

# THE CORRAN HERALD

A Ballymote Heritage Group Production

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## The FIRST NOEL

*The Corran Herald wishes all it's Readers, Contributors and Advertisers a Happy and Peaceful Christmas and a Bright New Year*

### On Writing for the Corran Herald

*'Dip into your past', said Mrs. Brady, But I cannot do that, mine is quite shady!*

*'Of a childhood experience you must write', But nothing will come, at least nothing polite!*

*'Write through your senses' Mrs Brady declared But my senses feel dull and I'm quite prepared.*

*My thoughts are in turmoil, my ideas are nil, Kate Cruise can you tell me, will it all be uphill?*

*'A cliché must never appear in your prose', and 'avoid using "very" in what you compose'.*

*'Anything hackneyed please underline', but such a big word I can scarcely define!*

*I'd like to sound clever and funny in print, but I've no inspiration, not a clue, not a hint,*

*Maeve I admire, her style is so witty, Will my efforts be viewed with derision or pity?*

*Hugh Leonard delights me with phrases so clever, Would he sneer at my prose or spurn my endeavour?*

*Should I 'head for the hills' or should I persist, and some day find ME on the Best Sellers list?*

Noreen McCrossan

## THE IRISH WAKE

BY P.J. DUFFY

In this country the practice of holding a wake when somebody dies is something that has been with us, right down through the centuries since primitive times. Up until quite recently, our ancestors had consistently observed the old custom of keeping a solemn watch on the remains of the dead bodies of their relatives and neighbours, from the time of their passing to the final parting at the graveside. Even at the present time, some people in parts of rural Ireland still carry on the old tradition of holding a wake, although many of the weird trappings and superstitions have been abandoned. Nowadays, people hold wakes only when they find themselves in a situation where a member of the family dies at his place of residence in the afternoons or early evening.

From ancient times, and throughout that period leading right up to the early years of the present century, wakes often times went on for the duration of two nights and as many days. All this took place at a time when the dead were taken directly from their place of residence for burial to the local cemetery. It was usually the last request of a person about to die, 'Won't ye bury me decent' (decent) and where in God's name would you find a person hard-hearted enough to refuse to comply with these wishes. Any Irishman worth his salt knew what a decent burial meant. Plenty of beer and tobacco, plenty of good food to eat, and a good solid, well-mounted coffin, capable of keeping out he grubs and worms.

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# THE IRISH WAKE

From Page 1

Let's take a brief look at some of the old practices and customs which according to my late parents, were still in existence when they were boys and girls. When somebody died it was a usual procedure for old ladies to come to the house and cry a good round. Later on, the scene at the household where the wake was taking place would change completely to singing and storytelling. These type of gatherings were also an ideal hunting ground for matchmakers, and no doubt but they exploited the situation, full measure, resulting in numerous introductions and proposals.

The presence of alcohol at wakes is, I would venture to say, something that has been with us for hundreds of years. Its usage has, more oftimes than not, served a twofold purpose, that is to treat those people who had come to sympathise, and also to act as a useful tranquilizer to relieve the distress of the bereaved at a time when there was no other form of drug readily available. The keg or quarter-barrel of stout was the most popular measure of alcohol to be found at wakes around the country, although in some cases there were families who came up with the half-barrel. These containers were usually placed on a stool in an outhouse and a certain person appointed to do the tapping and drawing. In bygone days the stuff was drawn into large delph mugs, and then passed around

among the mourners. It was most essential that the person in charge here knew his job and was capable of bring about a 'good head' on each mug of liquor served. Down the years, good 'well run' poteen was also available at wakes, and proved itself a valuable asset especially in the case of poor people, where the purchase of whiskey and other spirits was totally out of the question.

Tobacco smoking at wakes is of course another form of time consuming pleasure that has probably been with us ever since that illustrious pipe smoking gentleman, Ralph Lane allegedly introduced the weed to these parts over 400 years ago. There was a time when the people of the house

where the wake was being held, supplied the pipes as well as the tobacco. A basket containing clay pipes would be passed around, followed by a saucerful of tobacco. As distinct from the ordinary sized clay pipe or dudeen, the ones in use at wakes had a much smaller funnell, and would seem to have been devised to conserve tobacco supplies on occasions like this.

Most people at the time of retiring home, dropped their pipes back into the basket, and a couple of days following the burial these would be taken out and buried, on the nearest bit of wasteland available. In the early nineteen forties County Council worksmen engaged in roadwork at Ballintrufane, Killaville, unearthed a large cache of clay pipes resembling the description of the type said to be used at wakes during the last century. Their discovery close to the roadside tended to confirm the belief that the pipes were disposed of away from the place where the wake had been held. It was regrettable that a workman while getting on with his job of roadmaking, had accidently driven a pickaxe right through the centre of the pile damaging most of the pipes which numbered between twenty and thirty in all. However, the type of pipe, and the number involved, left no doubt that they were left-overs from a local wake.

Many of us are familiar with the phrase used to describe the laying out of a dead person. We say 'they put him/her overboard'. The real meaning of this term baffled me for some time, but was eventually described to me by the late Mrs. Kelleher, a former caretaker at Mount-Irwin Cemetery. She maintained that there was a time in our country when only rich people could afford coffins, and the vast majority of our citizens who passed away were buried with a board and shroud. This meant that they were laid out on a board in their home for a wake. The remains was then bound to the board, covered with shroud and taken to the cemetery for burial. Most country houses were small and restricted in space, so in order to ease congestion on the night of a wake, the board, with the deceased person on deck was often placed under the kitchen table. Mrs. Kelleher recalled that as a young girl she distinctly remembers seeing funerals arrive at Mount Irwin Cemetery, and they carrying the remains by board and shroud.

Many stories relating to incidents that were supposed to have taken place during the holding of wakes, have been passed on to us by our forefathers. James Joyce in his writings tells us of that illusory figure Tim Finegan, the hod-carrier from a Dublin working class suburb, who supposedly died after a fall from a ladder and whose subsequent wake he made famous in song and in story. The procedure at wakes it would seem varied little in country or city areas, that is in the working-class part of the city anyway. Joyce writes of a mug of porter at the head and feet of the corpse. Here you might likely find a mug of porter at his head and a saucer of tobacco on his chest.

Old folks tell us of a noted character who dwelled in these hearts at the turn of the century, and made quite a name for himself story-telling and singing ballads at nearly every wake that took place across the countryside. It has been said that on his arrival, he would spell out the praises of the dead man, go on to make remarks on how peaceful he looked, as well as to assure the bereaved that he had gone straight to heaven. This way he was sure to come in for a good share of the free-flowing liquor and tobacco supplies. His name was Michael Conway but he was better known by the nickname 'Miken The Hare'. Mikeen, a bachelor had little of the worlds goods but was, nevertheless, happy as the day is long. His one big worry was that when his turn came there would be no-one around who would be interested in giving him a proper 'send-off'.

When he did pass away, which was sooner than most people had expected, his neighbours did not forget his life-long concern, and all chipped in to give him a burial as good as the rest. Right then, it was discovered that some relations of Mikeen who were resident in America had already set aside a sum of money for the same purpose. The result was that Mikeen got a waking the like of which was never seen in these parts before or since. It became a sort of legend, and as happened in the case of Tim Finnegan, 'there was lots of fun at Mikeen's wake'; in fact there were people there who thought the organizers had gone a little too far, and one woman in particular stated so, in no uncertain terms. An old contemporary of Mikeen's sitting by the fireside, obviously well inebriated, and gripping in his hand

Contd. on Page 15

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# Christmas Long Ago

BY PAT PRINCE

*The seasons then seem, from memory, to have been more seasonal as regards the weather. I recall glorious Summers (or so it seemed) and around Christmas we nearly always had snow. I can still remember the postman plodding through the snow with big bundles of letters, cards and of course parcels, we children would tear the parcels apart with such excitement, wondering what Aunt Mary or Uncle Pat had sent: would it be a lovely fruit cake, jam, plum pudding, etc.*

*I recall my Grandmother giving the postman some refreshment, which I am sure delayed the delivery of the post, but no one really cared for it was Christmas and there was plenty of time.*

*What fun it was going to the town for the Christmas shopping, lists a mile long, raisins, currants, bag of flour, sugar, sweet, cakes, tobacco for our Grandfather, who smoked a clay pipe, whiskey, stout, etc. Things like raisins, currants and stout were usually only purchased at Christmas for the making of the Plum Pudding and Christmas cake.*

*Christmas then as I see it was wonderful. The town was jammed with horse and ass carts and the shops filled with people. While the women went their way shopping for all the goodies, the men went to the yard and untackled the horse or ass and set out to see whom they might meet for the chat and the few pints. It was amazing the amount of liquor that was consumed then (or so it seemed) for very little money. As the evening drew near there was the checking of parcels. A great many things were misplaced or perhaps lost with all the excitement, but all would be sorted out, when it was time to leave. I remember people going in and out of the shops at all hours, the shops stayed open very late. The women had their chat and glass of wine and the boss in all the shops gave Christmas Boxes, which were almost as big as the orders he got and he then stood a drink to each customer.*

Contd. on Page 4

## CHRISTMAS LONG AGO

From Page 3

When this was over all went home and in most cases it was the ass or horse who got everyone home safely and indeed knew every inch of the road which was a blessing as most were in no condition to head the horse in any direction.

The house was buzzing with work and excitement getting the food prepared for the big day and putting the house in order.

Christmas Eve arrived, children and visitors coming, the sound of horses' hooves on the cobblestones, with the visitors being collected at the railway station; everyone talking, laughing, exchanging the news and wishing each other Greetings – it was such a happy time. The kettle sang on the hearth, there were cups of tea later, singing and fiddle playing by the turf fire casting shadows on the ceiling.

Then the big day 'Christmas Day', the excitement of getting dressed for mass in our new clothes, the sounds of laughter, horses trotting gaily, the chapel all lit up and the P.P. wishing all a Happy Christmas.

This is how I remember it, and each Christmas I try to imagine it as it was, but alas times have changed and the commercialism and materialism of the modern 'festival' contrast sharply with the spirit of those bygone happy times.

It used to be something we regretted and were ashamed of – a Haemorrhage. We knew the Government of that time was glad of it as it relieved them from the headache of excessive unemployment, but now our educated and uneducated young people are being literally shovelled out and our government, brazening out the shame of it, are trying to fob off thinking citizens into believing that it will open up new vistas for the young people, in short, that it is a blessing in disguise. A senior politician tells that we can't all live on a small island. Ours is the most thinly populated country in the EEC. We elected and trusted successive governments to run our country – today we seem to be on the edge of bankruptcy.

Let us look more closely at one aspect of the picture – our capital city. It is a monstrosity. It's size out of all proportion to the size of the country and it is still growing while vast areas of the country are undeveloped.

Planning permissions are readily available in Dublin. We are told that according to an existing law applicants would have to be compensated if refused. It has been suggested many times that the law should be changed but nothing happened and we are forced to conclude that people in Government or in high places are amongst the planners.

Ugly square glass and concrete office blocks degrade many of our gracious old streets. High rise flats are offered as housing in working class areas. The sight of laundry hung out on the balconys of these flats proclaim their lack of amenities. No wonder there are drugs, drink and suicide problems. Youngsters roam the streets without work and without supervision, already becoming criminals, while the number of homeless people is steadily increasing.

Do we take our orders and get out or do we meekly sit around – draw the dole and wait for something to happen? An early edition of our National Anthem told us we were children of a fighting race. Now is the time to stand up and fight back. Our young girls are capable of more than holding a pen, working a typewriter, filing documents, or taking temperatures, and our young men are capable of more than Bar or Navy work.

There is a vast luxury market in the world today. Let us set our sights on that. In Tourist attractions we still have much that Europe and America have lost. Let us preserve, develop and sell that.

Our greatest needs are self-confidence and courage. Running away won't solve anything.

## The First Christmas Card



### • Reproduction

This is the first Christmas Card ever produced. Only 2,050 copies of it were printed and sold at one shilling each in 1846. Designed by an artist named John Calcott Horsley, it was published in London by Sir Henry Cole, who was also mainly responsible for founding the Victoria and Albert Museum and the Royal Albert Hall, London, as well as national schools for cookery and music

# A Store of Bonded History

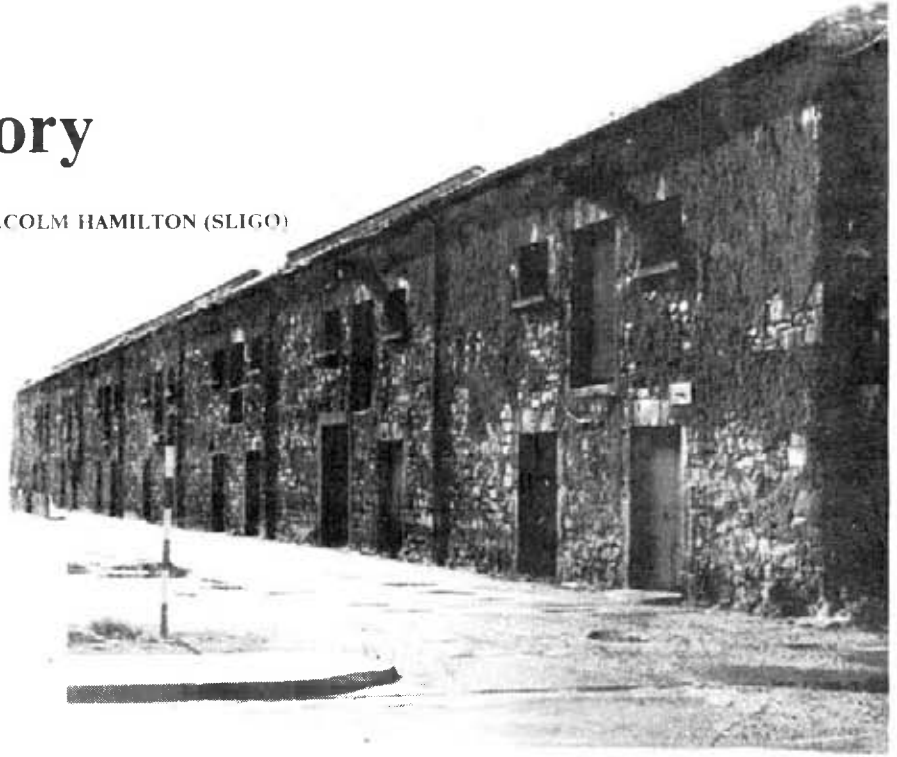
BY MALCOLM HAMILTON (SLIGO)

You could, by dint of imagination, look on Sligo Harbours 18th Century bonded warehouses as being among the towns really old, old-timers. For the Queens/Kings Stores building, which lie directly in the path of the approach route for the towns desperately awaited third bridge is just that one of the oldest and finest structures the town can boast, largely forgotten.

To take the image one step further it is easy to see how this impressively solid structure has fallen into minor disrepair over recent years. For like the qualities of the aged, when they are not required any longer, they may just slip quietly into their own silences, to become the relics of bygone times, tolerated certainly, but in a manner which allows them cross into a world of their own distant echoes. The Queens Stores now has many slates loose, many floors in bad repair, pullies and winches seized with disuse door hinges that give, not with the oily black efficiency of use, rather with a red dusty snap.

It is established fact that Sligo Harbour gained considerable reputation certainly by the 14th and 15th centuries. In state documents of the year 1553 Sligo was described as being the 'best haven town in all the country', and furthermore during the reign of Henry VI the importance of the port was further endorsed when 'It was agreed by William De Burgo, Knight, and his brother William De Burgo, should have payment for their services in the Irish wars, out of the customs of the ports of Sligo and Galway'.

It seems, however, as if the development of Sligo Harbour has always been piecemeal with the Quays alongside the Customs House (Old Site) and the Queen's Stores together with the the Customs House being finished as an overall development in the early 1790's. This development would have commenced with an Act of Parliament in 1729 which commanded improvement of the channel into Sligo harbour.



Similarly by other powers contained in the 1729 Act the Provost, Burgesse and Freemen of the town were empowered to erect the old Customs House or Ballast Office. The Quays alongside it were also developed and finally the bonded warehouse, the last part of this overview, was built. It is thought that the Queens Stores itself was designed by Alexander Nimmo who was responsible for a lot of harbour work in Ireland throughout his life. He was certainly one of the principle Engineers on Sligo Harbour at this time. At the time of construction it is thought that the harbour waters would actually have come to rear breadth of the Queen's Store prior to the quays being extended and developed further out. This would have moved the docking area beside the store and Custom House the central foetal point of harbour activity.

The actual architecture of the building reflects the care and meticulous attention paid to detail and functionalism of the age. Fire-Break walls interrupt the length of the warehouse breaking it down into small and compact units. Each unit has or had winch facilities for storing loads upstairs, with only narrow staircase facilities for personnel. One would hazard from this that the building would have been rather awkward to rob in bulk form. Even today, with so much minor disrepair in evidence in some parts of the Queens store it is still comforting to note that a lot of the

building is dry, free from dampness and decay. This in itself is fitting tribute to Nimmo and his engineers that the building has indeed outlasted its function, from the growth years of Sligo harbour through to its boom years and to the present day.

Had times been kinder, and circumstances been different, one could dream up a thousand suitable schemes for the silent Queens Stores. A restaurant, with gallery, craft centre, coffee shop, a market, an unemployment centre, maybe even a bar. The quality and heritage of the building would lend itself to a host of modern day functions all housed under one roof. There is such a centre in Galway, plus another in Limerick. A crumbled and ruined distillery on the Galway-Dublin Road was recently converted into a museum and community centre. The distillery was huge, the task of re-slatting and restoring it vast, but the local community (about an eighth the size of Sligo's) got together and through a mixture of voluntary effort and Social Employment have built for themselves a heritage centre of immeasurable benefit to their village.

However, retrospection is of little use now as far as Queens Stores are concerned. Sligo has waited too long for the bridge development to let anything come in it's way. Queen's Stores would have gone anyway, if not under the ball and chain then certainly through

Contd. on Page 11

# THE BIG BOAT

BY TOM McGETTRICK

*There was extensive turf cutting along the Owenmore in Portinch, Emlaghmaghten and Cluid in the last century and to a limited degree in the early years of this century. The area was left pitted with bog-holes and cut-away swamps. It was an ideal habitat for wild-duck and various other species of water fowl. The curlew's call was often heard at dusk calling for more rain. The Owenmore flooded frequently out over it. Then one might say that everything that wasn't fastened down went with the river. Some wit told the story of the housewife who got up on the table as the rising water filled her kitchen. But the rush of water swept her on the table down the river while her husband accompanied her on the piano. The drainage scheme of sixty years ago helped to dry out the holes and hollows but there was very little turf cutting then.*

*Derreen bog is across the river from Cluid along by where the river is widest and deepest. This bog was given out to tenants many of whom were from the Cluid side of the river. But there was no bridge between the two sides. One could go round by Templehouse Bridge, a journey or four or five miles or even more for some of the tenants, but then there was no road in through the bog to where their plots were.*

*This is where the story of the Big Boat begins. There was a good bog road from the public road through Cluid, to within a short distance of the river. The 'Bog-Road' was a landmark in so many places. There is an emigrant song about a Bog Road. 'My feet are here on Broadway, etc.'. The parody on it wasn't quite as sentimental.*

*'My feet are here, they're broad ones,  
This blessed harvest morn,  
And Oh, the ache that's in them  
From ingrown nails and corns .....*

*From the river to near the end of this road there was a canal cut to accommodate a boat. This was how the turf-cutters got to and from Derreen.*

*There were only vague memories in Cluid of the making of this road and canal. Perhaps it was Famine-relief work. The early Ordinance maps do not show it, later ones do. So it is fairly certain that at some time early in the last century this development opened a way to Derreen bog. Was this unique in all Ireland, or was there the likes elsewhere?*

*The turf-cutters made their way to the river by the bog-road and then took the boat from the canal. Then the boat was moored on the Derreen side but if there were late comers someone nearest the river took it across in response to a loud hail or a whistle. The implements for the day's work were carried in the boat too.*

*How big was it! On one occasion eighteen men returned in it after the day's work. It was too many and was not repeated, an extra crossing would not have taken very long. It was said to carry three horse-cribs of turf when the turf was saved and ready for home. It was flat-bottomed and built of heavy planking. It was taken across the river by the long-handled shovels that the men used on the bog and they made quite efficient oars. In all the years there was never a serious accident that a careless move, a lurching boat, a step reached too far between the boat and the water's edge might cause. There must have been hundreds of crossings and there wasn't a swimmer among them. Children too during school holiday time loved the boat and the river and the bog. It was like sailing to strange lands. When a wild bird fluttered from the heather there might be a nest there. Blackberries and blackberries were plentiful in season. The river along here was ten feet deep. No doubt everyone was alert to the dangers and every move was careful although appearing casual. On one occasion one of the oarsmen pushing the boat out, slipped into the shallow water near the bank. 'O Jazus I'm drowned', he shouted. 'Well you're going down with a prayer anyway' was the quick response from a helper on the boat.*

*Procuring turf from Derreen was a tedious, time-consuming job. Every stage involved crossing in the big boat. When the turf was ready for taking home the boat was secured bow and stern by the river bank. The turf was taken from up on the bog in a donkey cart or sometimes a donkey and creels. It was filled into the boat and taken across the river to be emptied onto the canal bank. Today one filling with a graip into a trailer is enough to see the turf on its way home to the turf-shed. There were no graips then.*

*Four cargos for the day would be good work. If there was pressure to get an extra load over the boat might leave the canal as early as five o'clock in the morning. The swans and the wild ducks and the waterhens interference with their territory as they hastened to quieter places. When taken across each man's turf was piled high on the canal bank waiting for the taking home, journey's end.*

*The turf would leave for home by the bog-road. The piles along the canal would diminish and disappear. It wasn't wise to leave it long there. Heavy rain for even a day and a night would quickly raise the level of the river soon to lick hungrily round the piles. Then a sod, ten sods, hundreds of sods would slip into the water to be carried down like a great flock of birds spread out over the flood. A sad end, they would never be collected again.*

*It is long over. There are a few left who will remember the last crossings. They may say it was great fun because they were young then, or be a little sad because the life has left the river and there is no boat to cross to Derreen now.*

*THE BIG BOAT! The road into the bog from the other side was made. For a time the boat was used for the cutting and saving but the turf came home by road. Then a severe winter with a heavy flood came. The boat went the way of the sods - down the river.*

# Ballymote Brass and Reed Band

Michael James Mulligan.



*There was a time when Ballymote had a thriving town band and the sound of famous Irish marchers, 'Step Together, Boys of Wexford, Kelly The Boy From Killane' could be heard on all special occasions.*

*The members of the band gave their services willingly and expected no reward other than to entertain the people. The band numbered about 25 members and also trainees were learning music. Emigration took its toll and replacements had to be trained. I was greatly honoured to be accepted into the band in 1942 as a drummer. The Band Masters name was Martin Brennan from Marlow. He was dedicated and a strict disciplinarian. When he tapped the music stand with the little white cane for silence, he meant it. Our band practice room then was over the present Youth Club (known as the Market House in those days). An inscription on the big drum read 'Eucharistic Congress 1932'. Ballymote had the A.O.H. (Ancient Order of Hibernians) Brass Band during the war of independence so the tradition of brass bands in Ballymote went back a long way. There was a yearly collection in the town for the upkeep of the instruments and also for the purchase of sheet music.*

*During the Second World War (1935 - 45) the band was asked to join the L.D.F. (Local Defence Force). We were given uniforms and participated in all the L.D.F. parades and presenting the Colour ceremonies. The war years were busy times for the band and we visited places like Sligo town, Ballina, Manorhamilton, and Easkey, to name just a few. At one big L.D.F. parade in Ballymote, the colours were presented to the various companies in Hogg's field, Keenaghan. These parades were attended by bands from other towns and villages. They were all pipe, fife and drum bands. Occasionally we met our old friends the 'Number 4 regular Army Brass Band which covered the Western Command area.*

*Apart from parades the yearly town carnival was a regular feature then. We played around the town every evening and also late members' funerals were attended to the strains of 'Dead March of Soul'. On religious occasions such as the yearly Eucharistic procession, hymns were played. The processions were huge in those days and covered the whole town which was decorated with flags, banners and flowers.*

*Before the war the band used to play the New Year in at the stroke of 12 o'clock from the church clock, the big drum would be heard. Our band master used to tell us a funny tale about one New Years Eve. The ground was a bit frosty and as the band marched down the Rock the big drummer lost his footing causing the drum to roll down the street, all on it's own.*

*When I was a child Ballymote used to have it's own Race Meetings (where Marren Park is built) attended by the band. The sound of brass would have half the children in Ballymote running in that direction.*

*At the famous 'Battle of the Curlews' pageant early 1940's the parade was led by the Collooney Pipers. There were scores of men on horseback all dressed up in costumes, even canons were made for the occasion. The Ballymote band were there and the entire pageant was filmed. A great spirit existed among the people in those areas. There was not much money around but the young people were happy and healthy. Above all the young people were patriotic. Irish music and songs were the order of the day. So many*

*other bands were in existence around Ballymote at that time. Keash (fife and drum); Emlaghnaughton (fife and drum); Culfadda (fife and drum); Ballisodare (fife and drum); Gurteen (pipers), and Sooeey (pipers). Ballymote Brass Band did not participate in politics but at pre-election meetings (usually held at the top of the Rock) bands would come from all directions, each band striving to drown-out the other.*

*Ballymote is quiet now but thank God for the Convent School Band. At least they are keeping the tradition going. The names of the band members who I can remember 1942-1946 are as follows:-*

*Jack Foy and Mick Meehan (Base); Pat Brennan and Micky Brennan (Slide Trombone); Mickey Healy, Jordon Candon, Peter Brennan; Paddy Brennan (Coronet Section); Tom Pakey Healy (Clarinet). Also Tom Brennan, The Gormans from Carrownanty, the Gunner Cawley, Frank Flannery, Joe Brady, Joe McKelvaney, Andy Denny, also Tailor Healy, Sean Hannon, Johnny Price.*

*As you can see from the list, the Brennans were the backbone of the band, from Bandmaster downwards. If I have not mentioned some names of the band I hope I will be forgiven.*

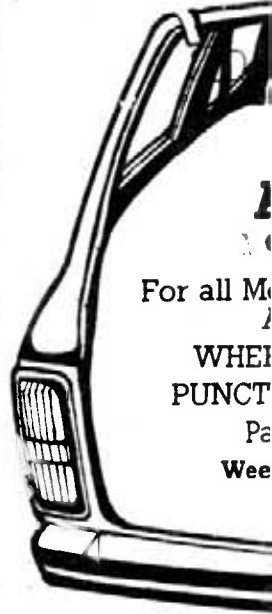
*When some of the young people of Ballymote read this article perhaps someone or some people will start a Brass Band again and the sound of brass and the big drum will be heard once again. One of our favourite marches was 'A Nation Once Again'. Maybe a brass band, once again.*



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# CONEY ISLAND

— *It's Beauty and Folklore* —

BY PAT PRINCE

'The Island' as it is called locally, has all the beauty one could ever want to see, Knocknarea smiling down upon it, Benbulbin guarding it, Sligo and Rosses Point in the distance. Years ago the Island was more frequented as a resort for Summer visitors, than it is now. It is indeed sad that it failed to make progress which it so well deserves.

In Boates' *Natural History of Ireland*, published in 1652, it is stated that there were then three silver and lead mines in Ireland one of which was in 'Connaught upon the very harbour mouth of Sligo, in a little desert island called Coney Island'. If this is correct and one cannot see any reason for doubting it some of the islanders could possibly have been millionaires if a mining expert had come to dig it up, but alas this did not happen.

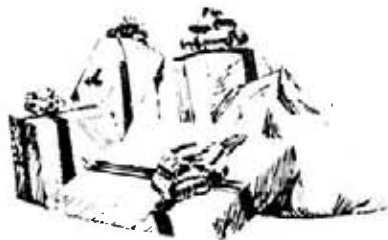
There are many interesting and amusing legends concerning this little island — of ghosts, goblins, fairies, mermaids and saints. One is that St. Patrick visited it while on his rounds and intended to establish a Church there, but an old pagan woman named Stones served up a pair of cats for the Saints' dinner instead of rabbits. After the Saint had said the usual prayers before meals, a dog appeared in the doorway and the two cats took life again and jumped off the dish. The Saint was so upset by the trick played on him that he refused to build the church, but did promise, however, they would never be prevented by the tides from wetting their feet, either going to or returning from Mass on the mainland on any Sunday throughout the year. It is certainly a fact that although the tide sometimes rises to fourteen or fifteen feet over the surface of the strand, people can always walk across dry-shad about mid-day on Sundays; but, no doubt, some astronomers might be able to give a reason for this Phenomenon that would not agree with the legendary one.

There is also a noted Well and a Wishing Chair. The Well is situated in a rabbit warren and according to legend, it was dug out by the Saint to a depth of about four feet in the dry sand. It is always about half-full of pure spring water; it never dries up and never overflows. Another strange thing about this Well is that when a person takes out a barrel of water it will yield no more to him, if a second person comes for some immediately afterwards, he also can get a similar quantity at once without waiting.

Another mystery is associated with the little islet called Dun-an-Padhraic. It is said that the water, no matter how the tide will not reach within five or six feet of the top, although the pillars which mark the passage to and from the mainland are four feet higher than the inlet and are often completely covered.

We also have 'St. Patrick's Wishing Chair' a huge chair-shaped boulder in the centre of one of the fields on the western side of the island. It has been said 'anyone, except a native of the parish who takes a drink at St. Patrick's, well once a day for nine days in succession and who then sits in the chair, will get whatever they have wished for.

There are many more stories attached to this beautiful island and I have been told that it was a Rosses Point man, Peter O'Connor the founder of the firm (O'Connor and Cullen) which sailed early in the last century between Sligo and New York and other places, who baptized the Coney Island of the latter in honour of its Sligo namesake.



## 'The Lays of South Sligo'

BY PAT PRINCE

In November, Mr. Luke Hannon, Chairman of the Keash branch of the Irish National League, introduced what he called 'a very important little book', 'The Lays of South Sligo', by Mr. J. O'Dowd, Bunninadden, subsequently M.P. for South Sligo. The Committee resolved to do all they could to give the volume circulation.

Whatever circulation the book received, one of the poems obtained a wide and lasting popularity, Billy Connell's tale of the days when he was young, 'when the gallant Frenchmen landed in Mayo'. This particular lay was put to music, but as it happens also to be one of the best of O'Dowd's poems, its survival may perhaps be a tribute to the literary taste of people. The following lines from another poem are also remembered:—

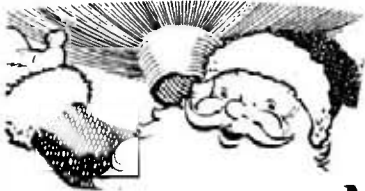
*The ivied ruin of Ballymote  
Looks weird and lonely still  
And fair as ever proudly soars  
Keash — Corran's stately Hill.*

*The Grim old Tower on Emlafad  
Seems gloomy as of yore;  
And once again I stand beside  
The winding Owenmore.*

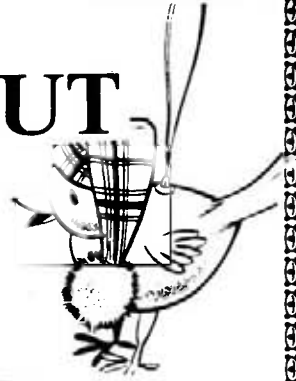
It was an age of facile rhymesters who let few occasions of local excitement pass without their commemoration in verses, good, bad or indifferent. Numerous as these rhyming chronicles were, it is surprising that local events did not attract better composers, because no makers of poems ever had a more appreciative audience. The people of that time were intensely fond of music and of any poetry or verses to which music could be wedded.

The new ballads and lovesongs from America, such as those of Stephen Foster, were much sought after and sold by ballad singers at the fairs and markets.

# STEP IN - STAND OUT



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## OUTINGS

Outings form an attractive branch of Ballymote Heritage Group's summer activities. These are not confined to Archaeological sites, though one or more is usually included in a tour. Their aim is to stimulate interest in this country of ours, in it's pre-historic past as demonstrated by Archaeological remains, it's historic past as shown by ruined castles, graveyards, and monastic sites, and it's mansions, some still in use, some abandoned and decaying, some being restored and opened to the public as tourist attractions, and last but not least, our beautiful country with it's rivers, lakes, mountains and forests — it's generally unspoiled and very varied rural scenery.

The first outing of the season was to Templehouse. This is a Georgian mansion situated in about 1000 acres of farm and woodland. It has a magnificent boating and fishing lake and very beautiful gardens. The Percivals have been there since the 17th century but the name of the place is derived from the former owners The Knights Templar. The remains of their 13th century castle can still be seen on the lake shore. The present owners are involved in farming and tourism.

## A Store of Bonded History

From Page 5

another 200 odd years of disuse for I would hazard it would have taken at least that long to shake the Queens Stores from its painstakingly considered foundations.

Meanwhile the building awaits it's final days, with the closed memory of age. It's secrets are hard to unravel, and even then uncertain. Was Nimmo definitely the Designer? In what year is it certain work on the Queen's Stores began and what was it's definite date of completion? On investigation of it's history you find the details vague and sometimes in conflict.

Direct references to the store in various histories and records of Sligo are scant, few and far between and invariably tied into the development of the harbour as a whole. It is unlikely now that this

upper portion of Sligo Harbour will ever be in use again, (with a bridge cutting it in two it is definite that the wharf along the site of the old customs house will never see berthing again). So with the old Customs House gone and doubtless impressive improvements on the way for the old cobbled surface of the Quays on the way, it is probable now that Queens Stores is the last visible ambassador of the harbour says that perhaps more than anything else were responsible for the flourishing of Sligo town.

So take a ramble by it soon if you can. Pay your respects to the architecture of cut stone in one of it's finest and most functional examples in Sligo, while it's still standing, we have deemed it soon enough a proper thing to lower it into the ground, as rubble.

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Very Happy Christmas*

## Introduction

This is the second in the series on Griffith's Valuation started in the October edition of the Corran Herald. Three rather small townlands have been selected but they have a local history significant beyond their size.

They are Maghera, Camross and Derroon.

Maghera is the townland on the right as one approaches the Creamery from Ballymote. The name is derived from Machaire, a plain but it could mean just a field, a playing field, a race course, etc. Machaire an Óir is the Field of Slaughter — the Battlefield. One notices the name George B. Cuffins (B for Blakeny) there. (See Below). His name will crop up in later issues. The Revenue Police Barrack (see below) was later a school and is noted the residence of Dr. J. Glynn. There were at that time Revenue Police and Peace Police and their titles indicate the function each force had.

Camross is Cam-Ros Crooked Wood. The word 'plantation' appears after the second last entry below. This was a wood on the right side of the main road to Sligo, in the townland. There are also some large tree stumps visible in the field on the right of the road to Templehouse. This would explain this 'wood' part of the name and maybe the wood was 'crooked'. The name appears in its English version in Westmeath. Crooked Wood P.O. 044 — 72111. In this townland the name Philip Gumley is listed and there will be reference to him also later. Philip and Blakeny had fingers in many pies.

DERROON: Although obviously coming from the word Doire, an oak wood, the '-oon' ending is difficult to explain. Because it has the same sound as uan, a lamb the

The word lamb has been added to the explanation 'doire uan' a wood of lambs or could it be an effort at a diminutive of doire (little oak wood). It contains two names which have been associated with the history of Ballymote and this county, Sir R. Gorbooth and Capt. Richard Gethin (or Capt. Gethins as he was called). The Captains Brae is named after him. He lived for a time at Earlsfield:—

# Griffith's Valuation

BY TOM McGETTRICK

## VALUATION OF TENEMENTS.

265

### PARISH OF EMLAGHFAD.

No. and Letters of Reference to Map.	Names.		Description of Tenement.	Area.	Rateable Annual Valuation.		Total Annual Valuation of Rateable Property.	
	Townlands and Occupiers.	Immediate Lessors.			Land.	Buildings.		
<b>MAGHERA.</b> (Ord. S. 33.)								
1	a	Patrick Flanagan,	George B. Gubbins, {	Land and herd's house, Orchard, . . . . .	55 3 17	44 0 0	1 0 0	45 0 0
2	b	Bartholomew O'Brien, (See Exemptions),	SirRobt.GoreBooth,Bt., Patrick Flanagan, Patrick Flanagan, . . . . .	Land (severance), Revenue police barrack and land, Half the annual rent derived from Revenue police barrack, &c. . . . .	0 0 20	—	—	4 0 0
					—	—	—	7 10 0
				Total of Rateable Property, . . . . .	55 3 37	44 0 0	1 0 0	56 10 0
2				EXEMPTIONS: Revenue police barrack and land, . . . . .	0 2 10	0 15 0	8 0 0	8 15 0
				Total, including Exemptions, . . . . .	56 2 7	44 15 0	9 0 0	65 5 0
<b>CAMROSS.</b> (Ord. S. 33.)								
1	a	Lewis W. Ren, . . . . .	SirRobt.GoreBooth,Bt.,	Land, house, and offices, . . . . .	20 3 10	9 5 0	2 10 0	11 15 0
2	a	James Meehan, . . . . .	Same, . . . . .	Land and house, . . . . .	24 2 16	6 0 0	0 10 0	6 10 0
3	a	Owen Hevers, . . . . .	Same, . . . . .	Land and house, . . . . .	8 0 25	6 10 0	0 15 0	7 5 0
4	a	Thomas Hevers, . . . . .	Same, . . . . .	Land and house, . . . . .	10 2 19	9 15 0	1 5 0	11 0 0
5		John Fox, . . . . .	Same, . . . . .	Land, . . . . .	6 2 10	6 5 0	—	6 5 0
6		Bartholomew O'Brien, . . . . .	Same, . . . . .	Land, . . . . .	13 0 9	13 5 0	—	13 5 0
7		Archibald Lawson, . . . . .	Same, . . . . .	Land, . . . . .	2 1 18	2 5 0	—	2 5 0
8		Robert Donoghue, . . . . .	Same, . . . . .	Land, . . . . .	2 3 15	2 10 0	—	2 10 0
9		Edward O'Brien, . . . . .	Same, . . . . .	Land, . . . . .	12 1 25	10 10 0	—	10 10 0
10		Peter Cannon, . . . . .	Same, . . . . .	Land, . . . . .	5 0 0	5 10 0	—	5 10 0
11		William Cornyn, . . . . .	Same, . . . . .	Land, . . . . .	9 0 30	10 0 0	—	10 0 0
12		John O'Brien, . . . . .	Same, . . . . .	Land, . . . . .	20 1 33	8 0 0	—	8 0 0
13		Patrick Gorman, . . . . .	Same, . . . . .	Land (bog), . . . . .	1 0 23	0 5 0	—	0 5 0
14		James Dyer, . . . . .	Same, . . . . .	Land (bog), . . . . .	1 3 0	0 7 0	—	0 7 0
15	a	Michael Coghlan, . . . . .	Same, . . . . .	Land, house, and offices, . . . . .	31 2 27	14 0 0	1 10 0	15 10 0
16	a	William Callaghan, . . . . .	Same, . . . . .	Land, . . . . .	6 2 0	7 0 0	—	9 15 0
17	a	John Roche, . . . . .	Same, . . . . .	Land and herd's house, . . . . .	3 3 0	2 5 0	0 10 0	9 10 0
18	a	Philip Gumley, . . . . .	Same, . . . . .	Land and house, . . . . .	10 0 1	8 15 0	0 15 0	9 10 0
19		SirRobt.GoreBooth,Bt.	In fee, . . . . .	Land, . . . . .	2 . 32	1 5 0	—	1 5 0
20		SirRobt.GoreBooth,Bt.	Land (plantation), . . . . .	Land (plantation), . . . . .	9 1 0	4 15 0	—	4 10 0
21		Catherine Kearns, . . . . .	SirRobt.GoreBooth,Bt.,	Land, . . . . .	15 3 30	5 10 0	—	5 10 0
				Total, . . . . .	218 2 3	136 12 0	7 15 0	144 7 0
<b>DERROON.</b> (Ord. S. 33.)								
1	a	Owen Preston, . . . . .	SirRobt.GoreBooth,Bt.,	Land, house, and offices, . . . . .	17 3 17	11 5 0	0 15 0	12 0 0
2	b	Michael Preston, . . . . .	Owen Preston, . . . . .	House, . . . . .	—	—	0 5 0	0 5 0
—	a	CaptainRichard Gethin, . . . . .	SirRobt.GoreBooth,Bt.,	Land and offices, . . . . .	140 1 28	105 0 0	2 10 0	107 10 0
—	b	James Foley, . . . . .	Richard Gethin, . . . . .	House, . . . . .	—	—	0 15 0	0 15 0
—	c	Owen Hevers, . . . . .	Same, . . . . .	House, . . . . .	—	—	0 15 0	0 15 0
—	d	Patrick Hevers, . . . . .	Same, . . . . .	House, . . . . .	—	—	0 15 0	0 15 0
				Total, . . . . .	158 1 5	116 5 0	5 15 0	122 0 0



## RETIREMENT

*Pictured are Vincent and Nellie Jordan with the organising committee at a function to mark his retirement from An Post.*

## WORKING WIVES

It is fashionable for married women to go out to work in the world of today — the Creche, the Babysitter, the Grandmother can take over. Motives are rarely out of economic necessity but rather, luxuries, Social contacts, distaste for the child-minding chores, etc. And like so many other things a doubtful advantage Europe encourages the idea. Do we blindly have to follow a fashion or a lead? A young child needs its mother. No one can take her place. A school-going child needs a friendly haven not a locked door and empty house. The adolescent needs someone who loves enough to be patient, understanding and helpful and willing to stand and wait while the future citizen goes through the trauma of finding the adult in himself. Those are the needs of the child. Now support and compensation for the mother who stays with her children — that needs careful thought. The emancipated woman needs more than platitudes. Only themselves can spell out womens needs. It is high time that women assumed the freedom they have fought for and started to behave responsibly. Then only will they gain full respect and no longer be available as a fair game for manipulation.

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a mug of porter, lashed out. 'Orah hold your whist man and have a bit of sense', said he 'shure Mikeen the poor devil would be delighted if only he knew the fine send-off we were giving him'. The old man may have been well under the influence of the stuff he was holding in his hand, but he had hit the name squarely on the head. It certainly was what Mikeen wanted, it was what everyman of the day, who might call himself an Irishman wanted, and that's precisely what the words 'won't ye bury me dacent' meant. To do the job in a stingy half-hearted way was nothing short of an insult to the memory of the dead and a dim reflection on anybody who might attempt to carry it out in this manner.

Other stories of incidents that were supposed to have taken place at wakes still linger on in folk memory. You had the custom of saying three rosaries in the course of a night. Usually there was a man or woman in each locality who were outstanding at introducing the preliminaries to the rosary, then go on to announce the mysteries, and conclude with the trimmings and the litany.

We had such a man in our area, way back in the early years of the century. His name was Mick Scully of Phaleesh, and he was present at nearly every wake around the countryside. Being a person of great piety and virtue he was the one usually called upon to offer up the rosary for the happy repose of the soul of the deceased. Because of his deep devotion to his religious duties, people used to refer to him as Mick, the priest. It has been said, that Mick used to carry around with him a fifteen decade rosary beads, and oftentimes at wakes used to do the full circle of that beads without quitting.

The story has been told of an incident that happened one night at a wake shortly after Mick had ordered everybody on to their knees for the rosary. The deceased person was conveniently laid out in a pouch bed near hand to the kitchen fireplace. Mick knelt alongside the remains announcing the mysteries, rolling off the decades and at the intervals, earnestly imploring the Lord to have the dead person's soul elevated to a state of eternal happiness. Towards the end of the third decade a local character and part-time horse trader edged his

way in at the end of the kitchen and dropped down on his knees beside a low stool. The same character was usually present at every fair around the countryside buying and selling a couple of nags. On this particular night he was actually returning from a fair and had pitched his steed to the garden gate before dropping in to pay his respects. His name was Tom Killoran (nicknamed Tom Vickey) after a noted horse dealer of the day (Thomas Vickey).

As Mick the priest concluded his rosary Killoran popped up on his stool and proceeded to light his pipe. Just as he did so Mick began to announce the first of a second set of mysteries, with the intention of getting on with a second rosary. A flustered looking Killoran gave a sour glance in the direction of Mick: 'Well, bad luck to ya' said he, thrusting his pipe back into his pocket and getting back down on his knees again. About mid-way through the fourth decade Mick nodded off to sleep his rosary beads dropping to the ground. He had, incidentally, been to the same fair, and was apparently jaded out tired. He quickly recovered, 'Where was I?', he enquired, meaning at what part of the rosary did he fall off to sleep. 'At the fair of Carrickmagat' quipped Killoran, with a tone of devilement in his voice.

Carrickmagat fair was a noted sale of horses held on February the first each year. The venue was that stretch of roadway situated half-way between Collooney and Ballisodare. It attracted all the leading horse dealers of the day.

As we might very well imagine, people weren't all saints in those days either, and poor Mick encountered many more incidents, during his tenure as Master of Ceremonies at wakes. On another occasion while saying the rosary at the house of a local man who had a bereavement in his family, Mick was drawing close to the end of the final decade when a workman on the farm shuffled in and dropped down on one knee on front of the kitchen dresser. Slightly annoyed with the commotion, Mick looked around, then got on with reciting the litany of Loreto, Mystical Rose, Tower of David, Tower of Ivory, House of Gold, he entreated. At this point the workman let forth a heavy sigh and muttered to himself:

'It's a nice house of gold this where I haven't seen a bloody halfpenny in wages for the past seven weeks'.

The fellow was evidently dissatisfied with the order in which his employer was coming forward with his weekly pay packets.

Today as we witness the passing of the Irish wake, we should stop to note that what is gradually slipping away from us is a sensitive and compassionate piece of our culture. The watch on the dead, is an old tradition, that I would venture to say dates back to pagan times. In city areas the coming of the funeral parlour has finally brought this grand old custom to an end.

I wonder what the bould Tim Finnegan might think if, say today, he were to rise from the dead and find himself in a funeral parlour. Isn't it likely that he would roar out', thunderin' Jazus what have ye done to me?"

Our young people especially should, if ever they find themselves at a wake, stop to ponder that what they are seeing is the preliminary of an old burial rite, that flourished in the middle ages. When it eventually passes, and some day it will, along with it will go a significant part of our ancient heritage.

## Bernadette

*Mid pretty dreeses, ribbons, net  
Sits the lovely Bernadette  
Plying needle, scissors, thimble  
Defly moves her nimble fingers  
Making subtle alternations. Fruits of  
study, skill and patience;  
Thoughtful is her face and mild  
Though well-grown, she's but a child  
Fifteen years have now passed o'er  
her  
All her life is stretched before her.  
Questions grave are in her mind  
Of future year will they be kind  
Will she find a loving mate, or will  
she seek the Cloisters gate  
Will the Mission fields behold her  
Will her children's love enfold her  
Will she climb to dizzy heights  
Or will the lowly paths suffice  
Youth's deep thoughts are seldom  
long  
Now the pensive mood is passing  
Now the mouth is softly smiling  
And the eyes are brightly shining  
Dim forebodings take thier flight,  
She's going to dance tonight.*

## The Prestons and their Music

BY UNA PRESTON

**EUGENE PRESTON PASSED TO HIS REWARD SINCE THIS ARTICLE WAS WRITTEN, BUT HIS GRANDCHILDREN ARE CARRYING ON THE TRADITION IN BOSTON.**

Ballymote and it's hinterland is sometimes called the heartland of Irish Traditional music and it is true to say that musicians from this area have had an enormous influence in the whole sphere of Irish music as we know it today. The family names of Coleman, Morrison, Gardiner, and Killoran immediately spring to mind. Another, perhaps lesser known but widely influential family spring to mind. Another, perhaps lesser known has been the Prestons of Carnaree. Two recent experiences highlighted this fact for me. On a recent visit to Dublin I found myself in O'Sheas pub in Bridge St. There I found a great session of traditional music in progress and leading the way with some excellent Flute playing was Louis Preston. Coincidentally, the next day I heard on the Radio a recording of Eugene Preston who is an uncle of Louis and at eighty five years of age the father figure of the Irish Music scene in Boston, U.S.A., and still playing.

Eugene is the last surviving member of the family of Michael Preston and Maria Shannon of Carnaree. Maria was a well known melodeon player and seems to have imbued in her thirteen children a love of music that has extended far and wide from their birthplace in Carnaree in the early years of this century.

Like many a family of the same era, circumstances dictated that they be scattered but wherever they went the Prestons brought their music. The best known players of the older generation Prestons were Michael (Flute), Eugene (Flute), Viola (Accordeon), and David (Fiddle). Michael was a railway worker who finally settled in Co. Clare. His son Michael was a member of the All-Ireland in the late fifties they toured America. Michael Preston stayed on in the States and now lives in New York. He was the subject of a lengthy article in a recent edition of Treoir, the Journal of CCE.

The Larkins of Ennis, Co. Clare are one of the foremost musical families in that town and Mrs. Theresa Larkin is another child of Michael Preston of Carnaree.

Viola Preston founded the Eamonn Ceannt ceili band in Dublins Pipers Club in the fifties. The Eamonn Ceannt was one of the best known bands in the country for the next twenty years and broadcast many times on Radio Eireann and later on R.T.E. The Eamonn Ceannt numbered among it's members Vincent Brodrick the famous flute player from Loughrea, Co. Galway, Dan Healy of Cloonamonagh, Ballymote, and in later years the afore mentioned Louis Preston and also Lorraine Hickey another grandchild of Michael Preston.

Viola Preston let the Eamonn Ceannt ceili band until her untimely death in 1981. David Preston spent his working life in England and his fiddle playing enriched many a Session in London in the forties and fifties.

One of the features of Irish traditional musical families is the passing of the tradition from one generation to another and this is certainly true in the case of the Prestons. Apart from members of the family previously mentioned the families of a number of other Prestons have continued the tradition.

The Sheridans of Lavally, Ballintogher, are the children of Annie Preston and Michael Sheridan. Josie and David Sheridan are well known accordeon players and Josie's daughter, Siobán and David's son Michael are already all-Ireland champions at under age level. Louis who lives in Dublin is the son of Anthony Preston and his brother Tony is also a fine player, and so it goes on. Traditional music has finally taken its rightful place worldwide and is enjoying unprecedented audiences and popularity.

This universal appreciation of our native musical heritage is due in no small way to families like the Prestons of Carnaree who kept the music alive in difficult times and played and fostered it wherever they went.

D.F.P.

## WOMEN

Women are sti' wasting their potential and achieving little Women's affairs and Men's affairs, one concerns the other. That fact cannot be over emphasised. Instead of isolating themselves women should look at themselves as what they are, and act accordingly. They are citizens of the country and of the world and of equal value with their male counterparts. Their place in Government is where the power lies — at the grass roots. They don't have to stay there and they won't, but they must start from there. They must know how the house — the country is being run, how it's money is being spent, how the children are being educated and why that pattern, who is getting big money in the health and other services and is all the expenditure justified, all about prices, food supplies, imports, supermarkets, etc-

Women's study groups are needed in every centre of population big or small. One would ask what should they study and the answer would have to be — the nation's house-keeping, at every level from the top to the bottom. A first question might be Why must we be governed by remote control? Why must Civil Servants based in our capital city tell us what to do? You will say our local representatives can explain our needs, but do they know them? They are members of political parties and as such are powerless unless in the framework of the party. Their first allegiance should be to their constituents, but in the party system to which most of them belong they must think and act as the party bosses decide. Women must challenge that state of affairs, and insist that organised groups at grass roots level will be listened to and their advice sought.

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