HANDICAPPED OF CREGG HOUSE.
Buses leaving Sligo at 8-30 p.m.

FRIDAY, 16th:
LANA TURNER, JOHN FORSYTHE
— in —
MADAME X
Also: Dirk Bogarde, Brigitte Bardot, James Robertson Justice in:
DOCTOR AT SEA
Under 18 years not admitted.

SUNDAY, 18th:
GLYNES JOHNS, BARBARA RHOADES, HARVEY KORMAN
— in —
DON'T JUST STAND THERE

TUESDAY, 20th:
ROBERT MITCHUM, ELIZABETH TAYLOR, MIA FARROW
— in —
SECRET CEREMONY

THURSDAY, 22nd, AT 9 P.M.:
BINGO
FOR SLIGO PARENTS AND FRIENDS ASSOCIATION FOR MENTALLY HANDICAPPED OF CREGG HOUSE.
Buses leaving Sligo at 8-30 p.m.

FRIDAY, 23rd:—
IAN HENDRY, ROY THINNES, LYNN LORING
— in —
DOPPELGANGER

SUNDAY, 25th:
RAQUEL WELCH, JAMES STACY, LUKE ASKEW
— in —
FLAREUP

TUESDAY, 27th:
PETER CUSHING, CHRISTOPHER LEE, MICHAEL GOUGH
— in —
DRACULA
Also: Peter Cushing, John Stuart, Christopher Lee in:
THE MUMMY

THURSDAY, 29th, AT 9 P.M.:
BINGO
FOR SLIGO PARENTS AND FRIENDS ASSOCIATION FOR MENTALLY HANDICAPPED OF CREGG HOUSE.
Buses leaving Sligo at 8-30 p.m.

FRIDAY, 30th:
LANA TURNER, JOHN GAVIN, SANDRA DEE
— in —
IMITATION OF LIFE

COMING NEXT MONTH:—
AIRPORT
DOCTOR IN TROUBLE

Cath Maige Tuired - The Battle of Moytirra

Sam Moore

ONLY two independent versions of the Battle of Moytirra exist and the general themes of these versions are the same although they differ in many instances. The following synopsis of the battle is taken from the older of the two texts and was written in the first half of the 16th century by Gilla Riabhach O Cleirigh, possibly at a place called Corrlios Conaill in Co. Leitrim.

SYNOPSIS OF THE BATTLE OF MOYTIRRA

While still living on islands north of Ireland, the Tuatha De Danann ally themselves with the Fomoire, and Eithne, daughter of the Fomorian Champion Balor of the Evil Eye, is given in marriage to Cian, son of the Tuatha De Danann's physician Dian Cecht. Soon afterward, the Tuatha De occupy Ireland, defeating its previous inhabitants, the Fir Bolg, in the first battle of Mag Tuired. During this battle, the king of the Tuatha De, Nuada, loses an arm and cannot continue to rule. The women of the Tuatha De Danann, intending to strengthen the earlier alliance with the Fomoire, propose to elect Bres, the illegitimate son of the Fomorian king Elatha and Eriu, a woman of the Tuatha De. The story of Bres' conception is explained and then, after many debates, the Tuatha De elect Bres as their king.

This proves to be disastrous and his reign acts as an example of incompetent kingship. Bres seeks profit for himself without considering the wellbeing of his people; he ignores his subjects' proper social roles and status. Ogma, the Tuatha De Danann champion carries wood for Bres' fire and the Dagda builds a fortress for him. Every household in Ireland was forced to pay tribute to Bres' father and two other Fomorian kings. The Dagda is not only having to built ringforts for Bres but is forced to give over much of his food to the satirist Cridenbel. However, his son advises him to play a trick on Cridenbell who ends up dying from his own greed. After finishing the fortress for Bres, the Dagda chooses as payment one single heifer–a choice that is only made clear at the end of the story when this heifer turns out to be a magical one among the herd and leads home all the cattle taken as tribute by the Fomorians.

At this point the story tells of Nuada being given a silver arm by Dian Cecht. However, Miach, the son of the physician, completely heals the former king. Dian Cecht is both furious and jealous of this and kills his son. Further descriptions of Bres' greed and lack of generosity are given. For example: "...there was great murmuring against him among the Tuatha De, for their knives were not greased by him and their breaths did not smell of ale". Then, the poet Coirpre, after having experienced the king's inhospitality, composed 'the first satire' in Ireland. After this the entire Tuatha De Danann turn against Bres who flees to his father Elatha who refuses his son help after discovering his son's injustices. However, Bres finds aid from Balor and another Fomorian king Indech Mac De Domann who gathered all their forces and set off to impose their rule on Ireland. Their numbers were so great that they made a single bridge of ships from the Hebrides to Ireland. Vastly outnumbered and aware of the attack, the Tuatha De gather for a royal feast at Tara with their reinstated king, Nuada of the Silver Arm.

During this feast a stranger arrives at the gates of Tara and demands entry. This is Lugh, maternal grandson of Balor; and son of Cian. He is admitted because he is the 'one who possesses all the arts'–the Samhmildanach and greatly impresses all those present at the banquet. Nuada and the rest of the tribe agree to give him the responsibility for co-ordinating the preparations for the battle and he proceeds to delegate functions to all the various craftsmen and magicians of the Tuatha De.

At this point the tale turns to the adventures of the Dagda: his meeting with the war goddess, the Morrigan, beside Lough Arrow on the banks of the River Uinshin; their sexual union and her promise of magical assistance against the Fomoire. As other preparations take place, Lugh sends the Dagda as an ambassador to the Fomoire, who have just landed near Ballisodare in Co. Sligo He arranges a truce with them until Samhain (Halloween) but is forced to eat an immense meal of porridge mixed with several goats, sheep, and pigs, and was then ridiculed and humiliated by the Fomoire. While returning to the Tuatha De camp he crosses Moylurg, the area between Lough Arrow and Lough Key. This is so named from the fact the Dagda dragged his great club behind him and created a large ditch and was called 'Magh Luirg an Daghda' or the plain of the track of the Dagda. As he went along he meets the daughter of Indech Mac De Domnann, with whom he has sexual

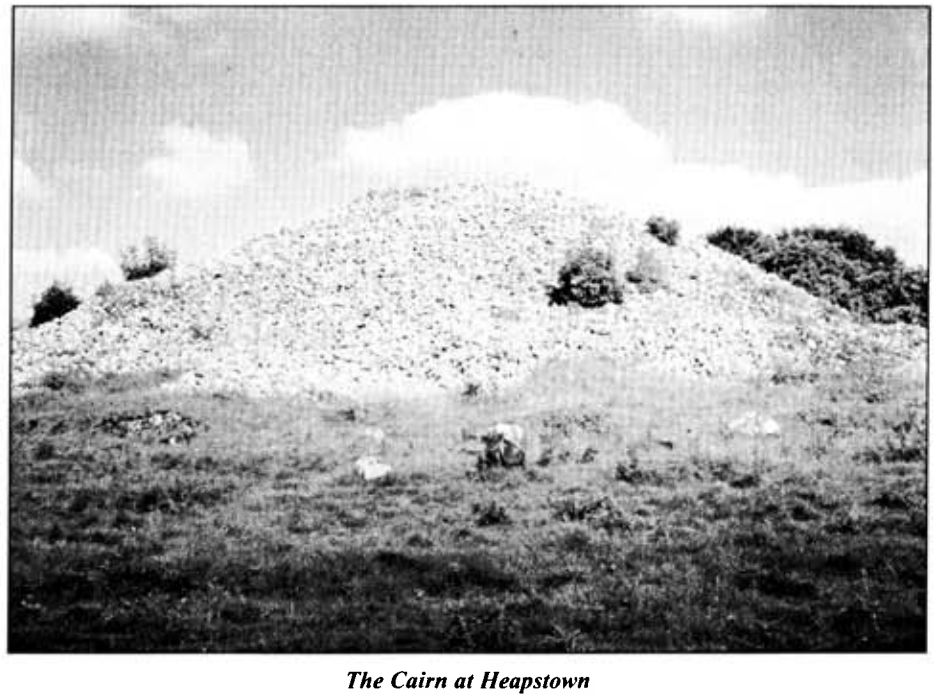
Labby Rock portal tomb, burial place of Nuada

intercourse in an extremely explicitly described fashion, and she promises him her magical assistance against her own people, the Fomoire.

Before the conflict begins, Lugh questions each member of the Tuatha De Danann regarding his or her particular contribution to the oncoming battle, and reveals the superior skill and co-ordinated expertise of the tribe as a whole. The battle begins on Samhain with preliminary combats, and the ability of the Tuatha De to provide weapons and heal the wounded astounds the Fomoire. The Fomoire then send Ruadain, son of Bres and Brig, daughter of the Dagda, to kill one of the craftsmen involved in the repair and maintenance of weapons. He attacks Goibniu, the Tuatha De Danann smith, but only wounds him. Goibniu throws back a spear and kills his assailant (it is interesting to note that a townland near Moytirra on the shore of Lough Arrow is called Annaghgowan, which means 'marsh of the smith'). Goibniu then goes to a well that had been prepared by Dian Cecht and his wound is cured. A Fomoire warrior called Ochtriallach then gathered every single man and each one put a stone into the well after they captured it in order to prevent the Tuatha De from healing their wounded. This now called Ochtriallacht's Cairn or Heapstown Cairn and is located at the northern end of Lough Arrow. The battle intensifies and the losses on both sides are enormous. Despite the loss of the healing well, the brilliance of Lugh's leadership and the Tuatha De Danann's superior knowledge of the magical arts give them the upper hand in the battlefield. Although the Tuatha De Danann had attempted to keep Lugh from the battle for his protection, he escapes and leads a massive attack against the Fomoire and urges on the Tuatha De. He then chants an obscure magical incantation as he goes around his warriors on one foot with one eye closed. The bloodshed increases and Balor kills Nuada during the slaughter. Then, just as Balor was raising his monstrous eye which had the power to destroy everything that fell under its gaze, Lugh cast a sling stone at him which carried the eye through his head killing his own warriors who stood behind him. (The eye burnt a great hole in the ground which filled with water and became known as the Lake of the Eye or Lough na Sool, a lake to the north of Moytirra plateau). By killing Balor, Lugh had avenged Nuada and the battle became a rout; the Fomoire are driven back to the sea.

The remainder of the tale consists of various negotiations; Bres is spared his life in return for information that will bring the Tuatha De Danann agricultural prosperity. Lethglas, a Fomoire poet guarantees that the Fomoire will never interfere with Ireland again and also tells the astronomical number of dead warriors. The Daghda regains his stolen harp through the power of music, not force, and his black heifer recovers all the Tuatha De Danann's cattle taken as tribute. Poets of both groups prophesy a new age of peace and prosperity in Ireland and the victory is proclaimed to every part of the country .... And so ends the story of the Battle of Moytirra.

The tale is not just the most dominant episode in Irish Mythology, but it is one that has created a variety of interpretations and comparisons with other Indo-European mythical traditions. The Celts had many affinities with Indo-European warrior groups. Indo-European language groups in Asia and Europe share linguistic forms, and other features that were connected with customs and social organisation. Hence, comparisons have been made between the Tuatha De and the Fomoire on one hand and the Devas and Asuras in the Vedic literature of India on the other. Other comparisons include the conflict between the Aesir and Vanir in Norse myths and the clash between Zeus and the Titans in Greek myth. These comparisons reflect a conflict between the forces of order and light; a struggle between the demonic powers against the Gods and the cosmic order which they command. The Battle of Moytirra has also been described as containing three functions. Firstly it functions on a magical/religious level combined with the rational and juridical administration of the universe. Secondly it consists in the exercise of physical force, primarily but not solely of a war like nature, and thirdly it comprises of all notions of fertility: prosperity, health, peace, reproduction, etc. The whole myth is said to provide a tripartite religion, which consists of the merging of spiritual, physical and imaginative/ mental aspects of Celtic religion. The myth also shows that the Tuatha De Danann did not command all the qualifications necessary to a settled community. The Dagda had at his disposal druidic magic, Ogma had warrior prowess, Lugh had the totality of arts, Dian Cecht had the techniques of medicine, Goibniu had the skills of the smith etc. However they lacked the most necessary of functions –that of agriculture. It was the Fomorians who supply them with the knowledge of this fundamental aspect of life. Bres in return for being spared from death tells Lugh that all the cattle of Ireland will always supply milk, that the Irish will always reap a harvest, that spring is for ploughing and sowing, summer for maturing the strength of the grain, autumn for ripeness and harvest and winter for consuming it. After being further questioned by Lugh with how the men of Ireland should plough, how will they sow, and how will they reap, Bres replies that they should plough, sow, and reap on Tuesdays. He is then released. The Morrigan–who is both a goddess of war and of the earth–then flies to the source of every river and summit of every mountain and proclaims a message of peace–of strength in everyone and harmony amongst all things.



The Cairn at Heapstown

Boxty on the Griddle

Supplied by Jack Gilmartin

TEN years on and Gallagher's Boxty House of Dublin's Temple Bar is still going strong. Aidan O 'Hara dropped in on the birthday celebrations where Altan struck the right chord for the occasion.

Mairéad Ni Mhaonaigh was there with her fiddle and her group, Altan; Aidan Doyle of the Burlington Hotel was there, doing a balancing act at the end of a big cigar and looking the picture of contentment; and–staying with the picture image–there, too, was Anna, Mother of all the Gallaghers, looking as pretty as a picture in a Kelly green outfit that off perfectly her fair skin and lovely red hair.

Mrs. Gallagher was the first person I met on arriving, and right away we did a very Irish thing: established tribal and territorial ties - she's from my father's part of Longford, and her brother married an O'Hara woman from the area. We weren't able to establish any firm family connections in the time we had together, but for this guest, it added considerably to the homely and friendly atmosphere of Gallagher's Boxty House in Dublin's Temple Bar.

Of course, having Altan there to play for the guests was a neat finishing touch to the whole affair–and a touch of class, too, on Pádraig óg's part; so what would they have done if Altan couldn't have made it –asked the Chieftains? Anyway, there was Máiread, Ciarán Tourish, Dermot Byrne, Ciarán Curran, and Mark Kelly, doing what they do best, and what they love doing most of all - playing music.

And playing as if this was the biggest gig of the month, instead of the small, if intimate affair that it was, in the basement chamber of the Boxty House, a room no bigger than the average sitting room. Altan's sound-man did a masterful job–the low ceiling and small room presented no problems to him, and as a result, listening to Altan perform was not just a pleasure but a comfortable experience, as well.

"They're great people, and great ambassadors for Ireland" remarked RTE's Harry Bradshaw. Earlier in the evening I spoke with Máiréad and the lads, and. said how much I enjoyed their performance of the Donegal version of Ceol aí Phíobaire, which I had heard them performing at Ionad Cois Locha in Gweedore a couple of years ago; I was positively chuffed when Máiréad sang it later on in the evening–and said it was for me!

And as soon as one walks in the door of Gallagher's Boxty House, the olfactory senses are greeted by a delightful mix of smells from turf fires and home cooking. Mrs. Gallagher told me about how it all began. Her son, Pádraig óg, opened Gallagher's Boxty House for business on the 20th February 1989 at a time when the future of Temple Bar was still very much in doubt. 10 years on, Temple Bar is thriving and Gallagher's Boxty House is one of the most popular eating places with Dubliners and tourists alike.

When he was in South America, Pádraig was introduced to the local speciality–the burrito–and realised that Ireland's own traditional boxty could work just as well; he should know, for wasn't he brought up on the traditional potato pancake? So he banished the thought of setting up a Mexican restaurant, realising that the humble boxty could be central to an exciting and varied menu offering the best of Irish food. Eighteen months of experimentation produced the boxty and range of fillings that have since been enjoyed by hundreds of thousands of customers.

Pádraig óg has welcomed many famous guests into the restaurant over the 10 years, including Dennis Hopper, the Spice Girls, Rebecca de Mornay, Elvis Costello, Christy Moore, Emmylou Harris, Michael · Winner, Sinead O'Connor, Michael Stipe from REM, and many more. Plans are now afoot for further expansion.

"Gallagher's Boxty House could well be going global," says Pádraig óg. "I have just returned from New York where I have been investigating opportunities for a franchise operation and conducting feasibility studies in conjunction with Enterprise Ireland. It's a very exciting time for us, and I am hoping that the first Gallagher's Boxty House will open in New York sometime in the year 2000."

Boxty for the patrons in New York. Any bets someone will soon came up with the Colcannon Cafe?

Too Close

Molly Howard

SHE saw him coming but too late to do anything about it. He'd already seen her.

Looking around for avenues of escape was a waste of time. She knew that none were near enough to be of any use. Tensely she waited as he approached.

As usual he didn't say anything, simply looked her over. The hair on the back of her neck bristled at the cold, contemplative way he examined her.

'As if I were something to eat!' she thought indignantly, her temper beginning to rise.

Then he had the nerve to try and sneak around behind her! As if she were the sort to like a surprise cuddle! The very idea!

Annoyed, she circled with him, getting crosser by the minute. All this feinting, this pseudo 'Let's get to know each other' activity made her furious.

There was a pause then, as though he was puzzled as to what to do next.

She'd neither welcomed him nor told him to get lost, but just stood there frostily, as though daring him to get any closer.

He decided to take up the dare. As he moved in, the temperature dropped noticeably, causing him to stop and wonder whether he had misread her. But, she still hadn't moved, so he thought, ' Nothing ventured, nothing gained, ' and reached out to touch her.

That was the last straw. With a screech of outrage, she leapt for the tree now nearer her than him. Reaching it before he could catch her, she scuttled to the very top, clinging tightly to its swaying top branch and hissing furiously.

Resigned te his loss, he sniffed around the base of the tree for a few minutes. Then, after marking it, he trotted off, head high, as though he'd never had any intentions, friendly or otherwise, towards her.

He really couldn't care less.

'Waiting for Billy and Other Short Stories' by Martin Healy (RIP)

Book Review by Olly Farry

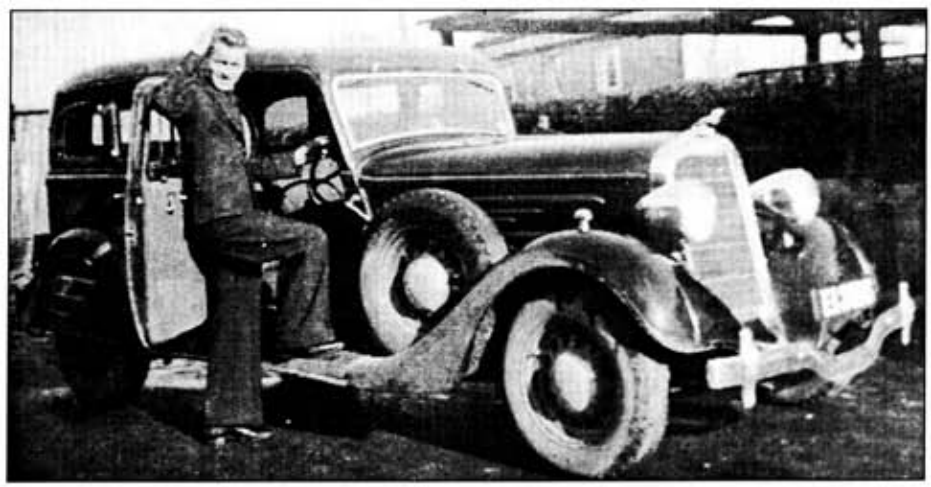
MARTIN Healy, a native of Cloonlurg, Ballymote, died of cancer at the early age of thirty-eight in 1997, by which time he had gleaned some success with his short stories, winning the 1994 Hennessy award and receiving an Arts Council bursary in 1996. In a time when Sligo has been home or native place to a plethora of successful writers – among them Patrick McCabe, Dermot Healy, Eoin MacNamee, and Eamonn Sweeney – it is tempting to view Martin Healy as the one who is fated to be forgotten. This would be unjust as a reading of his collected fiction "Waiting for Billy and Other Stories" demonstrates.

Most writers start off in their careers with the hope of attaining fame; few however harbour the express intention of doing so. It is unlikely that Martin Healy was any different although it is frustrating that his small but impressive output of twelve stories are unlikely to be afforded the recognition they deserve. Certainly a small number of plays – as with the British playwright Sarah Kane who died last year – or novels (as with John. Kennedy Toole) are more likely to grab the public's attention than the necessarily modest and physically emphemeral short story. Neither have Healy's publishers, the Lilliput Press, done him any favours in releasing the book with a rather indistinct and cheap cover; in the bookselling world the old cliché about not judging a book by its cover holds little water. Thus Martin Healy's work is made to appear the scribblings of a regional autodidact – a latter day peasant poet – whose publication is little more than. a posthumous charitable indulgence, which of course they weren't; all were published in some form in his lifetime.

"Waiting for Billy and Other Stories" is a mixed work, as one would expect of a writer who had been honing his trade. The styles are varied, from the economical prose of the Raymond Carver-influenced stories such as the title story and "The Lion Sleeps Tonight" to the more old-fashioned leisurely narrative of "The Prefect" and "Storm Damage". While the choice of style is not always crucial to the success of the story, the former idiom suits Healy better; "Waiting for Billy" is a fine piece in which the protagonists, a lone elderly couple, await the arrival of their eponymous nephew. A much-used motif in modern literature indeed but Healy is so well attuned to the rhythms of boredom and anticipation and his prose stretched so tightly over the moment described that the tale gains a freshness which it otherwise would have lacked. Likewise, albeit with a more prolix style in "The Prefect" – a tale in the manner of William Trevor or Michael McLaverty about the descent into loneliness and alcoholism of a middle-aged bride. Again the ritual of repetition is so well detailed that therein lies the power of the story – you only realise when the story is complete that the kernel of the heroine's tragedy lies in its very mundanity.

Not all the stories are uniformly successful. The ambitious "Could This Be Love?" about a young worker's affair with his boss's wife, falters because of the incompleteness of the characters – ironic given the story is the lengthiest in the collection. Healy is also less astute when dramatising the clash of cultures – and crucially when writing American characters. "Storm Damage" is the only story here which is actually bad. A young American backpacker is forced to seek shelter one night with a pair of elderly brothers and is gradually won over by them. Consider the following lines: "Nowhere in the pages of her trusty guidebook was there a signpost to such hidden wonders. Trad sessions could wait; tonight belonged to lore." They provoke the sort of painful embarrassment one gets when coming across a tyro writer – like watching a comedian die on stage. Healy generally shows himself to be a more able writer than this but this does at least indicate how far short he still was of his full potential.

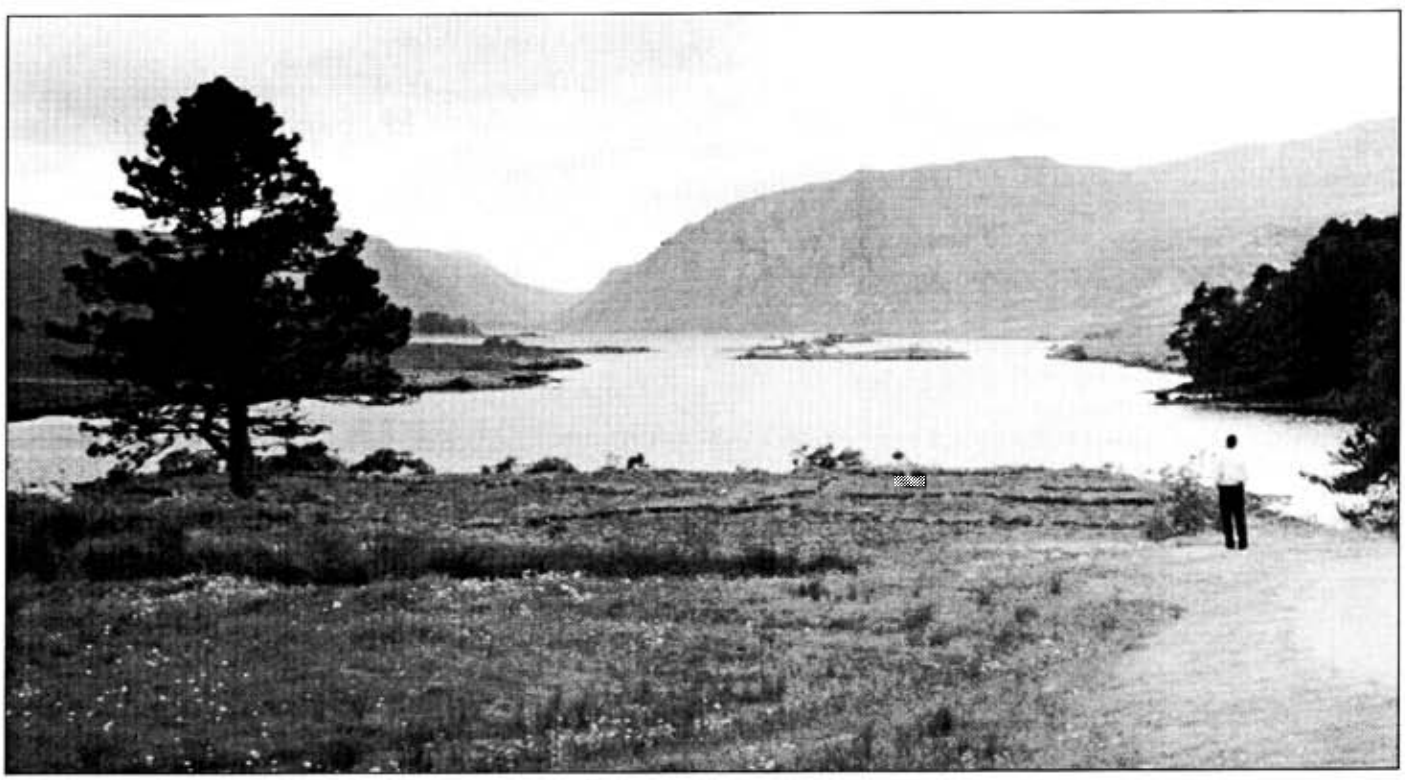
Such cavils though are somewhat churlish; while one doesn't want to be unnecessarily easy on a deceased writer just because he is dead, and in this case local, it is unfair to strictly judge one who was limited by the sheer brevity of his working life. If anything Healy was a unique writer, chronicling the humbler areas of Irish life – the bedsit-dwelling manual worker, the frugal single farmers of the West of Ireland – from within that social ambit. Few Irish writers – Brinsley MacNamara and John Broderick spring to mind – like Healy existed before him, the single male who stayed in the West or Midlands to which they devoted their work. At the risk of harping upon a single point, the misfortune of Martin Healy is that he did not live long enough to surpass the likes of MacNamara and Broderick, which he would have been more than capable of doing. In any case "Waiting for Billy and Other Stories" deserves to be read and preserved, constituting as it does a number of finely crafted and thoughtful, not to mention entertaining, stories. For a man of such endeavour, it is fitting that the Model Arts Centre in Sligo now gives a very substantial annual short-story prize in his name.



John Thomas Regan, Ballymote, with his new Dodge 6 motorcar EI 3166 in 1933. This 28-h.p. car was bought from P. Begley, Ballymote, for £350. Picture courtesy J.T. Regan

Outing to Glenveagh

Pictured above are most of those who went on the Ballymote Heritage Group outing to Glenveagh National Park, Co. Donegal, on May 14th, 2000. Below is a little of that they went to see. Pictures courtesy Jack Martin.



Glenveagh 14th May 2000

Where Stars Walked ... and Pilgrims Trod

Jim McGarry

AS a child I was driven in a trap to Tubbernalt on Garland Sunday. As a boy I cycled there. This year as a hardened cynic I returned in a motor after a gap of many years. I don't know what I expected to find. What I found not only surprised me but gave a much needed and long overdue fillip to my jaded spiritual life.

My recollection of the morning service was a smallish crowd; but in this year of materialism a crowd of over 3,000 attended Mass and practically all received Holy Communion. This in itself is hardly exceptional but the atmosphere of spiritual peace there was exceptional, in fact almost incredible and certainly not readily describable to one not there. Yeats' lines on nearby Innisfree took on new significance, for peace – spiritual peace – did "come dropping slow" even if raindrops for a while dropped somewhat less slowly on the lightly clad pilgrims.

Tubbernalt on the shores of Lough Gill has a fairytale elfinglade setting. Of all Irish Holy Wells it must be one of the most elaborate and its stone altar is set so that a canopy can easily be arranged for protection from the rain. In the foreground is the well itself with an abundance of water escaping in a stream which divides in two the congregation. On the left facing the altar is a large and imposing group of statuary representing Calvary. On the right and to the rear at an elevation is a niche with another group representing the apparition of Our Lady to Bernadette at Lourdes. In the forefront is the original Mass Rock at which Mass was celebrated in Penal Times and still is celebrated on Garland Sunday. The whole scene is set just inside the edge of a delightful copse.

One of the strangest features of Tubbernalt is that it is on the Wynne Estate. Usually Mass Rocks are found far from the haunts of the landed Anglo-Irish, Protestants as were the Wynne family. How a Mass Rock happened to be situated in enemy territory I have not heard explained.

One is so accustomed to congregations hearing Mass devoutly that one hardly realises that it is what one expects. But at Tubbernalt one could almost hear the attention with which Mass was being followed. I tried to explain it to myself but could not until the priest saying Mass turned to speak to us. The main thought in this talk was to draw a parallel between the Masses celebrated there in Penal Days and the one we were assisting at. It occurred to me is this the explanation? For of course deep in the sub-conscious of every Irish man and woman is a feeling of homage for the men and women who were tried and not found wanting in the Penal Days. Was this extra devotional feeling that day one of salutation to those who in such different circumstances attended Mass at the same Mass Rock? And if it was not is it not time we remembered them in our prayers by some external act such as an annual pilgrimage to their shrines?

Everyone is familiar with the undignified scramble of a small section of the congregation to get out of Church at the end of Mass.

At Tubbernalt the priest officiating asked the congregation not to go until he had removed the Blessed Sacrament. This I thought is the test, for we were already about one and a half hours there; but not a suggestion of a movement was made until the priest had eventually carried the Blessed Sacrament out of sight, although by this time the buzzing in the bee-loud glade was drowned by the patter of raindrops on the leaves of the overhanging trees. This was the culmination of an unusually edifying experience. Nobody will deny that something is very definitely rotten in the state of Denmark but at Tubbernalt on Garland Sunday one would find it very hard to believe.

My visit to Tubbernalt brought to mind some of the other better known Holy Wells of County Sligo, almost all of which are today deserted. All of them are worthy of a better fate and a few of them worthy of a visit by people of any denomination. Such a one is Tullahan Well which today is merely a curiosity of nature known by few and visited by even less.

On the road from Collooney to Coolaney one passes within the shadow of Tullaghan Hill – a hill about 200 feet high with a well on the top of it. This well is a documentary-authenticated example of the reason for the existence of holy wells in Ireland – when St. Patrick came to Ireland he found the Irish accustomed to praying to wells or to the spirits they imagined the wells contained. To facilitate conversion St. Patrick blessed such wells so that the converts might still show devotion to them. Other Irish Saints followed his example.

Tullaghan Well is remarkable today for the fact that the water in it fills and ebbs with the tide notwithstanding the fact that the Ox Mountains range lies between it and the sea.

Written references to this well go back to the Book of the murdered Dinnsenchas which alleges that the head of Gam servant of Eremon was thrown into the well which thus became enchanted so that sometimes it contained salt water at others fresh water ebbing and flowing with the tide.

In the writing of Nennius, Geraldus Cambrensis and O'Flaherty, Tullaghan Well is described as one of the Wonders of Ireland varying from the fourth to the seventh and again to the eleventh wonder.

Legend says that the well sprang up to quench St. Patrick's thirst after his praying on Croagh Patrick. But the reference to it by Dinnenchas proves it to have existed long before St. Patrick came to Ireland.

Beside the well is a cairn of small stones on which visitors throw a stone: also a big stone referred to as the altar on which Mass was celebrated in Penal Times. The pattern to this well has not been observed in the memory of the oldest inhabitants.

A couple of generations ago there was a holy well in the townland of Tubberbride about a mile from the village of Collooney. Over the well is big sycamore tree. An annual pattern was held at the well. Because of certain abuses the owner of the land on which the well was situated decided to close up the well. He did so but very soon it was discovered to have re-appeared in the fork of the tree about 5 feet from the ground. That was over 100 years ago but ever since in periods of the greatest drought it has never been known to dry up, so it cannot be claimed to be surface water nor has the tree shown any signs of decay as if it were hollow. There are authenticated cases of cures of eczema using water from the well in the hollow of the sycamore tree.

In the Coolavin district on the shores of Lough Gara in the extreme north end of

the County Sligo innumerable relics of St. Attracta the patron saint of the district are to be found, the principal of which is the Well at Clogher. This well of Clogher or St. Attracta's Well as it is variously called is situated on the very edge of the shrunken demesne of Coolavin the home of the McDermott, Prince of Coolavin since ever before St. Attracta passed that way. They are alike in that both saw better days.

The Well was enclosed in three sides by walls in the centre one of which was a limestone flag with the figure of Christ on the Cross sculptured on it and the implements of torture of the Passion carved on either side of the Cross dating from the 16th century. Today it is completely surrounded by an ugly concrete wall leaving the original centre-piece to the rear thereby making a constant comparison of the grace and skill of another age with the gracelessness of the utility-minded 20th century.

St. Attracta is remembered chiefly as the first in Ireland to organise an institution known as a Hospital for the practice of providing retreats for tired and hungry travellers free of charge. St Attracta founded such a Hospital at the meeting of seven roads at Killaraght in Co. Sligo which existed down till the Reformation.

The invariable custom on visiting a Holy Well is to take a drink from the Well and make a wish. The water here is so scarce and so unhygienic in appearance that one's faith in St. Attracta must be very strong to carry out the custom. Had Horace gazed on it, he would have found it as difficult to rhapsodise over as I did to drink of it.

The custom here was for the local priest to recite the Rosary at the Well on the Saint's Feast Day. That practice was discontinued a couple of years ago when the ceremony was transferred to the local church. Why? The very birth of Catholicism in Ireland might be said to have emanated in part at least from these same Holy Wells so why neglect and even destroy the ageless customs associated with them?

And Oh, it were a gallant deed
To show before mankind
How every race and every creed
Might be by love combined–
Might be combined yet not forgot
The fountains whence they rose
As, filled by many a rivulet,
The stately Shannon flows.

The rivulet from the Well of Clogher and other Holy Wells may not cause any appreciable rise in the level of the waters of the Shannon but they cannot be ignored and should be treated as St. Patrick intended – as, indeed – Holy Wells.

The Stirring Rock

Supplied by Paddy Horan

THE Stirring Rock is situated on the Corrick hills, away in the lonely valley of Corrick na Horna. It is a large boulder of about fifteen tons, and it could only have been set in its present position on a sharp point on a bed of limestone during the Glacier Period.

Formerly there used to be a pattern held here on Garland Sunday when the young people used to dance around the rock vying with one another to see who could set it rocking with one's little finger.

Near the Stirring Rock on the eastern side of the valley there is a cave which forms a very comfortable shelter for cattle in the winter season. It is here, according to tradition, that the hunted priest used to spend the night in meditation while he was awaiting the hour to begin Mass. His supper often was a potato and a naggin of buttermilk. Hunted priests have been identified by tradition in the parish of Aughanagh during the Penal Days. There was a martyr priest of Mullaghfarna around 1640, another known as Fear Feasa some time later and Thadeus McDonagh O.P. in 1668.

The Mass rock where these priests would have said Mass may be identified at the present day. It forms a natural altar on the side of the cliff on the western side of the valley about a quarter of a mile from the cave we have mentioned. The people would have come up the alt (a valley with hazel bushes) from the direction of Carradoo. The priest in walking from the cave to the Mass rock would have crossed a hillock known as the Carrigeen of the apple tree. All names mentioned here are still well known on the slopes of Corrick.

Around the Mass rock are strewn huge boulders which have fallen as detritus from the side of the cliff in the course of the centuries. The scene is weird and lonely in the winter but in the summer it is very beautiful and well worth a visit.

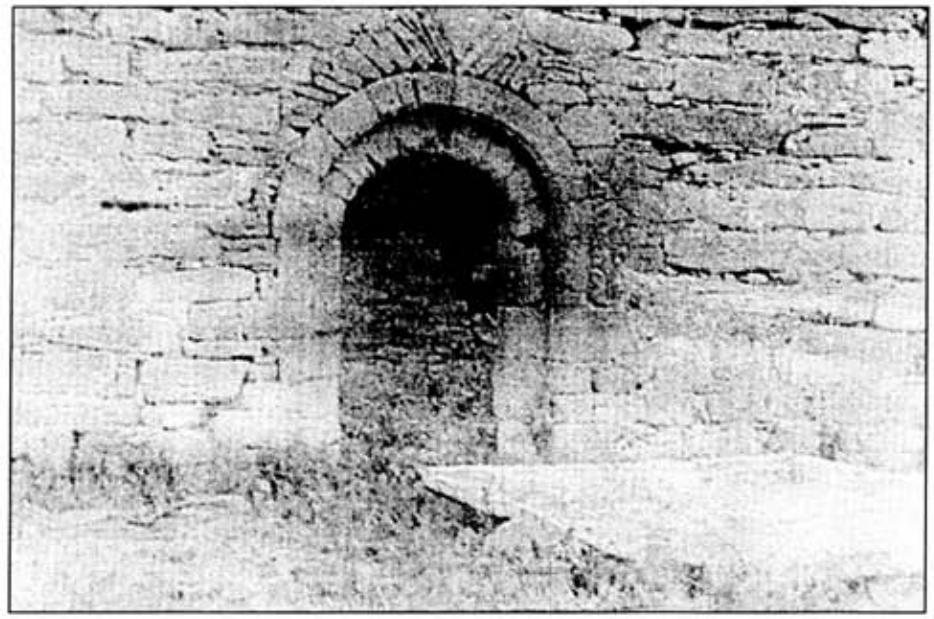


Photo taken early 20th Century: This arched doorway is still intact at the entrance to the ruins of the ancient Church at Aughanagh overlooking Lough Arrow and near the village of Ballinafad, Co Sligo. It is said to be one of the first stone churches to be built in the county. History tells us that St Patrick our Patron Saint visited this area when on his travels throughout Ireland. He banished the druids who had their haunt nearby and he then got a church built probably on this same site and formed the Parish of Aughanagh. The surrounding graveyard contains many memorials to our ancestors, and continues to be used as a burial ground. : *Kathleen Fairbanks*

Looking Back at the Future

For many in the world, our past is their future. Dave McEllin reflects on times gone by

THE coming of the new millennium has led to profound thoughts entering my mind as to what it is all about and where exactly we are going. We have made great progress on Earth, yet we are no nearer to answering the great questions which seem to me to be a cross between O'Casey's "What is the Moon?" and "What is the Stars?", and what exactly is Estragon and Vladimir awaiting in Beckett's acclaimed play "Waiting for Godot".

Recent pictures from the USA showed a group of fairly dishevelled looking scientists and space programmers sitting around expectantly, all of them as helpless as the baby ape who had been rejected by its mother and who appeared on the same bulletin, now thankfully being bottle fed in the arms of a nurse, as they wondered sheepishly what on earth had happened to their space craft which had attempted to land on Mars but was now lost. They had their fingers crossed for man's greatest items of technology to pull them out of a hole and start sending signals back to Earth, thereby showing an 'open mouthed' public glued to tv sets that all is well and that man is still on course to find out what's out there and on target to bring back the answers.

GODS AND EUROS

The ancient Irish (Milesians) who, it is alleged, came originally from Galicia in Spain, worshipped the Sun and idolised snakes and wells. The snakes were later to be banished with the advent of Christianity and the wells to be deemed holy. The New-age Irish, it might appear, are in transition and relegating the Saints for the Sun and losing interest in the wells – unless, of course, they contain oil or gas. The latest Messiah is money. And, we are told, the country is awash with it. What is the result of this? The latest reports are that we have:

1) A higher accident rate (pet capita) on our roads than Britain;
2) The highest suicide rate in Europe;
3) Our country (noted heretofore for its unspoilt greenery) is becoming polluted; phosphates are making the river Shannon unfit for fish to live in;
4) We are becoming the unhealthiest people in Europe; the highest rate of death from cancers and heart disease;
5) We are not sure if our food supply is safe (mad cow disease etc.).

I'll leave it at that...

Ireland has a history of nobody saying anything. This served us well in the past when the landlord mentality ruled the roost. You didn't rat on your neighbour. Only when the abuse and oppression became too much was there an outcry. Then all hell would break loose and the people would take the law into their own hands. There is a danger that the landlord society is taking root again in the 'climate' of Celtic Tiger prosperity, as more and more people take advantage of 'perks' and 'privileges' held out to them like 'carrots' in the mass consumerism of the fastest growing economy in Europe, and a great chasm is developing once again in Ireland between the 'haves' and the 'have nots.

THE MOTHER OF ALL BUDGETS

Charlie McCreevy came out smiling and delivered his 'awesome' budget, setting the trend for the Emerald Isle for the new Millennium. He expected cheers from the crowd, but got boos. What happens when you have too much money is that you get:

1) Candles being sent out in the post;
2) Clocks being immersed in a polluted river Liffey;
3) Monstrous football stadiums darkening the small streets of inner city communities;
4) Spikes, that have no useful function, penetrating the skies in O'Connell Street;
5) Roads, costing millions, ending in roundabouts or stale-mates because of local civic agitation.

Agus mar sin. What seems to be lacking in many or all of these enterprises is a lack of empathy for people.

DÉJA VU IRELAND

Another phenomenon in Millennium Ireland is the sight of refugees from other countries queuing outside Immigration Centres in Dublin. This is a 'touchy' subject and one that is taxing the minds, resources and indeed the hospitality of everyone in other European countries and elsewhere. Ireland has to play its part. We have a duty to do so by law because Ireland has signed the UN Universal Declaration on Human Rights, to offer refuge to people who are fleeing persecution and other abuses in their own land. It is a complex issue as the charter caters for 'political' refugees whereas many of those arriving are 'economic', and some perhaps are bogus.

THE WILD COLONIAL BOYS

What we have to remember in dealing with these refugees is that heretofore the shoe (if you had shoes) was on the other foot. The outflow of emigrants from Ireland to other lands is only matched by the Exodus of the Jews from Egypt. In 1860 a quarter of the population in Liverpool was Irish. Between 1956 and 1961, 212,000 Irish people emigrated. In the 1980's, 44,000 emigrated each year – all because there were no jobs. Our emigrants didn't find it easy. Often, they met with prejudice, discrimination and anti-Irish feelings, especially when they arrived on foreign soil in poor physical and mental condition. Even in the '60's it was possible to pick those emigrants out in the crowded streets or cities, or on the teeming platforms of railway stations. They had a 'lost look' about them. This, despite the fact that they often built those streets and railways.

In his book "The Irish in Britain" Kevin O'Connor talked about the Irish fellows who came onto the building sites looking for work. They had a 'gimp', a way of walking with a 'swagger' to give the impression of confidence. When a fellow with 'the gimp' came onto the building site, he'd kick any 'ould' timber outta his way, as much as to say, "You want a tunnel dug.... I'll dig it myself in a day". Somehow, by an innate endurance and with gallantry they were able to fight their way out of their ghettos, second class citizenry and underprivileged status. There is a lot of respect for the Irish around the world today. It is these men, who had nothing, who earned it. They are the real heroes. Through some piece of luck, that beggars belief, we are now a haven for the dispossessed, the disaffected and the distressed peoples of the world. Let us treat them with dignity and respect and help them if we can.

Ballinacarrow team in match against Killoran, played in Ballinacarrow played in Ballinacarrow in August 1946 in the Junior Championship. Front row, left to right: Thomas Healy (R.I.P.), Frank McCann (R.I.P.), Paddy Lavin (R.I.P.), Edward Lynch, Michael Berreen (R.I.P.), Jack McBrien, Brian Madden, Tom O'Grady (R.I.P.), John Ross (R.I.P.), Gerry Gallagher, Joe Gallagher, Peter Healy, Vincent Brady. 2nd row: Charlie Madden, Jack Gallagher, Paddy Gallagher, Tommy Cryan, Patrick Madden, Roger Cunningham, Pat Luby, Peter Currid, Ned Murrin (R.I.P.), John Quigley, Joe Johnston, Josie Gallagher, John Luby, John Sexton (R.I.P.). Photo courtesy Neal Farry

Ballymote N.S. c.1949: Front row, left to right: Kevin Reynolds, Mark Henry, Mel Rogers, Paddy Cunnane, Joe Nolan, Dan Droughtan. Second row: Peter Brady, Sean Brennan, Seamus Waters, Patrick Healy, Frankie Begley, Padrig Davey, John Duffy. Third row: Jacki Waters, Eamon Hannon, Joe Duffy, Padraig Healy, Davy Brennan. Back row: Michael Bree, George Molloy, Francis Brady, John James Brehony, Willie McDonagh, Joe Cassidy, Martie Brennan, Gerry Golden. Photo courtesy Mary Black.

Members of the Rathmullen Football Team pictured at Lough Gara, Monasteraden in 1955. Back row: P. Scanlon, S. O'Connor, A. Fox, M. Scanlon, T. Coleman, J. Higgins, P. Mullen, J. Brehony, T. Scanlon, J. Keville, J. Fox, S. Hannon, S. Fox, M. Harrison, K. Killoran. Front row: P. Gaffney, T. Meehan, T. Flatley, B. Conlon, P.J. Killoran, J. Hannon, S. Coleman, E. Fox. Photo courtesy P.J. Duffy.

Poet's Corner

Michael Hamilton

An Old Country Barn

I hear the rattle of swaying rafters, almost descended,
Its drooping swinging door
Creaks loudly in the winter's wind.
The lonely white owl has flown from its loft.
The noisy hanging bats, here did dwell,
Have now said their last farewell.

Inside its dark, grey walls are relics of the past.
There lies an old strapless copper spraying-machine,
Turned pale green by idle time.
Will never more dampen the blossoming potato stalk.
The rusty worn loy, its shaft and heel stick,
Riddled with "rent free" hungry woodworm.

A dusty old sickle, its mildewed handle,
Worn bare by the reaper's sweaty hand,
No more will reap the ripened corn of the land.
A pair of corn flails, wrapped in streaming cobwebs,
Never more to swing and thrash the sheaf of golden corn.

Outside its timbered walls, lies a broken toothless harrow.
Can't smooth the rough stony soil of tomorrow.
On the grassy cobbled stones, an old horse-cart I spy.
Its chainless worn shafts point into a dreary sky.
Its dusty iron shod wheels will never turn full circle, I sigh.

A broken horse-plough rests silently,
In a bed of thriving nettles.
Oh, where strayed the ploughman, whose steady hand
steered it through earth's fertile soil of our land.

In a quiet corner a horse-drawn mowing-machine.
Entwined in a bed of touchy thorny briars,
No more the old grey mare, will circle and mow
The fresh green meadows,
Speckled with scented wild flowers.
No more I hear my corncrake call.
My heavenly evening beckons,
Where changing deep shadows begin to fall

"My Silent" Greaghnafarna "Bog"

Oh, no more do I hear the workmen, swishing turf spades,
Harvest out my peat of golden brown
To fuel their cheery open hearth fires,
In their humble white-washed home-steads sweet,
As I rest here in peaceful sweet repose,
beneath my blanket of perfumed purple heather,
where busy bees toil all day long, extracting its precious golden pollen.

"Ceanawán" in gay profusion toss gently,
Its white downy cotton heads,
In the freshening gentle breezes,
Blend in with its purple heathers
A magic colour scheme divinely planned.
Shrill calling curlews swoop down on bleak, "Blast-Hill"
inviting soft gentle rain to spill,
From its gathering dark clouds above,
No more do I hear the singing early morning lark,
Its breast dampened by the morning dew,
As it soars into a clear sky, so blue,
Silent is the crowing grouse used there abound,
No more they grace and roam this hallow ground

Silent, the rattle of the turf-cart wheels
As it trundled o'er the old rugged bog road.
Now, I stand here in the evening's setting sun,
Spraying its golden rays through its broken clouds.

A spell of heavenly silence descends,
My fond heart throbs, as I recall.
My youthful summer days, once here spent,
Are ever-lasting dreams to me in sweet content
I, take a bunch of precious purple heathers,
My cherished souvenir, of humble days of yore,
A tear-drop falls, to be sure.

McDonagh, King of the Tinkers

From "The Boston Globe", 20:07:1961 • Reporter Brendan Malin • Supplied by Paddy Duffy

WHILE Dublin was still celebrating the visit of Princess Grace of Monaco, the town of Ballymote, 120 miles to the west, solemnly buried a king. It paid a last, silent tribute to John McDonagh who for 50 years was the acknowledged chieftain of the proudest clan of itinerants in the province of Connacht.

McDonagh, who was 73 at the time of his death, ruled quietly but ruthlessly over a far-flung realm of the great western outdoors, peopled by a fantastic amalgam of travelling tinsmiths, horse traders and fortune tellers. Not all of these of course were of the McDonagh clan, and "the Chief" as they all called John, would be slow to call many of them to the confines of his court. But all acknowledged the jurisdiction of the tough and tireless Mayo-born man-of-the-roads, accepted his leadership and bowed to his decisions

When after-fair feuding split skulls and sundered families, it was Chief John who mended both. And when the long arm of the law hauled them into court for disturbing the peace, or the property of a poultry-farmer, John was there again to fight their corner. A case against the itinerants moved to a high lane of representation when the Chief stepped forward, saying quietly "McDonagh, yer Honour".

For the greater part of his life, his official address was "no fixed abode" – the brown, dusty, winding roads of Mayo, Galway and Sligo. Here in the rugged territory that he loved, McDonagh was king, lord of his clan, and master of his trade as maker and mender of every shape and size of every pot, pan or kettle that could fit an Irish hearth.

Often I walked the Mayo roads with him, coming home from the district courts at Kiltimagh, Swinford or Charlestown, where we had filled very different roles to hear him declaim with equal vehemence about the law and the waywardness of a clansman who had provoked its servants.

He had an eye for the weather and a capacity to plot its course that might have paid off handsomely had he come to this part of America instead of beating tin into cans on the side of the ditches of Mayo.

And almost a lyrical mode of expression: "I'd push that bike hard, boy; the sun is out now but the rain'll be on the back of yer neck before you're over the bridge of Balla – if you don't make track, that is!"

McDonagh was born in a camp on the side of the road at Ballaghaderreen. He married young, as do most of the Irish itinerants, had 11 children and – at the time of his death – 80 grandchildren and 25 great-grandchildren. He left his clan to fight in World War 1 and was wounded in France, before returning to the open road in 1919. Seven years ago his wanderings came to an end. With old age taking its toll, he settled in a cottage on the outskirts of Ballymote, still the chief of the clan and the dispenser of peace to itinerants in trouble. His responsibilities had spread over the years and with the marriage of McDonaghs to Wards and Mongans.

Peace rested uneasily on this complex empire, but all its segments united in silence and all roads lead to Ballymote when word went out that "the Chief is dying". Two hundred of the McDonagh clan and its offshoots were on hand when he drew his last breath. Some had come from the factories of Britain, having earlier turned their backs on itinerant hardships for ever.

At their head was Pat McDonagh, the Chief's fifty year old son and his successor in title. "I'll take over as best I can, and I'll do what's best for us all", said Pat as he watched the motley assembly of itinerants drift from the cemetery and take once more to the road. "But", he added, "there's no man like my Dad".

Then, with a last look at the new grave, he too left the Chief behind and started down the road to the west – to somewhere – anywhere.

John and Mrs. McDonagh and daughter Ellen, in April 1960. Child not known.

THANK YOU

The Editor wishes to sincerely thank all those who provided articles and photographs for The Corran Herald

Bianconi "King of the Irish Roads"

Claire Walsh

CHARLES Bianconi came to Ireland as a pedlar at sixteen years of age. He found as he went around the country that there was very little reliable transport so he decided to start his own system.

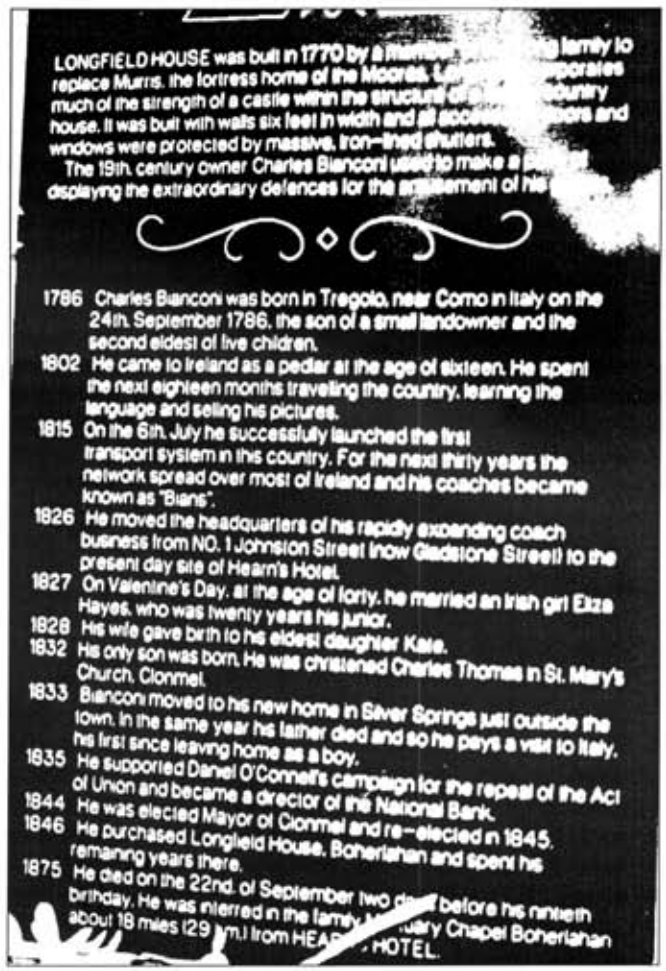
He based his first vehicles on the family jaunting car and commenced the first run from Hearn's Hotel in Clonmel to Waterford city. He arranged to have two cars running on the same route but did not tell this to the jarvies. They thought they were rivals and tried to outpace one another. Eventually the jarvies had a row as to which had the better claim on the route and Bianconi had to reveal that he was the owner of both cars, but he had found out their fastest speed.

He enlarged the cars, some to carry ten passengers and some fourteen. The smaller ones were drawn by three horses and the larger by four. They were called "long cars" or "outside cars" but the popular name was "the Bians".

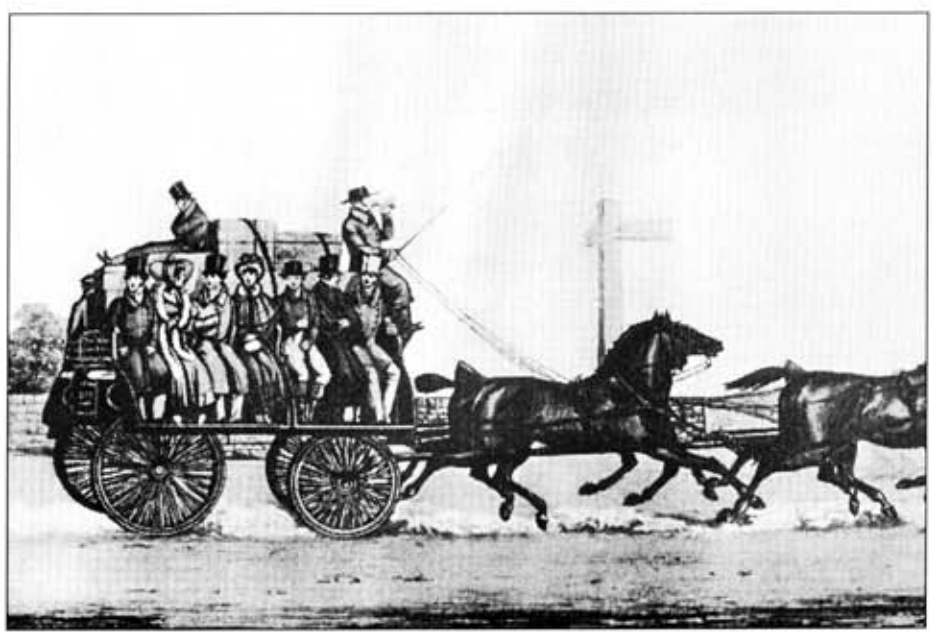
He took out the contract for the Mail Coach which transported mail from Dublin to the principal towns in Ireland. These coaches carried passengers inside and were more comfortable on long journeys. They were drawn by four horses and travelled on the Mail Coach roads.

There were "stages" along the route for the convenience of the passengers and for the changing and watering of the horses. These stages were every eight miles on each side of the road. Michael Walsh of Clohogue owned a stage on the Mail Coach road near the present village of Castlebaldwin. The house was a two-storied thatched building with eight rooms. The stable could accommodate sixteen horses.

When the railways were laid and the trains started running to the larger towns, Bianconi's enterprise diminished. He sold his business to smaller operators and took shares in the railways.



Charles Bianconi, 1775-1875



Arriving at the end of a stage in 1856

Mount Offaly/Cabinteely Excavations

Malachy Conway

DURING 1998 archaeological excavations were undertaken in advance of development at a site known locally as Mount Offaly, located along the Dublin bound carriageway of the N11, some 700m southwest of Cabinteely Village (NGR O 233242). Two bungalows and a small filling station and garage occupied the site prior to investigation. The excavations were carried out by Margaret Gowen & Co. Ltd on behalf of Esso Ireland Ltd who provided funding for both the excavation, which was undertaken from February to August 1998 and post-excavation works between August 1998 and February 2000. The topographic files of the National Museum of Ireland contain numerous references to the discovery of human remains from both the Mount Offaly site and adjacent properties. Two previous rescue excavations at locations to the north and northwest of the site recovered extended inhumations. The first in 1957 when the NMI excavated a long cist containing an adult male inhumation with some additional female bones and second in 1991 when an unprotected inhumation was recovered from the root ball of a tree (Ó Floinn, Excavations 1991,17). An archaeological assessment of the site undertaken in 1995 revealed at least 14 in situ burials of early medieval date as well as a sherd of Leinster cooking ware (Gowen, Excavations 1995,27-28).

Removal of all standing buildings from the site revealed a complex sequence of burial beginning at least around the 5th or 6th century AD, culminating sometime around the 11th or 12th century. At least 1553 individual burials were uncovered, along with numerous deposits of disarticulated remains and two charnel pits. Six broad phases of burial are at present proposed for the cemetery.

Phase 1 burial comprised at least 20 individuals, seven of which had associated grave cuts, and two of which were found in wood lined graves (elm). All phase one burials were cut directly into subsoil (sand to the south and gravel to the north of the site). In general these burials were well spaced and with clearly defined grave cut.

As the exact date of the phase 1 burials has yet to be established it is unclear whether the cutting of the first enclosure ditch on the site took place prior to or later than phase 1 burial. What is certain is that the inner ditch was filled in to facilitate the extension of the cemetery during phase 3.

Phase 2 burial comprised at least 48 individuals of which only three had surviving grave cuts, while a fourth burial was contained within a grave comprising stone features. Phase 2 was also accompanied by a stone lined socket, which may represent the position of a cemetery marker or grave alignment stone.

Phase 3 saw the filling in of the inner ditch and the excavation of a new enclosure ditch east of the first. This phase is represented by at least 120 individuals. Five burials were interred in lintel graves and one in a stone lined grave. The remaining burials lay in earth cut graves and of this number earmuff stones accompanied four and a further burial displayed a stone component in the grave.

Phase 4 burials comprise at least 262 individuals and represent a marked increase in both the number of burials and also the area utilized within the enclosure. Several areas are however burial free and these correspond with areas of stone cobble. Four of the lintel graves of phase 3 were re-opened and used for secondary burial. 11 burials were found utilizing earmuff stones and a further 3 burials had a stone feature or component to their interment.

Phase 5 represents a marked development in both the number of interments and the size of the enclosure. The middle ditch was filled in and a third and final ditch was excavated further east. At least 424 burials are represented for this phase and of this number 33 burials had earmuff stones and 4 had a small stone box or cist around the head. Only one of the head-cist burials contained a pillow stone (large flat quartz pebble). As with the preceding phases, few clearly defined grave cuts survived (only 11 grave cuts). A unique stone lined charnel pit (F77) was uncovered containing the remains of three individuals. The base of the charnel pit comprised an intact millstone. Features within this phase including several areas of cobbles from which two bronze rings were recovered and from the middle ditch a furnace with associated hearth and dump deposits of metalworking debris. The middle ditch was also found to be very rich in small finds and butchered animal bone.

Phase 6, the final phase, is characterized by the filling in of the outer ditch and the formation of a large cobbled surface, partly overlying the inner edge of the outer ditch. Test excavation immediately south of the surviving cobble failed to reveal any further continuation of the feature. However, as most of the archaeological deposits and burials from this area had been disturbed and or removed during construction of the original garage in the 1930's, it is reasonable to assume that the cobble surface may have extended south. It is clear that the cobble forms a perimeter to the burial area, however, the reason for the filling in of the outer ditch and the utilization of a cobbled area as the cemetery boundary is unclear. Phase 6 consists of at least 450 burials of which over half are infants. Within phase 6, sixteen grave cuts survived and of the total number of burials 57 have associated earmuff stones and 2 have head cists. Phase 6 may be subdivided further with the help of radiocarbon dating as I feel that the penultimate stage of cemetery usage was as a children's burial ground or cilliní.

Burials of Phases 1-2 and 4-6 were exclusively in earth cut graves, which in many cases were not clearly visible due to the numerous re-cuts and disturbance caused by successive interment. Many of the burials in earth cut graves from phase 3 through to phase 6 had stones surrounding the head (ear muff stones) or had the head surrounded by a stone setting resembling a head cist. In only one instance was a pillow stone used. Burial posture suggests the majority of interments were shrouded and at least 3 large shroud pins were recovered (though only one was directly associated with a burial). Generally the burials were laid in the extended supine position with the head to the west, however, a number were aligned with the head to either north or east and this group also included several prone burials and at least one crouched (cut into the middle ditch fill). Two female burials contained full term foetuses one of which was in the breach birth position. Other unusual burials include an adult male from phase 3 with body in an extended supine position, but with the skull turned around to quite

literally face west. During excavation pathologies were noted when obvious and these included a number of fractures, some showing signs of healing, dental and bone abscesses and compression fractures of the vertebrae. During post-excavation analysis more interesting pathologies were identified including at least one case of trepanation. This refers to the removal of a disc section of skull or cranium (without the aid of anaesthesia) to relieve pressure on the brain and was a technique employed from prehistoric times for ailments such as migraine or schizophrenia. The trepanation case from Mount Offaly certainly survived the procedure as evidenced by the re-growth of bone around the cut and the fact that further discs were not removed may also attest that the individual never complained of headaches or hearing voices again. A number of weapon injuries have also been identified and in one case the nature of the attack can be illustrated. A diagonal 'sword' cut was inflicted to his back extending from the upper vertebrae downwards and across the back of the left ribs. A fracture to the left arm was most probably incurred when the individual held it up to protect himself from a further blow, either from the left side or front, by a blunt weapon, possibly the broad side of the sword or bladed weapon. As with so many burials on the site and the hazards of disturbing remains it was not surprising to find two individuals who had been disturbed by clumsy grave diggers...not long after they had been interred. In one case the severed and still articulated lower limbs of one individual were carefully placed back into the grave several inches below where they were cut off from and in the second case an individuals right arm was cut post-mortem, though not severed and was folded over his shoulder to accommodate the new interment. In both these clear cases the burials were still 'with flesh and tissue' when cut by the grave diggers. In many ways this helps to explain why either earmuff stones or some stone component in the grave accompanied so many individuals. Essentially this was to protect the head, believed to be the receptacle for the soul and as the head invariably lay higher within the grave than the rest of the body, was the most likely part of the deceased to be disturbed during later grave digging.

A large assemblage of small finds was recovered from the site. This includes ferrous and non-ferrous metal, stone, bone, glass and ceramic. A number of small finds were recovered directly associated with burials, for example 3 bone beads from separate infant burials, several pins including one iron shroud pin and a number of iron knives. At least three individuals were found with a simple band ring on their finger. The majority of the finds, however, were recovered from contexts within the burial horizon, and therefore some objects possibly represent material formerly associated with burials, but which later re-cutting disturbed. Many artefacts of various types were recovered from contexts such as the enclosing inner and middle ditches. The finds assemblage includes shroud pins, stick and possible ring pins, iron knives, shears, gouges, D-shaped belt buckles, nails, bone and blue-glass beads, bone handles and double sided bone combs, one of which retained both decorated panels (dot & circle) held in place by four iron rivets. The pottery assemblage includes fragments of Phocaean red slipware (From Turkey), Bi amphora (from Mediterranean), D ware (from the Bordeaux region), E ware (from NW France) and several perforated 'lids' of unknown origin. Sherds of locally made Leinster cooking ware, datable to the late 11th or early 12th century, were recovered from later site contexts.

In summary the excavations have revealed a portion of an enclosed cemetery, which, by the nature of the burial phases and succession of ditches, clearly reflects a sequential development, or growth of the site. The large number of finds of funerary, domestic and industrial nature suggests that the site was not used exclusively for burial and religious practices. Along with objects interpreted as the mounts and fittings for possible shrines or reliquaries, it is suggested that the site had a dual religious and secular function. The large volume of butchered animal bone from the inner and middle ditches further highlights this; the large (used) millstone derived from the base of the stone lined charnel pit as well as features such as the furnace and hearths. This clearly shows that agricultural and industrial activities were undertaken on (or very close to) the site. During at least two stages, the area was possibly discontinued as a cemetery and during these stages cobbled surfaces were constructed (as well as tentative evidence for a structure) before the site reverted back to a burial ground. What is certain is that the range and type of objects recovered from the site, especially the imported pottery of sixth to seventh century date, suggest that the site is of considerable status and importance. The exact dimensions of the enclosure may only be estimated, however it is reasonable to assume that within the boundary of the site lies evidence for perhaps a church, ancillary buildings, possible workshops and certainly further burials.

Vincent Jordan

WITH great sadness we record in this Issue the death of Vincent Jordan of Ballinacarrow, President of Ballymote Heritage Group, who passed away at the end of May, 2000.

A sense of great loss and deep regret at his departure must be the overwhelming reaction of anyone who

knew him, for Vincent was friendly and outgoing, helpful and willing, never failing to give of himself in any situation. He was a gentleman in the truest sense of the word.

Imbued with a great love of his native Ballinacarrow, and having a deep and scholarly knowledge of its history and traditions, he was naturally drawn to any organisation that fostered interest in such things. So he became a member of the Heritage Group from its early years. There his opinions and ideas were always eagerly sought and listened to, and the respect in which he was held was reflected in the fact that he was elected President of the Group and held that position until his death.

The Post Office in Ballinacarrow had been in the care of his family for more than 100 years, a fact of which he was very proud. Vincent was a lifelong member of the FCA, and there too his care for and attention to the needs of others were evident – as is eloquently attested to elsewhere in this Issue.

His departure leaves a sense of personal loss for us all because to everyone he was a friend, and his courteous kindly presence was comforting and encouraging. To his wife and family we offer our very deep sympathy. May his gentle soul expand for ever in the love and peace of his eternal Home.

The Growth of a Rural Parish

Mary O'Donnell

THE present parish of Ballymote forms the biggest part of the Barony of Corran and consists of two ancient parishes, Emlaghfad and Kilmorgan.

The Parish of Emlaghfad was established by Saint Columcille in the sixth century when he built the Abbey of Emlaghfad. The monks were given two farms of land for their upkeep–one at Cloonamonagh and the other at Carrigans. Here they tilled their lands and looked after the spiritual wants of the people of the area, then known as Ballymote, a rural area. The ruins of this abbey are still standing as are the ruins of Kilmorgan Church, founded by St. Morgan, a descendent of Niall of the Nine Hostages.

In 1615 the monks were driven out of their abbey at Emlaghfad by the Established Church and it then remained the principal Protestant church of the area till the present church was built on "The Rock" in 1848.

When the monks left, a new Catholic church was built on the site of the present Loftus Hall and served the Catholic population till the present beautiful church was built, and consecrated to our Blessed Lady of the Immaculate Conception in 1864.

Most of the planning for this new church was done by Rev. Canon Denis Tighe P.P. under the guidance of the then bishop of the Diocese, Rev. Dr. Patrick Durcan. The site was given free by Sir Robert Gore Booth, grandfather of Countess Markievicz and owner of the town of Ballymote and surrounding lands at that time. The designer was George Goldie, a well known London firm, and the contractor was Charles Barker, both of whom were responsible for the building of the Cathedral in Ballaghaderreen, around the same time.

The people of Ballymote were very poor at that time and most of the £2,743, the cost of the contract, had to be collected outside the parish and indeed the country. Canon Tighe travelled far and wide to collect this money. The railway line from Dublin to Sligo was being laid at this time and those locals who were lucky enough to be employed, gave generously of their small earnings. At that time, £1 would be as good as £200 or more today.

By September 1864, the new church was at last ready for consecration, and on Sunday 14th the church was officially opened and dedicated to our Blessed Lady, the Immaculate Mother of God, by Bishop Patrick Durcan. The first Mass was said by Rev. Luke Hannon; the sermon was given by Dr. John McHale, Arch-Bishop of Tuam, and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament by Bishop Durcan.

The 14th September 1864 was the most important date as yet in the life of Ballymote parish and perhaps since. Special trains ran from Mullingar, Longford and Sligo; Bianconi cars from all arts and parts of Ireland, all packed with people eager to see the most beautiful country church in Ireland at that time, and perhaps yet.

All the priests and their parishioners from surrounding parishes flocked in on horse back, or on foot to pay homage to God and His Blessed Mother and to thank Canon Tighe and his band of loyal workers for this beautiful place of worship.

In Memory

AS we enter a new millennium it is appropriate to recall the names of those who contributed so much to Ballymote Heritage Group and who now sadly are no longer with us:

Vincent Jordan, inspirational member and President of the Group for many years. Died 2000.

Una Preston, founder member of the Group and driving force behind The Corran Herald. Died 1990.

Nellie Tansey, shining example of commitment and dedication. Treasurer at the time of her death in 1997.

Gerard O'Donnell, early member with a great love of all matters of Heritage. Died 1988.

We hold their memory in respect and honour. May they enjoy eternal peace.

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Pupils and teachers of the then St. Mary's Secondary School, Ballymote, 1954. Picture courtesy Mary Black

Bestow a Sweet Smile

Des Black

IN the early years of the fifth century A.D., European civilisation was under attack. Constantine III, withdrawing forces from Britain, probably ended the Roman military occupation of that country. The Vandals began their conquest of North Africa. Rome itself was sacked by the Goth, Alaric the Great. The Visigoths began their conquest of Spain and the Visigothic Kingdom of Toulouse became a recognised kingdom by Rome. The Huns had been pushing westward from Asia.

At this time, Patrick, as a sixteen year old slave arrived in Ireland. From where had this young Patrick come? Claims can be made with supporting reasoning from many places; South West Scotland, North West England and North West Wales are very proximate to the Antrim coast. South West Wales, Cornwall and France where places where slave trading was a common occurrence. No one can say with absolute certainty where he came from but he came to an alien land, with a different culture, different religious beliefs and probably a different language–not a great welcome for our national saint.

Sold to an Antrim chieftain, called Milchu, Patrick was used as a swine-herd on Mount Slemish–a large hill rising out of the Antrim plateau. Milchu was a hard task-master. During his ordeal on Slemish the young Patrick turned to God and prayer to forget his misery. Milchu was later to be converted to Christianity.

During this time, Patrick made friends amongst the local community, became familiar with their pagan customs and probably learned the language.

With the help of local families, Patrick escaped southwards and eventually ended up on the South East coast near Wicklow. In trying to gain passage on a ship, he was taken prisoner by the crew, who turned out to be pirates. These pirates brought him to France, where in the upheavals of the post-Roman period, they all had difficulty surviving. Again he managed to escape.

At this time, the young Patrick felt the call for the religious life. This call took him to a monastery on an island in the Mediterranean Sea. Here, tutored by St. Honoratus, he spent his time in prayer and meditation. In his meditations, he thought more and more of the pagan Irish and he resolved to make his way back to Ireland to help bring Christianity to its people.

The time lapse between his leaving Ireland and his return was about eighteen years.

St. Patrick was not the first Christian saint to visit Ireland with a view to its conversion. St. Declan had arrived in Waterford in AD 430 and christianised that locality. St. Palladius had been a bishop in Ireland and it was as his successor that Bishop Patrick returned in AD 432.

How St. Patrick existed in Ireland is not known. Obviously he had to eat, had to be clothed and had to have shelter from the sometimes inclement Irish weather. Certainly our mental image of St. Patrick, mitre on head, crozier in hand, in long loose flowing garb is an impracticability. Sheepskin-ware would have been more sensible.

St. Patrick travelled the length and breadth of Ireland. Many wells are attributed to places of his visitations. Amongst the best known of the many Patrician foundations are Ballintubber, Croagh Patrick, Lough Derg and of course, Armagh.

St. Patrick arrived in Armagh in 442 AD. He got permission from the local chieftain, Daire, to build his first church in Armagh which was reputedly built about four-hundred metres to the South East of the present day Church of Ireland cathedral. However, within two years he was given a prime site–the 'ridge of the sallies'–in the middle of present day Armagh. Here he built a long stone church. This site is now the site of the present Church of Ireland Cathedral. Through the centuries, it has been burnt, plundered, rebuilt, burnt, plundered and enlarged many times, even suffering 'collateral' damage from IRA bombs in the fifties and seventies of the last century.

St. Patrick made Armagh the centre of Christianity in Ireland–the Primatial City. It has remained as such to this day. King Brian Boru endorsed this choice and offered gold on the high altar of the Cathedral. Later, St. Malachy, himself a native of Armagh, confirmed this choice.

Amongst the famous Bishops of Armagh were St. Benignus (St. Patrick's immediate successor), St. Malachy and the martyred St. Oliver Plunkett.

St. Patrick himself was not canonised in Rome–nor were any of the early Irish saints. Before St. Oliver Plunkett, only St. Malachy, St. Lorcan O'Toole and St. Virgilius of Salzburg were canonised in Rome. Not one of them died in Ireland.

Of the Church of Ireland Bishops, the most notable was Archbishop Robinson in the eighteenth century. Together with his two great architects, Cooley and Johnston, Archbishop Robinson gave Armagh its fine character and its most beautiful buildings–the Bishop's Palace, the Courthouse and the Georgian houses on The Mall.

Back to St. Patrick–Armagh flourished as a centre of monasticesm and learning. In the great Monastery of St. Peter and Paul, the monk scribe Ferdamnach wrote the beautiful Book of Armagh in the first decade of the ninth century. This book, now in the library of Trinity College, Dublin, contains the Confessions of St. Patrick–a reference to some of the places he visited in Ireland and, on a personal note, a reference to his inadequacies.

Of the stories that have come down to us about the saint, his conversions of the druids at the Hill of Slane is the most noteworthy. At Easter, St. Patrick was staying at the Hill of Slane where he hoped to celebrate the Easter Eucharist. As part of this celebration, he lit a bonfire–an equivalent of our Easter Candle. At the same time, about eight miles away on the Hill of Tara, the druids of the Court of the High King of Tara were celebrating the Festival of Spring. This ceremony consisted of the re-kindling of a fire. Leading up to this all fire had to be extinguished. From their vantage point, they saw through the darkness St. Patrick's bonfire. The King, his household guards and the druids hurried to where this outrage was occurring. The druids initially would have St. Patrick put to death but, by divine intervention, this was averted and eventually some of the druids became Christians. Later, one of them, Eric, became Bishop of Slane.

Another story relates how St. Patrick used the shamrock with its three leaves on one stem to explain the Trinity–three persons in one God. Yet another story relates how he banished the snakes from Ireland. As there weren't any snakes in post-glacial Ireland, I like to think that this is a reference to more upright vipers.

Before his death, St. Patrick made St. Benignus both bishop and successor to the See of Armagh. St. Patrick died on the 17th March 461 AD aged about 65 years–a very great age at that time. Authorities differ as to where he was buried but there is a strong tradition that points to Downpatrick in Co. Down. Here a large stone covers the reputed grave. Interred with him are St. Brigid and St. Columba.

It is not generally known that St. Patrick had a sister who lived in Armagh and was buried there. This sister also became a saint–St. Lupita.

If St. Patrick, dear saint of our isle, ever looks down on his poor children in Erin's green isle, I wonder that thoughts pass through his mind today.

Trades and Crafts which have Died Out in the Last Century

Claire Walsh

FROM the beginning of civilisation man developed skills for his own well-being and comfort and later as a way of earning a living. People of like talents eventually joined together to protect their interests and guard the secrets of their trades.

In the Middle Ages Trades Guilds were formed and were very powerful. Each trade had its own Guild with rules, signs and symbols. The Guild Hall was a place of importance in towns and cities.

To become a member of a Guild and a master craftsman took many years. There were three stages: apprenticeship, journeyman and master craftsman. Depending on the trade, apprenticeship took from four to six years. Fees were paid in money or kind, sometimes it could be an extra year's work.

When the apprenticeship was finished, the learner became a journeyman. He travelled from one master craftsman to another, picking up different angles of the craft and tricks of the trade, and getting paid for his work. When he finally considered he was proficient and had money to start on his own, or when he found a sponsor, he settled in a centre where there was a demand for his work. He was then considered a master craftsman and he took on apprentices of his own.

The trades were usually handed down in a family and a trade background was very important in the Guilds. Each trade had its own set of tools and equipment. These were greatly treasured by the tradesmen and were taken care of for generations even when well worn.

With the advent of the Industrial Age and power -driven tools, the trades began to wane. Some died out completely due to changes in customs and lifestyles. The Guilds lost their prominent positions – though even today the "City and Guilds" examinations and qualifications are an important asset for many trades and crafts.

There were many other ways of earning a living which required skill and knowledge but were not considered trades. In rural areas they were important in their own right and a great asset to the community.

The following are some trades and livelihoods which have almost ceased in the last century:

Shoemaker and Cobbler; Farrier and Blacksmith; Carpenter, Cooper and Wheelwright; Miller; Weaver; Dyer; Tailor; Saddler; Thatcher; Basket and Creel maker; Herd; Gamekeeper; Tinsmith; Limeburner; Cattledrover; Carter; Ploughman; Road mender; Small shopkeeper; mixed farmer.

Women's accomplishments also were very important in the community and highly valued. They too served their time and became mistresses of their chosen trades. Many of these trades are now alas vanishing also: Dressmaker; Milliner; Poultry instructress; Laundress; Dairymaid; Spinner.

O.N.E. members, seated left to right: Redmond Shannon, Pat Brennan, Bro. Basil O.P., and standing: Stan Casey, Tom McGettrick. Photo courtesy Angela Brennan.

Errol Flynn–a Hollywood actor with Sligo roots

Margaret Kearns

HE illuminated the silver screen in the 1930's, 40's and 50's, mostly starring in swash-buckling roles–still considered to be the best of their genre. Who can forget "The Adventures of Robin Hood", "The Charge of the Light Brigade" or "The Private Lives of Elizabeth and Essex"? They have delighted generations of cinema goers.

But few people realise that the Hollywood actor had Sligo roots and strong Ballymote connections.

Born Leslie Errol Thompson Flynn on June 20th 1909 in Hobart, Tasmania, he was the son of the eminent marine biologist Professor Theodore Thompson Flynn and Marelle Young, descendant of mid-shipman Young of Bounty fame. Errol's great-grandfather had left Sooey, Co. Sligo for Northern Ireland around 1820. He settled in Co. Antrim, but soon after the family set sail for Australia and eventually settled in Tasmania.

Professor Flynn made his name in 1924 when he made a find on a Tasman beach of an oceanic species that threw light on evolution–on man's emergence from the sea. This elevated the family into the ranks of high society in Australia and made the young Errol eager to achieve some kind of fame for himself. His chance came in 1933 when he was discovered by an American director in Tasmania and was asked to play the role of Fletcher Christian in "The Wake of the Bounty". Soon he was winging his way to the USA and to fame.

By 1935 his was on his third film and the one which made his name "Captain Blood"–Rafael Sabatini's novel on the British physician, humanist, and buccaneer Captain Peter Blood. It was in this film that the famous duelling scene occurred with Basil Rathbone and gave only a hint of the excellent swordplay to follow in later Flynn epics. Others followed: "The Charge of the Light Brigade" in 1936, perhaps his best known movie, and "The Adventures of Robin Hood" in 1938 (to this day he is still considered the best actor to have played the role). He made a dashing Earl of Essex, Elizabeth's doomed envoy to Ireland, in the "Private Lives of Elizabeth and Essex" (1939).

Errol with Basil Rathbone in the duelling scene in "Captain Blood"

He continued to make films for the next twenty years until his untimely death at the age of 50 in 1959. These included war-time dramas,westerns, and of course more swashbucklers.

Much has been made of his off-screen life in the press, both in the past and at present, as being that of a playboy who lived the high life. But there is also evidence of being a deeper thinker than he was given credit for. Errol was a diving pioneer, making use of tubes and compressed air before modern equipment to go under water had been invented. He went to Spain as an observer during the Spanish Civil War, and also to Cuba in 1959, being as he was politically aware.

Known for being athletic on screen, his prowess also extended to the tennis court, when in the late 1930's he was amongst Hollywood's most respected tennis players.

It was said he never forgot his roots in Sligo and and even earlier ones in Roscommon, from where his ancestors had been exiled to Co. Sligo during the plantations. This story he craftily wove into his films. Few people knew he was descended from the Flynns and Flanagans of Roscommon who had fought in the Irish armies of the day against Essex, the envoy of Elizabeth I, or that these names were anglicised "Blood" (Flynn means red/ruddy in Irish). In one famous scene in "Captain Blood", Errol swings from a ship's mast and declared he is Irish. Various authors and biographies never took seriously his claims to be of Irish descent. And the American studios of the time often elaborated on their protegés' backgrounds, giving them fictitious pedigrees to make them appear more interesting.

Errol counted amongst his friends some minor Crowned Heads of Europe. He was a frequent visitor to Prince Rainier of Monaco at the Pink Palace in Monte Carlo. He sailed the world with King Farouk of Egypt. In America he was a guest at the White House.

There was often a boredom and restlessness with this life and it was then that he retreated to his lands in Jamaica, where he was more at home on the range tending to his 1500 head of cattle.

Perhaps his interest in farming harked back to the plains of Roscommon, where his ancestors (living in more modest circumstances) herded and tended their cattle. Some of his more warlike forebears took part in cattle raids into adjoining Co. Sligo where, ironically, the families would later settle.

We learn from the Four Masters, under the year 1266, that the "Borough of Bal an Tachair" (Ballintogher) was burned that year by Flann Roe O'Flynn, and that man of the English of the town were slain by him". Another branch of the Flynns of Ballymote settled in Cletta, Keash, in the Barony of Corran and it is through them that Errol has his Ballymote connections. It was in the neighbouring Tirerill district that his kinsmen the Flanagans of Roscommon eventually settled, soon after they had been made landless. Contrary to the popular belief that they had suffered clan extinction, the Flanagans in fact flourished in Sligo and became part and parcel of its history.

Later generations of the Flynn family became involved in politics, the most famous being Patrick J. Flynn, J.P. and Chairman of the Sligo Rural District Council. He was one of these leading the 15,000 people attending the Land League meeting near Riverstown on the 6th January 1880. Prior to his sudden death in 1909, Pat Flynn, as he was commonly known, was a candidate for the North Sligo Parliamentary election for Redmond's Nationalist Party.

Mr. Flynn was extremely popular with the electorate and was highly thought of in political circles, as newspaper reports in the Sligo Champion of the time will testify. But rather than divide the popular ranks of the party, he opted out of the race, when asked to by John Redmond himself. His brother John also achieved some fame as a historian and journalist with the "Sligo Champion". They had a hostelry/pub of some note in Sooey, which afterwards was taken over by their sister Mrs. Flanagan (of Sooey). The Flanagan family resided there until very recently, before they moved to Strandhill. Members of this sept originally came from the Benbulben/Drumcliffe area. They gave Sligo town a Lord Mayor when in 1904 and 1905, Thomas Flanagan of High Street, Sligo was elected two years running. Fionnuala Flanagan the US actress is also a member of this distinguished family.

Yet another sect resided in Riverstown (though not directly related to the Drumcliff branch): the "Flanagans of the Fort" who can trace themselves back to Elphin, Co. Roscommon, and still reside on the periphery of their old territory. One member of this branch set up an electrical plant, the first of its kind in a small village in Ireland when Thomas Flanagan of Drumrane established his business in Riverstown in 1919. Descendants of these families still live all over Co. Sligo. Many have gone further afield to the US or the UK.

Errol's immediate family, his two daughters by his second wife, still reside in the California area. Their sons, Errol's grandsons, now grace the pages of international magazines, having inherited the good looks that made him famous. His films too are often re-run on tv and are now available on video for a new generation to enjoy.

Errol Flynn died in Vancouver, Canada on October 14th 1959 aged just 50 and is buried in the resting place of the Hollywood stars at Forest Lawn, Glendale, California.

Errol in his role as Robin Hood

• *Many thanks to Collette Flanagan and family, Strandhill, Co. Sligo who kindly helped me out in my research.*

Sources:
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Photographs:
From "The Complete Films of Errol Flynn" by Thomas, Behlmer & McCarthy from Citadel Press, USA.

Heritage Group AGM

THE fifteenth Annual General Meeting of Ballymote Heritage Group was held on September 29, 1999.

In their reports, all officers told of a successful and worthwhile year's work. The August Heritage Weekend had been very well attended and appreciated, and had maintained its usual high standards.

To mark the national Heritage Week, an outing had been organised on September 5th to Castletown House at Celbridge and to Leixlip Castle, with a brief tour of Ardagh, Co Longford, on the way home; this expedition was well supported and very enjoyable. The 1999/2000 issue of the Corran Herald had been produced in mid July and had been sold out.

Following the AGM the membership of the Group, and its officers, were as follows:

Vincent Jordan,President
Matilda Casey, Vice-President
Eileen Tighe, Chairperson
Yvonne Perceval, Vice-Chairperson
Betty Conlon, Secretary)
Mary Martin and Gerry Cassidy, Joint Treasurers)
James Flanagan,PRO and Editor of Corran Herald
Maureen Egan, Ann Harrison, Carmel Rogers, Jack Martin, Esther Cassidy, Anne Flanagan, Mary O'Donnell, Stan Casey, Paddy Horan, Nuala Rogers, Noreen Friel, Rosalyn Duffy, Nellie Jordan, John Conlon, John and Marie Perry, Des and Mary Black, Brenda Friel, Molly Howard, Maisie McGovern, Cathleen Coleman.

Appointed to the Corran Herald subcommittee were Eileen Tighe, Betty Conlon, James Flanagan, Paddy Horan, Jack Martin, Des Black.

Eileen Tighe and Betty Conlon were appointed Heritage Weekend coordinators.

Whither the Weather?

Molly Howard

THE weather this spring was somewhat confusing to say the least. The only satisfactory explanation I could think of was that whoever controls the weather must have had a faulty calendar. Instead of running January, February, March, April, it went January, February, April, March.

By the middle of March, it had become too warm to sleep under my winter duvet so I changed it to a lighter one. Gloves were unnecessary when cycling to school and extra underwear became surplus to requirements. Thoughts of getting out into the garden and getting my seeds in early were nearly translated into action. The only thing holding me back was the wet condition of the soil.

This didn't bother those plants already in situ. I can't think when I've seen so many daffodils lasting for so long, as well as all the other spring flowers which decided it was the time to flower. New leaves began to appear on various small bushes and all in all, it looked like spring was well and truly on the way.

Then it was April with frosts, steady north winds, and for a final emphasis, hail storms. Truly March weather. I won't detail the set-backs and damages suffered by many plants but they hurt, both them and me. I know that if "March comes in like a lamb, it goes out like a lion" but this seemed to me somewhat excessive, as well as taking up two months rather than one.

This upheaval in the weather reminded me of something I'd read in passing re the melting of the polar ice-caps. It's usually the southern one which is discussed, the most recent event being the breaking off from the Ross Ice Shelf of a piece twenty odd miles long and about half as wide, a veritable floating island. The article I was reminded of concerned the North Pole. The ice was melting there as well but as it was already in the water it wasn't making as big a splash as the southern ice.

The implications of this melting, to us at any rate, were what stuck with me. The floating ice bergs, normally coming south past the coasts of Labrador and Newfoundland, are they what causes the Gulf Stream to angle east to warm the coasts of Ireland and England? Because if so, with the ice bergs melting before they get far enough to affect it, there appears to be a serious possibility of the Gulf Stream continuing straight north and warming the coasts of Canada instead.

What would this do to us on the West coast of Ireland?

Even if it only produces winters like those I knew as a child in Montreal, this country is in for a disastrous numbing shock.

But Ireland is ten degrees further north than Montreal while its winters at the moment are those of lands ten degrees further south than that city.

Just to be depressing, I'll describe the winters I was used to as a child.

Once September had finished, the weather would get gradually colder Frost at night would become a regular thing although temperatures during the day would normally be above freezing. The highs and lows would become gradually lower and lower until by the end of November we would be into permanent frost. This would cause the ground to freeze. Pipes carrying a house's water supply were always laid four feet down to prevent them freezing during the winter.

Prior to this, there would be snow flurries which initially would melt on landing. As the temperature went downhill, so the amount of snow falling would increase, becoming slower and slower to melt before sundown. Once we'd had a couple of weeks of hard frost, that was it. Any snow that fell was there to stay and would probably not disappear much before the end of March.

Christmas was usually white, very white with about a foot of snow on the ground. There was usually a thaw in early January, making everything very wet but not enough to make all the snow vanish. Sometimes, the thaw would end suddenly, after a heavy rain, encasing everything in a thick coating of ice. This is spectacular to look at but hard on the trees.

Then it would be back to cold and snow. In my memory it was the end of January and the month of February when we had the coldest periods. Once, I can remember the temperature falling to minus thirty Fahrenheit, which I think is about minus thirty-five Celsius. A school-friend of mine came into school that day with white patches on her cheeks. They were just starting to freeze.

The snow would continue to fall and to pile up. Clearing it away by scoop, or shovel or snowblower was a never-ending process. I used to make a reasonable amount of pocket-money keeping our neighbour's path clear of snow during the winter.

But spring would come at last, during March/April, with rising temperatures and melting snow. For two weeks or so, wet sloppy snow and streams of water would be everywhere as the snows disappeared. At one point I thought maybe it was called spring because there was so much water around.

By the end of April the snow would be all gone and coats would be lying discarded by the wall while we played hop-scotch.

I think of this kind of weather occurring where I live now and I shudder. And we are ten degrees further north here than where I lived as a child.

Would the winters start earlier and finish later? I know that the winter season in Labrador is longer and the summer shorter than the ones I knew. And central Labrador is fifty-five degrees north(the same latitude as Derry).

The only thing I can hope for is that if the Gulf Stream does change its path, the change is gradual, giving us a chance to get ready.

HEALY AND QUIGLEY FAMILIES

I am searching for any information I can get regarding my ancestors in Ireland. My greatgrandfather, John Healy, came with his sisters, Mary and Bridget, to the USA in early 1864. Their parents were Peter Healy and Mary Quigley, who were married in the Parish of Imlaghfad and Kilmorgan on 22 April 1840. It is thought that Peter's father was Michael Healy. It is believed that Michael and then Peter held land in Carrigans Lower, possibly with Peter's brothers James and Bartly, until 1863. James left his holding in 1873 and Bartly passed his holding to his wife Mary in 1890. In 1911, that holding passed to Michael Healy. Bartly and Mary Healy had several children as shown in the 1901 census:

Mary Healy, wife of Bartly, born about 1844; John, born about 1871; Agness, born about 1878; Michael, born about 1880; Andrew, born about 1882; Thomas, born about 1883

If any of this looks familiar or if you know of a family connection, I'd really like to hear from you soon. Thank you for reading my letter.

Sincerely,
John Haley
6451 Crestbrook Drive
Morrison, Colorado 80465 USA

The famous 'Glenfarne' scythe stone

Michael Hamilton .... supplied by Jack Martin

JAMES 'Jimmey Oweny' McMorrow from the townland of Loughafonta made the 'Glenfarne' sharpening scythe stones high up on Dooagh Mountain. He had bought the area of land where he quarried the soft sandstone rock from John 'Farrell' McDermott. Jimmy Oweny and his helpers climbed this mountain in all sorts of weather to carry out their work. If a misty rain came in on the mountain a thick would descend on the place putting a stop to the work. Jimmy's house was perched high on the mountain, though in later years he built a nice single storey house much closer to the main Manorhamilton - Kiltyclogher road. He never married.

At one stage, he tried, without success, to construct a miniature windmill - the windy conditions on Dooagh were ideal for such a venture - so that he could get power to a special instrument for cutting and shaping the scythe stones. He made two kinds of stone, a coarse one and a fine one. He achieved a rough rippled effect on the coarse stone by scrawling his chisel downward on it. The finished scythe stones were brought by donkey and creels to his house half a mile away. They were then laid out in dozen lots and secured with ropes made from poor quality wiry hay, of which there is no scarcity in that part of the world! The rope was twined round each individual stone and finished off with a carrier handle in each bundle.

Early in March James sent his products to many parts of the country. At that time, most of the farmer with small holdings mowed their meadows with scythes, so there was no point in going anywhere without your Glenfarne stone sticking up out of your hip pocket! Hardware shops in Manorhamilton (Joseph Mitchell, T R Armstrong) and in Sligo (Herron & Son; Western Wholesale Co; John Meldrum; WA&AF Woods) were some of his customers. The scythe stone retailed at 1s/6d. (7.5p).

In the late fifties I worked on a goods delivery service for CIE. The route took in part of west Cavan and north Leitrim. Kiltyclogher was our last delivery stop and often on our way back to Sligo, myself and my helper would encounter James at the bottom of his laneway where he would. have a few hundred bundles of scythe stones built. These would have been brought by donkey and creels over several journeys from his house throughout the day.

The conversation would go something like this: James–'Good evening men, you're late enough on the road'

Myself –'James where are they all going to?'

James–'They're for various parts of the country'

Myself–'Have you labels on each consignment, James?'

James–'No, I haven't any'

Myself–'A wee bit of a problem wouldn't you think, James? You'd best fill out and sign the necessary consignment notes for me and their destinations or better still I'll fill them out and you sign them.

James–'How much will each consignment cost?'

Myself–'I don't know James, I'll have the charge dockets for you next week.'

We sweated as we loaded the bundles and the next morning I labelled and loaded the bundles into rail wagons for hardware shops in Limerick, Cork and Dublin and elsewhere. James liked to bet on the Grand National and the Friday before the big race he'd greet us with - 'You wouldn't mind doing these bets for me at the bookies in Sligo tomorrow? I might get in myself if I can get a lift from here in the morning to Manorhamilton and join the bus there. Anyway do the bets for me in case I can't make it.' Then tossing his cap back on head and wheeling his donkey round he'd set off, back up his lonely laneway. James was well known for his ability to repair clocks and watches, gramophones and radios. If the appliance was beyond repair he kept it for spare parts. He could devise gadgets from bits and pieces of iron such as the cogwheels and other parts of old mowing machines.

James was a nice, kindly man. It was said that 'he had mechanical brains to burn'. He was in poor health for some time before he died and probably the conditions in which he and his helpers worked hastened his death. It was impossible to avoid inhaling some of the sand dust as the breezes blew on the mountain.

Willie Evans who lived in the same area as James also made small quantities of scythe stones, about three or four dozen at a time. I knew him well. He was a very quiet type of man. Sometimes I used to meet him in Manorhamilton and he'd invite me to join him for a pint of Guinness in Packy Campbell's pub (now Gurns). Willie's son Norman is a brilliant cut-stone craftsman. He designs and makes stone fireplaces, small headstones and reading lamps which are very popular in America.

Not long ago I visited this peaceful area, where close to the base of Dooagh fast-growing forestry trees will soon partly impede the view of this mountain of memories. I trace the meandering stream coming down from its face and flowing beneath the rustic bridge which spans the Kiltyclogher-Manorhamilton road. For the Glenfarne craftsmen its waters had been so essential in carving out and smoothing the scythe stones and for damping the rising sand dust.

My poem or ballad? pays tribute to the determined men, who toiled with their honest, bruised (sometimes bleeding), weary hands in the course of their uncanny work.

Peter Denning a great stonecutter worked with James McMorrow up there one windy day. Having put his loosely corked empty milk bottle into his coat pocket, that evening when he finished work, when taking it from his pocket, he noticed that quite an amount of sand dust had seeped into the bottle! This gave some idea of the conditions that prevailed there.

In memory to the Brave Scythe Stone Cutters who toiled up there on the Mountain of Memories -

"DOOAGH" MOUNTAIN SLEEP AWHILE

With heavy heart I must go now,
While "Dooagh" Mountain looks stiff and free,
The Stone-Cutters Memories,
Locked in there with a key.
The flowing stream from its rock face,
its restless waters run its race,
onwards to the valley below,
now slows its pace.
The late falling evening's dew,
reveals the hanging spiders' webs,
in their chosen place of rest,
where thirsting cattle now drink,
Its calm waters to their taste,
now they rest,
The "Dooagh" waters do the same,
all is calm now,
The night's darkness has fallen on the place.

WRITTEN BY: MICHAEL HAMILTON

Ballymote's place in history

Supplied by Tom McGettrick

HEIRS TO A GREAT TRADITION

CANON QUINN TRACES THE GLORIES OF THE PAST

Interesting and Inspiring Lecture

Reprinted from the "Sligo Champion", Saturday, November 16, 1940

A meeting of the Ballymote Connradh na Gaedhilge and their friends was especially convened in the Ballymote Vocational School on Wednesday evening the 6th inst, to hear a lecture on "Ballymote and its Surroundings" by Very Rev. T.H. Canon Quinn, P.P. The Chairman, Mr. R. Mellet, P.C., presided, and there was a large and enthusiastic gathering present.

The Rev. Lecturer said in part: "Both in legend and tradition the name originally given to our Island Home was Inis Ealga, and this because the country was one dense forest, hence the name Inis Ealga, which means 'the woody isle'. When the Gaels or Celts conquered the country they apportioned one-third of the island to each of the three princesses, Eire, Banba and Fodla. From that time the country was generally designated Eire, but the names Banba and Fodla were sometimes used, especially in poetry. To an ancestor of Milesisus–Gaedlheal Glas–we owe the distinctive appellation of Gaels to that branch of the Celtic race that was attracted to what Mitchell calls 'Banba of the streams.' It is certain that from the earliest times the Island was rich in fruits, flowers and vegetation, watered by clear running streams and rivers and filled with innumerable flocks and herds. The descendants of the first wave of the human race rested and remained unpolluted in their island-guarded home and their sons were noble and great, in the schoolroom and on the battlefield. The attractiveness of the country became known to European races. Her climate soft as a mother's smile; her perennial greenness showing a perpetual impulse to vegetation won for her the name of the Emerald Isle. To the Milesians, it was the Isle of Destiny.

Oh! where's the Isle we have seen in dreams,
Our destined home or grave.
Thus sang they unto the morning's beams
As they swept the Atlantic wave.

"It was the El Dorado of continental enthusiasts and attracted multitudes of strangers and visitors and not infrequently of invaders. The voices of her rulers were powerful in her council halls, and the wisdom of her sages reached from generation to generation. Nations abroad that were in gloom saw the light, and came to walk in the brightness of her rising. One of her ancient sages could well say: 'O, Erin, thy granaries are full, thy children are happy, thy daughters are virtuous, thy sons are brave, thy old men are wise, thy rulers are just and thy homes are in peace.' It is no vain boast, but upheld by the greatest writers of ancient or modern times that Ireland was, long before Christianity, the most civilised part of the world, both materially and intellectually. Not withstanding inroads made by foreign nationalities, Ireland retained its old culture, the inheritance of centuries of refinement, elevated in due course by the influence of Christianity.

"Long before the Saviour came to dispel the darkness of human degeneration with the light of the Gospel, and when other nations were sunk in ignorance and barbarism, Ireland was the home of civilization and refinement. Long before Ceasar crossed the Rubicon a wattle bridge spanned the Corran river, connecting Stoneparks with Carrownanty and here a town sprung up and the town was called after the wattle bridge or hurdles Baile Atha Cliath an Chorrain.

• *The above is an extract from a lecture given by Canon T.H. Quinn, Parish Priest of Emlafad and Kilmorgan 1921-1943. The lecture was a scholarly presentation of the history of the town where he was a much-loved parish priest.*

Golden Jubilee of Ordination

J. Higgins

Congratulations and Best Wishes to Reverend Dominic Keams, S.M.A., Knockadalteen, Ballymote, who recently celebrated The Golden Jubilee of his Ordination.

Fr. Dominic, who was the only son of Martin Kearns and Annie Scanlon, attended Carrigans National School, and was ordained a priest on June 14th 1950 in Cork.

He has spent 50 yrs of his life on the Missions in Nigeria, and is a fine example of the Irish Missioner, with wit and humour in abundance. He is pictured above at a Celebration Mass in his honour in Sligo recently.

SEMPER FIDELIS

Winnie McGettrick (Sister M. Sacred Heart) 1918-1999

Tom McGettrick

WINNIE McGettrick, who died on 5 December 1999, was the daughter of Margaret and Laurence McGettrick of Cluid. She went through the National School at Emlaghnaghten and the Ursuline Convent in Sligo earning the scholarships that these schools had available, before going on to Galway University in 1937 where she entered the Faculty of Science. In the summer of 1938 she passed the first examination in Science with Second Class Honours in Chemistry. In the following year she obtained First Class Honours in Chemistry and was permitted by the Faculty to read for the Honours Degree. In the autumn of 1940 she obtained First Class Honours and first place at the examination for the degree of B.Sc of the National University, chemistry being her main subject and physics her subsidiary.

In October 1940 she was appointed a junior demonstrator in the Chemistry Department and was also awarded a grant for research by the Industrial Research Council. In 1941 she was awarded the degree of M.Sc for her research. Some of her work was published in the Journal of the Chemical Society, England.

In 1942 she was appointed Third Assistant in Chemistry. In this post she had charge of practical classes in inorganic and organic Chemistry. She also gave tuition to first year students and continued her research.

By the age of 27, when she entered the Novitiate of the Sisters of Jesus and Mary at Gortnor Abbey, she had been a college lecturer, had founded a Science Club at the University, had been the Chief Hygiene Officer for the city of Galway and had been offered a Professorship, which was one of the highest honours the University could confer on her. A picture taken at the time of a large group of professors, lecturers and associates of the University shows seated in the front row Mrs Nevin, whose husband Professor T. Nevin is fourth in the row, Maureen de Valera, Professor Tom Dillon, Director of the Chemical Laboratory, Winnie McGettrick and Dr. Rosalind Clark. It is a picture that gives her recognition among those in whose care the welfare of the University was placed. Here was an open door to every prospect of a distinguished career in talents in which she excelled but she turned away. In 1944 she entered the Novitiate of the Sisters of Jesus and Mary to become a nun. It is not surprising when an intimate diary she kept down the years should record after each academic success "and still the church continued to call".

Her career as a nun, filled with her continuing standards of activity, brought her to India, New Zealand, Rome, the Lebanon and Syria. This article is not a book that would be necessary to tell it all. In Bombay there is a church associated with a hostel where street children were taken in for care and love and a brighter future. Her family name is on a plaque outside–she proved funds for the building. Mai O'Donnell will recall a welcome in New Zealand when Gerry and herself visited there. There is a nice picture of a warm handclasp with the Pope when a Chapter meeting of the Order was held in Rome.

Her last visit to Ballymote during Heritage Weekend last year was a meeting of old friends and making new ones. It was a trip down memory lane–no sign in the joy of the occasion that she was terminally ill. Thanks to two dear cousins, Katie and Margaret, to Dan and many others who were so good and kind and thoughtful.

Winnie McGettrick meets the Pope

Our Sponsors

Ballymote Heritage Group gratefully acknowledges the generosity of the following who have sponsored this year's Heritage Weekend:

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STAN CASEY,
MATILDA CASEY,
ROGER MCCARRICK,
JACK MARTIN,
JOHN AND MARIE PERRY.

Park Life

Stephen Flanagan

As a student with a J1 Visa I went to New York in search of work and adventure in the summer of 1999. My path eventually lead to a job as porter on Park Avenue ...

I got off the train at 86th St. and Lexington, and walked over to Park Avenue. It was hot and humid, and by the time I got to the building where I was to start work, I felt like I had run a marathon. As they like to say in New York, 'it's not the heat, it's the humidity.' There's nothing like Park Avenue in Ireland. The 'new' money people, who made their money from computers and electronics and modern industries, tend to live on the West Side of Manhattan, like Central Park West. The 'old' money, or the people who have been wealthy for generations usually live on the East Side. Park Avenue is on the East Side. It's always been the home of the wealthy and powerful.

The building where I worked had twelve floors and a penthouse that took up two more floors. The rich people there are happy to pay through the nose to have a doorman on duty 24/7, every day around the clock. There's also a porter in most buildings, who carries their bags and collects their rubbish and does anything else that they want. That porter was now me.

I started work at 8:00am. I was introduced to Mike, my immediate boss, and he was sound enough. He was a big gruff Brooklynite, very tall and strong, with short black hair. My first job was to mop the basement and for the first few minutes I scrubbed frantically trying to impress on my opening day, while Mike watched impassively. The basement was even hotter and more humid than outside, and sweat trickled off me. My T-shirt was stuck to me, and my hair was plastered to my forehead as if I had just stepped out from under a waterfall. Just when I thought that I was pretty much done in and I had mopped an area of floor about the size of a kitchen table, Mike took the mop from me and showed me the right way to do it. The key to the mopping was an easy, over-and-back motion that used the big muscles at the base of your back (kind of like golf) and effectively let you mop away all day and not get too tired. It seemed to me that this new method was much more likely to get the floor wet, but much less likely to get it clean. But I said nothing.

As time went by, a routine began to form. There was a room where we had lockers and ate lunch, and it was air conditioned by a window unit Mike had fixed up, God bless him. I used to change into my uniform there. The uniform was a light blue shirt and navy trousers– exactly the same as my old secondary school uniform, which was a bit strange. A row of lockers took up one wall, tall, narrow American-high-school-style metal presses. There was a table in the corner that had a microwave, an old black and white TV and a radio on it, all stuff that had been thrown out by our tenants at some point or other. It was a dingy little place, slightly grotty in its way. But when I had been sweating at something in the heat and stepped into its air-condition coolness, I couldn't have pictured a finer haven anywhere in the world.

So I'd change there, and then do the aptly named garbage run.

During my first week they had shown me how to run the lift. When I tell people this here, they look at me and I can hear them thinking, how hard is it to push a few buttons? But this was the service elevator, and it hadn't been changed since the building was constructed back in the Twenties. It had a handle mounted on one wall, and to go up you turned the handle right, to go down left. Depending on how much you turned it, there was a fractional variation in the speed of the elevator. There was no door like on a normal elevator. There was a big swing door in the basement, a huge lump of metal and wood that could have protected Monks had it existed in another era. You pulled this closed after you when you stepped inside the lift. Then you slid a wire-frame door across like the kind you see in the lifts in old films, and were away.

The garbage run meant loading the big bins from the basement into the lift, and then stopping off at each floor and emptying the bins that the tenants put their rubbish in. General rubbish, recyclables, glass and newspaper were kept separate, and the tenants were supposed to know this and separate their own trash. Some did, some didn't. I'd bring it all back down to the basement and tie up all the bags and bring them outside to the yard.

When that was finished, it'd be about time to deliver the mail. The people in the building got more mail between them every day than some small countries see in a week. It was unbelievable. Packages and magazines and boxes and bills and loads and loads of junk mail. Every morning each one of them got a wad of post, maybe fifteen or twenty items. The amount of it that came to the door of the building was huge, usually about three big boxes and maybe six or seven bags like you see the postman carrying in children's stories.

All the mail was mixed in together, so we had to separate it and deliver it to the right places. There was a big trolley for doing this, which I brought up from the basement into the air-conditioned bliss of the lobby. Myself and whatever doorman was on duty sorted them out. It took about an hour to do, with two of us at it full throttle. Each tenant of the building had a little cubby-hole on the trolley to hold their mail. When everything was ready I took the trolley back into the lift and delivered everything.

By that stage, a few UPS or FedEx parcels and packages had usually arrived at the door, or a few groceries or a bit of dry cleaning, and I delivered all of these too.

At the same time as sorting and delivering the mail and collecting the garbage, I had to bring the builders and painters and decorators up and down as they came and went. There were always a few of each at work somewhere in the building, as the extremely wealthy apparently have to change the look of their homes every few months. They were usually dead on, those lads, good for a laugh.

But once the garbage and the mail were done, things got very quiet for a while. I usually did another garbage run after lunch, but up until then there wasn't anything specific to do. At the start I used to find something to clean or polish. But I got tired of cleaning things that were already clean, and when I was settled in the job I used to sit in the lift and read the paper and wait for someone to call.

Sometimes there was an unexpected job, like the day Mike and myself found

ourselves planting what looked like a small tree in an oversized container. It was to stand outside the main door of the building. After a few hours of gruelling work in the humid heat, we had it done to our satisfaction, but there was no pleasing the lady who had bought it–it was "just a little crooked", she reckoned. "Oh no, Ma'am" said Mike seriously, "it's not the plant, it's the building"!

Towards the end of the summer, when the weather was settling towards comfortable levels and I was thinking about home, a new lad started there who would take over my job when I left. His name was Sammy. He used to have to help me do things sometimes, and because I was there longer I was kind of 'over' him, even though he was probably the best of twenty years my senior.

Every Thursday we had to carry the rubbish out of the yard at the side and bring it up the ramp and out onto the street where it would be collected. The bags with glass and the bags with recyclables and so on had to be stacked together, and the newspaper and cardboard put together and everything had to be arranged nicely.

It was a killer job in the heat going up and down that ramp. I had to do it on my own a fair few times. I'd sleep soundly that night after it. The cockroaches weren't much fun either: three or four inches long counting the feelers, nasty fast-moving things. I still shudder when I think of them. I'd be soaking wet from sweat when I was finished. But when Sammy arrived, I had him to help me. He was an absolute bull of a man. He went up and down the ramp as though it wasn't there and carried things in each hand that I would have had to get a trolley for. He more than halved the job for me and remained cheerful throughout. I often wonder how he's getting on.

The range of people there were a constant source of entertainment. There was a lad named Pedro who used to walk dogs for a living, and probably still does. He was South American and he was dead on, always up for a laugh. His accent and my accent made conversation very slow at the beginning. When I got to know him a bit, he told me that he used to have a good job at home, a big house that he owned with his brother and they were wealthy enough to have a housekeeper. But he left it all and came to the US, and I never really did find out why.

I often used to think it was a strange occupation, being a professional dog-walker. The rich people in our building were far too busy and important to do anything as mundane as walking their own dogs. So they employed people like Pedro to do it for them, at $15 for half an hour. He just worked from ten or eleven in the morning until two or three that afternoon, six days a week and made over $150 dollars an hour by walking a few dogs at the same time.

I liked Pedro a lot. He knew every underground club in NY, as far as I could tell. They didn't open until about four a.m. (after the bars closed) and didn't shut until eleven. Sometimes Pedro would come in on a Sunday on his way home from the night before and walk the dogs for a while. His eyes would have a slightly glazed look, and he wouldn't say much.

Mr. Johnson was a tenant in the building, and I met him now and again. He was highly intelligent and cultured. He had been a banker, he told me, and he was now doing a degree in biochemistry from Cornell University as he was retired, and had nothing else to do. So much for taking up golf! He worked part-time in the Metropolitan Museum too. He loved to talk about art and literature. He'd often open a conversation with "Have you ever come across the – " and he'd mention some obscure work of art that I had never heard of, and proceed to talk about it until we got to the fourth floor where he lived. I was always interested in what he had to say.

Another tenant was a woman called Mrs. Browne. I was hardly in the door of the place before the lads who worked there warned me to try and keep on her good side. She was a battleaxe. Everything had to be perfect, and more than that, it had to be done ten minutes ago. She'd call down to the door from her apartment and imperiously inform the doorman that she needed a taxi. Then either myself or the doorman would charge outside like we were been chased by Old Nick himself and hail down every passing taxi with a manic sort of urgency. More often then not, Mrs. Browne would have come out before we'd get one, and would launch into an unreasonable tirade about incompetent doormen and the state of the nation when one couldn't even get a taxi when one wanted.

At the start, I used to listen to her and apologise profusely that I couldn't control when and where taxi cabs chose to stop or not stop. After a while though, I just nodded and smiled and more or less ignored her.

Mrs. Browne had a daughter who was actually quite nice and much more laid back then her mother. She arrived back from college one weekend when I was working on the door, and I helped her carry her bags into the apartment. Inside the back door was the kitchen, all done up in black marble and dark teak and it probably cost as much as a three-bedroom house in Dalkey would here. Mrs. Browne was sitting at a chair in the middle of it all, and reminded me of a creature in the middle of its lair.

She had a minor fit when she saw me actually enter her home. It turned out later that about three doormen ever had been in there, so I was privileged. She tipped very well, too, better than anyone else in the building: I suppose she knew she had to, or the doormen would never put up with her temper.

The man who owned the penthouse was a publishing tycoon, Mr. Hollander. He owned a series of magazines. He had a butler and nice house in the Hamptons, so he didn't even live on Park much. He was easygoing and friendly. One of the doormen was reading a magazine on the door one time (which was strictly forbidden, but went on all the time). Mr. Hollander stopped when he saw that, and the doorman thought he was for it. But all Hollander asked was, "Do you like that magazine?" The doorman nodded yes, wondering where this was going. "I own it," said Hollander. "I'll see to it you get a lifetime subscription." And he did: the doorman didn't pay for an issue since.

One day a huge black man stepped into the lift when I opened the door. "How's it going, man," he said, and his drawling, laid-back Jamaican accent was familiar from countless films. He was intrigued when he found out that I was Irish, and he informed me, in his Jamaican accent with a deep belly laugh, that 'I is Irish too'.

I have to admit that I was doubtful. He took out his driver's licence though, and his name was Hugh O'Brian, so I suppose he was as Irish as the next Irish-American.

I finished up in Park Avenue towards the end of August, and when I was going they offered me a full-time job, if I wanted to stay. I can't say that I want to spend my life cleaning brass and collecting rubbish, but the people you'd meet there over a lifetime would keep things interesting. I declined, promised to come back, and headed for Ireland having found out something that many have learned before me: the best part of travel is going home.

Matt McCann Remembers

AS a young boy I grew up in the Coolaney area. Things were very different in those days. There was none of the prosperity we see everywhere now. It was hard work for everybody, hard work in hard times for very little reward.

Memories of even worse times were still strong. The stories you would hear about the power of landlords in the bad old days, and the things they did, would make you shiver. My father, as a young lad, saw the last eviction to take place in our parish. The poor woman evicted started to walk to Sligo. I never heard if she got there.

When I was older I worked on the building of the roads through the bogs. Bushes went down first, followed by heather and scraws and lastly gravel. Miles of roads were made in this way. I saw seventy two men working in three groups in the bogs building the roads. The pay was 24 shillings per week.

When a ganger left, 24 of those men became redundant. One of them was me. There was no other work to be had around so I went to England. World War 2 was on at that time and the war effort made jobs plentiful over there. I found work in Portsmouth at the construction of underground oil storage tanks.

These tanks became a target for German warplanes and their strafing runs made life very dangerous. In 1944 I joined the Merchant Navy. Even as civilians we received training in the use of machine guns in case our naval escorts couldn't protect us and we had to survive on our own. I remember one occasion when something like this happened. We were on the Glasgow-registered "Baron Stranraer" sailing from Africa with a cargo of manganese ore, part of a convoy. Our engines broke down and from 6 am till 6 pm we drifted helplessly. The convoy had to continue on and couldn't wait for us. Fortunately we weren't actually attacked. Eventually our engines were fixed and we pulled in to Casablanca to await another convoy.

When we finally were on our way home, we couldn't get in to Liverpool, our destination port, because a German submarine was in those waters. Our cargo was eventually unloaded at Barrow on Furness and our ship went on to Glasgow for full repairs.

Subsequently I worked on a Canadian ship the "Empire Yukon". I remember sailing far north in the Atlantic and getting trapped in the ice. We could hear the ice grind against the hull first and we were locked in completely soon after. It took a Russian ice-breaker to get us out. At the end of that voyage we went to New York. We arrived there on Easter Sunday to hear that President Franklin D Roosevelt had died.

I also did many smaller runs, over and back between England and the Continent, and on the Liverpool - Belfast run. We carried weapons and other necessities of warfare. In those days we would keep a very low profile in Belfast but I met few examples of anti-Irish feeling in Britain.

When the war was over I left the Merchant Navy. I was glad to get out. It was back then to the building jobs, and I worked in Sharpness, Bristol, Gloucester and London. The work was mostly on the docks. Living was rough and tough.

I returned to Ireland and got married. We went back to England once more, but came home to Ireland to stay in 1949. Home to my roots and to farming. Now I enjoy my many and varied memories of a long and active life.

First Holy Communion Ballymote, 2000: Back row, left to right: David Scanlon, Clare Stagg, Darren Morrison, Very Rev Dean Flynn PP Ballymote; Jacqueline Droughton, Tommy Perry, Rachel Murray. Third Row: Grainne Murtagh, Brendan Ward, Stephanie Lavin, John Tighe, Aoife Preston, Thomas Jolmson. Second Row: Shane Meehan, Laura McCann, Geoffrey Conboy, Sorcha Cunnane, John Feely, Aisling Brehony, Jason Booth Front Row: Brendan Martin, Angela Brennan, Gerard Brennan, Nicole Deegan, Niall Brennan, Shauna Gallagher.Also included are Sr Regina Lydon, Principal Scoil Muire gan Smal, Ballymote, and Ms Dolores Taheny, Vice Principal.

Confirmation Ballymote, 2000: Included above are (starting from front left): Mrs King (Teacher), Lisa Scanlon, Melissa Underwood, Richard Watson, Elizabeth Murray, Lynda Scanlon, Ella Trautmann, Sarah Ross, Joanne Cremin, Joseph Devaney, Luke McFadden, Mark Irwin, Brian Martin, Barry Tighe, Sr Regina Lydon (Principal Scoil Muire gan Smal), Deirdre McGettrick, Louise Conlon, Niamh Mahon, Tracey McDonagh, Maura McLoughlin, Mary Pettipiece, Eileen Hurley, Laura Creegan, Lorraine Quinn, Aidan Caffrey, Brian Drury, Ciaran Cunnane, Thomas McGrath, John Anderson, Maeve Golden, Veronica Kyle, Sinead Healy, Denise Lavin, Karen Tonry, Patricia Quinn, David Anderson, Aidan Healy, Nicky Glavin, Karl Scanlon, John Pettipiece, Kevin Healy, Siobhan McCarthy, Marian Mullen, Aaron Healy, John Cawley, Jacqueline Dolphin, Deirdre Tighe, Karl Brennan, Gavin Morrisroe, David Quinn, Mr M Heffernan (Teacher), Fr G Murphy C.C. Ballymote. Also included are Most Rev Dr T Flynn Bishop ofAchonry and Very Rev Dean Flynn P.P. Ballymote.

First Holy Communion Knockmina, 2000: Front row, left to right: Elaine Waters, Barry Scanlon, Patricia Quigley, Andrew Nealon, Laura Irwin, Kieran Gethins, Ann Caffrey. At the back: Mrs. L. King, Principal; Rev. Fr. G. Murphy, C.C., Ballymote; altarboy Martin Joseph Kerins and Mrs. M. Horan, teacher. Photo by Peter O'Connor.

Ballymote Heritage Weekend

11TH ANNUAL

(ORGANISED BY BALLYMOTE HERITAGE GROUP)

FRIDAY 4th AUGUST to MONDAY 7th AUGUST 2000

IN PASTORAL CENTRE BALLYMOTE, CO. SLIGO

FRIDAY 4TH AUGUST

8.30p.m. ***Official Opening***
by PAUL DOYLE, Manager/Keeper,
Irish Folk Life Division,
National Museum of Ireland.

Lecture: *Turlough Park House and the National Museum of Ireland.*
PAUL DOYLE, National Museum of Ireland.

SATURDAY 5TH AUGUST

10.30a.m. ***Lecture:*** *"From the Purple Ox Mountains Right Down to the Sea".*
MARTIN A. TIMONEY, B.A., FRSAI, MIAPA, ARCHAEOLOGIST, and MARY B. TIMONEY, B.A., ARCHAEOLOGIST.

2.00p.m. ***Outing:*** *"The Lands of Tireragh are Fertile and Green"*–Monuments and Places of the Last 6000 years.
Guides: MARTIN A. TIMONEY, MARY B. TIMONEY and MARTIN WILSON.

8.30p.m. ***Lecture:*** *Women In Ireland: 1500 to 1800.*
DR. MARY O'DOWD, Queen's University, Belfast.

SUNDAY 6TH AUGUST

2.00p.m. ***Outing:*** *King House, Boyle, Frybrook House, Boyle.*

8.30p.m. ***Millennium Lecture:*** *The Influence of Christianity on Society, Culture and Politics for the Last Two Thousand Years.*
FR. JOHN DURKAN, LSS, BD, BSc, HDE,
Lecturer
The Western Theological Institute,
Co. Galway.

MONDAY 7TH AUGUST

10.30a.m. ***Outing:*** *The Suck Valley–Castlestrange to Ballymoe.* *Guides:* ALBERT SIGGINS, Hon. Sec., Roscommon Historical and Archaeological Society.
MARTIN A. TIMONEY, BA, FRSAI, MIAPA.

8.30p.m. ***Lecture:*** *Ancestors, Passage Tombs and Mountains in Neolithic Sligo.*
DR. STEFAN BERGH, Research Fellow, Swedish Foundation for International Research.

LECTURES: £3.00

TRANSPORT AVAILABLE FOR OUTINGS

Weekend Co-Ordinators:
EILEEN TIGHE 071-83015 • BETTY CONLON 071-83380

The Corran Herald

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