

# THE CORRAN HERALD

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## A BIT OF RURAL IRELAND

by P.J. Duffy

In that hilly piece of countryside that stretches from Lough Gara to the Curlew Mountains, you may yet find among the people who reside there, a way of life rich in folklore and tradition. In fact, up until the cultural revolution of the early 1950's there existed here as authentic a slice of rural Ireland as you might find anywhere outside of the Gealtacht areas. Here you did find a highly intelligent people, woefully disheartened by Government neglect, and drained of a sizeable part of its best brains by emigration.

The now defunct station-house and platform at Kilfree were once the stage for many a tearful scene, as parents

from surrounding areas parted with their sons and daughters as they journeyed in pursuit of a better life in foreign lands. Some were never to return or set foot on their native soil again;

At a party in New York in the 1920's an emigrant from this part of Ireland sought to extol the praises of his native place by reciting these lines:-

*My youthful days round old Seefin  
I recall with joy and sorrow  
There was Sraugh, Cloonloo and  
Corradoo, and a place we called  
Kilderra*

*The maidens fair from this dear spot  
I courted with affection,  
In foreign land I now recline,  
and linger in dejection. cont. Page 2*

### Tumuli, Cairns and Barrows near Ballymote

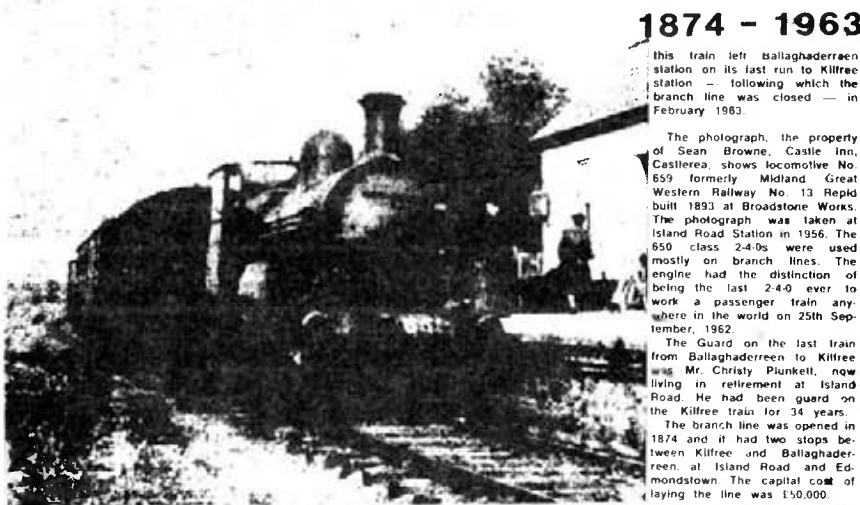
On a high ridge of land stretching by the eastern end of the townlands of Derroon and Rathdooney-beg there is a fine complex of earthworks which has already been added to by the uncovering of two more sites. It is fairly safe to assume that all the structures in the area are burial mounds and because of the number in such a small space a high place of importance must be given to the collection. They are usually identified by the name tumulus, cairn or barrow.

Carraun, which because of its high situation is visible over a large part of the countryside, with its attendant smaller tumulus is the best known of the group. But now with the two new sites showing up a study of all the tumuli and their relationship in time to one another becomes more inviting.

Until the local farmer carried out some reclamation these sites were covered with a tangle of furze and briars and this may be the reason why when the Ordnance survey of the area was being carried out in 1841/42 the surveyors failed to notice them.

Each of these earthen mounds is likely to contain a cist, a box-like structure of stone slabs in which an inhumed or a cremated burial is placed. In general they belong to the Bronze Age; some are earlier, some later. A despoiled cairn in the townland of Doomore shows a cist laid bare with the large covering slab removed to one side. A cist discovered on the land of the Andrew Walsh at Stoneparks contained the skeleton of a forty year old female (who suffered from arthritis) with a food vessel near her head.

The land owner in Derroon is to be complimented for the care with which he removed the furze covering from these two important sites on his land.



### 1874 - 1963

This train left Ballaghaderreen station on its last run to Kilfree station - following which the branch line was closed - in February 1963.

The photograph, the property of Sean Browne, Castle Inn, Castlereagh, shows locomotive No. 659 formerly Midland Great Western Railway No. 13 Repid built 1893 at Broadstone Works. The photograph was taken at Island Road Station in 1956. The 650 class 2-4-0s were used mostly on branch lines. The engine had the distinction of being the last 2-4-0 ever to work a passenger train anywhere in the world on 25th September, 1962.

The Guard on the last train from Ballaghaderreen to Kilfree was Mr. Christy Plunkett, now living in retirement at Island Road. He had been guard on the Kilfree train for 34 years.

The branch line was opened in 1874 and it had two stops between Kilfree and Ballaghaderreen, at Island Road and Edmondstown. The capital cost of laying the line was £50,000.

PHOTOGRAPH AND CAPTION FROM SLIGO CHAMPION 1963

## A BIT OF RURAL IRELAND

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In bygone days the real hub of activity within this scattered community was undoubtedly the old Seefin creamery which for a great many years prospered under the careful supervision of the late manager Gallagher.

It was from Sragh that the grandfather of the late Harry Heher emigrated more than one hundred years ago. He was the young barrister who proposed Franklin D. Roosevelt for president at a New York primary back in the 1930's. Roosevelt was subsequently elected, and went on to become the greatest president of the United States since George Washington. Heher eventually succeeded to one of the highest judicial positions in the land, that of chief justice of the American supreme court Boxer Thomas Connolly, also hailed from Sragh. In his hay-day he became known as the knocker out, and once declared that if given a chance he would knock spots out of any Irish professional. Connolly had little outlet for his boxing skills. In London in the late 1930's somebody tried to arrange a fight between him and a young Galway boxer named Mairtin Thornton, but fate intervened, when his father died and he to return to Ireland. Thornton later went on to become Irish heavy-weight champion.

There are people still around, who like myself remember with affection the late Andrew McGill, the Bard of Meelroe, and how his contributions to Old Moors Almanac, made such a pleasant Christmas reading.

Sir Patrick Hannon, A British Conservative M.P., who sat in the House of Commons in the 1940's came from Tavrane; He was a parliamentarian who truly believed that the interests of all Irish people, especially those from western counties, was best served by their remaining within the commonwealth.

The mass emigration to Great Britain in the 1940's and fifties in some ways vindicated his point of view.

Young men from here, who emigrated to England in the 1940's, and made considerable progress in the building industry abroad were the Conlon brothers of Liskea, and the Dodds of Chasefield. These boys worked on the building sites in London alongside another emigrant family, the Gallaghers of Cashel, near Tubbercurry, who went on to establish a vast industrial empire.

John Dodd later returned to erect the new church at Culfadda. The greater part of this project was funded by the late Fr. Rafferty who came from Dernagrog, and made his dollars on the American Continent. The boyish looking contractor who constructed this impressive building has like its benefactor Fr. Rafferty gone to his eternal reward,

Never-the-less, this fine church stand there to-day as an enduring monument to both their memories. In addition to Fr. Rafferty, other fine churchmen, who came from around here were Father P.J. O'Grady from Mahanagh, Fr. James McKeon of Moygara and Bishop Drury also of Moygara who of course is still with us.

One of the most remarkable characters who ever dwelled jercabpits, was in my opinion the late shanachie or storyteller and he resided at Corradoo. I had the pleasure of meeting with this man back in the 1940's when he came to our district to assist the Conlon family with work in the farm. The Conlons who came from Liskea, had a short time before purchased a farm at Phaleesh, and as a youth I had sometimes gone there to assist at the harvesting of crops. Darkie was certainly an extraordinary man and a gifted storyteller. Being young and gullible, I honestly thought at that time he was concocting it all. He

told us the strange story of a man named Gurrie who lived near-hand to himself. This man reckoned was guided by a spirit, who assisted him in doing extraordinary things that had failed other people.

There was the example of Rockingham mansion near Boyle, where at the time of its construction workmen had come from England to cut the roof's timbers. They failed to cut the guide rafters correctly, and after several unsuccessful attempts in which a large amount of timber had been spoiled, they called in Gurrie who stated he would have to take the timber home, to concentrate on markings and mitrings. Darkie reckoned this was nonsense and stated that he took the timber home to consult and have the assistance of his guiding spirit. The move was to prove successful for a few days later he returned the prepared rafters and lo and behold, each mitre-joint fitted correctly.

Perhaps his most fascinating story was the one about mischievous fairies of Meenmore, in which he described how a colony of peevish little fairies who existed there were sensitive to anybody interfering with their bit of territory. There was the case of the man who removed a boulder of stone from an old cave and used it for a lintel over the door in his cow-byre. Immediately he was set upon by a gang of angry fairies who subjected him to all sorts of persecution. The poor unfortunate individual was unaware that he had done anything wrong, but a suspecting neighbour put him in touch with an authority on spirits who resided in the Gurteen area. This man who might be described as an old fashioned equivalent of a present-day spiritualist, enquired with his subject, if he had recently interfered with any old lios or rath that might be on his lands. Your man admitted to taking a load of stones from the mouth of a cave leading to a fort.

## A BIT OF RURAL IRELAND

cont. from Page 2

"This is where you went wrong", explained his advisor, "you moved the cover from over the faries. Leave those stones back at once at the place where you found them, until you do this, a days ease or peace you will never have." The man did as he was bid and peace returned to his home once again.

There was the case of yet another man from around this place, who met up with the same experience after finding a number of old ornaments and a plait of hair in his turf-bank. He took his find home, only to discover his house attacked in the middle of the night and potatoes and vegetables hurled about the farmyard. Like the man and the stones he got no ease until such time as he returned the loot and reburied it at the spot where he found it.

These are but a few of the dozens of stories told to me by the late Darkie Hannon. It was years afterwards that I was to discover they were not his inventions but old folklore generally associated with the area in which he lived. I even found people who assured me that most of those stories contained a good deal of truth;

It is surprising too how the memory of some people lingers on. Perhaps it is because of the special things they did during their lifetime. You had men like Andrew Mulligan who established the Drumlistna stud farm back in the 1930's. He bred pedigree horses here at a time when the selective breeding of horses was almost unheard of in this part of the country. He even employed a groom back in those bygone years of great stringency. His famous stallion "Drumlistna Black Prince", and his progeny became known throughout the length and breadth of Connaught. Unfortunately this fine stud farm has long since gone out of existence, and the Mulligan home had changed hands to a new owner.

Yet, even to this day people continue to talk of Andrew Mulligan, his son Joe and their famous breed of horses.

In an elevated setting overlooking Lough Gara on one side and landscaped by hundreds of acres of hilly terrain, stands the tumble down ruin of Moygara Castle, at one time the lofty seat of the powerful O'Gara clann. In their days of glory the head of this proud family was lord of the half-barony of Coolavin.

The remains of this old castle show it to have been an enormous fortress, around 185 feet square with six huge towers, one in each corner, and one situated centre way in each sidewall.

According to the legend the son of Manus O'Donnell was killed here by a cannon ball, fired by a defender, when O'Donnell tried to take the castle in the early years of the sixteenth century. O'Donnell succeeded in taking possession of the castle and subsequently forgave the gunman who killed his son.

There is also the legend of the black nun who was said to have occupied a tower on the Carrentumple side of the building. She became known as "the nun in the tower" and was it appears a member of the family who probably fell foul of her superiors, and still being in holy orders, decided to live out the remainder of her religious life in the tower of the castle.

Old folk tell the story of the notorious sycamore tree where O'Gara handed criminals inside his jurisdiction. This tree was, it seems, located close to one of the castle's towers, and was connected to the building by a gangway leading from a loophole in the tower. The executioner marched the unfortunate victim through the loophole and on to a platform constructed amid the tree's branches, where a noose was placed around the neck and the entire body plunged headlong towards the ground.

The old ruins is said to be haunted by the ghost of young Diarmaid O'Gara, the last reigning member of the clann, slain here by Captain Malby, the Governor of Connaught when he burned the castle in 1581, and finally altered the destiny of the once powerful O'Gara clann. These lines taken from an old lament have lingered on in folklore.

*Young Diarmuid of the royal blood  
Shall roam the range no more  
His ghost now on a white horse rides  
Along famed Lough Gara's shore.*

Famed Lough Gara, it too owes its name to the O'Gara clann, and has become more famous in recent years, because of the discovery of the remains of a number of ancient celtic lake dwellings along its waters edge. Excavation work at the lakes out lets in the fifties lowered the water level in the lake, thus revealing distinct traces of ancient Irish settlements, dating back to pre-christian times.

The lake dwelling or Cranog was, it would seem, a sturdy construction situated a good distance back from the shore. Its massive base was made up of rocks deposited in a circular heap and elevated to a height of two or three feet above water level. The top portion was probably evened off by the use of smaller stones and a sticky sub-soil called dab (doib). The dwelling quarters consisted of a huge centre pillar built deep into the base, and usually comprised of oak, and an outer frame containing several smaller boulders which circled around the pillar and was drawn together to be secured at the pillar's tip. The spaces in between were filled by using wattles laced with a durable kind of reed called giolcach. When complete these structures could have looked very similar to the wigwams still used by a minority of north American Indians. Like the hill fort the lake dwelling was built for protection. Rafts and other types of makeshift bridges were probably used for contact with the shore, and

# FROM THE SOWING OF THE SEED TO THE MAKING OF THE STOOL



by Patricia McNally



Today the 22nd day of June 1986, I paid a visit to a carpenter's workshop in a remote area of the 'Corran District'. This same workshop could have been visited half a century ago, when the machinery - entirely pulley operated and the many hand tools would have been used to produce cartwheels, scythe handles, and even 'clog soles'.

One might expect to find the same machinery rust-eaten, and its many wheels locked with age and lack of use. Ah but this was not so, and because it was not so I am able to relate this article to you, the readers of the Corran Herald.

The workshop is no longer producing the essential farm implements of years past, or the 'clog soles' we once used for footwear. From this workshop with its ancient machinery, we can now see a very different form of wooden structure emerge.

If we are to start at the beginning we must go back to the old ash tree, it may be the tree under whose branches you sheltered from that heavy shower, on your way home from school many years ago. To another, it may be the tree whose sturdy branches supported the rope for the swing on which you and your friends shared many happy hours of play. Maybe even the tree from which the ash plant was taken, to remind you to close the gate after you the next time, so that the cows or the sheep would'nt stray onto the road.

Fifty maybe sixty years later, the ash tree is cut down, not to be used as firewood,

but to be skillfully transformed into a completely new structure. A structure that is sure to conserve the old ash tree, possibly even longer than mother earth. This transformation takes place at the hands of Mr. Goulden, a craftsman who has a great skill and a great love for the wood he works with. The wood he uses is native ash, white thorn or oak if the product is worthy of the old oak tree. Some of the timber he uses is that which his neighbours may have cut for firewood, but reluctant to reduce it to ashes they take to their neighbour in the sure knowledge that it will be preserved in one form or another.

The old ash tree once it has arrived at the workshop is stripped of its bark by a chain saw, the most modern piece of machinery to be found in the workshop. The tree is then cut into planks of wood and left to season for six months. From the seasoned planks of wood Mr. Goulden will produce stools, tables, chairs, plant stands maybe even an exquisite sideboard. These are all of a unique design, attributed to the one man who will start and finish each product.

The legs of the stool are curved and encased in a perfectly formed circle of wood. The seat of the stool is carefully chosen with attention to the natural grain of the old ash tree, and is attached to the legs of the stool with a very obvious skillfully manicured joint, "I don't try to hide the joint" he says. Indeed it would be a shame to conceal such workmanship. The seat of the stool

is surrounded with two indented black rings. When I commented on how effective these were, I was told how simple that particular task was, involving merely a wire being placed on the spinning wood, the ensuing friction thus creates the black rings. Simple it may be, but the lines were perfectly straight and must surely be so because of this mans' talent and the great pride he takes in his work.

The small table I was shown was carved with the same attention and even greater detail. The legs once again curved and encased in a deep circle of grained ash and a further circle of wood placed vertically beneath the table top. The wood that is left after cutting this circle is used to make the seat of the stool, so no part of the old ash tree is laid to waste. To appreciate the work that this craftsman puts into these tables it is necessary to bend 'on all fours'. That in itself personifies the craftsman from Coolaney.

The plant stands are made with great thought having gone into their design. They stand 2½ feet high, the legs once again curved and supporting, not one but two shelves their centres indented to hold any water that may escape the plant pot. These shelves are puzzling the finest of carpenters all over Ireland because there is no mark of the machine left on their surface. I have no doubt that they are also puzzling carpenters in Singapore where I am told the same plant stands, made and designed by Mr. Goulden, can also be found.

# Fr. P.J. O'GRADY

by Patricia McNally

*"For three years he remained in America travelling the length and breadth of every city and it is no exaggeration to say that the Diocesan Seminary in Ballaghaderren owes its erection in no small measure to the inspiring eloquent zeal and devotion of the Priest and patriot when thirteen years ago he crossed the Atlantic on behalf of piety and learning that the rising generation might prove worthy of their race"* (part of the tribute paid to Fr. P.J. O'Grady by the Sligo Champion May 15th 1920).

Patrick J' O'Grady was born in Mahanagh, Gurteen in 1864. He was educated at Ballaghaderren College in the ancient and historic Diocese of Achonry, a Diocese which in later years was to have a new Seminary erected with the help of Fr. P.J. O'Grady's tremendously successful mission to the States to procure funds. He studied for the priesthood at Maynooth, where he later had a distinguished career.

After his ordination he ministered in Bohola, Swinford Curry, Achonry, Collooney, Galway and Keash. Where ever his ministry took him he left behind him a record of work done which to this day remains a living monument to him. He was a warm hearted generous man whose firm handshake was worth its grip and whose cheerful laughter and good humour disarmed all formality. Everyone was welcome to his home and he treated them as only a true Irishman and priest could. It is not therefore surprising that Fr. O'Grady was known as Fr. P.J. and is remembered still as Fr. P.J. by those who recall childhood memories of their local priest and friend.

He Ministered in Galway at the time of the political movement to redistribute landed property in the late 19th century.

FR. P.J. O'GRADY 1913



Appreciation to Mrs. Bridget Kielty for this photo which she has preserved all down the years.

He aided and guided his people in their struggle against oppression and inculcated in their hearts a spirit of courageous, manly patriotism.

More than once he was subjected to the harrowing persecution of the British law but he always emerged unscathed with his high principles still to the fore. Fr. P.J. was a fearless champion of the poor and oppressed and thanks to his efforts several large tracts of land formerly devoted to grazing cattle were returned to their rightful owners. He was one of the most uncompromising foes of landlordism and class privilege a man with first a great love for his religion, then a love for his country and he had untold energy when at this time it was required to ensure the advancement of his peoples' interests.

His lot was also cast in Collooney where he worked for many years as curate and here again we find the twin virtues of priest and patriot loudly exemplified in his work. The poor he always had with him, the poor who loved and cherished their local parish priest Fr. P.J. His courageous spirit and patriotism came to the fore in Sept. 1898 when under his leadership a monument was inaugurated to Bartholemew Teeling, a hero of '98 who did a deed of daring at Carricknagat./

This monument still to-day from its eminence outside the town salutes the visitor to Sligo whether his journey be by train or car. There it stands defying time and the elements and in mute but unmistakable grandeur to the spirit of Fr. P.J., but the sight of thousands of Irishmen gathering from five counties to honour their martyred dead on Sept. 10th 1898 was reward sufficient for Fr. P.J. O'Grady.

His next ministry took him to Curry and while acting as curate for the parish he was chosen to go to America to obtain funds for the erection of a Diocesan College at Ballaghaderreen. Most Rev. Dr. Lyster chose Fr. P.J. as the representative of the Bishop, Priests, and people of Achonry in the sure knowledge that this exemplary priest and Irishman would succeed on this important mission. Fr. P.J. was an eloquent speaker who never failed to impress his listener, whether he preached the Word of God or spoke on behalf of the National Cause in Ireland.

A warm welcome awaited him in America where already his fame as priest and patriot had travelled across the Atlantic. The erection of the monument to Bartholemew Teeling had not gone unnoticed "We have a present in New York a distinguished Irish Clergyman and patriot Fr. P.J. O'Grady whose mission to the States is to procure funds for the erection

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# IRELAND'S SMALLEST CHURCH

## COSTELLO MEMORIAL CHAPEL

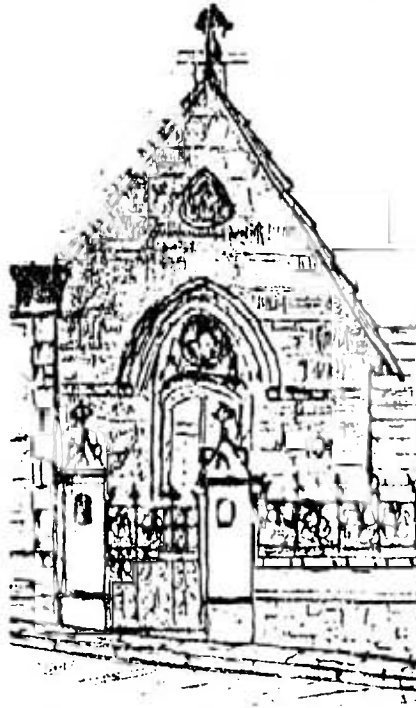
by Patricia McNally

When next you pass through Carrick-on-Shannon a special stop should be made to see the smallest Church in Ireland, a remarkable, quaint and exquisite Church built in 1877. The building is so small that it often goes unnoticed although it is situated near the prominent 'Town Clock' which is so obvious to the eye on entering the town of Carrick-on-Shannon.

This tiny church was built more than a century ago by Edward Costello, a farmer and a business man, as a memorial to his beloved wife who died at the early age of 46.

The Church has not suffered the ravages of time because of the nature of the stone used to build it. The stone was specially imported from Bath in the knowledge that it hardened with the passage of time.

On either side of the entrance one can see the monograms set in stone. The letters F.M.C. interwoven on one and the family coat of arms on the other. One is inclined to assume the letters F.M.C. represent Edward Costello's wife's initials, whereas one can be sure that the family coat of arms depicted on the other monogram "ne Quaesueris extra" when translated reads "seek not thyself outside thyself".



On entering the Church one is faced with a small white marble altar complete with tabernacle and backed by stained glass window. There are two hearts beautifully carved on the front of the altar.

One of the hearts is surrounded by a crown of roses, the other by a crown of thorns, the roses representing Mary the mother of God and the thorns representing Jesus Christ who died to save His people. This tiny Church was built as a result of the love Edward Costello had for his wife, and one may be correct in assuming that the two hearts depicted thus were at his request knowing that one day this too would be his final place of rest.

The Costellos, remembered for their kindness and charity, were respected by rich and poor alike. Edward Costello is also remembered as being instrumental in the establishing of the Marist Nuns in Carrick-on-Shannon.

This smallest Church in Ireland is a very beautiful memorial place that was built in 1877 as a result of a man's love for his wife. The one aspect I found strange is the glass used in the slabs built at floor level, which leave the lead coffins visible. However I have no doubt that Edward Costello had his own special reason for instructing glass to be used as opposed to the marble usually found marking a burial place within a church. Perhaps this is also unique to the smallest church in our country.

### Interesting Ballymote Heritage Group Outing

The above group are organising an Outing to places of interest in the Clare area for Saturday 16th of August. The tour will take in Bunratty Castle and the Folk Park associated with it. It will visit Craggaunowen Castle with its Bronze Age complex of crannog, ringfort and souterrain. Here also will be seen a re-creation of the 6th Century Craft in which St. Brendan the Navigator is reputed to have reached North America. In Ennis there will be an opportunity to visit the great Abbey of the Franciscan Order and if time permits other sites of interest will be visited in Clare and Galway.

A luxury bus will leave the Community Centre at 9.30 a.m. and early application for seats should be made at Cassidys or Perrys and not later than Tuesday 12th. A packed lunch is advisable and there will be arrangements for evening tea on the return journey. This would appear to be an event well worth joining in.

### THE PRICE OF PROGRESS

Why must man the atomic  
power station build,  
To send Electricity over every land  
and every field.  
Send into the atmosphere  
its atomic dust,  
Drifted by the breeze and the  
stormy gust.  
This atomic dust which lasts  
for years,  
Giving cancer to many and  
to more tears.  
Do they want to kill all people  
of the human race,  
Wipe out all the animals from  
this worlds face.  
Why not go back to wind  
and water power,  
So all people can enjoy  
every living hour.  
People of the world to this atomic  
power say no,  
Show the whole world which way  
to go.

### THE SLIGO CHAMPION, SATURDAY, MAY 10, 1952.

#### BALLYMOTE BOYS WIN

At Corran Park, Ballymote, on Sunday last, Ballymote schoolboys defeated Tubbercurry by 6-0 to 1-3 in a challenge football game. A marked superiority in the second half decided the issue in favour of the home team who were best served by E. Hannan, Gerry Cassidy and Joe Cassidy in the defence, P. Mattimoe and M. Brennan at mid-field and M. Bree, C. Carolan, T. O'Connor and J. J. Breheny, in the forwards.

Tubbercurry were best served by J. Faul, J. Lavelle, Moran and C. Killeoynne.

Scorers for Ballymote were—C. Carolan (2-0); Mark Henry (2-0); A. Mullen and J. J. Brehony (1-0) each.

Tubbercurry's marksmen were—J. Lavelle (1-0); J. Faul (0-2) and Moran (0-1) from a free.

Mr. P. Mullen, (Ballymote) refereed.

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# The Village Cobbler

*In this issue of the Corran Herald we are pleased to include a monologue written in memory of Willie Bourke, who is remembered by many who would have spent time in his workshop in Collooney, watching his skilled hands reviving their boots and shoes extending their already spent life.*

*Willie was the third generation of the Bourke family to carry on the trade of the shoe making and mending. The skill which was carried on by three generations will no doubt live on to the next generation when it flourishes in Willies' own sons John and Gordon.*

*On going down the old-street,  
the first house on the left,  
I would gaze through the tiny  
window-pane, has he arrived yet ?  
Ah yes he has ! I see him there,  
his head bent to his task,  
So I'd lift the latch, descend the  
stairs, stand silent, wait and watch,  
For the job that he was doing had  
to finish before he could stop.*

*When the time was right, he'd lift  
his head, adjust his eyes to see,  
His visitor or customer, whoever it  
might be,  
The greetings passed his work went  
on, and I would stand and look,  
As the old shoe placed upon the  
last was brought to life anew.*

*I would watch the cobbler cut the  
leather to fit the worn out shoe,  
And then proceed to secure it with  
wax - hemp tacks and glue,  
Then he'd use the shoe-rasp  
steadfastly until the leather smooth  
Was ready for the heel ball which  
he would brush along the shoe.*

*He'd place the shoe upon the clamp,  
take out his pipe to fill  
And if it was his dinner-time, I  
could sit for longer still,  
We might talk about the weather,  
we might not talk at all,  
There was no need, the silence  
pleased the cobbler and the child.*

*In the silence of the workshop I  
would look around,  
The leather in the linseed oil, shoes  
scattered all around,  
My nose would fill with the many  
smells pertaining to his trade,  
The leather, dye, the glue, the shoes  
the villagers left in.*

*All at once remembering the shoes  
tucked 'neath my arm,  
I would take them out and pass  
them on to see what he could do,  
Well he'd take the shoes and before  
my eyes, remove the very sole  
Surely now they can't be fixed  
whatever chance afore.*

*With frown upon my forehead and  
feet stuck to the floor,  
I would wait with baited breath as I  
often did before, "Ah sure leave  
them with me girl, and I'll see what  
I can do"  
Now the frown was lifted, for I  
surely knew,  
That when the shoes were mended  
they would be as good as new.*

*He'd place the shoes along with  
other pairs upon the floor,  
And start working on the comrade  
of the shoe he fixed before,  
The time had come to take my  
leave, reluctant as I go  
For I loved to watch the cobbler in  
Collooney long ago.*

*Willie the cobbler passed on and his  
workshop stood unused  
And we all travelled to Sligo with  
our old and worn-out shoes,  
No more "Ah sure leave them with  
me and I'll see what I can do"  
but instead a stranger tells us there  
is nothing he can do.*

*His workshop it has disappeared  
and in its place a home,  
But Willie Bourke is not forgotten  
or the work that he once done,  
For his skill held sheer perfection  
and his person held delight,  
All this was seen so long ago and  
through the eyes of youth  
That speaks aloud and louder than  
more words set here in rhyme.*

by Patricia McNally

# BULLETS TAWS TOPS AND OTHER THINGS

by Tom McGettrick

This is a recalling of simple things from a time when the world was not as confused a place to live in as it is now. They tell of a way of life of young and old that is barely a memory and it may bring pleasure or a little sadness to recall them. The greatest changes have taken place in the countryside and the present century has seen practically all these changes. There is no loy or reaping hook in the shops now, the last of the donkey carts is decaying in the weeds beside some derelict farmhouse and the thatched roof is a special item of interest for the tourist's camera. But the title above suggests I intend to tell of other things.

Bowling, or bullet throwing as it was called when I remember it, is a sport still popular in Cork. It died out here in the first quarter of the century. The bowl or bullet was a stone sphere smaller than the sixteen-pound weight used in putting the shot. A competitor threw it as far as he could along the road. The end of the throw was marked by a bunch of grass pulled on the roadside where the bullet rested. There was a lot of time spent looking for the bullet in the weeds and shrubbery that bordered the road. Golfers have the same trouble today in the rough. The roads were quiet then and long stretches would have little traffic or a late summer evening. Sometimes there would be Pitch and Toss with never anything more than pennies and half pennies on the ground. It too is dead as a rural pastime and where it has survived it is a gamblers' game. When the potatoes were dug the game of "Twenty-five" passed the winter nights until Lent. There would be a creel of turf burning on the open hearth and eight neighbours round the kitchen table playing by the light of the oil-lamp on the wall. That particular scene would look well in a Yeats' painting.

Taw playing started each year soon after the coming of the cornercrake and the cuckoo. It was a schoolboy's game. We don't hear the cornercrake anymore. If one were coming home with a midnight moon it was great company to hear the cornercrake in every meadow along the way. There must have been hundreds of them. Or it might be returning at dawn from an all-night dance or a wake and the

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## A Unique Advertising Scheme

Several years ago while sifting through old documents, I came across what at first-sight appeared to be a ballad but on closer examination I found that it contained many names of Ballymote traders. Further research among the elders and descendants of names still extant at that time brought to light the fact that about the middle of the nineteenth century a 'commune' of Ballymote traders devised this ballad-type advertising scheme, copies of which they used as a hand-out to their customers:-

*"Go to Kean's for lamps,  
To Gorman's for stamps,  
Go to Kelly's for candy,  
To Coughlan's for brandy,  
Go to Flannagan's for malt,  
To Roger's for salt,  
Go to Gorman's for tar,  
To Scully's for a car,  
Go to Dyer's for jam,  
To Hannan's for ham,  
Go to Smith's for figs,  
To Murray's for gigs,  
Go to Mackey's for hops,  
To Flanagan's for chops,  
Go to Keaveney's for bread,  
To McGlynn's for thread,  
Go to McDonagh's for wicks,  
To Ward's for sticks,  
Go to Henry's for beer,  
To Cuffe's for good cheer,  
Go to Keenan's for meal,  
To Dyers for veal,  
Go to Dockrey's for eggs,  
To Henderson's for pegs,  
Go to Clarke's for boots,  
To Hannan's for suits,  
Go to Reilly's for carts,  
To Lyttle's for tarts,  
Go to Gallagher's for hats,  
To Sweeney's for spats,  
Go to Cawley's for tweeds,  
To Barlow's for the weed.  
Go to Farry's for boards,  
To Head McKeno's for swords,"*

*Bat Keaney Commdt., (ret)*

As far as we can ascertain just two of the business houses listed above are trading in 1986 These are Rogers' and Dockrey's both are situated in O'Connell Street.



# Ulster Bank

**BALLYMOTE**



**Ulster Bank**

the friendly bank

**Manager**

**B. Dempsey**

**Asst. Manager**

**E. Sweeney**

## T. CASEY

**M.P.S.I. Ph. C.**

YOUR COUNTY PHARMACY

Medical and Veterinary Prescriptions

Agents: \_\_\_\_\_

Coty, Rimmel, Sans Souci,  
Yardley, L'etheric and Cyclax

LELLING STREET, BALLYMOTE

PH. (0719) 83370

## EARLY & LATE

LORD EDWARD St. BALLYMOTE

SWEETS  
CONFECTIONERY  
PAPERBACK BOOKS  
STATIONERY  
CARDS

TEAS, COFFEE AND SANDWICHES  
AVAILABLE FROM OUR COFFEE SHOP



# Ballymote City

GLANCING through the August 14, 1915 files of "The Sligo Champion" I came across the following poem, by J.P. Scanlon, which indicates that Ballymote was ahead of its times in the quest for the title "City".

*How dare you call it just a Town,  
Or worse than that, a Village  
With scraps of gardens up and down,  
And little bits of tillage.*

*How very stupid not to note-  
I think it is a pity,  
All must admit that Ballymote,  
Deserves to be a City.*

*They have a Chapel tall and grand,  
The finest in creation;*

*They have a Police Barrack and  
They have a Railway Station.*

*There is a Market on the hill,  
There is. I hope you follow,  
A Creamery and Corn Mill  
In Newtown in the hollow.*

*A boulevard called Emmet Street,  
A Pump if you can find it,  
A Sessions House sedate and neat,  
A Fair Green just behind it.*

*Improvements come at every call,  
They follow fast and faster,  
You have the stately Loftus Hall,  
Memorial of its pastor.*

*You have the old historic School,  
The best of all I call that;*

*You have a ruined Castle pool,  
With ivy round all that.*

*Of Banks you have no less than three  
To show how trade has risen;  
There's just one thing you cannot see  
They do not need a Prison.*

*Of holiness they have a feast,  
Of virtue there's an orgy,*

*For they have got as Parish Priest,  
The pick of all the clergy.*

*They always lead the van somehow,  
Don't ask me why, I pray thee-*

*They even have as Doctor now,  
A brilliant local lady.*

*A Postal Service up to date,  
The Telegraph humming,*

*A Postman who is never late-  
The Telephone is coming.*

*They haven't got a local Press,  
I don't suppose they mind it,  
They read the "Sligo Champion", yes  
And full of news they find it.*

# Vincent Mc Donagh & Son BALLYMOTE

PH. (071) 83351

NOW IN STOCK full range of NOVUUM, BAYLAY, FAGOR & INDESIT, FRIDGES, DEEP FREEZE, WASHING MACHINES, OVENS, DISHWASHERS & HOB & UNITS.

## ★ SPECIAL OFFERS ★

**AUTOMATIC WASHING MACHINES from £265**

**FRIDGES from £129**

**and Many More Offers**



Dan Gray presenting a prize to Patrick Coleman, Coolaney at Ballymote Show

**FBD**

Lord Edward St.,  
Ballymote,  
Co. Sligo.  
(071) 83135

SHANE LOFTUS  
Area Representative

F.B.D. Insurance P.L.C.

*Go, search old Ireland up and down,  
You won't discover any-*

*You cannot find another town  
Whose beauties are so many.*

*Embosomed in its sunny vales  
Enchanting I have found it,  
Un rivalled verdant hills and dales,  
Encircle and surround it.*

*If you deny the claims I quote,  
I think it is a pity,*

*For I submit that Ballymote  
Deserves to be a City.*

J.P. Scanlon.

# CARPET CARE CAR VALET SERVICE

**EMMET ST.  
BALLYMOTE**

CARPETS  
PROFESSIONALLY CLEANED  
IN YOUR OWN HOME  
WORK CARRIED OUT WITH  
NO DISTURBANCE OR MESS

ALSO CAR UPHOLSTERY  
SERVICE

... QUOTATION FREE ...

**PH. (071) 83110**

## BULLETS, TAWS, TOPS AND OTHER THINGS

cont. from Page 7

cornercrakes would still be continuing their tireless calling, and the farmyard cocks would have joined in then and a dog somewhere asking who was there. The young people today would not know what you meant if you said you were up at cockerow.

Taw playing had all the elements of keen competition, skill and strict rules to make it a fine discipline for young boys. Like the boys. Like the blossoms on the whitethorn or the mushrooms in the fields when the time came taws appeared almost overnight. They were in a box in almost every schoolboy's bag or in his pocket. There were dishes or them in the shop windows. For the game was a ritual. Someone called 'First for a ring' and this was followed by 'second', 'third', and 'fourth' being called, and so on. Five players was the ideal number for the game as a taw could be placed on each corner of a foot square ring and one in the centre. The first caller then asked the last caller to show 'pink' and this was the spot, a yard or more distant from which each player fired off with his crock taw, a taw much bigger than the ones on the ring. If he hit a taw from the ring he kept it and had another shot. If the crock taw after any shot came to rest inside the ring the player was said to be 'fat' and had to retire from the game. This was something like being caught offside or in the square in football. If one player hit another player's crock taw with his he was said to have 'killed' him and he had to retire from the game.

There were variations of the game. In one of these the players had to reach a series of holes as in golf. There were so many rules that a booklet could be compiled on them. Many a school playtime and many an evening on the road or on the footpath was spent playing taws. When the season was over with the approach of summer holidays a skilled player might have collected three or four hundred taws. There were often buried in the garden and the spot marked until the next season. This seems to have part of the ritual. In a thousand years' time if one of these hoards is unearthed the archaeologist of the time with the accustomed certainty of his kind will probably explain them as petrified droppings of some prehistoric sheep or goat. This article will not have survived to put him right.

Top spinning was another pastime. It had limited appeal. The top of the time was of hard wood with a spike on which it spun. Some boys carried tops in their pockets with a long piece of cord which they wound round it to put it spinning. These tops were sold in the shops.

'Going in the Feet' coincided with the taw playing season but lasted until the summer was over. It is difficult to describe the joy of galloping off that first day with the shoes discarded. Those who still wore shoes begged leave of their parents to be allowed to put them away for the summer. There were plenty of soft paths and safe places to wander then and broken glass was almost unheard of. If there was a bottle or jam pot about the beggar-man who called regularly collected them and he got a halfpenny for them. The most likely damage to the leather-like foot sole was a 'stone-bruise' and it could be nasty for a while.

Slates and slate pencils were still used in the schools. There were a most economical stand-in for the copy and pencil because after each exercise the slate was wiped clean (there is a metaphor there) and was ready for the next question. Some may still remember Miss Ward's shop in Teeling Street, where these slates were sold, some with neat wooden frames and some lined so that handwriting could be practiced on them. The slate could even be handed on from one member of the family to another. The reading book was like that too, The Third Book, The Fourth Book and so on and these are still treasured in some old collections. Truly 'The old order changeth yielding place to new'



FOR BETTER VALUE IN

DRAPERY & FOOTWEAR

*J.F. Lavin*

LORD EDWARD ST. BALLYMOTE

Ph. (071) 83354

CASSIDY'S

Newsagents Ballymote

- COOKED CHICKENS
- CONES & ICE CREAM
- CONFECTIONERY

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NCF FRESH CREAM DAILY  
FRESH COLESLAW AND FRESH SUMMER SALAD

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The ringing of the telephone wakened me from my slumber at 1.10 am., my younger brother, Brendan, who was wide awake spoke and said "Ben, bad news. Fred's dead", silence "who" I replied, not being quite awake. Fred, Fred Finn, Rose's husband - I've just received word from Sligo, it seems he had a heart attack. One of the neighbours 'phoned me". I responded "What are you going to do? - do you intend going down?" "Yes", he answered, I'm going to call the rest of the family and then I'll get back to you". "Fair enough, let me know" I said, hanging up the phone.

Not being able to return to sleep, I started to think - Fred? Who was Fred? Fred was married to my youngest sister for 13 years and lived in Sligo which is 150 miles from my home. I must have met him no more than a dozen times during this period and then only for a short time. He was a traditional Irish fiddle player, well known in the West of Ireland, especially around Ballymote and Bunninadden, his homeland where he played at Ceili Dances and in pubs and any other establishment where Irish music was played. I remembered that during 1972 he had gone to America on Tour with a ceili band and he had even made a few records and appeared on television. He always appeared to me to be a gentleman in the true sense of the word - a gentle person who was also useful with his hands and willing to tackle any job. I also remembered that he was a cattle farmer and was born and bred on the family farm, the only boy with four sisters, apart from that I knew little about the man.

## THE MAN I NEVER KNEW

by Ben Smith

Very late the following night, Brendan called me again "I'm just back from Sligo, Fred was taken to the Chapel tonight and he is being buried tomorrow after 11 o'clock mass in Killavil" I replied, "its short notice, but I'll be there, I'll take the boys with me and will meet you there".

Next morning, I wakened my two sons at 6.00 am. my wife, who had decided to go also, was already awake as we had to make an early start. The weather forecast indicated sleet on the day of our journey and as we set off, frost and ice on the side streets glistened below our headlights. The main roads were not too bad until we had journeyed half way and then the sleet came down and it started to snow, making driving much more difficult.

We finally arrived at my sister's house at about 10.15am and joined the rest of the family before heading off to the Church. The road to the Church could just about accommodate two cars side by side and we had been told that parking space had been reserved for us in the Church grounds. I was very glad about this as cars were parked for about a mile on each side of the Church, bumper to bumper.

At the Church, we had to struggle our way in to the pews reserved for the family of the deceased. Killavil Church is small, even for a country church and the crowd on that day would have filled a building twice its size. Six priests were on the Altar to celebrate the Mass for the repose of the soul of Fred Finn. The Parish Priest read the eulogy revealing aspects of Fred that I never suspected. "Fred Finn" the priest told the congregation, "will be missed by many in this gathering and also by the greater part of Co. Sligo. He was a gifted musician, knew his gift was from

God and was not selfish with his musical talent as he would perform whenever he was asked to do so. Music was not his only talent. He was also an amateur actor and treated us to many an enjoyable evening with his characters on the stage".

He went on to say that when charity required his presence, he never spared himself. Long was the list of his good deeds and many people were in his debt, not in monetary terms, but in favours not returned. He never said a wrong word about his neighbour as he could always see some good in everyone. He continued that not least among Fred's many accomplishments was his sportsmanship. He apparently played hurling and Gaelic football in his youth and became all Ireland Handball Champion.

He emphasised that music was his forte which carried him through the county of Sligo and across the seas, spreading joy wherever he went as his music displaying his love of life told the congregation that his gift from God is given to so few of us. He said, "Now his fiddle is silent, but I'm sure Fred will have no difficulty in learning to play the harp and join the heavenly orchestra".

As I sat there in Church, I reflected "Is this the same man I Knew?, Quiet, Fred Finn of the gentle smile - This was a man I never knew!" After Mass, a Fred's coffin left the Church, we were met at the door by a tall Piper, resplendent in his full dress uniform, who played a lament and accompanied the coffin to the hearse. Men and women wept openly and ashamedly in the heavy falling snow without a care for their own inconvenience and discomfort.

Driving slowly behind the hearse to the cemetery, we were stopped at the outskirts of the town by the owner of the local pub, the "Rosin Dubh" a pub where Fred played at least two nights a week.

## FR. P.J. O'GRADY

cont. from Page 5

of a Diocesan College in Ballaghaderren, the centre of a thickly populated district in Mayo where for centuries an industrious farming class have striven to wring from their small holdings sufficient means to keep the wolf from the cottage door and the no less careful visitor, the landlord's minor - pressing for the rent" (from the New York Irish World and American Industrial Liberator October 19th 1907.)

The Government at this time in our history had a lack of funding for the erection of Catholic Schools and Colleges. And so the people of Achonry in need of a college and finding their own funds insufficient turned with reluctance no doubt but with a confidence borne of experience, to their brothers, sisters and friends who were across the sea. People - Ireland's exiled sons and daughters who went in search of a home and freedom to find it under the protecting wings of the American eagle. These people had already heard of Fr. P.J. the people's friend, friend and supporter of the poor and oppressed. He cared little for brushing coat tails with 'shoneen' gentry or the landed proprietors and whenever a blow was to be struck for the poor man he was there, courageous, fearless and indomitable. And so Ireland's ex-patriot welcomed Fr. P.J. and gave generously when he called upon them for their financial support during his three years in the United States of America.

On his return from America Fr. P.J. was promoted to this pastoral charge of Keash. Here he found a new field for his energy and labour and the parish was to bear a striking testimony of his guiding hand in its religious social and industrial progressiveness.

He immediately set to uplifting the conditions of the people under his charge. The spiritual needs of his people catered for, he was happy to spend his time with them discussing ways and means for one project or another.

He was not a man whose outlook and ambition were concentrated in self or personal advantage.

Fr. P.J. had a big heart, a cheerful person with tremendous vitality. In no way did he spare himself, and he was never wanting in friends or support in any project he ever undertook. He was responsible for renovation of the Parish Church in Keash and the construction of a road from the Church to the Parochial house. White Hall which still stands to-day was built through his energy and perseverance.

On Garland and Sports Day he arranged to have Countess Markievicz visit and address the people of Keash. Fr. P.J. was to leave many lasting tributes in his Parish of Keash as he had done in his previous parishes. He is still remembered by Mrs. Bridget KIELTY who was a native of Keash now living in the town of Ballymote, she remembers Fr. P.J. as the first priest to give a tea party for the 'First Holy Communicants'. Mrs. KIELTY recalled the pony and trap used by Fr. P.J. when he would visit the school. He took great pride in the pony and trap which took prizes in the early shows in Ballymote. The pony Starlight had a bell around his neck to signal the approach of the smiling gentle priest who did as much in his lifetime for the good of his country, and her people whom he served well.

Very Rev. Fr. P.J. O'Grady died after a severe illness which lasted 12 months. Whatever he felt he always kept a cheerful face and it was only within the last few weeks when he was obliged to confine himself to his room that he admitted that the hand of death was upon him and he resigned himself to the will of His Creator. Two Mercy nuns, one his niece St. Eithne were specially permitted to be present at his bedside in the last weeks of his life. He died on May 8th 1920 and was buried in the family burial ground in Gurteen 6 miles from Keash. His cortege was three miles long with 80 cars, at a time when cars were few. All followed the steady downpour of rain the man, priest and patriot who had the heart and courage of a lion and the gentleness of a child, and who left behind him many lasting tributes that bear eloquent witness to his lifelong work.

(With gratitude to the staff of the 'Sligo Library Archives' in the Court House Sligo for access to the old issues of the Sligo Champion)

Narrative Patricia McNally



## THE MAN I NEVER KNEW

cont. Page 11

"Sorry for holding you up" he said, "But we won't keep you long" Then the lone Piper led the hearse, and a guard of honour of about 40 musicians flanked each side of the hearse, each carrying their instruments - flute, penny whistle, fiddle & bodhran. The Piper struck up a lament and let us through the town to the graveyard on the far side, accompanied all the way by the honour guard, each person unmindful of the mixture of sleet and snow falling around them and continued at a walking pace up the hill to the final resting place.

fiddler spoke out "That was our farewell to Fred, but this is how we are sure he would like to be remembered" All at once, the air was filled with the joyful sound of happy music which not even the cold biting wind and winter's cold white flurries could overcome.

Later, as we were returning through the town, I asked a local if this was the usual type of funeral for Sligo and in reply he said "That was not just any man we buried today, that was FRED FINN". Once again I was reminded that Fred was a man I never knew!

FROM THE SOWING OF  
THE SEED TO THE MAKING  
OF THE STOOL

cont. from page 4

In addition to the ash, white-thorn is also used in the making of the stand. The white thorn is 'turned' into several small ornamental pieces of wood with wood-cutting chisels. The finished pieces are then placed along the top shelf of the stand to ensure the safety of the potted plant. The stands are not only ornamental but are also of a practical use and are fit to grace any hall.

I was finally shown an oak sideboard, worthy of the stately ancient tree from which it was produced. The birds depicted on the centrepiece of the sideboard were copied from an old 4 penny (4d) stamp and that tells a tale of its own. On either side of the doors are bunches of grapes, carved from the piece of wood that was left on the surface for this purpose when the wood was being cut. This shows the forethought that this craftsman puts into his work.

As I looked at the sideboard and beside me the man who carved it, I pictured the ancient oak standing solid and masterful in the open countryside, and now the sideboard, eventually carved from it, takes its place of honour in the drawing room of the man who carved it. The birds who once sang from the branches of the tree now bring their song to the home of Mr. Goulden the man who immortalized them on the centrepiece of the sideboard, what contrasting pictures yet both produced from the single seed that was sown centuries before.

multi-talented people. To-day in a remote Corran District I saw the hands of a gifted yet humble craftsman. A craftsman whose like was during 'Ireland's Golden Era', held high in esteem throughout Europe, and who were invited to many of its cities, to enhance and enrich them with their talent and skill. These skills included glass

## Memories of Carnaree

*Mrs. Flannery (nee Quinn) a former native of Carnaree speaks of her youth in the early part of this century.*

We had no alarm in those days so we waited for the cock to crow and knew it was time to get up for school. If our awaited caller was late then we went to school without our usual breakfast of porridge and prepared our hands for inevitable slap of the ruler. Our teeth gritted and hands held forth we accepted the punishment, consoled with the inner promise to 'kill' the old cock when we got home from school. This promise was never carried out because on returning home the cross old cock would let us know who was boss and the further away we stayed the safer our heels would be. The education we received, Shakespeare, Geometry, English, Irish, Geography, Sums and History took us to the far corners of the world where we could hold our own and further our education if we so desired.

When we came home from school we helped with the work on the farm, making ropes for the hay in the summer-time, and helping with the animals in the winter, doing whatever was required of us whatever the season. If there was time left for play we would play Taws or hop scotch but we didn't have much free time with all the work needed to be done on the farm.

blowing, illuminated manuscripts, highly ornamented metal and decorative stone and wood carvings. Many accepted but as can clearly be seen from this article our country was not left without the craftsman who carried on at home and in so doing ensured the preservation of his skill and talent the like of which may be seen to this day the 22nd day of June 1986 in a remote area of the Corran District.

My mother was great with the spinning wheel and we would prepare the wool for her on the card holders. The wool would then be used to make our clothes, trousers for the men, cardigans for the girls. Buttercups, bracken, moss and ragwort were used to dye the wool, which was soaked along with the weed and would come a lovely bright yellow colour. If we had black wool from the sheep my mother would knit, what was called, salt and pepper socks. The men wore their trousers just as far as the knee in those days. The complete sheep fleeces were sent to the woolen factory in Coolaney where it was used for manufacturing serge suits.

Our dresses were made from the material of the empty flour bag which my mother would dye with ragwort and various other shrubs. We wore them proudly as did our friends who used the empty flour bags for the same purpose.

We were totally self-sufficient, all our clothes were home-spun, our food home-grown, and we churned our own butter and of course baked our own bread.

I have fond memories of Christmas. A pig would be killed six to eight weeks before and we would have to watch it being smoked over the hearth fire all this time. However we knew it would be shared out on Christmas day so we were happy enough in the waiting.

At times we had great gatherings in the house when we were visited by our neighbouring musicians, John Joe, Willie and Jim Coleman and the Prestons. The lamp would stay lit to the early hours and sparks would be lifting from the old cement floor with the dancing. Our parents would go rambling to leave us to our merriment if we were celebrating special occasions like birthdays.

They were good days, we were lucky in that we were self-sufficient. Life was very simple and easy-going and revolved around the home and seasons of the year.

Narrative Patricia McNally

cont. from Page 3

these would be dismantled at nighttime, giving the people inside a definite advantage in the event of an attack.

Lough Gara had been noted for one other thing, that is, at certain times of year it had a penchant for claiming the lives of people who happen to enter into its waters, and a number of young men have drowned while swimming there. A popular ballad was once written, lamenting the passing of a young squire who drowned after venturing into what the writer described as "The deep and flase waters in the lake at Coolavin"

Even as I write this article word has come through that the lake has claimed yet another victim, and a young Dutch fisherman has drowned while swimming there.

If viewed on a summer's evening, the scenery around the castle and the lake shore is breathtaking, with miles and miles of unspoiled countryside, almost totally free from the ravages of modern day pollution.

Should you decide to take a trip to this historic landmark, then after you have been there, head out across the county in the direction of the Curlews. There you will see a tranquil piece of the real Ireland, its hills and dales dotted with cosy homesteads, and a community enjoying a standard of living that far exceeds anything experienced by former generations who dwelled here. The children enjoy a level of education that was not available to the majority of their parents. The people who belong here, whether at home or abroad, love this place. For all of them it is home and their hearts will always be there.

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Items of local folklore, such as those related by the late John (Darkie) Hannon, will be lost forever if not recorded. If you have any knowledge of such folklore yourself, or if you know somebody who has, PLEASE GET IN TOUCH WITH US.

## BOOK of BALLYMOTE

### IRELAND'S TREASURED BOOK GEMS

Devotedly maintained in the Library of the Royal Irish Academy, Dawson Street, Dublin, is one of the most precious collections of ancient manuscripts and books to be found anywhere in Europe. In fact, Dublin has few sources of greater pride than the priceless manuscripts which were so eagerly acquired over the past two centuries, and so worthily preserved in its archives. Undoubtedly, the most treasured of these are: *An Leabhar Breac*, *Annala Ríochta Éireann*, *Leabhar Mor Leacain*, *Book of Ballymote*, *Domhnach Airgid*, *Leabhar na hUidhre*, *Leabhar Uí Múine*, and the *Book of Fermoy*.

The Book of Ballymote, written in 1391, in Ballymote Monastery, Co. Sligo, also preserve the only other oldest copy of the "Book of Rights". It has 251 vellum pages, each with attractive ornamental capitals. It also contains the alphabet key to the ancient Ogham script (as seen on stone edges throughout the land), genealogies, Greek Romances, ancient laws and some history all in Irish. At least three scribes are identified with it: Maghnus O Duibhghcannain, Solamh O Droma and Robertus Mac Sithigh.

# PERRY'S

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HB Block Ice Cream . . . 89p  
 ½ lb. Lyons Tea . . . . . 82p  
 1kg Sugar . . . . . 59p  
 1 lb. Butter . . . . . 1.09  
 1 lb. Tin Peaches . . . . . 39p  
 4 lb. Chicken . . . . . 3.25  
 Shoulder Bacon min weight  
 10 lbs . . . . . 75p per lb.

### FRIDGE FREEZER

Winner Catherine Lavin  
 Rathmullen

# J. McDonagh

## KEASH

### FUNERAL DIRECTORS

Personal Attention Assured

PH. (071) 83406

# Community Radio in Ballymote

by James Flanagan

July 14th - 19th was a unique week in the history of Ballymote. For each of those six days at certain hours it was possible to switch on one's radio and hear Radio Phobail Baile an Mhota coming loud and clear across the airways. For those days RTE 1 and RTE 2 and all the others faded into insignificance as Ballymote's local "station" took the air and dominated all attention and all conversation for the week.

A week of local broadcasting provides a community with a unique challenge and a unique opportunity. Like it not, each programme, once gone out, conveys unalterably a message from an image of the community that produced it. Therein lie the challenge and the opportunity: to present an image and a message that faithfully and vigorously portray the richness of the life of the area.

That the Ballymote area had profound richness of life and experience has always been known. That Ballymote rose magnificently to respond to the challenge and grasp the opportunity of presenting comprehensively this life and experience during its week of broadcasting is now well known also. For the week nothing else was talked about. Every day during the hours of broadcasting droves of people watched as local amateurs turned themselves into instant professionals in the unfamiliar confines of the RTE mobile studio parked outside the Community Centre. Through them, all aspects of life in Ballymote and the surrounding areas were covered, competently and thoroughly. One could only marvel at the wealth of activity, tradition and entertainment revealed. No one item will be singled out for special mention: all deserve equal praise and recognition. The balance between the old and the new, between town and outlying areas, and between the young and not so young, was very well kept. The endless stream of requests provided great excitement and involvement for countless scores of others.

Truly it was a memorable week. Out of it all there emerged a confident procture of a dynamic community deservedly proud of its past and its present, and optimistic about its future. The challenge and the opportunity were well met and used.

All this was not accomplished without hard work and meticulous planning. To the organising Committee great credit is due. It consisted of:- John Perry (Chairman), Alfie Banks, Mary Brennan, Peter Brennan, David Casey, Stan Casey, Jude Cassidy, Kathleen Doddy, Brenda Duffy, Brendan Friel, Martin Golden, Alison Healy, Keenan Johnson, Tim Kelly, Brigid McGettrick, Mary McGettrick, Martin McGettrick, Tom McGettrick, Victor Martin, Dominic Murray, Paddy Ryan, Eamon Scanlon. On the RTE side Padraig O'Neill (alias Paddy O'Brien) was Director, and Kevin Fowley, Brian Mulvihill and Conor Rahilly were Technicians. Transmissions were on 202 metres Medium Wave and 96.2MHz VHF/FM. The hours of broadcasting were 4.30 - 6.30 on Monday 14th, 11.30 - 1.30 and 4.30 - 6.30 on each of Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and 11.30 - 1.30 on Saturday 19th.

## COUNTY SLIGO

(Gap of the North)

by Batt Keaney

County Sligo is endowed with unsurpassed beautiful scenery and ancient lore, nestling in a deep valley between Maeve's Knocknarea and Benbulbin, said to take its name from Gulbin son of Nial of the Nine Hostages and associated with the legendary love flight of Diarmuid and Grainne.

Looked upon as the "Gap to the North", it figured prominently in the wars of the Gael and the Gaul. It was O'Donnell's county and through the "Gap" marched Red Hugh and his Galloglass on their way to victory over Sir Conyers Clifford at the Yellow Pass in the Curlew mountains, where they won a resounding victory over the English. When William landed in the North in 1689 he had practically the entire province in his possession.

Patrick Sarsfield after marching some 40 miles overnight from Jamestown over the Curlews, surprised the Sligo Garrison, captured the "Gap" and held it open for the Jacobite forces but all to no avail, the Jacobites could only muster 20,000 men and 6 Cannon while the Williamites fielded 45,000 men and 60 Cannon.

The "Gap" is associated with the legend of King Eoghann Bell one time King of Connaught, now reputed to be buried face downwards on the slopes of Knocknarea. In A.D. 537 according to the Four Masters, two sons of the late monarch and some supporters rebelled against the authority of Eoghann Bell the then King of Connaught, and were assisted by Northerners from Ulster. The opposing armies met at Sligeach (Shelly River) where a fierce battle took place in which, we are told:- "The Sligheach bore to the great sea the blood of men and their flesh".

Although their King was mortally wounded, the Connaughtmen were the victors and in accordance with instructions given before he expired, Eoghann Bell was buried on Knocknarea in a standing position, his Red Javelin in his hand, with his face towards Ulster. While he occupied this position, it was said that the Connaughtmen were unconquerable. But the Ulstermen learning the cause of their disasters, disinterred the King's body and to counteract the spell reburied him face downwards.

The "Gap" is also associated with the "Battle of the Books" - To every cow her calf and to every book its copy. With which St. Columcill did not agree and declared his own private war.



## OUTING TO NORTH MAYO

On July 20th a most rewarding and enjoyable outing to North Mayo was organised by the Ballymote Heritage Group. There were focal points to the day: Moyne Abbey and the prehistoric sites found under the blanket bog near

Moyne Abbey, near Killala, is the remains of a 15th Century Franciscan Abbey (or Convent). The walls are in fine state of preservation so that the plan of the whole building is clearly discernible. The site, now a national monument, is very well worth a visit. It is however scandalous and disgraceful that the rather long access route from the road to the Abbey should be so shockingly filthy and difficult to negotiate.

The next site visited took the visitors back a further 4,000 years in time. This was the prehistoric farm found at Belderrig Beg, beyond Ballycastle. Before the blanket bog began to grow in this area, i.e. before 3,000 B.C., the landscape was rich and fertile and covered in pine forests. Around 2,900 B.C. a group of Neolithic (New Stone) Age farmers settled here. They cleared the forests with implements of stone and flint and laid out fields divided by stone walls. Today, where the bog has been cut away, we can see the remains of these walls resting on the surface immediately below the peat.

After maybe a few centuries the area was abandoned. The bog was then free to grow over the fields leaving only the tops of the walls visible in places and the forest spread back to engulf the landscape.

Fifteen more centuries later, around 1,500 B.C., there came a new wave of settlers. These were Bronze Age People who reclaimed the fields and added some new enclosures. Their walls can be seen today also, resting in up to 30cm of peat, showing how the bog had grown between the times of the two settlements.

The remains of a Bronze Age house are clearly visible today. One roomed and circular with an entrance porch, it had a wall base of earth and stone. Roof rafters rested in this vase and, supported by an inner circle of posts, rose to meet above the centre of the house, leaving a smoke-hole at the highest point. The central hearth-stone is still in place, and there is a paved walkway from it to the the entrance.

It was absolutely fascinating to stand in the floor area of this house and try to think yourself back into the time of those remote ancestors of ours, whether Neolithic or Bronze Age. Whence had they come and why? What laws did they obey? What gods did they worship? Were they tall or small, dark or fair? Does their blood still run in our veins?

Other interesting remains are to be seen here, such as Bronze Age ridges from tillage, still clearly discernible.

On the return journey a brief stop was made at Ceide to survey the high landscape under whose logs very extensive prehistoric field systems exist. A stop was also made at Downpatrick Head to savour its wild and bleak beauty and to wonder at the power of the sea.

Finally a stop was made in the very modern town of Ballina to satisfy some demanding twentieth century appetites and an enjoyable day drew to a close.

Sincere thanks are due to Noel Dunne who acted as guide throughout the day.

The second Annual General Meeting of the Ballymote Heritage Group held recently in the Castle Hotel marked the end of two very successful years of existence for the

The resignation of the President Mr. Tom Tighe owing to work pressure occasioned some office changes as follows:

President . . . . . Tom McGettrick  
Vice President. . . . Yvonne Perceval  
Chairman. . . . . Keenan Johnson  
Vice-Chairman . . . . Stan Casey  
Secretary . . . . . Eileen Tighe  
Treasurer . . . . . Michael Tarmey  
P.R.O. . . . . Una Preston

The Secretary in her report gave a brief run down on the main activities of the past year. These included some local outings, and two very interesting long distance tours to the Boyne Valley, and to Devenish Island.

A lecture and a session of native music arranged by the County Board of C.C.E. and by U.C.G. marked its beginning of the winter season, while its preparation and launching of its "Corran Herald", the town's first publication, was also regarded as a worthwhile achievement.

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