# The Corran Herald

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# The Corran Herald

Annual Publication of Ballymote Heritage Group

Compiled and Published by Ballymote Heritage Group

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Issue No 45 2012/2013

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The Corran Herald wishes to sincerely thank all those who have written articles or contributed photographs or other material for this Issue

# Ballymote Heritage Weekend

23rd Annual

## Friday 3rd August to Monday 6th August 2012
## Coach House Hotel, Ballymote, Co. Sligo.

### Friday 3rd August

**8.30 p.m** — *OFFICIAL OPENING*
**by Dr. Edward McParland, Architectural Historian (Lecturer Emeritus, Trinity College, Dublin)**

*LECTURE*
**What is Classical Architecture?**
**Dr. Edward McParland**

### Saturday 4th August

**9.00a.m** — *OUTING*
**Mayo - Newport & Burrishoole Abbey**
*Guides:*
**Michaél Murphy & Noel O'Neill**

**8.30 p.m** — *LECTURE*
**Myths and Monuments from Moytura to Keshcorran, Co. Sligo**
**Sam Moore, Archaeologist**

### Sunday 5th August

**2.00 p.m** — *OUTING*
**Boyle Abbey, Ardcarn Church**
*Guide:*
**Frank Tivnan, MA, Historian**

**8.30 p.m** — *LECTURE*
**The Titanic**
**Stephen Cameron, Historian**

### Monday 6th August

**9.00 a.m** — *OUTING*
**Tour of Gandon Masterpiece Emo Court, (Co. Laois)**

**8.30 p.m** — *LECTURE*
**Ballymote, Sligo & The Great War**
**Kevin Myers, Journalist, Writer & Historian**

Supported by
Sligo Co Council Community Heritage Grant Scheme 2012

Burrishoole Abbey Window

Lectures €10.00

Coach for outings departs from the Catholic Church

Further information from, 071-9189275 or 071 9183380

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# Remembering James Flanagan

*Stephen Flanagan*

As many readers of *The Corran Herald* will already be aware, James Flanagan passed away peacefully on May 21, 2012, at Sligo General Hospital, surrounded by his family.

We miss him dearly. He was a husband, a father, a grandfather, a friend, a teacher and a scholar. From the hundreds who attended his funeral the word I heard over and over was 'gentleman'. Mourners came from all strands of his life - former pupils and colleagues from his days in St Nathy's College, from the Heritage Group, from the Credit Union, from his student days in Maynooth, from his decades-long work with the Church, from Ballymote and all over Ireland. He loved Sligo and Ardconnell and felt a deep connection with the area, and he would have been very pleased to see all those who turned out.

He was born in 1940, and I often spoke to him about the changes he had seen in his life: the introduction of running water, electricity, television, telephones, personal computers, the internet and much else. Dad embraced each phase. He had one of the first commercially available 'pocket' calculators in the early 1970s, a brick-sized device that needed to be plugged in to work. In the 1980s he brought home a computer from St Nathy's each summer so he could better understand it, and of course teach his children to use it. In 1996, he and I made a deal whereby I would use some of the proceeds of my first summer job to purchase a modem and an internet subscription, and he would make up the shortfall. He was as excited as I was when we first managed to successfully connect to the internet and understood that the information we were seeing was coming to us across the phone network from a computer in another country. Near the end of his life we talked about the latest innovation from Google - a pair of glasses that allow you to see information projected into space in front of you - and wondered what it might mean for the world.

Throughout his life he was constantly questioning and learning and observing. He often told me that his own father used to say 'Keep your eye on what you're doing,' and Dad took that almost as a philosophy. If he was working on a mathematical problem, he concentrated on it totally. If he was cutting the hedge, he thought about cutting the hedge. He was always present in the moment. Benjamin Franklin once said that you should 'give time to all your businesses', and Dad lived that idea. He was interested in a wide range of things, from mathematics and science to politics and history, and he immersed himself in them all.

But as much as he was a man of science, he was a man of God. He studied at Maynooth with the intention of becoming a priest, and his faith never left him. He attended daily Mass for much of his life. He believed in tolerance and love, and abhorred violence. I never once heard him swear, but when he read stories of violence and atrocity in the newspaper, it was as close as he came.

From his studies and reading he had a broad knowledge of theology, and looking through his bookshelves now I see books on how science and religion combine, and on theology and the history of the church, among the many other volumes. When I was a teenager I sometimes pointed out places in the readings at Mass where there were contradictions or implausibilities, and he would smile his wry smile, point out a few more that I had missed, and steer me back towards the broader truths.

Dad loved to teach. After he left Maynooth, he studied for a Higher Diploma in Education at UCD. He gave some maths grinds on the side and taught a few hours a week in a school in Maynooth and one on Synge Street in Dublin. Those were his first tentative steps on his own in the world, finding his way into what would turn out to be his true vocation. He loved the city and the subject, and he said later that that year was one of the happiest of his life.

His gift was to be able to understand how the person he was teaching saw the world, to see the limits of their knowledge and then explain things in a way they could understand. He never forgot how difficult he had found it himself in the first place to learn the concepts of mathematics and science. He once described his early introduction to mathematics as being exposed to the 'doubtful joys of Algebra and Geometry'. But for most of his life they were as dear to him as old friends. In the mid 1960s the 'new maths' syllabus was introduced to secondary schools, and because of his third-level background he became one of the people who taught other teachers

the new course. He travelled all over Ireland doing it for more than a decade, and it gave him some of his happiest times.

Maybe above all else, though, he was a family man. He was always there for his wife, Anne, his three children, six grandchildren and his extended family, a wise, supportive, loving presence, part of the bedrock of our existence. Throughout our lives his children turned to him for guidance on all the aspects and stages of growing up – school, college, career, friends, relationships, children and family of our own, decisions large and small. He would pause before answering, his most characteristic trait, thinking things over before helping us think things through. He was a 'content' person, as my mother has said, happy with his life. Of her, he once wrote of their first meeting that they had been introduced on 'the afternoon of May 30, 1970', and that it was an 'earth-shakingly fateful afternoon.' Their relationship was and is an example and an inspiration.

This is the first issue of *The Corran Herald* produced without Dad's guidance since it began publication in 1985. One way or another we will continue what he started – of all the many things he did, working on *The Corran Herald* was one he loved most. I have a clear image of him from my childhood sitting at the kitchen table in the early summer sun, surrounded by papers and articles for the edition he was putting together, carefully checking and editing and refining, working on his labour of love.

Dad's faith was strong and deep, and we prayed with him to the very end. At his funeral there were fifteen priests, and when they stood on the altar together they were arrayed like the messengers of God come to see him on his way. I can think of no more fitting tribute. Though we mourn his passing and miss him dreadfully, we are thankful that he was his lucid, loving self to the very end, and he slipped away very peacefully and serenely. He died as he lived: a gentleman and a scholar. We take comfort that he's in a place now where all the answers are to be found.

**James Flanagan**
**1940 - 2012**

# James Flanagan, R.I.P.

Members of Ballymote Heritage Group were greatly saddened by the death in May of James Flanagan, who was for many years a devoted member of the group and our PRO and Editor of *The Corran Herald*. James's dedicated and thorough work in compiling and editing *The Corran Herald* was widely appreciated in the community, as was clear from the large number sold each year.

Thankfully his work will remain as a memorial and resource for future generations interested in Ballymote and its heritage since he was always careful to ensure that there was a copy of the *Herald* lodged in the National Library each year. James was an incomparable MC, introducing guest lecturers on each evening of the Heritage Weekend, conducting the traditional raffle and always rounding off with a characteristically thoughtful few words of appreciation to the speaker before winding up proceedings. Above all he was truly a scholar and a gentleman.

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam

Eileen Tighe

President
Ballymote Heritage Group

# Rural Post Offices in Mid-20th-Century Ireland

*Tommy Kilcoyne*

It is difficult to explain how different life was in rural Ireland in the middle of the 20th century in comparison with the modern era. Many of the modern conveniences we take for granted today had still to make their appearance. Computers, mobile phones, the internet and Skype were still all in the future, while electricity and television were just beginning to commence their life-changing impact on the west of Ireland. It is certainly a culture shock for the Facebook and Twitter generation to hear how primitive communication was just over half a century ago.

At the centre of local communication was the post office. It possessed the only telephone (or one of the few) in its area. Therefore the post office was the hub which allowed information to leave or enter the local area. News was transmitted by phone call to and from the post office. Telegrams were important in that era. An incoming phone message was written down on a green page and delivered in a little green envelope to the recipient. People did not like to see a person from the post office arriving with a little green envelope as more often than not it conveyed news of the illness or death of a loved one far away. On a happier note, post offices conveyed messages of congratulations for people by telegram to hotels where wedding receptions were taking place, to be read out by the best man after the wedding 'breakfast'.

Local farmers used the post office phone to call the veterinary surgeon to tend to a sick animal or to call the local artificial insemination office. These calls were very important to the farmers, who often depended on the person in the post office to actually make the phone call. This involved speaking to a colleague in the phone exchange in the post office in the nearest local town who would then connect the two lines, allowing contact to be made. Many a rural post office had a single digit phone number. The phone was also regularly used to inquire about the health of a person who was hospitalised. Again the phone call to the hospital was usually made by the postmistress or postmaster on behalf of the person seeking information. Many times the information was relayed to anxious ears that the patient was 'comfortable.' It was invariably received as good news.

The bread-and-butter work of the post office was selling postage stamps and delivering mail to the local area, usually by a postman on bicycle. The mail arrived in the early morning, again by bicycle from the nearest town. The postman was an important figure locally as he often delivered news as well as the letters. He was also often cast in the role of 'the Good Samaritan', helping out people in many ways. He took letters from people for posting. These were brought later in the evening to the nearest town, again often by bicycle, for transmission to the wider world.

Friday was the busiest day of the week as it was the day designated for the issuing of old age pension money to the local senior citizens. Seventy years of age was the threshold for receiving the pension, which was greatly coveted when money was very scarce. Even though the pension money was small, it was most welcome. Similarly widows received their pensions on Fridays. Widowers did not qualify for a pension in those days. Children's Allowance money was also paid through post offices, on the first Tuesday of every month.

Dog licences were sold in post offices for a small fee. Every dog, and there were and are lots of dogs in rural Ireland, had to be licensed. The breed of each dog had to be declared on the licence. Any owner who was in doubt about the right answer to that question usually settled for the all embracing term 'Collie'.

Christmas was a particularly busy time for everyone associated with a post office. Lots of Christmas cards were stamped and sent out to the wider world, but mainly to other parts of Ireland, to Britain and the United States. The deluge of incoming cards would ensure lots of sorting and deliveries late into the dark evenings. A phenomenon of that time was the widespread custom of posting turkeys (dead and plucked of course) as presents to relatives in Britain. The turkeys were of the bronze variety as the white turkey did not make its appearance until much later. The birds were individually wrapped in brown paper over greaseproof paper, tied securely with strong twine, and address labels attached. A few daubs of colourful red sealing wax and a customs label declaring the contents and their value completed the operation, and the heavy birds were placed in sacks and brought on the next stage of their long journey, often by bicycle. It was as if people believed there were no turkeys in Britain, or perhaps if there were

that they would not be as tasty as an Irish turkey. Turkeys were by far the most popular present, being the traditional Christmas dish, but some geese and ducks also made their way across the Irish Sea in a similar manner. Extra vigilance was required in post offices before Christmas to ensure the cat or dog did not get at the parcels waiting to be collected.

People in charge of the local post office took their position very seriously, conscious of the important service they were delivering to their local area. Holidays were rare, if ever. The show had to go on every day with very few exceptions. Even if the post office was closed on a bank holiday it was quite common for someone to need to use the phone. Nobody was ever turned away.

Local post offices were subject to inspection by personnel from larger offices in their area. These visits could be by arrangement but sometimes were unannounced. Stock was checked and cash was counted. Everything was expected to be correct to the penny. Usually the inspection was completed to everybody's satisfaction.

Many of the local post offices are now closed and are just a distant memory. Those of us who experienced their way of life have a rich stock of memories. We smile at the high tech modern offices with their computerisation and laser equipment and look back to a time when stamps cost a couple of old pence, of which there were twelve in a shilling and 240 in a pound note, which carried a portrait of Lady Lavery. Decimalisation of Ireland's currency in 1971 put an end to all that. But that's another story.

*This article is dedicated to the memory of my late mother Kathleen Kilcoyne (nee Carney) who was Postmistress at Achonry post office from 1928-1974.*

# Owen Wynne VI and Hazelwood: The Twilight of an Era

*Pádraig Deignan*

This article examines Owen Wynne VI, the last of the Wynne family to preside over the family's extensive estates in the counties of Sligo and Leitrim. The Wynnes were intimately involved in local and national political life in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and members of the family represented Sligo in parliament and were High Sheriffs of Co. Sligo at various times. There was also a strong military tradition in the family and its members served in the army and the local Sligo Militia. They were regarded as 'improving' landlords, and they introduced new technology and new agricultural methods, thus making their estate very productive.

**Owen Wynne VI**

**Owen Wynne I**

Owen Wynne I was granted land in Ireland under the Cromwellian administration and established himself at Lurganboy, Co. Leitrim. In 1722 Owen Wynne II purchased the Hazelwood estate of about 14,500 acres in Co. Sligo for £20,000 and in the year 1731 he built Hazelwood House, which is located about two miles from Sligo town on the shore of Lough Gill. The house was based on the designs of Richard Cassel who also designed Leinster House in Dublin, Powerscourt House in Wicklow, Westport House in Mayo and St John's Church of Ireland Cathedral in Sligo.

**John Arthur Wynne**

The right Honourable John Arthur Wynne, Under-Secretary of State for Ireland and a Privy Councillor, was born in 1801 and was educated at Winchester and Christ Church, Oxford. He succeeded to the family estates in 1841 on the death of his father. During his father's lifetime he had been High Sheriff of Co. Leitrim in 1834 and of Co. Sligo in 1840. In 1838 he married Lady Anne Butler, second daughter of the 1st Marquess of Ormonde. She died eleven years after her marriage, while helping with Famine relief, having given birth to four children. In 1830 John Wynne succeeded his father as Member of Parliament for the borough. This was by his father's nomination rather than by election. During the Famine, John Wynne reduced his rents and paid for tenants' passage to Canada. Between 1847 and 1852 he was chairman of the Board of Guardians, the body responsible

**Right Honourable Arthur Wynne**

for the relief of poverty, and he helped to found the Sligo Mental Hospital. In his latter years he devoted himself to agricultural improvement and afforestation. On his death in 1865 he was succeeded by his son Owen VI.

**Owen Wynne VI**

Owen Wynne VI was born in 1843 and was twenty-two when he inherited the family estate. He reactivated the family military tradition and as a young man served as a lieutenant in the 61st Foot Regiment and was High Sheriff of County Sligo in 1875 and of County Leitrim in 1881. He was also a founding director of the Sligo Leitrim and Northern Counties Railway. At the age of 27 he married Stella Fanny, the younger daughter of Sir Robert Gore-Broth of Lissadell, the fourth baronet.

They had four children, all daughters – Muriel, the eldest, followed by Evelyn, Madeline and Dorothy.

It may seem obvious to us now with the gift of hindsight, but to those living at the start of the 1800s there was little indication that the power of the Protestant lords of Ireland would be radically altered in favour of the majority Catholic Nationalist population by the end of that century. Under Owen VI the Hazelwood estate would witness remarkable changes, the culmination of continuous gradual reforms.

**Wynne Power Dismantled**

Over forty years before Owen VI was born, the end of the power and influence of the Anglo-Irish ascendancy had begun. The first step in this process was taken by the Act of Union in 1800. The delay until 1829 in granting Catholic emancipation which would have enabled Catholics to become members of Parliament and to hold any public office resulted in Daniel O'Connell's campaign for emancipation, followed by his campaign for repeal of the Act of Union. Both movements attracted massive public support. As a result Catholicism and nationalism became linked together in the popular mind.

The strong link between the state and the Protestant Church was dissolved in 1869 when the Church of Ireland was disestablished. The Church had been a prop of the ascendancy. Now Catholic tenants no longer had to pay tithes to a church which was not their own and from then on the Church of Ireland declined in the life of the nation.

**Parliamentary and Local Government**

Political changes also eroded Protestant power. The Reform Act of 1832 put an end to 'rotten' or 'pocket' boroughs where the choice of the Member of Parliament was effectively by nomination, not by election. By that Act the direct power of the Wynne family to appoint the member for the Borough of Sligo was removed.

Before reform the local authority for the Borough of Sligo consisted of two bodies, the Corporation and the Town and Harbour Commissioners. The Corporation had been largely under the control of the Wynnes. The 24 members of the Town and Harbour Commissioners were elected for life and the body was controlled by the Wynnes.

The most important local government body in the County was the Grand Jury. Its powers extended over the construction of roads and the appointment of the administrative staff of the County. It was appointed each year from among members of the larger landowning families by the High Sheriff, who was always a Protestant landlord.

It was criticised for its award of contracts on the basis of jobbery, patronage and nepotism. One or more members of the Wynne family always appeared amongst its numbers.

Under the Sligo Borough Improvement Act of 1869, the Grand Jury lost its power within the Borough, so that the corporation became responsible for all services within the town. By the same Act the Town and Harbour Commissioners were dissolved; their place was taken by new Harbour Commissioners, no longer elected for life, whose powers were restricted to the harbour only.

The act also removed Owen VI's right to levy tolls on goods sold in the Sligo market and the duties and revenues over butter quality sold in Sligo held by his father and grandfather had been lost by him in a legal action in 1865.

Finally, under the Local Government Act of 1898 Grand Juries were abolished, their place taken by elected County Councils. By gradual steps the power of the Wynnes had been replaced by democratic bodies and when combined with the demands of the land movements for a massive change in landownership, would finally completely erode Wynne influence and power; all this happened within Owen VI's lifetime.

**Agrarian Revolution and Innovation**

In 1850 a Tenant Right Association had demanded the 'three Fs', namely fair rent, fixity of tenure and freedom for the tenant to sell his leasehold interest. From 1879 to 1882 the Land League organised

**Hazelwood House**

what became known as the Land War, mass meetings of tenants throughout Ireland. On the 22nd August 1880 a meeting was held at Manorhamilton at which 7,000 people were present.

In his speech to the crowd, the chairman, James Cullen admitted that "Landlordism surely requires reform, though there are certainly some landlords who are creditably different from the majority. Mr. Wynne, and some others like him, are a credit to the name of landlord. The idle few, not at home, but abroad or in England, leave their lands to the tender mercies of a horde of agents and bailiffs."

In 1881 the Land Courts were set up to fix fair rents, and although rents had been reduced on the Wynne estates by more than the average 10 per cent, tenants needed more protection. In 1886 the Land Movement set in motion the Plan of Campaign.

Where a landlord refused to lower the rents voluntarily, the tenants offered reduced rents. If this offer was not accepted the tenants were to pay no rent at all, but instead paid an equivalent amount into a fund to be used for the support of those who were evicted.

In County Leitrim the plan was first put into action in December 1886, on Wynne's estate. George Hewson, Wynne's agent, refused a proposed reduction of 25 per cent. Proinnsios O'Duigneain in his work 'North Leitrim' has argued that "the decision of the League to choose the Wynne estate for the plan may have been influenced by the fact that the landlord was not considered harsh in his dealing with tenants and therefore, the achievement of a favourable settlement within a short time, was a real possibility. On the other hand local leaders may have desired a confrontation with George Hewson, which would give them the opportunity of undermining his reputation as one of the most feared agents in the country."


NO RENT!

NO LANDLORDS' GRASSLAND

Tenant Farmers, now is the time. Now is the hour. You proved false to the first call made upon you. REDEEM YOUR CHARACTER NOW.

NO RENT

UNTIL THE SUSPECTS ARE RELEASED

The man who pays Rent (whether an abatement is offered or not) while PARNELL, DILLON &c., are in Jail, will be looked upon as a Traitor to his Country and a disgrace to his class.

No RENT, No Compromise, No Landlords' Grassland, Under any circumstances.

Avoid the Police, and listen not to spying and deluding Bailiffs.

NO RENT! LET THE LANDTHIEVES DO THEIR WORST!

THE LAND FOR THE PEOPLE!

**Land League poster**

**Hazelwood steam engine**

This was most likely true as there was no action by the land movement on the Wynne's Sligo estates and the *Sligo Independen*t editorial argued that "Wynne is well known as a good landlord in Sligo and he has no difficulty in getting his rents of his Sligo estates," while the Nationalist *Sligo Champion*, an ardent supporter of the Land League campaigns, expressed a respect for Owen Wynne.

In a book entitled *The North-West of Ireland* published in 1862, the author, Henry Coulter, paints a grim picture of the poverty and poor living conditions in the northwest. However, by contrast, in a chapter on John Wynne's land he mentioned that the numerous population are in a comfortable position and the land is let at low rent, describing him as "a most liberal and indulgent landlord, and is greatly respected and loved by those who hold under him."

The Wynnes encouraged agricultural and technological innovation on the estate and also promoted the reclamation of wasteland, allowing it rent-free. Coulter also mentioned that "there are a good many other tenants of Mr. Wynne well off; but on the neighbouring estates it would be difficult to find similar instances of prosperity amongst the small holders, and they are nearly all of that class in this part of the country." Although the landlord referred to in this passage was of course Owen Wynne's father, there was little change in policy when Owen VI took over.

In fact in March 1871 the *Sligo Champion*, always a strong opponent of the landlord class in Sligo, published a report from their correspondent 'A Sligo Man' prefacing the letter with:

"Now, as ever, it is to us a labour of love to record or refer to acts of good landlordism, and we need not say that we willingly give insertion to the following letter; which it will be seen, has special reference to the Hazelwood property."[1] A Sligo Man wrote that "as allusion has been made to the Hazelwood estates, and as you have expressed your willingness to make favourable reference to their landlordism, I think it but right to state my conviction that, in his dealings with his tenantry, the present youthful owner [Owen Wynne VI] can well bear comparison with any landlord in the county."

He goes on to state that "the very absence of all complaint, to which your pages would, I doubt not, be readily open, may fairly warrant us in concluding that good landlordism is the practice

**Gathering the harvest**

upon the Hazelwood estate.[2] The late John Wynne was latterly compelled, through ill health, to leave the entire management of his property in the hands of his agents. And though I have not formed the very highest estimate of some of them, in a religious point of view especially, yet I am free to state that I have never known them to screw a tenant up to the last gale day; and that I have seen old leases expire at a time when there was the greatest competition for land; yet no tenant was evicted, nor was the rent in any case raised to an exorbitant degree." [3]

He goes on to write that Wynne's agent had appeared on the platform with the Catholic Bishop of Elphin and priests who were demanding 'justice to the long neglected tenants' and argued in favour of tenant right. The correspondent finished by saying that the word eviction had little place on the Hazelwood estate and "what is likely most of all to render Captain Wynne popular as a resident landlord, and to endear him to his tenantry, is the absence from his bearing of all chilling and repelling aristocratic hauteur" and "the homely simplicity of his manner."[4] Other letters favourable towards other Sligo landlords who appeared in the Champion at this time were criticised to a greater or lesser degree by the editor, but not Owen Wynne.

An enlightened landlord he may have been, but the strength of the land movement and the terms of sale of the Ashbourne Land Act 1885, and especially the Wyndham Land Act of 1903, encouraged Owen VI to sell his lands. By 1908 the estate, other than the Hazelwood demesne, had been transferred to the Land Commission for the price of £79,000.

**Death of Stella Wynne**

On Sunday, the 27th February, 1887, tragedy struck the Wynnes as Stella, Owen's wife, suffered a serious road accident which caused her death. She was a very generous woman and was involved in many charities, was devoted to the poor, and her funeral attracted all creeds and classes, landowners and tenants, Catholic and Protestant bishops and prominent nationalists and unionists. Her funeral was described by the eminent Sligo historian Archdeacon O'Rorke as "unparalleled in the county of Sligo for numbers and the feelings that swayed them."

**The House and Demesne**

According to many, Owen never recovered from the death of his wife; however Hazelwood continued to thrive under him. In the latter part of the nineteenth century O'Rorke described the uniqueness of Hazelwood saying that "though the residence may not be equal in massiveness to some more modern mansions, it is still a very stately and graceful structure. It is built of cut and polished limestone, in the Italian style, with a bold four-storey front facade, and two lateral curving wings … a secondary front, rising from a fine terrace, looks to the south; and the area, running form the terrace to the lake, is divided between an open lawn and shady groves, in which are provided charming retreats for saunterers, including a cane house,

**Stella Fanny Wynne**

a rock house, a shell house, and a curious chair of state constructed of whale bone."

At that time of Owen VI's death in 1910 Hazelwood demesne consisted of 900 acres of arable land, of which 80 were under tillage, 130 in meadow, and the balance of 690 acres under grazing. A further 600 acres were under forestry. A hundred head of cattle were bred annually. There were twenty to twenty-five dairy cows and seventy to eighty ewes. There was stabling for thirty horses. £1,500 was expended annually on labour and the workmen were comfortably housed.

**Sports**

Hazelwood was also the venue for many sporting events. Yacht racing on Lough Gill took place throughout the 19th century and from 1880 to 1942 race meetings were held on the race-course on the Hazelwood demesne. A polo club was founded in 1878, matches being played at Hazelwood. According to the *Sligo Champion*, a game at Hazelwood was an event to be watched by the entire town. The national success of the Sligo polo team was renowned and Sligo polo ponies were much in demand – many were exported to England and America. Shooting parties were also regularly organised at Hazelwood.

As Winston Guthrie Jones mentioned in his book on the Wynnes, when Owen Wynne VI died on 21st November 1910 aged 67, one cannot escape the feeling that he was a saddened man. His wife had been tragically killed twenty-three years earlier. The great estates of 15,000 acres in Leitrim and 14,000 acres in Sligo

had for the most part been sold. Since he had no male heir, with his death the line of the Wynnes of Hazelwood came to an end.

**Hazelwood after Owen VI**

Owen VI's eldest daughter Muriel married Philip Dudley Perceval in 1892; he was the youngest son of Alexander Perceval of Temple House, Co, Sligo. In 1901 his second daughter Evelyn Mary, married Henry George L'Estrange, the youngest son of Christopher Carleton L'Estrange of Market Hill, Co. Fermanagh and Kevinsfort,

**A shooting party at Hazelwood**

Sligo. His two other daughters remained unmarried.

The land at Hazelwood passed to Owen Wynne's eldest daughter Muriel. In 1922 she sold the livestock and machinery. Muriel and Philip Perceval left Sligo following the Civil War and Hazelwood House and the remaining part of the estate was sold to the Land Commission in 1937.

From 1923 to 1930 the house was empty. Henry George L'Estrange died in 1929. When his widow, Mrs Evelyn L'Estrange, died in 1952 the *Sligo Champion* commented that Sligo's last link with the Wynnes of Hazelwood had gone.

In 1930 Samuel Berridge, a retired Anglo-Indian tea planter, rented the house and carried out some renovations, and in 1937 the house and remaining land was sold to the Land Commission and the State Forestry Department for £20,000. The contents of the house were sold separately. The Land Commission share was subdivided among smallholders.

During the Second World War the Irish army occupied the house. In 1946 the Land Commission put the house up for sale. The terms of sale stipulated that all the material had to be removed from the house and the site levelled. As an encouragement

**Playing polo at Hazelwood**

to buyers the advertisement of sale made it known that the roof had a high quality of lead.

The editor of the *Sligo Champion* was one of the few to oppose the potential destruction of the house, condemning the Land Commission's policy of acquiring houses in order to demolish them and arguing sarcastically that: "In Ireland the value of such a house is measured by the contents of lead in the roof," while in England the National Trust was committed to preserving them.

Fortunately the house did not attract much interest and in May 1946 the house was saved from destruction when Sligo Mental Hospital Committee purchased the house for £2,000.

In 1969 an Italian textile company, Snia, bought the house and built a factory extending from the back of the house and created 500 jobs making nylon yarn. In 1983 the company closed.

**Muriel Perceval**

**Philip Perceval**

In 1987 Saehan Media Corporation, a Korean company, manufacturing videotapes, acquired the site and started production in June 1991. However, almost fifteen years later, in April 2006, Saehan Media closed leaving a huge video tape factory glaring at its garden front at a distance of only 100 yards.

**Conclusion**

With the death of his wife, and lack of male heir, everything changed for the Wynnes and Owen VI, though he still took an interest in farming issues, administration, sporting pursuits, and campaigned for the Unionist cause in the 1890s. At one stage he was proposed by the unionist convention as a candidate in the south Sligo election of 1892, although Colonel Ffolliott ran instead. He continued his involvement in the Sligo Unionist Alliance and did not seem to attract criticism from the Sligo

**Hazelwood house as it is today**

Champion, which was unusual as most other prominent landowning Unionists attracted plenty of Champion wrath. He threw himself into the cultivation of the remainder of his land, but with two of his daughters married and the other two unmarried, there was no immediate male blood relative to take an interest in the demesne after he had died.

Who's to say what would have happen to Hazelwood if Owen Wynne had had a male heir to steer Hazelwood into a new Ireland? It could have become the northwest's rival to any other estate house.

Owen Wynne had stepped in both worlds – he had witnessed the height of Protestant power just before its collapse and circumstances had forced him to preside over the sale of his own estate.

Perhaps agrarian, religious and political changes forced the Wynnes to pass into history, or perhaps it was a combination of general and personal circumstances and bad luck. Whatever your political, emotional or historical feelings are concerning the erosion of the power and influence of families such as the Wynnes, the reality is that the Wynne family have left Sligo a strong, rich historical legacy which allows us an opportunity to build on for the future and hopefully not squander and waste it like so much else of our valuable heritage.

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2.Ibid.
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4.Ibid.

# Douglas Hyde in Ballymote

**First President of Ireland Douglas Hyde on a visit to Ballymote on 29th June 1936 for the opening Féis Báile an Mhota.**

The event was held in the show grounds/race course located where Marren Park is now.

**Canon Quinn of Ballymote on the same day. The photographs were taken by Maisie McGovern (nee Benson).**

Maisie's sister Kathleen conducted the choir that performed for the president on the day. Photographs submitted by John Coleman.

# Under Two Flags

*Eugene Benson*

*…. somewhere*
*A man is killed, or a house burned,*
*Yet no clear fact to be discerned.*
W. B. Yeats

It was the fate of Francis Benson and his brother John Joseph Benson (my father) to be born to an Irish farmer at a time when one of the few avenues open to young men to escape poverty was to join the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC). Francis (1877-1921) and John Joseph (1887-1971) were born in Carrickbanagher, Ballisodare, Co. Sligo, and received an education that enabled them to meet the entrance requirements for the RIC –proficiency in reading, writing, and in the basic principles of arithmetic, which meant being able to add, subtract, divide, and multiply. They also had natural intelligence and a determination to advance in the world. My father always said that the career of Sir John Benson, the distinguished architect born in Carrickbanagher, had encouraged him to better himself.

When my uncle and father joined the RIC, its mandate was being radically altered by the political situation in Ireland. The Land Wars of the late nineteenth century had forced the RIC to help in the eviction of tenants for non-payment of rent, thus highlighting the force's repressive role. But between the Land Wars and the 1916 Easter Rising, members of the RIC were highly regarded in the local areas they served since their main role was traditional police work – the prevention of crime and the apprehension of criminals.

But gradually the growing Irish nationalism of the early twentieth century imposed a paramilitary role on the RIC, signified most dramatically in the Easter Rising of 1916. The Croke Park murders of fourteen civilians in November 1921 by members of the RIC illustrated how radically the service had been politicised in the intervening years. The rise in the killing of RIC men in the years following the Easter Rising shows the effectiveness of the IRA's campaign to demonise the RIC: none were killed in 1917, one

**John Benson**

in 1918, 12 in 1919, 171 in 1920, 230 in 1921, 29 in 1922. The most dangerous counties were Cork (96 killed), followed by Limerick (38) and Kerry (35). My uncle, Francis Benson, Head Constable, was shot in Tralee, County Kerry, by the IRA. He left three children from his first marriage and two from his second.

My father was luckier. He had served in a number of RIC stations in the counties of Northern Ireland, and was stationed in Irvingstown, Co. Fermanagh, when he met my mother, Isabella Green of Ballymagin, Maralin, Co. Down. She was a nurse and midwife, whom he married in 1919. It was perhaps because of this that on the disbandment of the RIC in 1922 and the establishment of Northern Ireland that he joined the newly-created Royal Ulster Constabulary. My parents had a large family – ten children of whom I am the last surviving member – but that did not prevent them from taking into their home Violet and Cyril, the two children of my uncle Francis's first marriage. (A third child died in 1923 of tuberculosis). Francis' second wife, fearing the IRA, fled with her children to Australia shortly after Francis's death. Violet and Cyril received their education in the new Irish Free State and I have often thought about how difficult life must have been for them since they must have been counselled not to speak of their father whom they loved, but who would have been regarded by those around them as an enemy of the State and a collaborator with the hated British.

In the early years of the RUC my father lived under daily threat of assassination because Co. Fermanagh was a strongly nationalist area where the IRA continued its war against the new Northern Ireland (and Orange) government. It was a part of our family mythology that my mother and father had an agreed-upon password when he returned home at night, and that she had a rifle to defend her household. I have no reason to doubt its truth. But my father must have been conflicted in his personal life since the government of Northern Ireland openly practiced a policy of discrimination against the Catholic minority by rigging the voting process and denying it employment and a fair share of

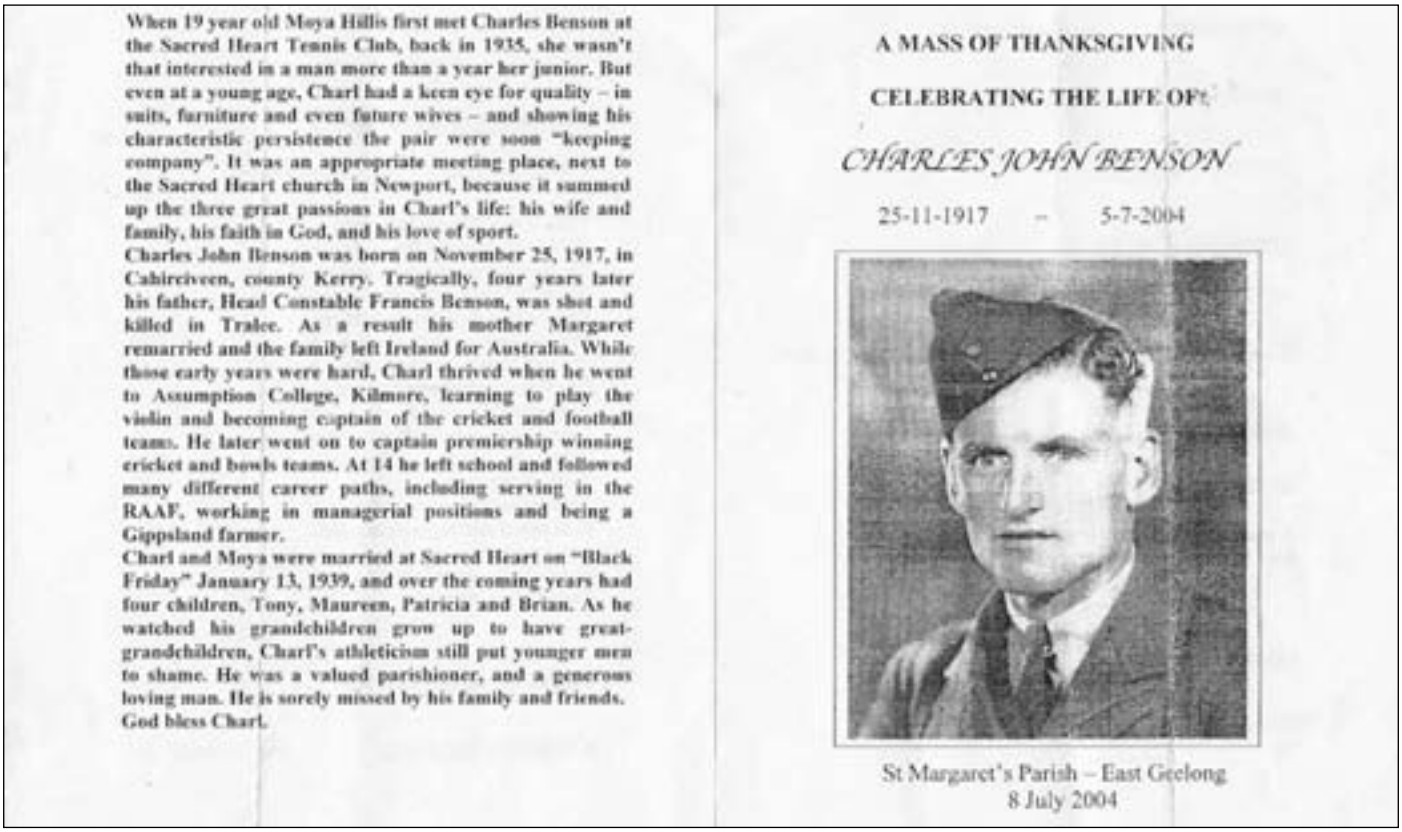
**Francis Patrick Benson and his wife Anna (nee Byrne)**

public housing. He must have been aware that he could be seen as a fair target for the IRA which was active in its attempts to undermine the new Ulster government. During the 1930s my father visited his home in Sligo only once for a family funeral – it was a hurried visit, carried out in secrecy, for fear he might be shot.

I never discussed these matters of a possible divided loyalty with my father. I was educated at St Colman's College, Violet Hill, Newry, where the teachers – mainly priests – were fiercely nationalistic and hostile to the partitioning of Ireland. Consequently, I was influenced greatly by their views and as I grew older I spoke openly of my nationalistic feelings, which offended my mother. We were taking the King's shilling, she argued, so decency demanded we be loyal to the Northern Ireland government. While the vast majority of Catholics in Ulster refused to hang out the British flag on the 12th of July, my mother did so defiantly. My father also listened to my nationalistic talk but never once did he rebuke me nor did I ever hear him in my life speak of his feelings towards the Ulster government nor towards the paramilitary role of the RUC in which he became a sergeant. But in his old age a remarkable thing happened – he had a fine voice and his party piece became a song that celebrated Ireland's fight for independence and the men who had died in that noble cause. The song was *The Bold Fenian Men* and I can still hear his voice with the strong Sligo accent that he never lost:

*Some died by the glenside, some died near a stranger,*
*And wise men have told us their cause was a failure.*
*But they fought for old Ireland and never feared danger.*
*Glory O, Glory O, to the bold Fenian men.*

My own sons have asked me about my feelings towards this period of Irish history and especially about the assassination of my uncle Francis. I have always mourned his death, regretting that he was cut down at such a young age. But I was touched even more by the fate of Violet and Cyril, orphans, who must have been forever scarred by his death and its circumstances. This period of Irish history was tragic in its amalgam of terrorism and heroism, but ultimately private grief and political right and wrong are irrelevant in the unfolding of an indifferent history, which, in W. H. Auden's words, 'May say Alas but cannot help or pardon.'



When 19 year old Moya Hillis first met Charles Benson at the Sacred Heart Tennis Club, back in 1935, she wasn't that interested in a man more than a year her junior. But even at a young age, Charl had a keen eye for quality – in suits, furniture and even future wives – and showing his characteristic persistence the pair were soon "keeping company". It was an appropriate meeting place, next to the Sacred Heart church in Newport, because it summed up the three great passions in Charl's life: his wife and family, his faith in God, and his love of sport.

Charles John Benson was born on November 25, 1917, in Cahirciveen, county Kerry. Tragically, four years later his father, Head Constable Francis Benson, was shot and killed in Tralee. As a result his mother Margaret remarried and the family left Ireland for Australia. While those early years were hard, Charl thrived when he went to Assumption College, Kilmore, learning to play the violin and becoming captain of the cricket and football teams. He later went on to captain premiership winning cricket and bowls teams. At 14 he left school and followed many different career paths, including serving in the RAAF, working in managerial positions and being a Gippsland farmer.

Charl and Moya were married at Sacred Heart on "Black Friday" January 13, 1939, and over the coming years had four children, Tony, Maureen, Patricia and Brian. As he watched his grandchildren grow up to have great-grandchildren, Charl's athleticism still put younger men to shame. He was a valued parishioner, and a generous loving man. He is sorely missed by his family and friends.

God bless Charl.

A MASS OF THANKSGIVING

CELEBRATING THE LIFE OF:

CHARLES JOHN BENSON

25-11-1917 – 5-7-2004

St Margaret's Parish – East Geelong
8 July 2004

**From the papers of the late Maisie McGovern (nee Benson) who corresponded regularly with Charles Benson (her 2nd cousin) and his wife. (Submitted by John Coleman)**

# The Antonine Wall

*Niamh Conlon*

The Romans first came to Britain in 43 AD but it took them thirty years to reach Scotland. For a while they controlled much of the country, but as the troops were called away to other parts of the Empire the Roman influence in Scotland shrank. Around 122AD Emperor Hadrian ordered work to begin on a wall in what is now northern England. His reasons are still debated by historians. Some say it was defensive, others that it was to stop smuggling and others still that it was to show the power of Rome. Whatever his reasons it is now known to us as Hadrian's Wall, and when it was finished it marked the northern boundary of the Roman Empire in Britain. After Emperor Hadrian's death, his successor Antoninus Pius once again invaded Scotland and the empire's frontier was pushed seventy miles north. In 142AD a new wall was begun.

The new barrier, known to us as the Antonine Wall, extends 61km along the narrowest part of central Scotland from Old Kilpatrick on the Clyde to Carriden on the Forth. As the Forth and Clyde rivers meet the sea in Firths (like Scandinavian fjords) it meant that the wall could be supplied by sea and limited the length of the wall needed to create a barrier between north and south.

The wall cut though what was mostly pasture land and it didn't deviate around homesteads or farms. At various points along its length it can be seen to divide fields and even settlements. In areas near the wall, land would have been taken from the natives to provide allotments for the soldiers and pasture for their horses. The first thing to be built was a road, around five metres wide, with drainage ditches on either side. It allowed materials to be transported to the construction site. The wall itself was built using different material depending on what was available, and the style varies due to different work squads constructing different parts of it. A formidable construction, it was built by the legions stationed in the area. We know from inscriptions left that these legions were the Second and part of the Sixth and Twentieth, and they are believed to have numbered nine thousand men.

**Lilia at Roughcastle Fort**

The wall itself was made of a turf and earthen rampart that stood around three metres high on a stone foundation, and may have had a wooden palisade on the top making it even higher. It was punctuated by culverts to drain away water coming down through the rampart. It was 4.3m wide at the base and six meters to the north of this lay a massive V-shaped ditch that was around 12m wide and 4.2m deep. Of course if you dig a big ditch you have to put the excavated material somewhere, and this was usually north of the ditch making a mound of upcast material that created another barrier to people trying to cross. Between the rampart and the ditch was the rather vicious Roman version of a minefield – rows of defensive pits known as 'lilia'. At around a meter long, these 30cm deep pits contained two fire-hardened stakes pointing upwards and held in place by backfill.

Along the Antonine Wall were a number of structures to aid in the running of the border controls. There were probably watch towers ever third of a mile along its length, manned by an eight-man unit with two on duty at any one time. This made sure that the entire wall could be visually covered by soldiers. Every mile 'fortlets' were built, which were linked by the road known as the Military Way. The fortlets were basically defendable positions with freestanding and lean-to buildings inside. It is believed that around twenty-four men would have been posted to these, and they were occupied for long periods as they had water supplies, latrines and cooking facilities. They were probably there to tax and disarm travellers, which adds credence to the belief that the wall was not a closed border but more of a way to control movement in and out of the Empire.

Every eight miles there were forts which provided living space for the troops. Originally there were six forts along the wall, with one slightly north of the wall at

Camelon, which was on the main route north. This number slowly increased to seventeen forts of varying size but nearly all smaller than the main forts. Some took over from fortlets and slowly the latter were downgraded with only their watch towers remaining in some places. This spread troops more evenly across the wall but it also reduced the number of crossing points to more heavily armed positions.

The forts were home to the soldiers and their supplies. There could be up to five hundred men stationed in the fort, though some would probably always be out on patrol. The soldiers on the wall, like all Roman soldiers, were professionals signed up for twenty-five years of service. The legionaries were the more heavily-armed men and were recruited from the 'civilised' provinces; auxiliaries were lighter armed and paid about a third less. They were recruited from the fringes of the Empire but when they retired they were granted citizenship which extended to their illegitimate kids. The forts provided cramped accommodation but had services such as bathhouses fed by aqueducts and latrines which were flushed by waste water from the bathhouse. In one area a septic tank was also found. The fort contained granaries and annexes where repairs could be done on armour, vehicles etc. Outside the fort there would have been parade grounds and allotments with cemeteries and temples lining the roads into the forts.

**Remains of a Roman fort at Roughcastle**

**Map of the location of the Antonine Wall**

The wall was abandoned after only 20 years of occupation when the army withdrew following the death of Antoninus. Since then it has suffered a lot of damage due to its location in one of the most densely populated parts of Scotland. While large lengths of the wall are now under suburban houses there are still some sites where you can see the remains of this man-made frontier.

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# Brigid Billings (neé O'Hara)

The Heritage Group was saddened to learn of the death in June of Brigid Billings (neé O'Hara) and Professor Etienne Rynne. Brigid, who grew up at Coopershill was a long time supporter of the group and her husband Malcolm has delivered many engaging lectures over the years. Professor Rynne who was a distinguished archaeologist also delivered several lectures at heritage weekends.

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a n-anamacha dílis.

# Bank Raid in Ballymote!

*Pat Leyden*

Mick was a proud man who lived on a holding of twenty-three acres of not-so-good land. He never married and did not socialise a lot. A man of 5ft10in, he always presented well when appearing in public. He would on occasion visit the local pub and always over-indulged in the drink when he went there. People used to say he did not know how to drink; that 'He drinks Guinness like you might drink new milk.'

Despite these little lapses Mick was a thrifty man and had a healthy deposit account in the bank in Ballymote. It was not unusual, if anyone would listen, for Mick to boast of how the bank manager and himself were on such good terms and how the bank manager congratulated him on not being like a lot of the farmers and keeping large sums of money under the mattress. 'A man with money in biscuit tins or under the mattress, that's what has them thieves roaming the countryside and beating up people,' was Mick's mantra. When going to the bank Mick would always dress in his Sunday best and visit the barber, for according to himself his hair was his crowning glory.

In the spring of 1978, Mick sold two old cows and as he had reared two heifer calves for replacements he was in a position once more to make a deposit with his friendly bank manager. So he made his preparations and got himself a lift into town with a neighbour. He would, he told himself, follow his usual routine. Perhaps Mick should have observed the old saying 'Beware the ides of March,' the term that refers to the 15th day of the month and which famously marks the date on which Julius Caesar was killed in 44BC having been stabbed 23 times by a group of conspirators. Of course some might say that we should not heed this or bad luck on a Friday 13th. They might dismiss it as 'superstitious nonsense,' but this is how Mick's day unfolded.

Having arrived in town early just as the shops and pubs were opening, Mick decided he had lots of time on his hands and only two jobs to be done, a haircut and deposit the money, so he decided to have a drink to pass some of the day. He had four pints before having the hair done. With the short break his appetite for more drink wasn't at all satisfied, so another visit to the pub followed and he stayed there until someone told him that the bank shut at four o'clock. Mick sneakily checked the deposit money in his inside pocket and set off.

He arrived at the bank just as the porter was closing the door. What was he to do? He had come to town for one main purpose, to deposit money, and he did not intend going home with his mission incomplete. So he rushed at the door but the porter was intent on closing it, so the door was being shut in his face. Mick pushed hard to try and open the door but the porter was equally set on closing it and was winning the joust. However Mick succeeded in getting his foot between the door and the jam so that the door could not be fully closed. The porter heard loud shouts telling him his life was about to be ended if he did not open the door. "I have business to do here!" roared Mick.

Panic set in. The porter thought it was a bank raid by some armed gang or the Republican movement who were very active raiding banks at that time, and he shouted to the staff, "Help, help, help, robbery, help, help!" All hell broke loose. Bells were rung, guards alerted, alarms set off, scared staff ran for cover, money drawers were locked and one cashier fainted to add to the mayhem.

The porter tried to keep the door shut but after some shouting his panic weakened his resolve as he was afraid of being shot, so he let the door open suddenly. Mick spilled into the bank, face on the floor and arms and legs outstretched and unable to get up.

Already the police sirens could be heard as they raced towards the bank, on their way having rang Sligo Gardaí for backup. Within minutes two Garda cars with sirens wailing and blue lights flashing screeched to a halt in the middle of the street and the street was quickly cordoned off. Two shaky armed detectives cautiously approached the bank with guns cocked. Passersby heard the commotion and hurriedly left the street, darting into shops for cover. As word of an armed bank raid spread, those shops closest to the bank quickly shut their doors. A shoot-out in Ballymote!

It took nearly five minutes before Mick in his drunken state was able to regain an upright position, and by then it was dawning on some of the staff that the bank raider was maybe not a bank raider at all. Once he was back on his feet, he took his money from his pocket and said to the ashen-faced clerk, "I want to put this in me deposit account."

"Don't move or we'll shoot, we have you covered!" yelled a detective from the door. Mick was oblivious to the commotion and only realised something was up when the detective grabbed him from behind and threw him on the floor. He tried to explain himself but neither the police or the bankers would listen to him, so he was handcuffed and bundled into the squad car and taken to the barracks. On the way the backup squads were called and triumphantly told, "We have captured the raider."

After nearly five hours of intensive interrogation, Mick was released without charge with the advice to never tell anyone what had happened. Mick was never the same man again and for years his big worry was that the incident would be reported in the papers. For some reason neither bank nor the guards ever admitted to the incident!

As for Mick he immediately shut down his bank account and resorted to the biscuit tin, and he never again boasted of his relationship with the bank manager. Had he lived a little longer I'm sure he would have loved the idea of banks needing a bail out.

# Take Me Up to Monto!

*Jack Gilligan*

For many years, like very many people, I had only a hazy knowledge of Monto. I knew for sure it must be somewhere in Dublin city – hadn't I often heard the Dubliners singing *Take me up to Monto*. The lyrics, however, told me little about the actual place. Then there was that other song, *The Waxies' Dargle*, which also referred to Monto but without giving much away either:

*Says my aul' one to your aul' one*
*'We have no beef nor mutton*
*But if we go down to Monto town*
*We might get a drink for nothin"*

The precise location of Monto was still a mystery, as was its sad and murky history.

Sometime in the 1970s I found myself at a performance of a play called The End of Mrs. Oblong. While the play's central character, May Oblong, was a brothel keeper, I assumed that the story was a creation of a playwright's fertile imagination. Later, as I struggled with James Joyce's *Ulysses*, I read that Leopold Bloom paused on Talbot Street to buy a 'lukewarm pig's crubeen' and a 'cold sheep's trotter' before entering nearby Nighttown, an area of ill-repute. None of that, however, prepared me for the realisation that Monto, just five minutes from Dublin's O'Connell Street, was once a most notorious district of brothels, murder, robbery and deprivation.

Living in Dublin since the 1970s I had often passed along Talbot Street on my way to Connolly railway station, not realising that I was just a stone's throw from what was once the most infamous red-light district in Europe! It was only thirty years later when I moved to work in the regenerated Foley Street that I got to know the full and fascinating history of this north inner-city area. I learned that the May Oblong in the play was indeed a real person, and not a very nice one either. She was, in fact, the last and probably the most loathsome of the madams to flourish in the district. I also learned that the name 'Monto' was, in typical Dublin fashion, an abbreviation of Montgomery Street, now Foley Street, which is just off Talbot Street.


**Remains of a Roman fort at Roughcastle**

Monto was that relatively small area enclosed by Talbot Street, Amiens Street, Gardiner Street and Sean Mac Dermott Street. The hub of Monto activity was Mecklenburgh Street Lower – now Railway Street – and the surrounding alleyways and lanes.

The 1801 Act of Union is seen as the beginning of the deterioration of this once-fine residential area of Dublin city. Many of the former homeowners sold up and the Georgian properties fell into the hands of unscrupulous landlords who were happy to see them become tenement dwellings for the increasing poor of the city. Each tenement house accommodated several mostly decent, hard-working families in conditions which can only be described as dire. Usually an entire family lived in a single room, often cold and damp, with just one outside toilet for all the residents. Many of the houses, however, fell into the hands of greedy madams who set up their brothels in the very same streets.

From the 1860s to the early 1900s, there were believed to be more than a thousand prostitutes working in this small area of the north inner city. In 1863 the *Irish Independent* released official police statistics accounting for 984 girls, but the reality is believed to have been a much greater number. Reputed to be the biggest red light district in Europe, it even rated a mention in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* of 1903. Monto attracted clients from all walks of life. Wealthy professionals would have been entertained in the more plush residences, which, with their comfortable furnishings and blazing fires, were known as 'Flash houses'. Those with less money were entertained in very basic accommodation known as 'kips'. Some out-of-town clients drove to the brothels in open carriages while others, preferring anonymity, travelled in closed cabs under the cover of darkness. According to popular legend, the then Prince of Wales, Prince Albert Edward, later King Edward VII, made a number of discreet visits to Monto.

The commercial viability of Monto was greatly boosted by the number of British Army barracks in the city, including one in nearby Portland Row. Madams discreetly sent their business cards to the various city barracks to target the latest regiments to arrive. Proximity to the Dublin docks ensured a steady supply of sailor clients to Monto. Labourers, tradesmen, professionals, students and tourists also made their way to the area. Once the cover charge to the brothel was paid and the fee agreed, food with whiskey, porter or stout was included in the deal. The formidable wealthy madams could be ruthless and cruel in their response to any perceived misdemeanour by the women or their clients. When not so inclined themselves they had 'bullies' to dish out punishment on their behalf.

So, two very different worlds existed side by side on the streets of Monto. There was the constant struggle for survival by poor, overcrowded, hardworking families

alongside the scandalous activities of the brothels. Many feared the consequences of living in such an environment and the possible effects on morals and public safety. In 1865 the *Freeman's Journal* published a letter from 'A Mother' pleading for the suppression of prostitution. She objected to the 'obscene language' and 'indecent conduct' of the 'abandoned women who crowd the streets nightly and ply their trade without the slightest attempt at concealment.' The use of the word 'abandoned' is very interesting and appropriate in this context. The Monto prostitutes, often referred to locally as the 'poor unfortunates', were under the control of madams and pimps and suffered violence, disease and eventual abandonment.

The early 1900s saw a decline in the fortunes of the madams and in the business they promoted. The Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921 and the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922 led to the withdrawal of British soldiers from the city and a consequent impact on the commercial viability of the brothels. Between 1923 and 1925, Legion of Mary founder Frank Duff led a strong campaign for the closure of these houses of ill-repute. He received the co-operation of the Dublin Police Commissioner, General William Murphy, who on the 12th of March 1925 ordered a raid on the area. There were 120 arrests, most of the brothels were closed and the remaining prostitution was driven into the back rooms and alleys. By the 1930s the old Monto had disappeared.

An ironic footnote to the sad story of Monto is that the irrepressible May Oblong continued to operate in the area as a madam and a shopkeeper. Always the businesswoman, she seized the opportunity of the 1932 Eucharistic Congress to sell religious objects to the pilgrims crowding the city for one of the most celebrated events in the history of Catholic Ireland.

# Winters Now and Then

*Joan Gleeson*

Bare trees, beech brown leaves
Ivy green beneath the eves
Snow-capped mountains
Swollen streams shouting
Fields laid out in pristine snow
Glorious sunset red and low.
Fox and pheasant have lost their cover
The one so vulnerable
Beware the other
A puffed up robin in glorious red breast blush
Is constant subject for the artist's brush.

Children throwing snow balls, laughing,
Making snow men, dogs' excited barking
Halloween with age-old customs
Reenacted by every generation.
Snap apple, ducking, tricks and treats
Witch meets wizard in the streets
Feast and fun with ring in brack
Goodies gathered, nuts to crack.

November prayers for our relations
Closely followed by Christmas decorations
Cosy fires burning bright
Children indoors for the night
Local neighbours ramble in
A twenty-five card game to win.
Ghost stories eerily told
More chilling than the winter's cold
The fiddler plays a lively tune
The sky is filled with stars and moon
Ballads, half sets, tea and bread
Five decades of the rosary said.

Winters come and winters go
The TV now puts on the show.
Still, days dark and chill
And new years' winds so loud and shrill
Do not disturb the slumber of God's creation
We await spring with elation.

# The Fallen

*Pat Leyden*

A broken man still wears a shirt and tie
Suffering beneath the open sky
He's sleeping rough on the side of the street
He no longer can afford to eat
An old woolly jumper tattered and torn
His shabby jacket badly worn
Bare toes visible from shoes once black
His old worn jeans hanging slack
He's feeling so sad he wants maybe to cry
Red burned face and bloodshot eye
His lips chaffed and a windswept tan
By all accounts an aggressive man
He has drank cheap wine all over the land
He wishes folk would understand
Wishing the next drink would ease his pain
He's fully aware of the public disdain
He wishes his angel came calling for him
Does God forgive your every sin?
He's praying for forgiveness for his past
Heaven will be his home, at last

# Ireland's Neutrality: Sacred Cow or Pious Wish?

*Joe McGowan*

*The focal point of the war against England and the one possibility of bringing her to her knees is in attacking sea communications in the Atlantic.*
Karl Donitz, Grand Admiral, German U-boats.

Given the current debate surrounding Irish neutrality and the use of Shannon Airport by American troops, we as Irish citizens ponder the matter of where we stand on the question of neutrality. After all it is a treasured 'sacred cow' of the Irish Constitution – or is it?

In December 1939, the opening year of World War II, German U-boats operating together with planes and surface raiders accounted for 754, 000 tons of Allied shipping losses. This represented 99. 6 per cent of all shipping sunk in 1939. At this point in the war Britain had less than three weeks' supply of wheat; stocks of many other commodities such as sugar had fallen to under six weeks' supply. A solution had to be found, and quickly.

As Europe fell to the advancing German armies, the UK became more and more isolated and increasingly dependent on the Atlantic trade route for industrial raw materials and food. If this lifeline were broken then England would starve both physically and financially. Following the successful conclusion of the 'Battle of Britain' in October 1940, England prepared immediately for what was to become known as the 'Battle of the Atlantic'.

Although some air cover was already provided, a 'black gap' existed in the mid-Atlantic, a section which could not be reached from existing air bases. Both Germany and Britain realised the importance of this gap. If U-boats could operate in this area without fear of air attack then the allied convoys would be at the mercy of the German 'wolf packs'.

As a result of aerial surveys carried out late in 1940, and despite a less-than-favourable report, construction of an RAF base began almost immediately on the old Castle Archdale estate on the shores of Lough Erne with the intention of closing the gap. There was one snag. The extra 100 miles' range possible from the new base would only become a reality if the aircraft could fly due west over neutral Ireland. Failing an agreement, planes would have to fly north over Lough Foyle before heading for the Atlantic battleground. Britain was determined that despite De Valera's dogged insistence on neutrality they would bring 'the ungrateful Irish to heel. ' The bombing of Belfast by the Luftwaffe in April 1941 in which 750 people were killed was a signal lesson to the Irish government then (and today!) of what might happen should they join the belligerents. In May, German planes bombed Dublin, killing 34 people and destroying 300 houses in North Strand.

While De Valera would not be coerced into joining the war, pragmatism demanded that, despite strained Anglo-Irish relations, an official blind eye be turned to what became known as the 'Donegal corridor', a route over south Donegal/ north Leitrim/north Sligo that led to the Atlantic. This concession was subject to the condition that flights be made at a good height and that the route over the military camp at Finner be avoided, both of which conditions subsequently received scant attention from the British.

No. 240 Squadron, equipped with Stranraer Flying Boats, carried out the first sorties from the newly-established base on Lough Erne, styled No. 15 Group Coastal Command, on 21st February 1941, thus bringing Fermanagh into the front line of the 'Battle of the Atlantic'. One of the earliest and most notable successes of planes based at Castle Archdale was the location and chase that resulted in the sinking of the German battleship, *Bismarck*. She had sunk the pride of the British fleet, *HMS Hood*, some days previously. An entry in the Castle Archdale log of May 27th 1941 reads: 'German battleship sunk at 1100 hrs Aircraft of 209 and 240 squadrons operating from this station were responsible…'

The 'nod and a wink' policy of 'neutral Ireland' quickly extended to more than just a shortcut to the Atlantic! As the bombs rained down on Belfast on the night of 15-16 April 1941, a panic-stricken call from the

**Castle Archdale seaplane base from the air**

Six County Security Minister, John Mc Dermott, brought a humanitarian dash by thirteen units of the Dublin Fire Brigade to the rescue of the devastated city.

Other concessions followed. The establishment in June 1941 of an armed air/sea rescue trawler, the Robert Hastie, manned by eleven British personnel, at Killybegs fishing port was shrouded in secrecy. Its purpose was to provide assistance to shipping casualties and to supply planes that had run out of fuel. The need for such a vessel was clearly illustrated the previous April when Pilot Officer Denis Briggs, returning from a routine U-boat patrol, was forced to ditch his Saro Lerwick sea-plane in the sea off Tullan Strand, Co. Donegal, when he ran short of fuel. Watching the descent of the stricken plane Irish army observation posts shortly afterwards beheld the unusual sight of an airplane being towed to Bundoran by a passing fishing boat and immediately reported the incident to HQ.

This was a new dilemma for all involved. Local units of the Army, unaware of decisions made at higher levels, proceeded on the assumption that the crew would be interned for the duration of the war in neutral Ireland and the plane impounded. Following some hasty consultation and diplomatic manoeuvrings a camouflaged Air Force lorry arrived from across the border in Castle Archdale with eighty gallons of aviation fuel. The plane was made ready and took off with its crew for their home base on Lough Erne.

On the evening of December 5th 1942 people from all over North Sligo looked up into a glowering winter sky, watching fearfully as a huge Flying Fortress circled noisily overhead looking for a safe place to land. The *Devil Himself* created a sensation when it dropped safely out of the sky on to Mullaghmore beach. The crew of American officers and airmen were feted in accommodation at the Beach Hotel, Mullaghmore, and at Finner camp, for 17 days while a replacement engine was supplied from Northern Ireland and fitted to the plane. A local man did well when he received two pounds compensation from the Irish Air Corps for damage to 'his' land!

Co-operation between the British and Irish authorities soon became commonplace, eventually becoming so close that in some instances HQ in Athlone could inform Castle Archdale of downed planes in Irish territory before the British even knew they were missing! The struggle was a desperate one but eventually, thanks to Ireland's part in the Battle of the Atlantic, Germany's stranglehold on British shipping was broken.

**Crashed Seaplane at Clonamany, Co. Donegal March 1943**

## Some airplane crashes and forced landings in the Northwest

There were approximately 1,000 wartime crashes and forced landings in the Six Counties and 162 in southern Ireland during the war years. Following are details of some such incidents in south Co. Donegal (Co. Donegal alone accounted for 41), Co. Leitrim, Co. Sligo and Co. Mayo.

**24/1/1941:** At 17.00 hrs, a Lockheed Hudson reconnaissance bomber, R.A.F.233 Squadron; forced landing at Skreen, Co. Sligo (out of fuel). Repaired and flown to Baldonnell at 19.15 hrs on 26/3/41. Four survivors, two missing. Two carrier pigeons taken into custody and sent to the Curragh!

**21/3/1941:** A Catalina Flying Boat from 240 Squadron, Castle Archdale; crashed on the mountain near Glenade, Co. Leitrim. Casualties: nine dead, no survivors. The plane was completely wrecked.

**10/4/1941:** At approximately 14.00hrs, a Saro Lerwick Flying Boat, 209 Squadron, Castle Archdale; forced landing off Tullan Strand, Co. Donegal (out of fuel). Crew of nine, no casualties. Towed to Bundoran, refuelled and took off at 18.45hrs.

**30/4/1941:** Crashed at Askill, on Ballyshannon to Garrison road, Co. Donegal. Based at Limavady. Casualties: none (crew baled out).

**21/7/1941:** At 1900 hrs, a British Lockheed Hudson; forced landing on Tragh Bui, Ballyconnell, Co Sligo, one quarter mile south of Roskeeragh L.O.P. Took off at 13.40hrs for Limavady, N.I. No casualties.

**17/11/1942:** At approximately 16.25hrs, a Catalina Flying Boat; forced landing on Lough Gill, Co. Sligo. On flight from Bermuda to Scotland. Crew of six unhurt. Refuelled and took off at 16.35 hrs on 19/11/42

**5/12/1942:** A B-17 Flying Fortress long-range bomber named *The Devil Himself;* forced landing at Mullaghmore beach, Co. Sligo. Casualties: none. Repaired and took off for Eglinton, N.I. on 22/12/42.

**10/5/1943:** At 09.00hrs, a B-17 Flying Fortress, 524th Bomb Squadron; forced landing at Tullan Strand, Finner, Co. Donegal (out of fuel). Crew of ten unhurt. Mission: Ferry flight from Gander, Newfoundland to Prestwick. Aircraft dismantled and conveyed to N.I on low-loader.

**9/12/1943:** At approximately 17.19hrs, a Flying Fortress B-25 bomber; crashed on Truskmore Mtn., Ballintrillick, Co. Sligo on ferry flight

from Goose Bay, Canada to Prestwick in Scotland. Casualties: three dead, seven injured. Plane a total wreck.

**23/1/1944:** At 18.40 hrs, a British Halifax four-engine bomber; struck cliff at 'Fairy Bridges', Bundoran, Co. Donegal. Completely wrecked. Casualties: six bodies recovered, four washed out to sea.

**31/1/1944:** At app. 23.30hrs, a Sunderland Flying Boat DW 110 from 228 Squadron, Castle Archdale; crashed at Bluestack Mountains near Brockagh, Co. Donegal. Casualties: seven killed, five injured.

**20/02/1944:** At 18.10hrs, forced landing of a B-17 Flying Fortress on Fintragh Strand, Killybegs (out of fuel). Plane submerged at high tide, becoming a total loss. Crew of ten injured but survived.

**5/5/1944:** At 09.15hrs, a U.S. Liberator, B24; forced landing (out of fuel) at Carradreshy, Foxford, Co. Mayo. Crew of ten uninjured.Partially salvaged and handed over to R.A.F., Northern Ireland on 1/6/44.

**19/6/1944:** At 22.50hrs, an American Flying Fortress bomber on land of Hamilton Black at Sheegus, NW of Ballyshannon (engine failure). Crew of ten: two killed, seven injured, one unscathed. Plane badly damaged, handed over to U.S forces in N.I.

**12/8/1944:** At approximately 11.55hrs, a British Sunderland, Squadron RCAF 422, Castle Archdale; crashed at Breesy mountain near Belleek, Co. Fermanagh (engine failure). Crew of 12: three killed. Surviving three engines and rear turret handed over to R.A.F.N.I.

**4/9/1944:** At 2100hrs, a British Swordfish torpedo and reconnaissance biplane; forced landing at Carrowcastle, Skreen, Co. Sligo. Crew of two, no injuries. Stephen Foley's hen-house destroyed, 30 chickens killed and half an acre of cabbage ruined! Plane dismantled and handed over to R.A.F.N.I. on 10/9/44.

**17/12/1944:** At 16.20 hrs, a British Martinet, Squadron 131; forced landing on Classiebawn estate, Mullaghmore, Co. Sligo. Crew of two unhurt. Wreckage salvaged and transferred to R.A.F.N.I. by low loader on 21/12/44.

**14/3/1945:** At 02.30hrs, a British Sunderland from 201 Squadron; crashed on Fintragh Mt. at Clane, Killybegs, Co. Donegal. Crew of 12, all killed. Plane completely wrecked.

**9/2/1945:** At approximately 16.30hrs, a British Halifax four-engine bomber; forced landing in sea one mile East of Mullaghmore Head, Co. Sligo. Crew: three Canadian and three British. Four survivors, two drowned, one body recovered at Rosnowlagh and one at Mountcharles. Privates Herrity and Gilmartin of Mullaghmore L.O.P. commended on prompt reporting to Killybegs lifeboat resulting in prompt rescue of survivors.

**29/7/1945:** At 17.30hrs, an American Lockheed; forced landing (out of fuel) on Frank Trimble's land at Rehins, Ballina, Co. Mayo. Crew of two plus two passengers unhurt. En route from Hendon airbase to St. Angelo, Co. Fermanagh. Plane salvaged and returned to N.I.

Castle Archdale took its name from the Archdale family of Suffolk, England. During the Ulster Plantation they took possession of the confiscated lands of Maguire, O'Neill and O'Donnell who fled Ireland with their families during the 'Flight of the Earls' in 1607. The Archdales built a fortified mansion and added to their estate by purchasing land from other planters who had found the climate too harsh.

Archdale Castle was burned to the ground during the rebellion of 1641. According to tradition, all nine Archdale children perished except the youngest, William, who was saved by his Irish nurse. It was secretly believed that the nurse saved her own son and the Archdale child perished.

Whatever his lineage, William further added to the estates, but fled to England during the Williamite wars in 1689 when Castle Archdale was again burned to the ground. The stones for another castle built by the Archdales in 1773, and demolished in 1970, were taken from the monastery at Kiltierney. Because of this desecration it is said that a curse was pronounced on the family by which no heirs were ever born within its walls!

The Archdales represented Fermanagh in Parliament for an unbroken period of 154 years, a Parliamentary record. By the end of the 19th century their estates amounted to over 33, 000 acres with an annual income of £17, 000 and sufficient ground set aside for the family's pleasure such as a walled garden, rock garden, Japanese garden and formally maintained trees and shrubs.

Following the Wyndham Land Act of 1903, their lands were sold off to the tenants in 1906 thus starting the gradual decline of the Archdale empire.

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Churchill admitted later that this may have been as a result of the distortion of Luftwaffe radio guidance beams by the British in an attempt to bring Ireland into the war.

Francis Daly and his brother William were the Bundoran fishermen who towed the plane to safety. They were paid ten shillings for their efforts. On another occasion they brought a dead airman, found floating in the bay, into the Bundoran boat quay.

**Crashed Seaplane at Clonamany, Co. Donegal March 1943**

# Notes on Toomour Ancient Ecclesiastical Site, Keash, Co. Sligo

*Martin A. Timoney*

**Introduction**

On June 29th, 2011, the Feast of Sts. Peter and Paul, there was a parish mass at Toomour, Keash, Co. Sligo, as part of the build up to the 50th Eucharistic Congress to be held in Dublin in June 2012. Canon James Finan, P.P., asked me to talk about Toomour at the mass in the ancient ecclesiastical site at the south side of Keash mountain Co. Sligo. This article is a reassembled and edited version of the notes that I used at two points during the event, firstly at the sermon stage and then afterwards during a short description of the monuments of the site.

Hopefully, like all good sermons, the message rattled around in the heads of those present in the bitter cold, and had a lasting effect, asking oneself, 'Just what were we taught in school many years ago'!

The period of time we are going back to is 1,600 years, say 60 generations, ten times the length back to the so-called Great Famine. There was a major climatic downturn in 540 AD. The Vikings, the Cambro-Normans, the Reformation all caused considerable change and a great loss of knowledge. The Great Famine, and most people ignore the word 'Great', wiped out memory of the lesser but still significant famine of 1740-1741. Some events were more concerned with taking possession of property, but many of us were taught otherwise. History often has a modern agenda! Climate change, just as economic upheaval, leads to loss of knowledge. How much will be lost in the current economic turmoil?

**Pilgrimage**

A question for every person, not to be answered out loud, just to your own inner self: How often have you gone on pilgrimage? Knock, Croagh Patrick, Lough Derg, Canterbury, Lisseau, Lourdes, Saint Iago de Compostella, Fatima, Cologne, Jerusalem, Rome, Medjugorje, probably immediately spring to mind as places of pilgrimage in our part of the world. But why go so far? When were you in Toomour last?

Have you ever gone on pilgrimage to your own local monastic site, Knockbrack, Templevanny, Emlaghfad, Greenan or Battlefield, or to major ones in the county, Drumcliff, Skreen, Sligo Abbey, Cloonameehan, Carrowntemple or Ballindoon? Personally, I have no desire to go to the international pilgrimage sites, the local ones do me fine and can be most touching; just take the time to stop and say a prayer!

**Toomour Medieval church from the east.**
Photo: Martin A. Timoney.

**Introduction of Christianity to Ireland**

Where did this Christianity come from and how soon? We seldom remember that St. Patrick was sent to minister over the Catholics already present in Ireland. St. Declan of Ardmore in west Waterford gets a mention in our house every St. Patrick's Day, my wife being from Waterford. Perhaps more accurately Patrick was sent to replace Declan's version of Christianity which had come in through southern ports from the Mediterranean areas with the Roman version coming through the Roman Empire from Rome itself!

Palladius, possibly of Auxerre in Roman France, was sent by Celestine, Bishop of Rome, in 431 AD to be bishop to "the Irish believing in Christ", to the followers of Christ already here. To mis-quote Pádraig Ó Riain's recent Dictionary of Irish Saints, 'the scarcity of sources has not stopped scholarly discussion of history and identity in this period'.

We must never underestimate the amount and distances of travel in the past. All through pre-historic times we have objects that indicate long-distance communication within these islands and with Scandinavia, central Europe and the eastern end of the Mediterranean. Those areas traded with us and with trade comes the spread of ideas,

and of a new religion. Just look at what you have absorbed over the last few years. It is quite possible that Christianity arrived on our shores as early as 380 AD, half a century before St. Patrick. Rome is usually given as the source of our Christianity. Some archaeologists, such as Françoise Henry and Hillary Richardson, who have studied the very early remains of Christianity in this country have been drawing attention to early parallels in art with the east Mediterranean and Coptic areas of Egypt.

The recent discovery of an 8th century Psalter in the bog at Faddan More near Birr is having major consequences for what we have been taught. Our National Museum of Ireland has been doing research in conjunction with the conservation of that book. They have discovered pieces of papyrus in the make up of the book cover; the only place they can have come from was the Coptic east. Did our religion initially come from that area as well? Alf Monaghan from Drumsna has lectured about this from his experiences in Coptic Egypt.

**Introduction of Christianity to Keash**

One 'early' reference to Toomour was published by Archdeacon Terence O'Rorke in his History of Sligo in 1889: St. Luidhigh of Cill Easpaig. Luidhigh seems to be the Bishop Lugid who ordained St. Kevin of Glendalough and the same Lughaidh, Bishop of Tuaim-fobhair [O'Rorke 1889, 206-215; Hogan Ononmasticon Goedelicum, 648].

As regards the route in, in our Keash and Culfadda parish history in 2001, we outlined a possible connection at the end of prehistory, the end of the Early Iron Age, between the Rathcroghan near Tulsk in Co. Roscommon, and this Keash area. Rathcroghan was the major Connacht Celtic Iron Age centre in the time just before Christianity. There are links particularly in relation to our mythology. Keash and Rathcroghan can be seen from each other. This close connection may have hastened the arrival of Christianity here. The Discovery Programme is currently looking at the many indicators of contacts with the Roman World and Rathcroghan is being looked at in this regard.

Along the Bóthar an Chorainn, a major route thought to be built by Richard de Burgo and to date to about 1300 AD, there are several churches: Emlaghfad, Knockbrack = Drumrat, Greenan = Temple Ultan, Toomour, Battlefield, Templevanny, the nunnery at Carricknahorna. Some of these sites hint for perhaps a 6th century, if not earlier, date for this route. Were the Caves of Keash an early focus for routes coming from where Ballymote and Boyle are now, the locations linked by Bóthar an Chorainn?

**East gable of Toomour Medieval church from close up.**
Photo: Martin A. Timoney.

**Placename**

Dr. Conchubhar Ó Crualaoich at the Placenames Office informed me that Tuaim Fhobhair could be translated as "mound of (the) spring, well". The evidence does not support derivation from Tuaim Dá Bhodhar "mound of the two deaf persons." In regard to the explanation of Tuaim Fhobhair, that exact meaning of tuaim is sometimes unclear, as tuaim can signify '"a flank ridge or side... a moat, mound or bank... a knap, tump or hillock, also a tomb, grave or sepulchre, Lat. tumulus... a town or fortress... a townland or farm... a front or face'... Frequently in place-names (in some cases meaning 'burial mound, tumulus"' (DIL túaim).

Two archaeological mounds are recorded in this townland in which case tuaim may refer to one of these. Fobhar is explained as meaning "well, spring" (see Ó Dónaill fobhar), in which Tuaim Fhobhair could then be translated as "mound of (the) spring, well"; a number of springs and wells are found in this townland; Kingstone may be the closest.

**Recent History**

We came to Keash in summer 1985, but I had been to Keash many times in the decade before that and took notes in October 1974 and May 1983. I got to know Paddy McDonagh, Paddy Costello's uncle, who lived in the adjacent house. He was interested in someone who was interested in his bit of our heritage and I came back a number of times and gathered a good feeling of the place from him.

About 1988 three people using a metal detector found at least some modernish coins on the site. This led to National Monument Service becoming very concerned. Sometime later, the farm was bought by Josie and Mary Cryan; I suggested swopping a piece of

land Cryan had sold to County Council years ago for this site. The State moved slowly, but it happened, and this site is now in county care, something we have far too little of. A local group erected an information plaque and had a conservation plan drawn up by Shirley Markey of North West Archaeological Services.

**Enclosure and Features**

Early ecclesiastical sites have round enclosures. At Carrowntemple, south of Gurteen, there are three, one within the other, totalling as much as 20 acres. Here at Toomour, Shirley Markey raised the possibility of an enclosure showing on the east side. I wonder if the curvature of the lane passing George and Martha Garvey's house continues north of the road, out behind Paddy McDonough's house, a sector of about 60 degrees indicates the line of the enclosure on the west side.

**Altar**

Within the inner enclosure there is a leacht, an altar, with at least four Early Christian cross slabs and some rounded praying stones. The leacht is probably the earliest feature on site. Leacht does not refer just to the slab on the ground in front of the altar but to the whole altar and its various part.

The slab in front of the altar has depressions, crosses and scorings. These depressions, known to archaeologists as 'bullauns', may have been for crushing metal ore. The scorings are often thought to be plough marks but may have a purposeful explanation.

Fr. Pat McDermott, C.C. here 1885-1888, lived in what is now Canon Finan's house during Fr. Patrick Scully's time as P.P. here. He was sent by Archdeacon O'Rorke to look for the bones of the Kings killed at the Battle of Keash in 971, a battle between the Northeners and the Connachtmen. He dug three feet under the slab and several bones were found - 'They seem to have been there for ages.'

There are three other cross slabs known from here: a slab that had been broken in the past was repaired by John Corcoran of OPW in Dromahaire, the arms and top of the cross unusually extend beyond the face of the slab; a small recently broken unique slab; a now missing squarish slab with superimposed crosses, but it has gone and been returned before. There are also rounded stones, praying stones or cursing stones, like those at Clogher Monasteraden, Ballysumaghan Ballintogher and Inishmurray; the number here seems to vary over time, or perhaps it is just what we count.

**Early Altar with 'praying stones' at Toomour, Co. Sligo.**
Photo: Martin A. Timoney.

There is also a rectangular block with a hole through it that Josie Cryan found outside in the field on the northwest side. At my prompting he took it in to near the site; later it was put on the altar. It has absolutely nothing to do with a holed stone in the gable wall of the church, and may have nothing to do with this site at all.

**Stone from an earlier church built into the corner of Toomour Medieval church, Co. Sligo.**
Photo: Martin A. Timoney.

I would have written a very different archaeological section on the altar to that in the report of some years ago. When I tried to provide information at the end of a lecture in the parish hall some years ago I was treated to something I have never experienced in over forty years in Sligo and Irish archaeology! It would have been hard for those parishioners present to make sense of it all, but that is for the memoirs!

**Church**

The recent report on the church provides a badly needed plan of the church. The church is medieval in date, perhaps 13th century, with the west end used as a dwelling but that was altered later on.

Early churches were of wood, and later of stone. Surviving early church buildings in Co. Sligo are all late in the Early Christian period; only Corcorans Acres in Templeboy has an early type of doorway and some of the buildings on Inishmurray, Templeronan on the north shore of Lough Gara and parts of St. Fechin's at Ballisodare are early.

The church as it stands is Medieval in date and there is at least one

reused stone at the northeast corner; it could be from an earlier building on this site or the taking of sanctity from an ancestral church. I listed Sligo priest's residences in A Celebration of Sligo: Ballynaglough, Kilross, Aughris, Killeaspugbrone, Shancough, Grange More, Church Island, Drumbcolumb and Drumcliff; Taghmon in Westmeath is best surviving example. The west end of Toomour church could have been such a residence.

We have no record of when Toomour church was last used. There is a praying stone that is a cure for a pain in the back in the east wall of the church.

Even though there are no headstones and only a few marking stones, there have been burials within living memory. Some human bones have become exposed in recent years and you are walking on graves no matter where you are within the recent sheepwire fence.

**Early cross-slab with complex design at Toomour, Co. Sligo.** Photo: Martin A. Timoney.

**Adjacent Sites**

There are several sites and places of importance in the general area. Kingstone Well is a few fields away to the east and there is a stone with three pairs of holes and a circle, which Michael Brennan told me of, on the south side of a curiously shaped hill west of the well. In 2012 there was another parish gathering, this time at Kingstone Well, where Canon Finan recited prayers.

There is a Land League house to the north of the church. Cormac's Well is opposite John and Elizabeth Frehill's. Looking down on all are the internationally renowned Caves of Keash, a mountain associated with the Diarmuid and Grainne mythology cycle. Perhaps Lughaidh, the Bishop of Tuaim-fobhair, referred to above, is a reflection of the pagan deity Lugh.

**A Final Thought**

Superlatives, 'greatest', 'oldest' and so on, are often used about places like these. When it comes to early archaeology one should not absolutely state that any site is the earliest, but we can try! And we can enjoy working out our past. Toomour is not certainly the earliest in these parts. There is a convenient path in from the roadside parking area to this special early monastic site, a place of pilgrimage in the past and the present, where you can enjoy a taste of archaeology and history while saying a prayer!

# Treasured Memories

*John McDonagh*

The big machines have done their work
There's nothing left to show
That a little farmstead prospered here
So many years ago
A little house, with golden thatch,
Whitewashed walls so clean
Turf smoke curling upwards
In a landscape so serene

The byre where the cows were milked
The shed where calves were reared,
Just like the little farm-house
They've gone, long disappeared
The plot where vegetables were grown
And tended with such care
By special people, old and bent
Is now no longer there

In self-sufficient wealth they lived
With cash almost unknown
In prosperous contentment
And happiness, home grown.
I still can see the cheerful hearth,
The chairs around the flame
The rosary beads hung on a nail
Holy pictures in their frame.
People, simple, yet so proud
And so adverse to change
No need to travel with the crowd
No use for new or strange

They did what they had always done
With diligence and pride
Until bent and spent, but still content
Their time came and they died.
The little house and buildings
That once adorned this place
Were ruthlessly demolished
And buried without trace.
The diggers and the dozers
Levelled out the homely fields
In an unrelenting scramble
For more and higher yields,

But a poignant memory remains
In a hedge that has survived--
Each June white roses blossoms through,
To show Summer has arrived
A little show of happiness
In a culture brown and plain
Through briar, bush and thorn they come
On a long deserted lane

Perhaps it's to reflect the love
That was lavished on this place,
The care and dedication
Of a long forgotten race
To show a soulless, heartless land,
No matter what we do
The rose, like treasured memories
Will still come peeping through

# Madam Felicity MacDermot

*Frank Tivnan*

Madam Felicity Julia Mary MacDermot died last March at St. John's Hospital, Sligo, at the age of 89. Her passing has left many people feeling a little diminished. Felicity was the youngest child of Edward Terence MacDermot and his wife Margaret MacTernan Jackson, who lived at Lillycombe, Porlock, Somerset, England.

Madam Felicity, as she was popularly known, belonged to the Carrowmore Boyle branch of the MacDermots. Her father was a lawyer and a writer of note who penned among other books *The History of the Forest of Exmoor* and *History of The Great Western Railway.*

She was educated at the Franciscan convent at Taunton, Somerset. One of her teachers was a member of the noble and staunch Catholic family of Bedingfield of Oxborough Hall, Norfolk.

Felicity married Charles John MacDermot, Prince of Coolavin, in 1954, at the church of the Holy Redeemer and St. Thomas More, Cheyne Row, Chelsea, London. Together they lived at the beautiful Coolavin House, designed by James Franklin Fuller. They worked very hard on the estate farm and did much to improve the locality both culturally and economically.

Madam Felicity was a very intelligent and witty lady who was ever willing to share her great knowledge with scholars and students, especially in the fields of archaeology, history and genealogy. She was a great hostess and welcomed scholars from around the world, even though many of the visits were impromptu. Her husband Prince Charles John (Bay) died on May 7th,1979. Bay was educated at Stonyhurst Jesuit College in Lancashire and Trinity College, Dublin. Before taking over Coolavin he tended a rubber plantation in Malaya.

Felicity was a staunch Catholic whose faith and behaviour were firmly rooted in the four gospels. She hated hypocrisy and always communicated with people in an honest and open manner.

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam dílis I geonaí.

***Photo Taken on 04/05/1973 in St. Mary's College, Boyle, on the occasion of Dr. Catherine Simms lecture on 'The Annals of Loch Cé', sponsored by St. Mary's Past Pupils Union.***

**Front row left to right: Madam Felicity MacDermot; Charles John, Prince of Coolavin; Dr. Catherine Simms; Very Rev. Cannon Thomas Mahon P.P, Boyle.**

**Back row left to right: MacDara Coll, John Connolly, Barry Feely, Joe Cryan, Frank Tivnan and Seamus Flynn.**

# From Heapstown to New South Wales: A Family Saga in Famine Times

John C. McTernan

In March 1833, three men from the Heapstown area named John Tighe, Owen Conlon and James McAndrew, were indicted at the Sligo Assizes of causing the death of a young boy named Thomas McDonagh. He died of head injuries received in a beating, the circumstances of which were not disclosed in court. The boy died in the Sligo Infirmary a month later in September 1832. On the evidence before them the jury found the defendants guilty of manslaughter and Judge Burton sentenced both John Tighe and James McAndrew to transportation for seven years.

Over the following six months both men were incarcerated in Sligo Gaol while transport was being arranged. Eventually, they were transported to Cork and placed on board the convict ship Parmelia for the long voyage to Tasmania, where they disembarked in January 1834. John Tighe was then thirty-four years of age, of dark complexion, five foot six inches in height. Seven years after arriving, in 1841, he received his Certificate of Freedom and initially found employment as a farm labourer, He subsequently became eligible for a land grant and settled at Wollongong, New South Wales, where he farmed extensively and lived out the remainder of his life.

John Tighe left behind him at Heapstown his wife, Mary, nee McDonagh, and two daughters, Honora, aged five, and Mary, aged one year. Having completed his sentence the former convict communicated regularly by letter with his family but as his wife was illiterate he channelled the correspondence via Revd. B. Hester, the then parish priest in Riverstown who communicated their contents to the family,

One such letter, dated March 1848, reached Revd. Edward Feeney, who had replaced Hester as Parish Priest, the following August. He immediately notified John's wife, Mary. Some days later she called to the parochial residence and was present when the good pastor hand wrote the following letter to Mery's husband, John, in far off Australia.

*Riverstown, Co. Sligo.*
*18th Aug. 1848*
*John Tighe,*

*Your letter of March 20th to Revd. Mr Hester reached me this week. On receipt of your letter I sent for your wife as I am well acquainted with all your family and friends since I came to this parish five years ago. Your two daughters are also alive, the eldest, Honora, was married by me three years ago to a young man, John McDonagh of Drumshinnagh. They have one child, a son, about two years old. I can confirm that your son-in-law, John McDonagh, is a well conducted, honest and industrious young man and very willing to work and earn for his family if there was any employment to be had.*
*The second girl, Mary, has been living with her uncle, Patt, McDonagh of Annaghcarty for two to three years. She is an industrious and becoming young girl. Your wife has been living in Annaghcarty, also Honora and her husband in a house belonging to Patt. McDonagh, her brother.*
*Your brother Hugh Tighe left this country for America about twelve weeks ago. He had often mentioned to me that he would strive to travel as far as you if the Lord spared him. Your mother died last April twelve months. Your sister Nancy and husband are still living in Heapstown but in poor circumstances. You no doubt have heard of the great poverty and distress in this country for the last two years. Things are no better this year, the potato crop is entirely blighted in this district.*
*Your wife, Mary, got two letters from you since last Christmas and her replies were sent off by Hugh. She is most anxious to get as far as you and begs you to exert yourself to get her out. She is at my side as I write and requests me to send you her most affectionate love. If you could send a remittance of some money to her it would indeed be greatly wanted as she is very destitute of help. The entire family are most desirous to join you if only they could get their passage out there. It would be considered the greatest blessing.*
*Your wife expected I would write a few lines from herself to you at the end of this letter but I have not left myself any space. I remain, your friend,*

*Edward Feeney, PP.*

The original of this letter, which reveals the tragedy of an entire family in Famine times, was found in the New South Wales State Archives some years ago by an Australian genealogist, Richard Reid, who subsequently visited Heapstown and verified the Tighe family details in the parish register with the assistance of the late Canon McLoughlin, P. P, Riverstown.

Further researches in Australia revealed that almost a decade after Fr. Feeney's letter, Mary Tighe, John's wife, his two daughters and their families had their passages paid and in 1857 a joyful reunion took place at Wollongong, New South Wales. Both John and Mary Tighe died in 1880 leaving their two married daughters and numerous grand-children to mourn their passing.

# John Taaffe of Kingsfort, Drumrane and The Windy Gap

*Neal Farry*

**The Chapel of the Sacred Heart (1845) at Lough Talk that was largely financed by Jack Taaffe. Reproduced with the kind permission of the Diocese of Achonry.**

In the early years of the 17th century during the reign of James I, Sir James Fullerton assigned Ballymote Castle and its lands to Sir William Taaffe of County Louth. Sir William, although a Catholic, was a firm Royalist. Sir William brought many of his cousins from the Pale and gave them holdings in Co. Sligo. One of these was Christopher Taaffe of Balbriggan, Co. Dublin, who became the ancestor of the Taaffes of Ballinaglough and Rathnary, now known as Kingsfort, both townlands being in the vicinity of Ballymote. Christopher Taaffe was assigned the church lands of Ballinaglough.

The Taaffes of Ballymote remained staunchly Catholic and distinguished themselves in the military service of Catholic Monarchs in Ireland and all over Europe during the 1600s and 1700s. The Taaffes of Ballinaglough conformed to the Established Church in 1723. A descendant of that branch of the family, i.e. John Taaffe, who later resided in Kingsfort house, and who lived during the latter half of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century, adhered to the reformed faith.

John Taaffe, who bore the nickname 'Mad Jack Taaffe', in the words of local historians Rev. Archdeacon O'Rourke and J.C. McDonagh, was a hard-drinking, riotous-living, hospitable, good- natured oddity, who was worshipped by the peasantry as their champion against the establishment bucks, squireens and half-mounted gentry. He was always on the lookout for a duel and consequently docked the manes and tails of his horses in a most grotesque manner, so that if any gentleman laughed at them, this would provide a pretext for a challenge by Jack to an affair of honour – in these situations, a duel with pistols.

John McTernan has recorded an entry in *Faulkner's Journal* as follows: "Sligo, March 25th, 1794. Yesterday morning a duel was fought in Boyle, Co. Roscommon between John Taaffe, Esq. of Kingsfort and James Bridgham Esq. of Carrowcawley, both of Ballymote in this county. After two shots each the matter was happily terminated by the interference of seconds and a number of friends." The precise location of the duel was the yard of the Rockingham Arms Hotel in Boyle. James Bridgham lived in Earlsfield House which subsequently became the Convent of Mercy. Bridgham was the Land Agent for the Fitzmaurice Estate in Ballymote. In 1805 Camphill House in Collooney was sublet by Abraham Martin of Sligo to Jack Taaffe.

As a resident of Kingsfort, Jack Taaffe was a tenant on the Ballymote estate of Thomas Fitzmaurice. Taaffe was evicted from the Kingsfort holding and took up residence in a gentleman farmer's house that he owned at Drumrane in Bunninadden parish. The Taaffes had owned landed property in this area since the 1600s. Soon afterwards Kingsfort House went up in flames and naturally Jack Taaffe was the chief suspect for possible arson. Jack had many of the local gentry on his side and Gowan Gilmor and Rev. Mr. William King-Duke of Newpark House bailed him for £1,000 to appear before the Spring Assizes of 1818 in Sligo. At Jack's trial the untrustworthy evidence of the prosecution witnesses was so apparent that the trial collapsed. The case against Jack Taaffe was further discredited later that year when the prosecution witnesses came forward during a Mission in the Catholic Church in Ballymote, now the Loftus Hall, and publicly confessed their perjury against Jack Taaffe. Mrs. Bridget Reynolds now resides in the Drumrane farmhouse.

A poor tenant, Jemmy Jordan, was accused of being Jack's accomplice. He was not so fortunate and was condemned to be flogged through the streets of Ballymote. Jordan bore his ordeal unflinchingly and on the completion of the torture astonished the onlookers by throwing his cap in the air and giving three cheers for Jack Taaffe.

Although Jack performed the role of champion for the poor people he could be rigid in imposing discipline on his own workers. He gained some notoriety in Drumrane for a workplace incident involving his own steward. Once as he was leaving home for a number of

days, Jack directed his steward to build a winter's supply of turf at a certain place in the farmyard. The steward, on taking home the turf from the bog, found that Jack's chosen location was unsuitable and built the stack in another part of the yard. Taaffe, on returning home, perceived the change and immediately ordered the turf to be carted back to the bog, restacked there, and then carted back to the farmyard to the place he had directed before leaving home.

In the late 1700s Jack purchased approximately 7,000 acres of mountain pasture in the Ox Mountains and this area near Lough Talt is still known as Taaffe's Mountain. Jack and his mother took up residence in the Glenesk Estate in the Windy Gap. Jack was bilingual and at this time before the Famine, Irish was still widely spoken all over South Sligo and the gentry were as proficient in the local language as the poorer people.

Dr. Douglas Hyde, in his book about the life, poetry and songs of the celebrated Antoine O Raifteiri, entitled *Abhrain agus Danta an Reachtabhraigh* gives us an insight into the personality and lifestyle of Jack Taaffe. Dr. Hyde points out that the usual pronunciation of the Taaffe name in Sligo and Mayo was 'Taef'.

Frank Taaffe of Killeaden (Cill Aodain) near Kiltimagh was the patron of the poet Raftery, and he is celebrated in the final lines of Raftery's poem or song 'Cill Aodain'. In translation it goes like this:

*The end of the talk is this: 'Long life to Frank Taaffe there',*
*The descendant of the Lynch of hospitality, who never spared the hunt.*

Dr. Hyde continued his story in the following vein: It was worthwhile to further describe the Taaffes among whom Raftery spent his youth. Another member of the Mayo Taaffes, Seamus Óg, was married to a sister of Cinty O'Rourke, the Ballincurry gentleman who lost his life in a duel with Mr. Perceval in County Sligo. Ballincurry is in the Curry parish.

Duelling was very prevalent at that time but Seamus Óg Taaffe was under a clear instruction to avoid this form of combat because he had taken out an insurance policy on his own life. As a result of this restriction he was compelled to send for a cousin of his to be a proxy duelist for him when the occasion arose. This cousin was none other than Jack Taaffe of Ballymote, who at that time was residing in the Windy Gap with his mother. This is a story about the man that I heard from my friend, John Rogers (Sean O Ruaidhri) and I will retell it in his own words:

**Ballymote Castle**

"One time a dispute arose between Seamus Óg Taaffe and a British officer about a matter of religion, on a night when they were drinking after a day's hunting. Things turned violent and in the ensuing struggle Seamus threw the officer on his rear end into the fire. Not surprisingly the offended officer challenged Seamus to a duel for the following morning in Ballaghaderreen. Seamus immediately sent a messenger by the name of Dominick Wynne to Jack Taaffe with a request for Jack to fight the duel in his place.

"Dominick went down to the Ox Mountains to Jack Taaffe's home in Glenesk. Because Seamus Taaffe was a Catholic, Dominick was under the impression that Jack Taaffe's people were of the same persuasion, which was not the case. It was late at night when Dominick dismounted at the Taaffe house but Jack had already retired to bed. Jack's mother was still up, and when she heard the story she addressed Dominick in Irish in the following terms: 'What kind of a delusion comes over your master when he knows right well that he is totally barred from fighting duels?' 'Ho ho', said Dominick 'sure your Jack is the boy who wouldn't be long throwing a Protestant into the fire as well'. With this statement he could not make out why the woman of the house was inflicting painful pinches on his thighs. But when she heard the whole story about the cause of the quarrel her tune changed and she became as wrathful as Dominick and his master, a kinsman of the Taaffes, Seamus Óg Taaffe.

"Jack Taaffe was aroused from his slumber and down the road galloped the pair of them, mounted on two fine horses, until they were on the street in Ballaghaderreen before day break. Jack began cleaning his pistols without dismounting and firing shots in the air that quickly awakened and alarmed the people of the town. These good folk were convinced that the French were back in their midst. But after all

that no duel materialised because the army officer conceded and both parties reached a settlement. Jack Taaffe was none the worst for the incident."

Colonel Woodmartin has noted that at the commencement of the 19th century a slate quarry was opened by Mr. Taaffe near Lough Talt but it proved a failure. Jack Taaffe is also credited with building a road from Lough Talt to Lough Esk.

John C. McTiernan illuminates another aspect of the life and career of Jack Taaffe. John describes the activities of the Irish Waste Land Society that was established in London in 1836. As part of the work of this society, large tracts of mountain land were acquired in Ireland by 99-year leaseholds at a low rent and re-let in allotments of from 15 to 25 acres on leases of twenty-one years at rents rising gradually from 4 shillings to 10 shillings an acre, main drainage and roads being attended to by the society.

Among the properties acquired in 1838 for this purpose was the Taaffe estate at Glenesk, embracing 6,000 acres of Taaffe's Mountain stretching over ten miles from Lough Talk to Lough Easkey. Within a year, upwards of forty families had taken up tenancies. By 1844 about 1,000 Irish acres had been reclaimed at a cost of £2,250 and was sub-let to sixty tenants whose combined rents yielded in the region of £450 a year. It is worth noting that the Waste Land Society was paying Jack Taaffe rent of £600 per annum under the overall lease and, in spite of the best efforts of the society and the sub-tenants, the project was never an economic success from a venture capital point of view.

Nevertheless a thriving village quickly developed. This was comprised of a police station, a porter's lodge, a national school and a chapel. The chapel was commenced in 1837. John McTernan and Fr. Liam Swords tell us that the landowner, Jack Taaffe, donated a free site for the chapel and initiated the subscription list. There were forty-seven tenants living on the Glenesk Esate in 1837, and they needed to walk from four to nine Irish miles to church on a Sunday in the old chapels of Kilmactigue and Tourlestrane. This project did not get co-operation from the administrator of Kilmactigue Parish, Fr. Daniel Mullarkey, probably because he was at the same time engaged in the construction of a new chapel in Tourlestrane. When additional funds were not forthcoming for the Glenesk development, Jack Taaffe, almost single-handedly, financed the building of the Catholic chapel on his estate. This chapel of the Sacred Heart at Lough Talt is in use to this day. J.C. McDonagh believes that he had just completed this work in 1845 shortly before his death.

The Irish Waste Land Society had invested £8,000 in the reclamation of the mountainous estate by 1848 and the tenants had made commendable efforts in working the land, successfully growing a wide range of vegetables and supporting a greater number of farm animals than was usual at that time on comparable holdings. However, in 1850 the company was wound up, partly due to the onslaught of the Famine, but principally as a result of mounting losses, and the estate was advertised for letting, pending redemption. By 1880 the number of tenants had dwindled to fifty, and many of the houses built by the Waste Land Company had fallen into disrepair or were uninhabited, and the reclaimed land had gone back to heath and grass and rushes. In 1901 Glenesk Estate had thirty-seven families and a population of 182.

Padraig Doddy informs us that Jack Taaffe married a lady from Staffordshire, England, and they had two daughters. John Taaffe the Younger is likely to have been the only male issue of the union. Jack's wife died in Jersey in 1846.

Jack Taaffe's property passed on to his only son John Taaffe the Younger, who lived with his wife, Julia Ann Trafford of Hertfortshire, and his family in Rathgar, Dublin. In 1915 Dr. Fredick Taaffe, a son of John Taaffe the Younger, sold Glenesk to the Congested District's Board who carried out many improvements. Eventually the lands at Glenesk were divided among the landowners of the area and much of it was turned over to forestry.

In the year 2000 just two families resided in the townlands of Glenesk Estate and numerous ruined houses dotted the landscape. No trace remains of Jack Taaffe's Hunting Lodge. The steward's residence which was built by the Waste Land Society in 1839 is now the residence of the Forde family.

Archdeacon O'Rorke has recorded a story that aptly sums up the personality of Jack Taaffe. Jack was informed that one of his friends and a supportive second during all of his duelling exploits was on his deathbed. This gentleman, one Captain F…. was resisting the efforts of the parson to bring him to a Christian frame of mind and the frustrated clergyman was compelled to leave him to his fate. Jack rushed to his friend's bedside to act as 'a second in the affair'. During his friend's final moments Jack kept appealing to him to 'despise the devil as I would if I were in your place' and adding, every now and then, with a string of the wildest oaths in Irish, that Jack Taaffe feared nothing or nobody in this world or in the next.

John McTernan tells us that Jack Taaffe returned to live in Drumrane in his declining years to the farm which he had held on a lease. John McTernan and Padraig Doddy have noted two advertisements in the *Sligo Journal*, dated 1834 and 1841 respectively, offering the Taaffe Drumrane farm of 40 acres of arable land and 60 acres of bog for rent. The farmyard boasted a coach house and stabling for eleven horses.

The Irish Poor Law Act of 1838 divided the country into 130 Unions, in each of which was built a Workhouse for the

relief of the distressed. The Workhouses were administered by a Board of Guardians, consisting of representative ratepayers of the Union. The first elections of the Poor Law Guardians were held in August 1839. John Taaffe was elected to represent Cloonoghill in the Bunninadden area. The new Workhouse in Ash Lane in Sligo was completed in 1841 at a cost of £12,842.

J.C. McDonagh says that Jack Taaffe died in 1845 and was interred in Emlaghfad Churchyard. The Ballymote historian tells a story that illustrates the cherished memories the people of the locality had of Taaffe. When a wheelwright named Jemmy Taaffe came under the influence of drink, he used to immediately head for Emlaghfad to pray for Jack's soul. His friends pointed out that Jack, as a Protestant, did not care for such prayers. Jemmy always replied that after his death Jack would have changed his mind and now would have no objections to prayers for the dead.

John McTernan has recorded the fact that Ballytivnan House in Sligo, the property of the Griffith family, was occupied by Jack Taaffe, the noted duelist, formerly of Drumraine House, in January 1839 when the roof was badly damaged on 'The Night of the Big Wind'. John says that Jack Taaffe died at this suburban residence in August 1840 at an advanced age.

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# Carbide Story

*James P Kilcoyne*

Carbide was once a common fuel but it's mostly forgotten now. It was made in the mill in Collooney where I worked for some time in the mid 1940s. In the early 1900s it was made in the same part of the mill, but discontinued for some reason or other.

Three men who had worked at the mill at the start of the 1900s were brought back to get the carbide session going again in the 1940s. They were Johnny Haran RIP, Paddy Haran, cousin of Johnny, and Packie Gallagher RIP.

Carbide was made of three different substances – coal, coke and lime. Coke and coal we then granulated as the lime had already gone through that process. The mixture was pushed down a chute to the floor of the building below. There was a big connector over the furnace known as an 'electrode'. The electrode was connected to eight dynamos in the dynamo room down another floor level.

The electrode was lowered by wheel for three shifts per day, 8-4, 4-12 and 12-8. We all worked revolving shifts each week.

It was then ready for 'tapping' which was done by a small electrode fixed to a 14-foot bar. One man pushed this bar into the opening on the bottom end of the furnace.

Having made a connection with the bar to the bottom end of the furnace, it made a small opening. Out of this opening came the finished product carbide, which lit up houses all around the country.

The carbide was then filled, a boiling hot red colour, into a large container. The opening in the kiln was blocked by a small timber block. This was attached to another pole, which was used to close the kiln minutes before more carbide was produced.

The finished carbide was on the floor below and brought up to the third floor by a bogey. Here it was granulated again and then packed into twenty gallon tins. After this it was sent to Dublin via horse and cart to Collooney station and sent to Charles Tenant.

I worked in the dynamo room by myself. For a shift I would be taking care of the machinery, checking bearings and anything else that might go wrong with the machines.

It was not all gloom here. I used to go to the butcher shop for lamb chops on the evening shift,4-12, and I cooked them on the head of a shovel over the carbide in a matter of seconds. They were lovely.

My wages was £2 per week, no extra pay for unsocial hours, just a couple of extra bob for working Saturday night and Sunday morning.

Carbide is now gone and heard of no more. Tonnes and tonnes were made each week. I am the only one now living who worked there at that time, and I am thinking of contacting the host of Julius Caesar who may escort me over the Rubicon as he did himself in 49BC.

# Joseph Myles McDonnell of Doocastle

*John McTernan*

Joseph Myles McDonnell (1794-1872) of Doocastle was one of the best-known and most fascinating characters in the West of Ireland in the mid 19th century. He was a typical country squire of the old school, beloved by his tenantry and esteemed far and wide as a sportsman. Although he was a married man with a large family, he is reported to have led the most bohemian of lives in an era of high drinking and endless partying, According to his friend and kinsman, M. McDonnell Bodkin, Q.C., his fame as a wit was widely known whilst his playing of his silver-mounted bagpipes was a treat not to be missed. The bagpipes were a gift from his blood relation, Philip Phillips of Cloonmore, subsequently Bishop of Achonry, while studying at Salamanca.

Joseph Myles McDonnell was the eldest son of Myles McDonnell of Doocastle

and his wife, Mary Anne Hughes. Shortly after coming of age he built a large two-storey thatched house, which he named Doo Castle, and in 1828 married Eleanor Lynch from Ballinasloe who is said to have had her weight in gold in the form of a dowry. A man of herculean build and over six foot tall, he entertained highly and regularly, and it was a common sight to witness coaches emerging from his avenue at daybreak. A leading sportsman, he kept a pack of beagles which he housed in the ruins of the old castle that stood close to his residence. He was also into race horses and held meetings on the nearby turlough, aping the landed gentry. Together with his family he regularly holidayed on Coney Island, and in August 1857 he was the principal organiser of a race meeting on the adjacent Dorran's Strand.

During his lifetime he was widely known as 'Joe Mor' and was commemorated in a planxty, two verses of which ran as follows in translation:

*Long life to Your Honour,*
*Joe Mor Myles MacDonnell,*
*Of far famed Doo Castle in the County of Mayo*
*In a title of honour*
*You're the bright Star of Connacht*
*And in the Irish character your name is Joe Mor.*

*At the door of Doo Castle*
*He vaults to his saddle*
*And away with him coursing and sporting go leor,*
*In winning or fighting*
*In speeching or writing*
*He bears off the palm for the County Mayo.*

'Joe Mor' was a magistrate of both Sligo and Mayo. In that capacity he gained general popularity in his application of the law, which he never enforced too harshly, and as a result the country people held him in high esteem. In January 1846 the Sligo Champion described him as "the poor man's Magistrate, warm hearted, kind, conciliatory, whose deliberations appeared more in the character of a councillor and a friend than a judge." In contrast with his demeanour on the bench, he rarely missed out on collecting his rents which he desperately required to meet his mounting bills. He had a widespread reputation, regretfully founded on fact, that he squandered money and piled up debts wherever he went.

McDonnell's entry into politics dated from 1828 when he became a founding member and Vice-Chairman of the Sligo Liberal and Independent Club. A decade later in 1837 he canvassed widely for his nephew, Daniel Jones of Banada, the Liberal candidate in the Parliamentary election of that year in which a kidnapping affair in the Cloonacool district led to the wrongful imprisonment of Fr. Patrick Spelman, a Tubbercurry curate. McDonnell was enraged by the action of the police, and in his capacity as a local Magistrate he almost single-handedly rescued the curate from the local police barracks – a feat that made him an idol in the eyes of the Liberal supporters.

Daniel O'Connell's Repeal Movement had McDonnell's full backing and he was one of the first to join its ranks. In 1846 he was selected as the Repeal candidate for North Mayo, and with the backing of the clergy was returned by a majority of sixty votes over no less an opponent than George Henry Moore of Moorehall, who ran as an Independent. Although generally a silent member at Westminister, the North Mayo representative was unsurpassed as a stump orator during electioneering campaigns, and his ready wit and repartee invariably captivated his audiences. On the dissolution of Parliament in 1848, Moore romped home with a large majority while 'Joe Mor' was humiliated with a meagre return of sixty-one votes, an outcome that left him beggared by the extent of the debts he had incurred during a disastrous campaign.

While the two elections in quick succession cost him a lot of money, much more than he could afford, sport and gambling proved to be his downfall. He borrowed heavily from Brett's Bank in Tubbercurry and never repaid. Such were the number of his creditors that he is said to have engaged henchmen to protect him from physical harm and keep the bailiff from the door. Time

eventually caught up with him, and following the introduction of the Encumbered Estates Act of 1852, a decree for £10,000 was made against him and he was obliged to hand over most of his property to his debtors. In 1873 the Landed Estates Court made an order for the sale of what remained of his estate with only the demesne lands remaining for the time being in the possession of his grandson, Martin Darcy.

In the early 1860s McDonald's stately home, Doo Castle, was accidently burned to the ground after the thatched roof caught fire. Further misfortune followed when all his family predeceased him leaving three grandchildren alone as survivors. In his declining years he took up residence at Rathmines at the home of Dr. John Hughes, possibly a relation on his mother's side. He died there in January 1872, aged 78 years, and lies at rest in an unmarked grave in Glasnevin cemetery. The *Sligo Champion* in its obituary exclaimed that with his passing "went the last type of an Irish country gentleman, a prince of hospitality, brimful of humour, teeming with anecdote and the best shot in Connaught."

Such was the life and times of Joe Mor McDonnell, whom the late Dr. John Garvin described as "a wild Irish Chief born too late for chieftaincy".

# Some Important Discoveries That Came About By Accident

*P.J. Duffy*

**Match Stick**

Back in 1826, John Walker, a County Durham pharmacist, was using a stick to stir a mixture of potash and antimony. After finishing his work he left the stick aside, but some of the mixture stuck to the tip of the stick and dried out. Days later, when the stick was touched against a stone, it burst into flames. This incident, we are told, resulted in the discovery of match sticks.

**Penicillin**

In 1928 a London-based bacteriologist was working in his laboratory in St. Mary's hospital in London. It was a warm autumn day, so he opened out the room's window to let in some fresh air. The man was Dr. Alexander Flemming and he was searching for an antibiotic to kill off bacteria quickly.

On his lab table he had a glass dish containing staphylococcus aureus, one of the most resistant types of bacteria. After retiring for a break for a meal, he returned only to find hordes of spores drifting in through the open window and coming to settle on his open dish of bacteria. Observing the procedure through a magnifying glass he was amazed to discover that these sudden movements of spores were quickly killing off his bacteria. Later he consulted with a German bio-chemist named Ernest Chain and by 1940 they produced penicillin, an antibiotic that was later to save millions of lives.

**Sulphate Of Copper**

Ever since the failure of the potato crop due to blight, people redoubled their efforts to find a solution to this problem. During the 1840 - 1850 period the only preventative known to them was spraying with lime and water. Although some people would say it worked, by and large it did not prove successful.

Then we had the story of the farmer who always sprayed his crop in time and sprayed quite often. His neighbour, a reckless gentleman was known to neglect his crop. Both men came to have their potato crops situated side by side on a conacre field. As usual, the practical man attended to his crop with meticulous care, while his neighbour was seen to neglect his. The practical man filled a clean wooden barrel with clear water, added his lime and sprayed his crop. His neighbour came along with an old copper container heavily coated with a bluish sulphur-ish substance and filled it with water. The weather turned out wet, preventing him from getting out his spray. The result was his container full of water was there for over a week. When he eventually got around to spraying, the water in the container had turned to a bluish-green colour.

He nevertheless got on with the job. After some period of time had passed, the practical man was amazed to find out that his crop had been completely ruined with blight, whereas his reckless neighbour's crop was entirely free from the disease.

He consulted with his agricultural adviser, and after a thorough investigation it was discovered that the coating inside the copper container was responsible for preventing the fungus from taking hold, and so was discovered sulphate of copper.

# School Through The Years in Meenmore

*John J. Higgins*
*Retired Principal Culfadda N.S.*

Apart from the home, no other institution has had such a profound influence on the lives of the Irish people as the National School. For more than a century and a half, primary schools provided the only education available for the vast majority of Irish people.

We in this country have always had a proud tradition of concern for education, as we know from the great monastic schools of early Christian Ireland. From the beginning of the English conquest, the policy of the government was to use education as a means of spreading the English language and the Protestant faith. In the 17th century, the Penal Laws prohibited Catholics from becoming teachers, and made it illegal to send Catholic children to school. It was hoped that by having no Catholic school masters there would be no Catholic schools, and that parents would be obliged to send their children to Protestant schools. Despite these harsh laws, the Irish people felt the need for some form of education which would ensure the preservation and survival of the country's cultural identity. As a result the hedge schools developed and mushroomed up all over the country. These schools were very popular and many of them offered a wide range of subjects.

A Commission of Enquiry set up in 1826 to report on the number of hedge schools in the country found that there were six in this area. Schools in the parish in the beginning of the 19th century are not easily documented, as they were often only seasonal. Prosecution at this time was rife, and teachers, like priests, were hunted down. With a price on their heads they could only teach in secret, since the government authorities considered that such persons corrupted the youth of the country with their Popish principles.

The schools were well attended in summer but almost deserted in winter because of the cold and damp. In wintertime teachers often went from house to house where they taught in return for their lodgings. The 'three R's' were taught as well as religion in all of these schools, and learning was the order of the day. There were many voluntary religious groups, particularly in urban areas, teaching at this time as well, and it is estimated that in 1824 there were 11,000 schools in Ireland with about half a million students attending. Most of these were hedge schools or fee-paying schools of some sort.

However the educational system, which received no state support, was very haphazard and lacked organization. It was obvious that the vast majority of children were not benefiting from any formal education, and all concerned had come to realise that the ability to be literate and numerate was highly desirable for everyone. Finally in 1831 the National School System was established. A Board of Commissioners for National Education was set up. The Board was given power to defray the cost of building schools, contribute to teachers' pay, establish schools and provide school books. From the beginning it was intended that children of different religious beliefs should be taught together, but to obtain religious instruction pertaining to their own religion on separate occasions. The number of years spent at school varied in the absence of compulsory attendance legislation. Many pupils did not attend school in spring or autumn as their labour was required at home, tending to the potato crop. In 1891 many National Schools were given building grants as the numbers attending were increasing.

The teacher in the National School system was in a position of relatively high status because he was the person with learning. However, the Government tried to ensure that the teacher should not have ideas above his station in life, which was the giving of education to the children of the parish. Teachers at this time were forbidden to take part in any extra occupation which might impair their usefulness as teachers, and they were not allowed to attend fairs, markets or political gatherings. Not only were they expected to give good example themselves, but they were asked to carry out personal hygiene inspections every morning of children's hair, faces and clothes.

According to information given by Maureen Brady (nee Brehony), Carrowreagh, her grandmother, Mrs. Terence Boyland (nee Mary Garvin), Carrowcrory, taught school in 'Horan's Barn' in the town land of Derrygolagh from 1878. Her father had taught earlier in a hedge school. Mary Garvin's daily route to school was through the fields which skirted the edge of Garvin's lake. She owned one pair of shoes which she carried while she went barefoot through the fields, on by Dernaskeagh Lake to her destination at the school in Derrygolagh. In 1880 she and her pupils moved into a new one-roomed national school which was named Liskeagh National School.

She was later joined by Brigid Barnes as assistant teacher (who married John Joe Berhony). Brigid Barnes was an aunt of the former D.P.P. Eamon Barnes. Mrs. Terence Boylan retired as principal in 1921 and her daughter Brigid Boylan (who later married Tom Brehony) became principal of the school. In 1935 Liskeagh N.S. closed and a brand new two-roomed slated school named 'Meenmore N.S.' was built by the Casey brothers. It provided for the education of the former Liskeagh pupils, as well as for the pupils from the nearby Derryknockeran N.S. ('Cronin's School').

Mrs. Tom Brehony retired in 1962 and John Joe Gallagher from Grange replaced her. He left in 1966 to be replaced by Mrs. Drury. The last principal of Meenmore N.S. was Mrs. Elizabeth Duffy from Carrowcrory. Miss Bridie Morris was an assistant in the school until her retirement in

the 1960's.

The old Derryknockeran N.S., or as it was known locally 'Cronin's School', was a one-roomed thatched building on the Boyle to Culfadda road. Master Cronin and Roger Neary served there as principals before it closed. Peter Lavin of Dernaskeagh (grandfather of Mai Langton) taught in this school prior to his appointment as principal of Lackagh N.S. in Co. Galway.

Heat was provided from the open fires in Meenmore N.S., and the pupils brought turf to the school. At the rear of the school were the boys' and girls' toilets, which were divided by a high wall. These were dry toilets as there was no running water or electricity at this time. People came regularly to clean the toilets. The pupils sat on long wooden benches, and the subjects taught were the 'three R's', geography, history, singing and needlework for the girls. Miss Morris taught craftwork to the senior boys and girls. There were no teaching aids available expect for the odd wall map and pictorial chart.

Despite the harsh conditions prevailing at the time, many of the pupils went on to distinguish themselves at home and abroad, which is a fitting tribute to the commitment of the teachers who gave a lifetime to the promotion of learning. There was no free post-primary education in Ireland until 1968, and until that time the local primary school was often referred to as 'the poor man's university', as very often it was the only formal education that the children of that era received.

Government policy in the late 1960s and early 70s was to close small rural schools, so Meenmore N.S. was amalgamated with Culfadda and free transport was provided. Mrs. E. Duffy then joined the teaching staff of Culfadda N.S. and taught there until her retirement in 1977. A prefab classroom was erected alongside the two-roomed building, and the local community hall was used as a temporary classroom to accommodate the increased enrolment. It was however soon evident to all concerned that this accommodation was totally inadequate. Accordingly a Parents' Association was formed and they worked in close liaison with the newly-elected Board of Management to secure an additional site and a permanent extension for the school.

In 1983 the official opening of two additional permanent classrooms, a G.P. room and a medical room took place. More funding was now available from the Department of Education for the purchase of educational aids and equipment. A new curriculum had come on stream. A new era in primary school education had dawned.

# 1932 Eucharistic Congress

**Photo of the late Eugene Gilhawley, who acted as a steward at the Eucharistic Congress in 1932. Photo courtesy of Mary Gilhawley.**

The original caption reads: 'THE AUTOGRAPH-HUNTER. – Monsignor Rodie, Bishop of Corsica, adding his signature to an autograph book belonging to a Boy Scout in Marlborough Street, Dublin, after yesterday's Solemn Pontifical Mass at the Pro-Cathedral. The bishop arrived in Dublin only yesterday morning.'

# Lost with the Titanic

*John McTernan*

The centenary of the sinking of the *Titanic* has recently been widely commemorated, recalling as it did the memory of those who lost their lives in the tragedy. Amongst the dead were five Sligonians – Mary Burns (Kilmacowen), Catherine Hargadon (Carraroe), Henry Harte (Ballisodare), Jane Carr (Castlerock, Aclare), and John Meehan (Curry). A sixth passenger, Margaret Devaney, aged 17, from Kilmacowen, was rescued. She subsequently settled in New York, then later moved to New Jersey where she married and had a family. She died in 1974, aged 82 years.

Also on board was Alfred P. Middleton, a crewmember, who was born in Ballisodare in 1885, the eldest son of Adam J. Middleton and his wife Annie McKim. Adam was the managing director of the Messrs W. G. Pollexfen Mills at Ballisodare, a position he held for close on half a century prior to his death at Oldcastle, Collooney, in August 1935, aged 64.

His son, Alfred, received his early education in Sligo before attending the Glasgow Technical Institute where he trained as an electrician. After graduation he took up employment with electrical contractors, Messrs Telford, Grier & Mackay Ltd, and in 1911 joined the Aberdeen White Star Line and sailed on the liner *Demosthenes* on its maiden voyage to Australia. On his return he joined the Belfast shipbuilding company of Harland and Wolff, and worked on the *Titanic* before the ill-fated liner set sail on its maiden voyage to New York in April, 1912. Following the collision with the iceberg, Middleton with other members of the crew battled bravely in their efforts to save as many passengers as was humanly possible. Alfred Middleton, aged 26, was amongst the hundreds that descended to a watery grave and whose body was never recovered.

Wilbram A. G. Middleton, second son of Adam and younger brother of the afore-mentioned Alfred, was a well-known Collooney miller who in his youth gained considerable experience of the trade working with his father in the Ballisodare Mills. In 1932 he re-opened both the Hollow Mills and the former Bleach Mill in Collooney, previously operated by Messrs Alex, Sim & Co, installed new machinery and introduced up-to-date methods. In a relatively short period he turned them into flourishing concerns, producing maize meal, oatmeal and rolled oats in large quantities. During the 'Emergency' the Hollow Mills were closed owing to a scarcity of home grown grain, but they were partly re-opened shortly afterwards. The long-established mills on both sides of the Owenmore River were finally closed on Wilbram's retirement in 1956. The family subsequently moved from Abbey House in Collooney to Culleenamore where he died in January 1960. He was survived by his wife, Lilian, son Gerald and daughter, Noelle, who was then widely known as a screen actress and television star.

# Snowdrops

*Bernie Gilbride*

From December first
I watch for you,
With stems so delicate
Will you make it through?

The cold hard clay
With frost on top,
Will you come so far,
Then have to stop?

But no, one day I see
A wrinkle, where you might be
You have not died
But have survived

Along the wall
Under leafless trees,
Clusters white and green
Brighten the dark scene.

Again you weave,
Your magic for me
Snow-white bells
Fluttering, translucent, free
You stand erect,
Through wind or storm.
Snow, frost or rain
Does you no harm

Long may you come
Each gloomy January year
Letting us know
That Spring is near.

# The Life and Times of Rev Owen Feeney

*John McTernan*

**Ballyrush church, which was built by Feeney**

*Owen Feeney, who was held in high esteem especially by his own flock, was the champion of the poor and downtrodden, distinguished as a scholar and the splendid pattern of the Irish priest who was popularly known as 'Father Owen'.*

These lines are taken from an obituary of Rev. Eugene Feeney, D.D., V.F., parish priest of Riverstown, who died in January 1876. For upwards of a decade and a half he had been Administrator of the Sligo Parish and to the forefront in the public life of the Borough of Sligo.

Eugene Feeney (1804-1876) was born in Castlerea and studied at Maynooth, where he was ordained in 1830. His first ministry was Roscommon town. Six months later he was transferred to Sligo town where he was destined to serve initially as a curate and from 1838 to 1850 as Administrator of St. John's Parish, the largest and most densely populated in the diocese.

In his initial years in Sligo, Owen Feeney was greatly influenced by his immediate superior, Dean James Donlevy, the then Administrator, who was deeply involved in the politics of his day within the Borough. He championed the cause of the depressed and worked unceasingly for the emancipation of Catholics and the repeal of the Union. His appeal was such that he played no small part in influencing the outcome of both the 1832 and 1837 Borough Parliamentary elections.

Following his death in 1838 Owen Feeney filled his shoes in more ways than one, not only replacing him as Administrator but also as a leader in other spheres, notably the Temperance and Repeal Movements. In June 1840, on the occasion of Fr. Mathew's visit, the newly appointed Administrator headed a group of parishioners who marched to Collooney in a colourful procession to greet the Apostle of Temperance. According to a correspondent of the *Sligo Journal*, Fr. Feeney was mounted upon a horse and appropriately robed: "His sash streaming in the wind and every now and again he was seen moisturising his parched lips with the juice of an orange." A few months later, in October 1840, Fr. Mathew was back in Sligo on Feeney's invitation, where he preached a charity sermon in St. John's Parish Chapel and subsequently administered the Pledge to thousands in the Market Yard.

In April 1843 Owen Feeney was a founding member of the Sligo Repeal Association, was its first chairman and the prime mover in the opening of the Repeal Meeting Rooms in Bridge Street. A month later he was one of the platform party welcoming Daniel O'Connell at a monster meeting at Cartron, and two years after that was instrumental in inviting the Liberator back for a second visit.

In his role as Administrator, Owen Feeney was actively involved with the arrival in Sligo of both the Mercy and Ursuline nuns, the former in 1846 and the latter in 1848-49. On his shoulders fell much of the preliminary work of sorting out leases and, in the case of the Mercy Order, overseeing the building of their Convent on Chapel Hill. This required the appointment of competent contractors and overseeing building costs which involved negotiating a deal with Henry Griffith, owner of the Killery Brickwoks, for the supply of large quantities of bricks at a very competitive rate.

In the early 1840s Fr. Feeney resided at Seaville House at Finisklin, which he had leased from the Vernon estate. However on the arrival of the Ursulines he was obliged not only to vacate the premises in favour of the nuns but in doing so ran himself into debt, having to pay off a fine or charge on the property before it was handed over to the Ursulines.

His labours on their behalf have been recorded in a series of letters which reveal a kind and dedicated man, who despite periodical health problems worked long and hard to sort out difficulties, both legal and financial, as they arose.

With the arrival of the Famine, the Abbey burial ground – the principal burial place for Catholics within the Borough – quickly filled to overflowing and faced closure. In the circumstances he was obliged to bring pressure on the Town Council to release a portion of their landed possessions at Cleveragh, known as the 'Commons', for use as a cemetery. Due in no small measure to his herculean efforts the new cemetery became a reality in 1848 and he was appointed a trustee of the Cemetery Committee. Later that year he took up residence at Cairnsfort House, Cleveragh, which he leased from Major Bromhead, a Waterloo veteran, who had married Judith Wood of Woodville. He later complained of a severe attack of rheumatism which he blamed on taking up residence in a cold house in the severity of winter.

His concern for and attention to the wants of the poor and down-trodden gained for him widespread esteem and indirectly led to his taking a leading role in the politics of the Borough, especially its representation in Parliament. Ahead of the Parliamentary election of 1841 he chaired a meeting of Catholic voters in the Parish Chapel at which John Patrick Somers (outgoing) was unanimously chosen as the Liberal candidate and was returned unopposed.

Over the following year Owen Feeney and a majority of electors became disillusioned with Somers's performance at Westminster, and in 1847 invited Charles Townley of Townley Hall, Lancashire, a leading English Catholic, to stand in the Liberal interest for the Borough of Sligo. The Englishman answered the call and defeated Somers in the ensuing contest but was subsequently unseated on a Petition

**Recumbent gravestone in the grounds of the church of the Sacred Heart, Riverstown, making the final resting place of Revd. Owen Feeney, PP.**

A man of independent outlook, Feeney did not always follow the party line but used his own discretion when the occasion demanded it. In 1853, although no longer resident in Sligo, he was still involving himself in Borough politics, and attended a convention in the courthouse for the nomination of candidates for the upcoming election. On that occasion he spoke in support of J.P. Somers in preference to John Sadlier, who had the backing of a majority of local clergy and was the 'popular' candidate. As a result efforts were made to shout him down by a section of the crowd, but to no avail, as his persuasive eloquence finally silenced those who disagreed with his change in outlook. The *Sligo Champion*, which was invariably loud in its praise of Feeney, was then at a loss to explain to its readers his change in attitude and lack of support for Sadlier, and went on to refer to him as "a very uncertain, vacillating and not over trusted politician."

In January 1850 the *Sligo Journal* reported that Rev. Owen Feeney was about to be removed from Sligo to Riverstown by Bishop George Browne, and then commented: "Mr Feeney is a gentleman of no inconsiderable ability and but for his interference in politics would have commanded the respect of all his flock." Three years later, in 1853, the *Sligo Chronicle* reported that his removal to Riverstown had been the subject of much regret, so much so that efforts were afoot to have him recalled, but to no avail.

In mid January 1876 the *Sligo Champion* carried news of the death of Very Rev. Eugene Feeney, D.D., V.F., "an illustrious pastor". Although in failing health for a considerable time his demise was rather unexpected. "Under Dr. Feeney's fostering care, religion and education made rapid progress," it said. "He built new schools and improved old buildings, he erected a beautiful church at Ballyrush and a short time previous to his death expressed a hope that he might be spared to the building of a similar structure in Riverstown." His remains were interred within the old parish church and were re-interred three-quarters of a century later in the grounds of the newly-built parish church.

# Guarding the North-West

*Padraig Feehily*


Talking to neighbours or reading newspapers of the period 1939-45, one is struck by the analogy of ducks swimming in a pond: everything calm and peaceful on the surface, frenetic activity underneath. This appeared the norm at national level with a difference of emphasis at regional level and an impelling force to survive at local level.

**The Background**

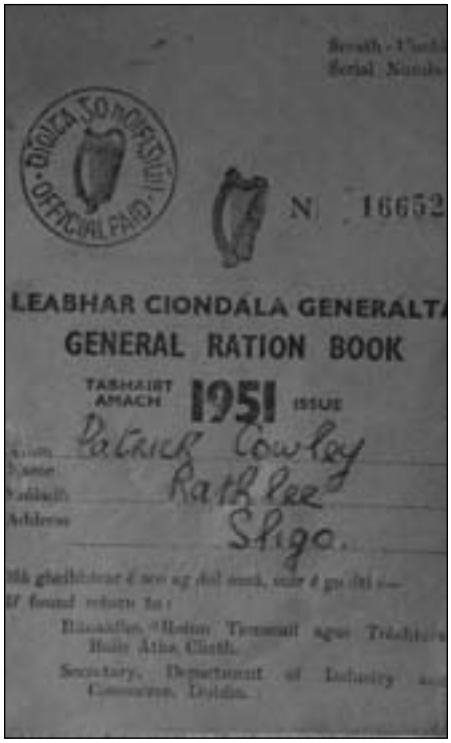
During this period of hostilities the leader of Fianna Fail, Eamon De Valera, combined the positions of Taoiseach and Minister for External Affairs. Powered by a sense of duty to the needs of a young and relatively weak state, he was determined to keep Ireland out of the war that by the 1930s was already looming. He was disillusioned with the politics of collective security after the failure of the League of Nations to protect its weaker member, Ethiopia, from the onslaught of its aggressor, Italy. De Valera was convinced of the democratic rights of small nations to protect themselves from becoming embroiled in the conflicts of the big powers, and also, to remain neutral during a major conflict in which Britain was involved was a resounding statement of Irish independence and sovereignty.

Even before the return of the Treaty Ports in 1938 De Valera made it clear that neutrality would be his policy. In the election of the same year, with 52 per cent of the vote, this was a major plank in his policy. Increasingly the party portrayed itself as the only effective guarantee of Ireland's insulation from the horrors of war. The decision to return the Treaty Ports had at the end of the day reflected the British government's belief that whatever their strategic value to Britain in wartime, this would be negated by the southern state's lack of good will. Although the British army chiefs of staff supported the return of the ports, they pointed out that in the event of war with Germany, the non-availability of the Irish ports would seriously hamper naval operations. Prime Minister Winston Churchill and later President Roosevelt attempted to encourage, persuade and occasionally bully De Valera into joining the war effort against the axis powers; supported by the vast majority of the Irish people, De Valera kept the Republic out of the conflict.

Huge internal difficulties stood in the way of Ireland lending support to Britain. First amongst them was the continuing problem of partition and the threat of the country returning to civil war. Minister of Defence Frank Aiken summarized the government's analyses: "Any other policy would have divided our people, and for a divided nation to fling itself into the war would have been suicide." Aiken went further when he said: "If the Irish were to join the war effort they would have to fight a civil war first to decide what side they were going to be on." The moral question of Ireland's exclusion from what was to become a global conflict was hotly debated during the Battle of the Atlantic in 1941. However the views of intellectuals and theologians carried little weight as the government sought the most expedient course of action.

**On a War Footing**

In May 1940 the political climate changed completely when the German army invaded Holland and Belgium, both neutral countries. The Irish civil servants were forced by changing circumstances to relax




**A 1951 ration book**

the purse strings the following month to allow the government to increase the army strength to 40,000 men. There followed a national recruiting drive which proved to be an outstanding success; within five weeks 25,000 volunteered. Empty barracks at Naas, Mullingar, Longford, Boyle, Castlebar, Wexford, Waterford and Hazelwood House in Sligo were thrown open to accommodate the expanding army. Recruiting

thereafter proved more sluggish as the immediate threat of invasion receded and the LDF and auxiliary local security force offered alternative outlets of national service. Those who might seek broader horizons could find plenty of civilian work at a good pay in mainland Britain, and for those with a natural taste for military life in foreign fields there were always the British Services.

**Soldiers of the 3rd Cyclist Squadron Hazlewood House 1940. Back row: Jim Scanlon, Sligo; Jimmy Callaghan, Sligo: next not known; Joe Walsh, Enniscrone; Ned Sherlock, Sligo; Gerry Flynn, Ballina; Stephen McManus, Sligo; Next not known. Front row: includes Robert Mc-----, Sligo dispatch rider also Michael McArt, Sligo; Tom McNulty, Sligo & Tommy Haire, Galway.**

**Two Old Soldiers**

Two old soldiers still hale and hearty and living in west Sligo can recall with razor-sharp clarity those early days when they were called to the flag to defend their country. Joseph Walsh signed up at the outset of hostilities in Castlebar. Eugene Forde signed at the local Garda barracks in Easkey. "The guards asked all sorts of questions, who were your father and mother and the likes," remembers Eugene. "A few weeks later an army lorry came around and collected us; there was other lads from the village as well." The two young recruits went through the same basic training in the same barracks – the headquarters of Western Command in Athlone.

Eugene Forde was well aware of the dangers of war – his father John Forde served with the Connaught Rangers in WWI and was wounded on the Gallipoli Peninsula in 1915, and his uncle served and did not survive the war. As a young lad Eugene recalls an early experience of the technology of war. "When I was going to the National School it was such a rare thing to hear and see a plane," he says. "The teacher would let us out of the classroom to see it. I remember it well, I was with my sisters and we heard the roar and looked up and saw this large plane flying in low. It came in over Easkey and flew inland, it circled over the parish and out to sea again. This manoeuvre was repeated several times – you see it was impossible for it to land in the large fields as they were covered with large poles, sticking up about five feet out of the ground to prevent planes from landing. The war had just started.

"Now we did not have TVs or radios but we knew what was going on – a lot of men here had served in the First World War and knew the consequences of war, with rationing and the like. To get back to the story of the plane, it flew out the bay one last time – it must have ran out of fuel and ditched into the sea, a sad sight. Sometime later the wheels were washed ashore a few miles down at Carnrush.

In July or August 1940 we experienced the awful outcome of war when the bodies of the early victims were washed in along the shore. I saw a man – he had a hole in his throat, apart from that he was perfect. Well the doctor was called: Doctor Mervyn Clarke. The doctor examined the corpse, putting his finger into the wound to see if he could find a bullet but there was nothing. He concluded it was caused by a bird or a fish. Within a few days three more bodies were washed in, they were laid out in Easkey courthouse before being buried in Easkey Cemetery. In 1941 I was sixteen years [old] – I told the recruiting officer I was eighteen! And I became a soldier in A-company 17 Batt."

Joe Walshe was sent to Finner Camp straight after basic in Athlone. Joe recalls: "Finner was the camp for rifle practice and all types of arms training. When we landed there it was in the early days of the war, the camp was packed. We had to billet in tents – they were half-rotten, leftovers from the Civil War, you were nearly as well sleeping under the stars. Any chance I got I made it indoors to get a bit of heat. Some of the lads could not hack it – the officers – some of them could be very strict and the lads were not used to that kind of life at home, they were sensitive types, many of them left.

"After six weeks we were moved up to duty on the Border, watching the movement of people going back and forth. We would ask them what was their business, we were instructed by the officer in charge: 'Take nobody's word, check everything.' We served two hours on and four hours off. The hours off were spent resting in a wooden hut. Sometimes we went on patrol – maybe seventy men with an officer in charge covering thirty or forty miles along the Leitrim-Fermanagh border on foot. We

**The Andora Star: on the 2nd of July 1940 she was torpedoed off the North West Coast**

had a lot of deserters, practically every night, they would make off across the border. A lot of them joined the British army. We would make a collection if we knew a lad was making a break, we'd collect a shilling a piece to send him on his way. Another thing, you would have to watch your underwear, they'd be whipped and pickpockets weren't scarce either.

"Ireland had a serious fuel shortage during the war – we spent a fair amount of time helping farmers to cut and save the turf. I have to say the Leitrim people were very nice when they got to know you.

"The soldiers were given lectures from time to time. Oscar Traynor was the Minister for Defence and he would come about giving talks on the chance of a British attack across the border. As a common soldier I never felt we would be attacked by either the British or indeed the Germans. If they did invade the country we would be overrun in a day. There was a real danger of attack in the South though. I knew some lads that soldiered there under General Mickey Costello. They were out on battlefield manoeuvres, crossing dangerous rivers, the Blackwater. [They were told to] 'get across sink or swim.' I spent some of my service in Hazelwood House, it was stripped bare. I'd say it was a grand structure in its day. A lot of Sligo lads there too – Steven McManus, Jim Scanlon, Jimmy Callaghan. I suppose they're all gone! I served two years in all. In 1942 I was given a medical discharge and headed for England and more adventure!"

Eugene Forde can go back in time seventy years like it was yesterday. "The first thing I felt when I joined the army was the loss of freedom, you could not come and go when you liked," he says. When Eugene was asked the age-old question as to why he joined up, the frivolity of the enquiry initiated an instant response: "Poverty… and a bit of adventure. There was nothing around here, if you were a great worker you might earn a few bob."

**Eugene Forde Standing at the Solonica War Memorial**

Eugene, like Joe Walshe, recalls his early days training in the headquarters of Western Command in Athlone: "I was sixteen years old…I told them I was eighteen, if I told the truth I've been put into the Construction Corps, I didn't want that. It was 1941, my number was 425389, I was now a soldier in the army of the Republic fitted out with two uniforms, two pair of boots, two shirts and vests, a great coat, two caps and badge, a towel which was cut off a long roll, and believe it or not a 'housewife' containing needles, thread, thimble and other bits and pieces. Oh, and a button stick, it was made of brass, about four or five inches long and two inches wide with a slot in the middle, and it was for polishing your brass buttons. You bought your own Brasso and shoe polish – they supplied the brush! Three boards six feet long by nine inches wide – that made up a base for your bed, you had your own kit box which was kept locked at all times. Sixteen shilling and nine pence was my wage with deductions for any breakages.

"Training never stopped, we were on route marches every two weeks, eight in the morning to four in the afternoon, three days continuous at three miles per hour with the army band playing and with one all-night march. I was stationed up in Rockhill Barracks guarding important installations in Malin Head. We never worried about invaders, British or German, we were having such a great time – two shillings for steak and onions and all the bread you could eat. I remember a woman had a little stall on the street in Buncrana, for two old pence you got a mug of good strong tea and a bun, more if you wanted it.

"There was an exact procedure to follow and a definite chain of command to refer to. When on border duty if we spotted a person in the distance our instructions were to call, 'Who goes there – 'a friend'?' If there was no reply an officer would be called. The officer would ask, 'Advance in order to be recognised?' The suspect would be questioned at a distance.

"There was a lot of employment around Buncrana during the war. We often bought a length of army towel to the girls working in the shirt factories – well, they'd turn

out the nicest shirt for us ever you saw out of the length of army towel."

**A Wiley Deception!**

Whilst on duty one day in Rockhill, Private Eugene Forde and seventy or eighty other soldiers were ordered to on the double assemble and clamber into awaiting lorries. They were driven south on an urgent mission to search and seek out an enemy spy who was reported to have landed on the beaches of west Sligo.

A devilish scheme had been put in train by person or persons unknown. It appeared the 'spy' was obviously more than familiar with the plans and strategies of the British war leader Chruchill, who in a previous meeting had advised the Russian leader Josef Stalin: "In war time the truth is so precious that she should always be attended by a bodyguard of lies." This the Easkey spy had done to such good effect that the extensive search through and around the townlands of Easkey, Rathlee and the parishes of Kilglass and Castleconnor revealed nothing.

Eugene Forde takes up the story. "To get pregnant in those days wasn't something a girl would go boasting to her parents about, and the State certainly wouldn't be running to her door to give her a pension." Here then lay the source of the scheme – a local girl in desperation, finding herself pregnant, decided on a diversionary tactic: to create as much commotion and befuddlement as possible. She succeeded. She also succeeded, in spite of her spirited invention, of having to appear before the District Court. This was not to be the last report of an enemy spy landing on a Sligo beach!

In 1945, Eugene Forde got an honourable discharge from the army, and as a result when a vacancy occurred for the job as postman for the parish of Easkey, Eugene secured the post in which he served for 43 years. In 2009 the Forde family and local historian Gerry Donagher made the journey to Salonika to visit the grave of his uncle John Gordon, who was killed there in 1915, thus closing a chapter in the Forde family history.

The natives of the West came closest to experiencing the horrific carnage of war where the winding coastline meets the sea and the gods of war were offering up their dead along Ireland's beaches from the earliest hours.

At 4am on Tuesday 2nd July, 1940, the *Arandora Star* sailed from Liverpool en route for Newfoundland. The ship was unescorted. At 6.15am, some 75 miles west of Bloody Foreland, she was torpedoed by the German submarine U-47, commanded by Kapitänleutnant Günther Prien. It was another triumph for the young commander in a relatively short but spectacular career of destruction. Within a year he had sunk 245,000 tons of allied shipping.

On the evening of the 10th of August further down the coast of Castletown, Easkey, the badly decomposed remains of Matteo Fossaluzza, an Italian internee from Cavasso later resident in London, were washed up. He was identified by receipts from the Wakefield Building Society and a St. John Bosco medal. His remains were interred in Easkey Cemetery on August 12.

Amongst the German internees on board was the tragic Franz Kirste, whose remains drifted ashore at Cloonagh, Lissadell. His story constitutes one of the more lamentable episodes in British wartime history. As in the first, so now in the second World War – the dread of invasion and the fear of fifth columns in their midst caused the British Government and people to react with hostility and suspicion to 'foreigners' regardless of circumstances. A British ration book was found on Kirste's body. As a German, his death would have been communicated to the German legation in Dublin. Kirste, however was no ordinary German. In 1933, he left Germany in a hurry with a group the Czech-Slovak Friends of German Refugees. A staunch anti-Nazi, he again fled, this time to Britain, after the German invasion and annexation of Czechoslovakia but like other German and Italians in Britain, despite being an opponent of Hilter's regime, he was interned in 1940.

While no one was certain at the time, inquests on Kirste's body and the remains of sixteen other bodies washed up along the shore lines indicated they were all victims of the sinking of the *Arandora Star.* Its victims were not only Germans, Austrians and Italian internees, but the troops who were guarding them. One of the main units engaged in escort duty on that fateful day was the 4th Battalion Devonshire Regiment. One of these is remembered in Easkey (Roslea) Cemetery, 23-year-old Owen Mitchell from Torquay in Devon. In the weeks and months that followed, a grim succession of doomed ships added their crews and passengers to the list of the war dead on the north-west coast.

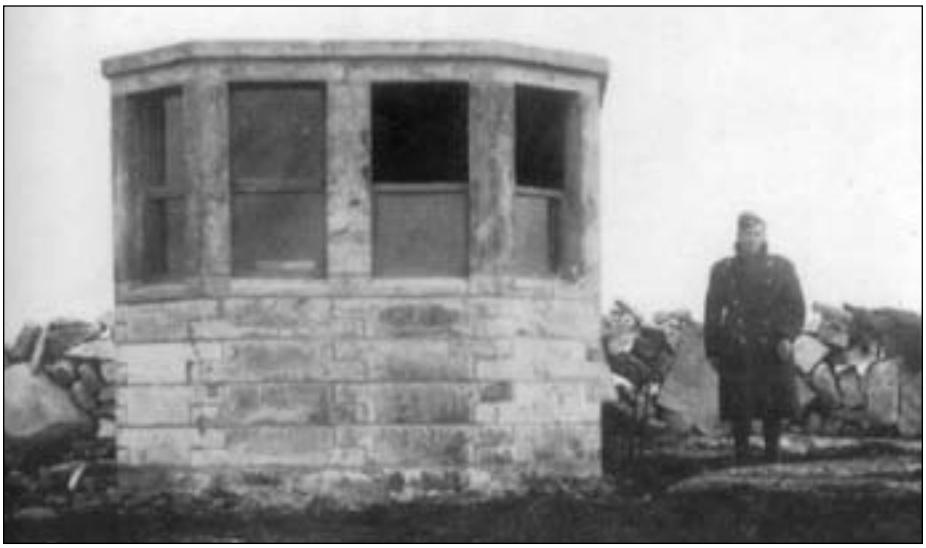
Even as the *Arandora Star's* luckless victims were still being washed ashore, they were joined among others by the lost of the *Mohamed Ali El Kelir,* when 32 bodies were washed up on the beaches of Sligo, Donegal and Mayo. Late in September the 6,000-ton S.S. Manchester Brigade en route from Manchester to Montreal was in convoy off the Mayo coast when sunk by U-boat 137. Six weeks later after the loss of the Manchester Brigade the U-boat commander 'Silent Otto' Kretschmer continued to wreak havoc. On the night of Sunday 3rd November, commanding U-boat U-99, he attacked and sank a merchant vessel off Bloody Foreland. The ship's distress signal alerted the 18,000-ton, armed merchant cruiser *H.M.S. Laurentic,* also on patrol in the area, as was the 12,000-ton *H.M.S. Patroclus,* then homeward bound from convoy duty. 'Silent

Otto' torpedoed *Laurentic* twice but it took a third missile to sink her. The ace U-boat captain, who by war's end had sunk more Allied shipping than any other German submarine commander, then turned to the oncoming Patroclus, racing too late to *Laurentic's* rescue. Firing three torpedoes at *Patroclus*, two of which struck home, U-99 then dived for cover from an approaching Sunderland flying boat. When he surfaced next morning he found both *Laurentic* and *Patroclus* still afloat. Further missiles finally sent one after the other to the ocean floor.

Although the Battle of the Atlantic continued and technically did not end until 8 May 1945, as far as relentlessly depositing its dead on Ireland's shores the peak had passed by mid 1942. Some perished far from their native land – one was a Chinaman named Chu Ning Lei, whose remains were washed ashore at Creevy, Ballyshannon on 29 August 1940. There was no evidence of the circumstances of his death and little of the circumstances of his life. He was laid to rest in Mullinashea Graveyard, Ballyshannon. Corporal Francis Gordan Harrison of Victoria, British Columbia is buried in Roslea Cemetery, Easkey, three thousand miles distant from his loved ones. A maple leaf inscribed in limestone, the emblem of his native country, marks his grave. Corporal Harrison was lost on the SS Nerissa, a troopship ferrying soldiers from Canada to the U.K. It was the only troopship in the war to lose Canadian troops en route to England.

**The Coast Watching Service**

The Coast Watching Service L.O.P.'s (Look Out Posts) located at Lendoon Point (Rathlee), Aughris, Roskeeragh and Mullaghmore were among eighty-three established from September 1939 at commanding locations at regular intervals along the Irish coastline. Initially intended as a "land improvisation for the coastal protection of a country that has no naval force of any kind", the Coast Watching Service ensured that no vulnerable stretch of Ireland's coast remained unobserved. The Coast Watchers were members of a part-time military force recruited from coastal districts, men for whom seafaring was a way of life. Serving locally they knew their districts, they knew what conditions to expect around their posts, what was normal and what was unusual. By selecting local mariners, fishermen, beachcombers and those with farms along the coast, the military acquired the services of men with a knowledge of a given section of the coastline. This was knowledge of tides and underwater obstacles that only a lifetime's experience with the sea could give, and which barrack training could never provide.



**Newly Constructed LOP March 1940 ( National Archives Ireland) Aughris Head Co. Sligo**

A simple example of this local knowledge is provided by a district officer for the north-west, Owen Quinn. After mistakenly identifying a half-submerged rock as a submarine off the Sligo coast, he decided for the better he would leave future identification to the men of each LOP in his district. He recalled listening to a volunteer and a corporal at Roskeeragh LOP in north Sligo discussing "an almost completely submerged bale of some sort out in the water. They were attempting to guess what it was and I said 'Will it come in on this tide?' 'Ah no sir, nor the next,' the man said. 'It will come in about a quarter of a mile down, it will go out maybe half a mile, it will go in and out. By tomorrow evening around Ballysadare Bay, that one will land and we will keep an eye on it.' And right enough he was dead on, to the very tide he was able to predict and that was almost ten miles away."

At the outset of the war a bell tent was erected at LOPs as temporary accommodation. This was later replaced with a pre-cast concrete structure with a fire-place. They were nine feet long by thirteen feet wide with a large bay window made up of six angled windows on the seaward side.

It is initially hard for anyone now visiting a ruined LOP, vacant since the end of the Second World War, to imagine it in operation. Yet in the cracked plaster one can see the screw holes where the telephone was mounted and lines in the plaster where a nautical chart was once affixed. Shattered resistors where phone lines terminated remain in place on the outside of the post and inside corroded copper wires indicated the presence of the long-silenced phone. The interior contained the core equipment needed by the coast watcher. The

all-important logbook lay on the table and the telephone was affixed near the window. Binoculars hung in a box on the whitewashed wall and a telescope stood on a stand for viewing ships, aircraft, flotsam, mines and bodies brought in by the tide. On the walls further back near the fireplace were local maps and charts of the silhouettes of ships and aircraft, and a clock showing often the wrong time. It was notoriously difficult to synchronize the time between the 83 posts and a central location, but knowing the correct time was essential if ever flights were to be reported accurately and plotted correctly by central control. This problem was solved after the introduction of telephones.

Semaphore and Morse flags and lamps crammed into the remaining space on small shelves. Non-inventory items included turf baskets, scythes, brushes and shovels, rubber boots, pots and pans hung over the fire, and among it all was a first aid kit, either for the men themselves or for administering to crash-landed airmen or ship-wrecked sailors (see *Guarding Neutral Ireland* by Michael Kennedy).

A March 1940 photograph of Aughris Head, Co. Sligo, shows the newly completed LOP set against a barren landscape under a flat spring sky. The prefabricated nature of the LOP is visible as the exterior walls have not yet been covered with the light pebbledash common to all LOPs. The lone coast watcher standing to the left of the post, his greatcoat fully buttoned with collar raised, is a testimony to the wretched weather conditions in which LOPs were constructed.

From April 1943 to March 1944, 21,000 military aircraft were reported near or over Ireland. In response to the huge increase in flights crossing Irish territory and the landing of greater numbers of military planes, the defence forces took one simple step. In order to warn belligerent aircraft of the position of the LOPs, the words 'EIRE' had been prominently displayed close by as a way to reduce the number of aircraft landing because their crews had lost their bearings. Now at the prompting of the American Minister to Ireland, the number of the nearby LOP was added to the sign during or shortly after construction. At Lenadoon near Easkey the sign was found to be too small and a larger one constructed to a standard size, used throughout the country, of twelve metres long by six metres high and surrounded by a wide rectangular stone border. In some cases up to 150 tons of stone were used. They were embedded in concrete and whitewashed to increase visibility, though not all aircraft were able to benefit from the 'EIRE' signs. Flying Fortress B-17G bound for Northern Ireland crashed in poor weather conditions on Truskmore Mountain of 9th December 1943, killing three of the crew.

**The Spy Who Came In From The Cold**

Early in February 1940 coast watchers in Western Command failed in one of their primary tasks. On the night of 8-9th February, U-boat 37 landed Ernst Weber-Drohl unobserved on the Sligo coast (see *In Time of War* by Robert Fisk). He was instructed to make contact with the IRA, deliver a sum of money and a radio transmitter, and urge them to send a representative to Germany. He landed under the cover of darkness with whipping high breakers. A U-boat crewman rowed him ashore, but they were nearly drowned when their dingy capsized with the loss of his radio. Neither the LOPs at Lendoon Point, Aughris Head or those further north reported sighting a submarine or the dingy ferrying Weber-Drohl ashore. For the LOPs to fail to report anything was a poor result for the coast watchers.

In one government report (G2) it stated:

*Upon landing Weber-Drohl met with the IRA chief Stephen Hayes in the Sligo house of Barney O'Donnell. He then made his way inland and arrived at the house of the man who was to be his original contact: Jim O'Donovan in Shankill, Co. Dublin. There he delivered the sum of $14,450 keeping $650 to replace the money lost when he fell from the dingy.*

Ambassador Hempel, the German representative in Ireland, reported on the 27th of March that Weber-Drohl had given the money to the 'Irish Friends.' In April the Gardai arrested the agent and he finished up in court. Through bullying and telling half-truths, mixing fact with fiction in equal measure, "he was fined only £3 and released." Though he had succeeded in hoodwinking the gullible Irish court, G2 (Irish Military Intelligence) was not over impressed with his sob story. He was re-arrested just three days after his release. However the combination of a hunger strike and diplomatic pressure eventually secured his early release from Mountjoy.

The gravity of the predicament Ireland found herself in during the war was often compensated for by the comic situations that arose. A British army officer was detained in March 1941 near Roskeeragh LOP and handed over to the Gardai at Lisadell. He was found to have in his possession a map and a pair of binoculars. It transpired he was merely carrying a tourist map and his only function in the area was to observe a famous flock of Barnacle geese on the Gore Booth estate.

Even the higher echelons of the security services were not noted for their uninspired thinking. When Garda Superintendent Hunt covering the Easkey district reported that the binoculars his men were using in assisting the coast watchers were "not powerful enough for this purpose unless the boat or aircraft happened to be very near to the person using the glasses," he could hardly be accused of overstating the obvious.

**War Graves Roslea Cemetery, Easkey, Co. Sligo**

**The Black Grease**

Mrs. Maura Cowley of Rathlee, Easkey, would be mildly amused at being described as an exceptional social commentator on the period of the duration of the second World War. Yet Maura's total recall, her immediate readiness to embrace her early years in all their shades of grey and her total lack of pretentiousness make for an unease in one with a certain romantic view of bygone days.

"Tea, sugar, butter, flour, clothes, shoes, lamp oil, they were all rationed," she says. "Meat – well if the family had an old rooster he'd be for the pot and that wouldn't be very often either. The flour was very dark, the job was to sieve it through an old stocking to take the flakes out and lighten the colour."

Maura reflects on the state of general health. "On top of the rationing the general state of people's health was poor. Colds and sores, rashes on peoples faces, coughs that wouldn't clear up. This was due to the seasonal nature of farming. It's not like now with bread that doesn't go stale and vegetables and eggs that last for weeks. First of all we needed cash – the rates had to be paid, so the pigs were sold, any potatoes over and above when they were dug were sold. In winter the cows dried up so we had no milk and as a result no butter, and vegetables were out of season after Christmas."

The families living along the western seaboard from time immemorial reaped the sea's bounty whether it was a fine big lobster or the timber to make a roof for the house. Maura continues: "I suppose tea was the thing we missed most but at the height of the war you never knew what the tide would wash in. At first light the neighbours would be up and down at the shore. Well it's sad but these are some of the things the war threw up – a bale of heavy thick solid grease about two feet by two feet by one and a half deep. We melted it in a ponger to make candles. We would make a mould out of the cross-bar of an old bike or a hollowed out bamboo, then place a piece of cord in for a wick and pour in the grease, and it would make a fine candle.

"Another type of grease, probably from ships that were torpedoed, came in on the surface of the water and could be scooped up and put into an old bucket. To find a use for this we'd get an old axel grease tin, bore a hole in the bottom and insert an old piece of cloth or lint for a wick, then pour in the grease. This was used for a light in the kitchen when having the tea. Mind you there was a lot of black smoke around!

"A lot of bales of rubber were taken from the sea and were supposed to be surrendered at the Garda Station, but they were sold to a man in Enniscrone for £5 a bale. One man took a plastic bucket from the sea, he brought it home and filled it with swill and put it on the fire to boil it. It wasn't a very successful experiment!

"There was little or no fishing during the war – the fishermen were afraid to go out for fear of been bombed, especially at night. The notion was that the pilots would suspect the boats were carrying arms or bringing enemy spies ashore. Windows were blacked out at night, one character would go around shouting 'Don't forget to put your old taigs (coats) over the windows'.

"Well its an ill wind that doesn't blow some good, in this case a 'great' good – a bale of black grease came in on the tide, don't know how it was discovered but it appeared to contain iodine. Well they came from all over with jam pots. It was used for everything, rashes, sores, open wounds! We had a black mare, she got stabbed with a scallop the thatcher was using. My father tried everything on the wound and it would not heal. It was coming into the ploughing season and he was in a fix, the wound was on the hindquarters and weeping badly. The horse is a very valuable animal to a farmer. But he decided to try 'the black grease.' In no time the wound healed – he was as good as new. Somebody discovered afterwards that there was iodine in the grease. There are some of the ways we managed, I suppose they didn't call it the 'Emergency' for nothing!"

The only reminder of the War to-day in Easkey is in Roslea Cemetery; the men and their stories largely forgotten.

*Many thanks to Joe Walsh, Enniscrone; Eugene Forde, Easkey; Maura Cowley, Rathlee and Padraic Scott, Rathlee for their kind assistance with this story.*

**Further Reading:**

*Remembering The War Dead* by Fergus A. D'Arcy.
*Guarding Neutral Ireland* by Michael Kennedy
*Ireland 1912 – 1985* by Joe Lee

# The Hartes of Ballinspor

*John McDonagh*

I suppose that when one was born and has lived all their lives in one location, there is a yearning to look back on the area's history and ask, who worked this land in the distant long-ago? What kind of people were they? Did any of them achieve fame, or notoriety? Had they any descendants? And what happened to them?

The earliest historical account that I can find of Ballinspor (Spurtown) is a brief extract from Woodmartin's History of Sligo. Translated from Latin, it states that in the year 1588, two quarters in the townland of Ballinspor were granted to 'Irwin Mc Sweeney' as part of 'The Elizabethan Inquisitions. '

Some years later the same townland 'with a low mill and a small river containing trouts' is listed in the ownership of one Robert McConmee. This particular gentleman earned a ferocious reputation and is named on several occasions in the depositions of 1641, always with blood on his hands.

Because of the imprecise spelling of that period, he is sometimes referred to as Robert McNamee, Robert McConvey and on one occasion as Robert McConney, but he is always 'of Ballinspor', and I think it would be safe to assume that it is the same individual who took part in the massacres in Sligo jail, Templehouse, Ballinafad, Boyle and Skreen. Whatever happened to him? I would dearly love to know!

The very inaccurate 'Down Survey Map' of circa 1655 shows Ballinspor containing a manor house, but because the map is so inaccurate I cannot determine its precise location, and it is not until the year 1688 when Colonel Thomas Harte leased Spurtown, or Ballinspor, from 'Nicholas, Earl of Carlingford, for 987 years at an annual rent of £25/16s/8d' that more precise and better-documented information emerges.

Recently I found an old book entitled *A Family History of The Hartes of Donegal* by Henry Travis Harte. Written in 1883, it is long out of print but is available as a Google e-book. It gives an amazing insight into this particular Harte family and it was from this source I learned that 'The Spurtown Hartes' were an offshoot of the 'Donegal Hartes. '

I read with great amusement that Colonel Thomas Harte was thought to be the son of Henry Harte from Kregnasle, Co Donegal, and his wife, Frances Bosville, from an aristocratic Kentish family. Apparently, the said Frances was not a pretty woman, and quoting from an older Kilderry manuscript, the author describes her as 'little, vain and very ugly.' She had allegedly been heard to boast "that my father could put money bags enough under my feet to make me as tall as anybody and although I am not snout fair, I am penny white."

The said Henry is said to have come from Devonshire with one hundred halberdiers to fight in the Elizabethan wars, and as a consequence was rewarded with large tracts of land in Co. Donegal.

Just exactly how his son Thomas came to lease lands in Co Sligo from Nicholas Taafe in the year of 1688 is a mystery, but a record of the transaction is still in existence and the Hartes retained their Sligo lands until the late 1700s.

Committed supporters of William of Orange, and very anti-Catholic in their outlook, the Harte family fought on numerous occasions in the Williamite wars. Colonel Thomas Harte was listed as second in command to Lord Kingston at the Battle of Sligo. Three of his sons – Morgan, Thomas and Robert, described as 'gents' – were attainted by James II and played a prominent part in the defence of Enniskillen in 1689.

I can find nothing else of relevance about that generation, but one Thomas Harte, a member of the next generation is mentioned frequently. On March 10th, 1713, he married Mary Gardiner of Culdaff in North Donegal, daughter of one Robert Gardiner, Rector of Culdaff. A record of the marriage contract still exists in the Records Office and it is also recorded in the Hartes' papers. According to these records, Robert Gardiner agreed to pay Thomas Harte £130 sterling "in consideration of the said Thomas Harte's marriage to his daughter Mary. " He also undertook to pay £20 yearly for " each child lawfully begotten on the body of the said Mary. "

After the marriage, Thomas and Mary moved to Kregnasle in Co Donegal. He later became an alderman of Derry.

Extract from the book *The Harts of Donegal*:

*Thomas Harte of Kregnasle who married Mary, the daughter of the Rev Robert Gardiner of Culdaff, is one of the Ballinspur Hartes of Co. Sligo. The lands he held, when he made the deed of assignment in 1713, were granted to his grandfather by the Earl of Carlingford. This latter Thomas Harte may have been the son of Henry Harte and Francis Bosvile, but no records have yet been found.*

*Thomas Harte of Kregnale was Alderman of Derry and had several children, of whom Robert Harte of Dublin (born 1716) was the eldest son and heir.*

*Three Hartes of Ballinspor Co. Sligo viz. Robert, Thomas and Morgan Harte, were supporters of the Prince of Orange in 1689 and were attainted by King James for that reason. They assisted in the defence of Enniskillen as adherents of the Protestant cause.*

The records show an indenture bearing the date 25th of October 1746 between Robert Harte of Ballinspor Gent Co. Sligo of one part and William Cooper of Tansyford, transferring the Harte's lands in Ballinspor and Oughamto the said William Cooper. This appears to have been a mortgage, because it could be redeemed on payment of £500 plus interest and £24 to Mary Harte, mother of the said Robert. The deed was witnessed by William Knox and Arthur Cooper, 7th Nov 1746.

Apparently, the mortgage must have been redeemed, because subsequent records show a deed on "Dec 2nd 1752 Robert Harte of Dublin, Esq, eldest son and heir of Thos. Hart, late of Londonderry, Esq, deceased, of one part and John Tuekey, Surgeon of Dublin.

"Did grant and make over all those lands of Ballinspur, Ougham, etc. in the barony of Corran, Co Sligo, to

S--- Tuekey for a term of 80 years." Witnessed by Andrea Mackelwaine and William Burke, both of Dublin, gents.

Members of the Harte family had intermarried with the Knox and Beresford families, so it would appear likely that when Robert Harte finally sold out to Dowell O'Reilly on 14th of April 1786 for £6500, the families would have been known to each other.

Thus ends the long association of the Harte Family with Spurtown, or Ballinspur, as it was formerly known. History is not particularly kind to them. The very few, very faint historical threads that survived into the twentieth century depict a family of bigots, always antagonistic to the native Irish and who treated their tenants very harshly.

The Hartes were a family with strong military ties. They first came to Ireland as soldiers, to fight for Queen Elizabeth the First and they appear to have held on firmly to their military tradition. According to their records, every generation produced its share of army and navy personnel, most of whom acquitted themselves admirably in the service of the British Crown, with some of them becoming governors and administrators in the British colonies. I feel sure that unlike their successors, the O'Reillys, the Hartes have many descendants in various parts of the world.

# Ballymote and its Surroundings

*Submitted by Padraig Doddy*

*This article is taken from a 1903 edition of the Sligo Independent, and was originally written by an anonymous schoolboy.*

Ballymote is the second-largest town in County Sligo and is bigger than Bunninadden or Ballinacarrow. Its population is about 700, exclusive of the suburbs. The Commons is a large suburb and is connected with the town by a bridge, with a single span like the Brooklyn Bridge in New York. There is a smaller bridge thrown across the river leading to Keenahan.

Ballymote is only four miles from Bunninadden and six from Coolaney – two famous towns. The Waterford Company were going to run their line one time so as to connect Bunninadden with Coolaney and Ballymote, but the Bunninadden people opposed it in Parliament, as it would injure their trade and the Kilshalvey people would have to pay a baronial guarantee. There is a telegraph wire from Ballymote to Bunninadden and a wireless connection with Coolaney and Mullagharoe.

There are several public buildings in Ballymote but no Town Hall – unless the old barracks. Besides places of worship, the principal buildings are the banks, barracks, old castle, the new sub-inspector's house and the new doctor's house, with their electric bells; the courthouse, where they try people for making speeches and let them out on bail or no bail, or state a case; the cemetery, with its splendid offices; the lace factory, hive of female industry; the National Schools; the Irish School, and the Night School.

Ballymote has also a splendid lawn tennis court and dressing rooms attached, and cricket club in flourishing condition and sports track. The lawn tennis people do not play at all in the wintertime as wet weather would be too trying so they play ping pong. The poor class live of course by labour and have in general very cheap and comfortable houses and the County Council is going to provide cottages and three acres of land for anyone who does not like his house at 3 and 6 pence per week and after 50 years the house becomes the soul property of the labourer.

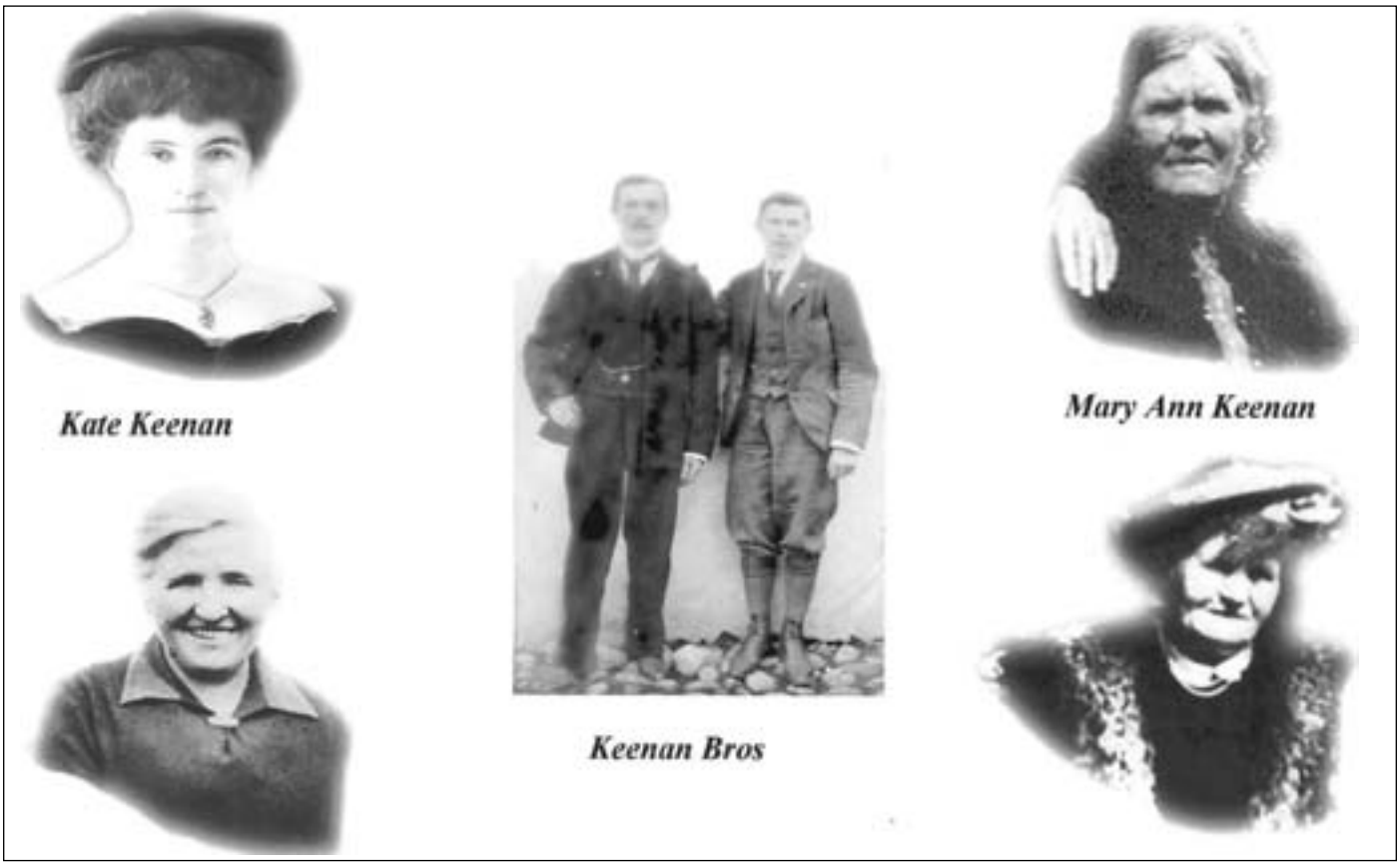
The farmers around the town are also comfortable unless the people out near Marlow when the river gets flooded every July like the Nile, the poor farmers have to look at their cocks of hay floating away and sometimes lose cattle with the flood. Ballymote has a good water supply except in the very hot summer and then they have to go to the Carrigans and Carrickbanagher pumps for water.

There is a great deal of money left in Ballymote by the Creamery and the Lace Factory people. The town is improving very much and getting flagged with flags from Glenfarne. The Creamery pays every month depending if they have the money counted. This saves people travelling to Sligo. The Creamery Society also sends often, a man from Glasnevin (not from the Cemetery though!) to tell the farmers how to save hay and feed calves without milk. Also, to tell the farmers and dry shareholders how to cooperate and get basic slag and bone manure and a special breed of Yorkshire pigs and cows and timothy grass, how to cure calves with sore throat and coughs.

One professor I think his name was Balden, or Commons, a Doctor of law, gave a lecture all about timothy grass and all the farmers were greatly surprised at their lecture, some of them would tell him about their calves dying, and he would keep looking at them like a gunner at a christening. When the farmer would be done the professor would reply, "That's where you got lost through ignorance, my dear man, but if you give your calf timothy grass. . ." and so on, so that before long all was timothy grass. Only one farmer shouted 'he did not give a damn for the whole shebang' and so the mixture terminated.

The people are very friendly to each other and when one goes away they present him with an address and a purse of sovereigns. I was at one address, and when the champagne was over the secretary would stand up before the addressed man who sat in a semi-electrocuted position and read, "The people of all of Ballymote have heard with great regret your departure from amongst them. While you were amongst them your brilliant qualities both commercially and otherwise were an ornament amongst us and in your new sad extended phase of action, we wish you your kind acceptance of the enclosed purse of sovereigns." The addressed man would read a reply he received from the secretary, collected the purse and went away to his new sphere, so goodbye.

# The Keenan Family




Michael Keenan owned a shop where James Duffy the accountant is now. Previous to that it was McGettrick's public house. Michael Keenan's wife was Annie Gaffney from Keash. They sold vegetables and groceries and owned a farm of land in Carrowkeel. They had four daughters and two sons. Mary Anne Doddy (nee Keenan, born 1971); Bridie Egan (nee Keenan, born 1873); John Keenan (born 1875); Kate Lipsett (nee Keenan, born 1878); Patrick Keenan (born 1880); Margaret Johnston (nee Keenan, 1882). Photographs courtesy of Derek Droughton, submitted by Padraig Doddy.

# Musings

*Bernie Gilbride*

As death draws nigh
Where do we go when we die?
From the beautiful garden that is earth
To the Eden of our birth?

From earth's fruitful vales
To where there are no tears
Eden, prepared by God for our tomorrows
Our destiny, away from all sorrows

To know as we cross the divide,
It's where forever, we will abide.
There, in that heavenly place
Meet our loved ones again, face to face.

# Ancient Stones

*Lynda Hart*

Ancient stones
What secrets do you keep?
Through fire and ice
Life and death,
With un-seeing eyes,
You witnessed all.

Ancestors moved you,
Touched you,
Worshipped you.
Building passages and portals
To a place apart.
From the land of the living
To the place of the dead.

Celebrating and dedicating
Honouring gods now lost,
But not forgotten.
Ancient stones,
Sacred stones
What secrets do you keep?

# The Barytes Mines

*Paddy Cooney*

I was on an Active Age outing to Co. Galway with a group from Sligo in the so-called summer of 2011. Most of the group went on a trip to the Aran Islands but some of the group had already been there, so instead they went to see parts of Connemara. We visited an old lead and silver mine called Glengowla near Oughterard.

This old mine was closed around 1860 and remained so until the late 1900s. The people who purchased the land the mine was on knew the history of it. They decided to clean it outand put new handrails in it, also e lectricity. They were a couple of years working on it; eventually it was opened up as a tourist attraction. The guide who took us on tour of the mine told us when you were employed in the mine you had to sign a contract to remove a number of tons of ore, from which the silver and lead would be extracted, and you were paid for the silver and lead rather than the ore. So on many occasions, people would get no money after all their hard work. The rock was cut out with hammers and chisels, with candlelight being the only light inside. The workers hired out the hammers and chisels from the mine owners who had their own mark (ID) on them. You could purchase the same quality tools from the local blacksmith much cheaper, but if you were caught in possession of those you immediately lost your contract.

The company also put special colouring in the candles – should an inspector from the mine pay a visit at night, it was to check out the candles they were using at home. Those were some of the stories the guide told us.

I was relating this information to Eileen, one of the ladies who went with the group to the Aran Islands. She wondered how I was so interested in the mine, so I told her that I worked in a mine for five years. She requested that I might reminisce a little about it – hence, this is my story.

I worked in the old barytes mine on Benbulben Mountain in the 1950s; I spent five years there. Conditions in the 1950s were very different from when Glengowla was working, but a long way from the way things are today.

Barytes is a mineral that is not plentiful throughout the world. There are a number of those mines in the U. S. A. , Russia and one or two in the U. K. It has a lot of uses, such as the making of delph, cosmetics, rubber and explosives. It is the main ingredient in the barium meal. This is used for medicinal purposes, such as before a person has a stomach x-ray.

In recent times, it was used to mix with oil to lubricate the drilling heads on oil and gas rigs. It is very heavy and therefore helps to bring the oil down to the bits. I believe it also has many other uses.

I understand that the first barytes mine opened on Benbulben sometime in the 1800s. A tunnel was made into the rock face on the Ballintrillick side of the mountain – somewhere up over the Gleniff-Horse Shoe road. A man had to go down the rock on a rope a number of times to drill the holes with a hammer and chisel to insert the explosives. Later on an iron ladder was secured to the rock face for this purpose. I presume they later made a safety shaft to the surface where the workers would have to go up and down. I do not know the location of this tunnel, but I am sure the locals do.

The ore was taken out and shafted down the steep slopes from the tunnel to a point from where it was brought to a mill by horse and cart where it was washed and graded. The pure barytes was loaded on wagons and transported on a narrow gauge railway line to Gleniff Horseshoe. From there it was shipped to England. Some of the senior workers from

**Paddy Cooney standing above the entrance to the old 1930s mine**

Ballintrillick used to say that the full wagons going down helped to pull the empty ones up. I do not know how that would work unless they had a steel rope all the way between them, which they might have.

I started work at the barytes mine, the 4pm until 12am shift, on a good summer's evening in July 1955. A friend and neighbour of mine started on the same shift. We were proud to get started, as work was very scarce then. We worked very hard all evening, in an area that resembled a quarry. Of course we were both young and wanted to make an impression, and we put out 28 wagons. We were later told that 14 was the norm. We kept up that record for a week, before being sent into the mine.

It was very different in there, as no one was watching you; even so we all worked just as hard. It was very wet and dirty inside. The only light we had was a carbide lamp, which you carried in your hand, or left on a rock while you were

working. There was electric light in the mine years before we started working in it. An old miner told us that it used to be lovely, clean and dry inside, until they started opening shafts out to the surface in order to do open-cast mining. The ore would be blasted outside, then it would be quarried and thrown down those shafts. It was then loaded into wagons from chutes over the railway line. Sooner or later the ore would start to slide into the shaft by itself, which was the source of the idea of doing it in the first place. As it was a mixture of clay and barytes, when the rain came it would go down the shafts and cause extreme pressure, which would smash the timbers of the chutes and block the tunnels for 20 or 30 yards sometimes. Of course there were escape routes to get out then. That is the reason why electricity was no longer in use in the mine.

**A cross which was erected above the mine for the Holy Year 1950 and blessed on the site by the Bishop of Elphin**

The main tunnel went into a hill and was from 20ftbelow the ground to about 150ft at the end of the line. There was another old mine that worked in the 1930s. It was a shaft that went straight down for around 150ft. It was closed before I worked there. We often threw stones down the shaft; it must have been full of water.

When I was there about a month, a few more men and myself were sent up to the surface of the open-cast area to take off two or three feet of bog, so it would not fall down the shaft along with ore and clay. It had to be all cleared off with spades and shovels –there were no hi-macs or JCBs around that time. It was heavy work.

There were a few miners working 60 feet below us. They were connected by rope to bars on the surface, from heavy belts around their bodies. They were earning 'danger money' for working down there, and they certainly deserved it, as it looked suicidal to me. There was one miner killed in a similar place about 100ft up. He was a foreman; he was showing the men what had to be done. The accident happened on Good Friday 1947, and the mine always closed on Good Friday from then on. There were some very dangerous areas underground. It would be known well in advance when the mines inspector was coming, and those areas would be closed off with timber work. He would only be half way down the mountain when they would start to open them again.

The lad who started the same day as I did got hurt in one of those areas where the ore fell from the roof by itself. It was filled in to wagons on the rail line from chutes in the side of the tunnel. Sometimes it would stop falling. After a few days someone would have to go in to put a blast or two in sidewalls ofthis area. You could not make out the roof of this area, even with a very good torch, therefore you did not know what was above you. This was done so the shock of the blast would start it falling again, possibly for weeks, maybe months.

My mate and a miner went in to do this job. As they were setting the blast, a small piece came away from the roof above them. They had helmets on them of course, but they both got hit and were knocked into the water. The miner was not badly injured, but my mate was. He had to be carried out on a stretcher and down the mountain with two relays of four men. It was a dark night and there was about three or four inches of snow on the ground. The ambulance was waiting at the road. He was taken to hospital, where he remained for a very long time. He never came back to the mine as he had problems with his back, and still has to this day. Sometime before that, there was another miner carried out on a stretcher to the first-aid room. He said afterwards, "I am very thankful to you for bringing me out, I hope I will be able to carry some of ye out soon. "He did not mean it the way it sounded.

The wage when I started was £4-2-6 per week and 10 shillings per month travel allowance. You worked 6-8 hour shifts including a 30-minute break for food.

Most people working there cycled to work, a few had motorcycles and they were not Harley Davidsons – some had old bangers. They are better going to the recycling yard nowadays.

Saturday night was 'Barber's Night' in the mine. Any man who was handy with the scissors and comb had a good no-pay job. I remember a man who had a big head of white hair got it cut the

night before Christmas Eve. When we were ready to go home, someone mentioned that we had forgotten to clean Paddy's hair off the rock. We need not have worried about it, as when we returned to work after Christmas roughly a thousand tonnes of clay and gravel had filled the tunnel, so the manager never saw it!

Most of us working in the mine lived in waders, sometimes we wore them home to keep our legs dry. There was no fancy working gear in those times, so nearly every man working there wore some type of used police or army uniforms. After a Fair Day in Manorhamilton, you could see every rank from Super down to Private walking down the mountain, as there was a shop in Manorhamilton that sold all this used clothing, and guard's caps also.

It was the good part of two miles from the road at Glencar Lake to the mine. It was a tough trek after cycling four miles first, and you had to do your shift after. I never heard anything about retirement age there, you worked as long as you were fit to do your job. I know there were men over 70 years of age still working when I was there. There were eighty to ninety men working there between both shifts. All are departed now, R. I. P. , except about twelve.

The ore was brought from the mine to the mill on the shore of Glencar Lake by an aerial rope-way, which had two separate sections. The reason there were two separate sections was the first part was built to service the old mine, which was working in the 1930s. The second part was built to accommodate the mine where we worked. A new rope had to be put in about every six years. The rope had to be pulled up manually from the Ballintrillick side of the mountain as it was not as steep as the Glencar side. It had to be pulled along the pylons fitted to the wheels on the top of the pylons, it was then strained to the correct length and both ends of the rope had to be unravelled and then spliced together. The splice could be over 100 foot long and when finished you would not find where it had been done.

The man who used to do the splice was Tom Feeney from near Ballisodare; his people still live around there. I do not know what year the first aerial rope went up but it must have been in the late 1930s. There were eighteen buckets spaced out on the main ropeway which was about two miles long in total. Each bucket would be a couple of hundredweight when full as the barytes was very heavy. At each end of the rope the buckets would come onto a rail where they would be pushed manually on two pulley wheels where they would be filled or tipped to empty them. They would then be pushed out to where they engaged with the moving rope. They were held on the rope by two half-round clips. The clips had two spots of weld on the inside which engaged in grooves of the rope, that is what stopped then from slipping, going up or down the incline. The rope travelled on wheels on pylons that varied in height from 10ft to 70ft. In one place where the rope crossed the valley it was over 700ft above the ground. People were not allowed to travel in the buckets, not that many would want to.

Mr. Jennings, who was an engineer with the company, did travel on it a few times when it was new. A man I knew very well who was dehydrated from the Sunday night travelled on it once. The man at the rope station would not push his bucket on the rope, so he got a stick and pushed himself out. He was waving his cap at all the other men who were trudging their way up the mountain on a warm day. However they had the last laugh as he was suspended for a month without pay when he arrived at the top. It was very dangerous to travel on the rope as sometimes a clip that would get worn out would let the buckets slide. It would rise smoke from the rope until it hit the next bucket and they would both fall to the ground.

**The ruins of the hostel where workers who travelled long distance stayed in the 1940s.**

The timber for the pit props and sheeting was all brought up on the rope. The wages for all the workers was sent up in the bucket – nowadays it would probably not reach the top as the buckets passed within one foot of the ground at the highest point of the rope-way. There was a second stretch of ropeway erected when the mine I worked in was opened. The ore was taken to the main ropeway, by this one. There were seven or eight men working in the old mill

by Glencar Lake. There, all the ore was washed and graded. It was then taken by lorry to Deepwater in Sligo from where it would be shipped to England. It was lovely and white like sugar or marble chippings, a very big difference from when it came out of the mine. Things were very different those times, as all the work was done by hand or not at all.

All the wagons in the mine had to be pushed by hand and sometimes the points for passing might be silted. If this happened the empty wagons would have had to be taken off and put on by hand. Your clothes would be wet and dirty. They only way to dry them was at a potbelly stove where all the cut-offs from the larch timber were burned. If you got near it, it was not too bad, and you would at least get warm. There were no houses with piped water in the rural areas at that time, as the plastic piping had not come to be used around here until the early sixties. Nobody had central heating and practically nobody in country areas had a cylinder for hot water. Some old cookers had a tank for hot water that could be drawn off by a tap on the side of the cooker. People would have to put on damp clothes if they did not have time to hold them in front of the fire. I often held my shirt in front of the open fire if I was going to a dance, and you would see the steam rising from it. If you were in a hurry you would put it straight on. If we did that nowadays I am sure we would get pneumonia, now that we are getting used to warmer and centrally heated houses.

At night when we would be coming down the mountain, only the odd man would have a lamp, and most people would be running to get home. On the way down there was an area we passed which was bog for about 300 yards and it was all old banks about three or four feet high which were worn by sheep scratching over many years. There was one particular man who had a very good carbide light, and he had lots of friends on a dark night! He would run down through this boggy area as fast as he could, and suddenly he would hide the lamp under his coat. There were always a few casualties, not badly hurt but covered in wet and muck. I believe the carbide came from somewhere about Collooney, it had been quarried around there.

Well, I recently paid a short visit to where I used to work, there is nothing there now only the skeletons of the buildings and the rusting pylons that have fallen down under the weight of the ropes. The old tunnel is built up and closed in the interest of safety. I understand a lot of explosives from the 1960s era were still in the magazine. This was reported to the army last year, who came and blew them up where they were as it would be dangerous to move them. There are some interesting info and pictures of the mines on the barytes mines website.

# Juan-les-Pins

*Bernie Gilbride*

A week by the Mediterranean Sea,
In May this year, I readily agree,
Juan-les-Pins our destination
South of France by invitation.

Fly to Nice one cold rainy day,
Arrive to heat we are here to stay
Road over road round and round
For miles it seems just one long town.

Pine trees, evergreens abound,
Flowers of every hue can be found.
Scented pathways shade the glare
A joy to walk without a care.

A promenade surrounds the bay
The beaches are crowded every day
Families with children having fun,
Teenagers, old folk, enjoy the sun.

Today the bay's alive with crafts,
Cruisers, speed boats, yachts and rafts,
Swimmers sailors surfers abound
Abseilers, snorkelers can be found.

Dark skins, brown, yellow, white,
In this lovely place all delight.
Italian, English, French, Moroccan
All languages here are spoken.

The apartment six floors over ground
Looks to the sea that's all around.
Breakfast on balcony early everyday
Tastes much nicer eaten this way

Evening we stroll the streets
Cafes everywhere, dinner we eat,
Up narrow windy old streets
On beach with water lapping feet.

Fortified towns along the bay,
Long ago kept invaders away,
Mighty castles, towns, moats,
Protected all from those in boats.

A day in the mountains with friends we spend,
Near ancient village, where old roads wend
Large mounds of grey stones on farms abound
Heaped high as ancestors cleared the ground
That they might make a worthwhile living
Making good use of all God's giving.
Those stones many a tale could tell
Of war, peace, love and hardship as well

To us on that blissful evening
Twas a place that seemed very near heaven.

# Childhood Memories

*Brigid Healy*

I was born in a small two-roomed mud-walled thatched cabin, on the side of a mountain in the second decade of the last century. I was number five in a family of twelve, one of whom was adopted owing to the death of her mother soon after she was born.

I never remember us being overcrowded, but it was a lot of people for such a small space. There was no back door, only a tiny square of street leading out to the road and that was all we had for play.

My parents had a small portion of land allotted to them – about three and three-quarter acres or thereabouts. On it they reared fowl, we never had to buy eggs. These were sold at one shilling and six pence per dozen. We kept pigs and a donkey, and in the winter months we had two cows. In that small acreage we grew all our vegetables – potatoes, cabbage, onions, turnips and parsnips. They took conacre and pasture for two cows from the local landlord. He had thousands of acres. My mother had to travel there – nearly two miles, morning and evening – to milk those said cows. She always said they were in the farthest part of the field. The rush in the mornings for the milk cart must have been a bit of a strain but she never showed it, sometimes she would wipe her brow and laugh it off.

I think we used to miss her when she was away and then my father would take my younger sister and myself on his knee and sing for us until she would return. I remember her having to be back from milking each morning to send us to school. Then she had to prepare herself for the bog many miles away. She had a busy day before her and having done so much she was back to welcome us home from school.

There was no water around the house. It had to be carried in buckets and barrels every day of the year. That was my mother's job too. I remember us children as we got older being able to help. We would

**Brigid Healy**

get a broom handle and cut a small niche in the centre to hold the pail securely, which we would cautiously carry so as not to spill a drop.

I remember my first day at school. I also remember my lovely embroidery Anglaise dress. I must have looked a little picture. I was only three. I had two older brothers and two older sisters. My brothers said, 'Won't you come with us?' and my sisters asked me the same question. So I very wisely at the ripe old age of three made my decision. I went with my sisters. I am still making decisions and have not regretted any of them. I remember being awed on seeing a room full of children. I think there were seventy or eighty on the rolls at that time. I soon got used to them. The teacher was very kind. She seemed to me to be very old. She always had something nice for us. We especially loved to get lucky bags. They were a real treat.

I remember my mother once being very ill in the springtime and she was taken away on a stretcher. She was splitting potatoes in a cold barn and got pneumonia. It was touch and go for a very long time. The hospitals were almost empty in those days. She asked to be taken home as she got a little better as she was the only patient in the ward.

The summers seemed to be never-ending. Those times we used to be roasted with sun coming from school. We kept in the shade of the hedges and trees where we often picked wild strawberries. After school we had hay down and potatoes to pick. We had no time to lose and helped with whatever had to be done. The journey to and from we enjoyed very much. We could look down into the valley and see this ribbon of water winding its way in a semi circle (the Owenmore), with the hills and mountains in the distance. It was very beautiful. I never dreamed I would find myself in that place and live there, which I do at present. My parents were very industrious and their one aim in life was to take us off the side of the road and give us a bit of space. They did this in the early twenties. They sowed wheat, barley and oat sand; got the wheat and oats ground into flour, flake meal and oaten meal. I remember them stacked away under the clock. We still have that clock after ninety years. It is striking away as good as ever.

There was always a kettle on the crook, an oven with a cake baking one side of the fire and a pot of porridge simmering on the other side. Market day for my parents was on Saturday. My father worked a five and a half day week so when the winter store was exhausted it was 'off to the town'. They always bought things in bulk. I remember when going to school a pencil cost a penny but Dad always got the dozen for three and a half pence. That was a great bargain.

We got holidays from school three times a year and the teacher used to buy large boxes of fruit and sweets, which were very welcome indeed. There were very few luxuries in those times. We went to school in our bare feet nearly all the year round. Many a stone bruise we had, our toes used to be black. Often shins would be black with the cane. Why we didn't lose our toes is a mystery to me. Doctors were never called, only on grave occasions. People could not afford to pay them anyway.

I had a very dear grandmother

who was bedridden for about twenty years. She took a special liking to me as I had the same mane of hair as a daughter of hers who she lost at the age of twelve. She took the place of my mother when Mam was absent. Dad used to bring her sugar candy every week. It had to be rolled into a cloth and hammered to make it into small pieces fit for a child to eat and we enjoyed this immensely.

When she died in 1925 we were broken hearted. Seeing the black coach and four horses with white ribbons streaming from it we stood watching as it disappeared from sight and were devastated. We did not know what was happening. Ninety twenty-five had a special appeal to me. I used to say to myself, 'Nineteen twenty-five is gone forever.' I used to think deeply about things at the tender age of five and six. With all that was going on around me I was taking it all in and saying nothing. I always had a yearning for the spiritual and got very good example from our parents and I came to realise when I was young how wonderful they were.

They kept a servant boy continuously as they both could not cope with all the work. Michael or James would cut the corn, wheat, barley and oats. My mother made the sheaves. Then we could all help out when we came from school. When it was safely harvested in stacks the threshing machines would come along with nine or ten men as everyone helped one another. Then there would be a dance or céile to celebrate.

After the winter months when the stack of turf was getting small, my brother would get the donkey and creels and my sister and I would get into each creel. They had to be held very carefully each side until we were safely within. You may guess what happened, my sister forgot herself and out I came across the donkey's back into a hedge of sally rods. Thankfully I was none the worse for my experience but it was a bit of a shock. We got to the bog without any more mishaps. The first thing we always did was start a fire. We gathered sticks and pieces of bark and soon had it going strong. We settled our billycan on top of it. Then we hurried to fill our creels while it was boiling. We were always to find the turf bone dry being the time of year that it was. We made the tea then and how refreshing it was and it renewed our strength for the journey home when we proudly showed off the results of our efforts. Then we lit a blazing fire on the hearth at home and were in our glory.

We always had something to look forward to – Easter, Christmas holidays. The season of Lent was a time of penance and it was kept to the letter. The milk would be watered and there were no luxuries allowed at all. I think on Sundays we could relax a bit. My dad would buy a side of 'ling' – I think it was the skin of a large fish. It was as hard as a board and the size of half the door. There was a sizeable piece cut off every day and left to boil for hours, which we tolerated with much patience being the Holy Season as it was. There was no murmur of discontent. My father encouraged us by talking about the treats we would have for Easter. He fulfilled his promise and we realised he was the best Dad in all the world.

My mother was kept busy baking, boiling and stewing. She always tried to have something different for us at meal times. She worked long hours but it was a joy to her, not a burden. I never saw a frown on her face. She used to make oatcakes which we took to school and we always had to have a piece for the teacher. So it must have tasted as good to him as it did to all of us.

With all the bread that was baked we had lots of empty flour bags. Four large ones sewed together would make a sheet for a bed. But before that happy time came there was a lot of work to do. Mam would buy a half-stone of washing-soda. When the bags were soaked in cold water until all trace of the flour was gone, she would get the washing soda and go all over the brands with it and put a heavy weight on them for a week or so. It helped a lot but there was a lot more rubbing to be done. Then they were washed and left to bleach on the grass a bit away from the house. She also made pillowslips. She made little slips for us which she always had as white as snow. Sometimes you would see a sunburst on a little dress but did we care? It made it more appealing.

We would look forward to Christmas very much. The house had to be whitewashed two or three times so as it would be whiter than white. My sister and myself used to say four thousand Hail Marys and have them finished on Christmas Eve. My mother would have all classes of cakes baked for us, plain white, treacle with no fruit, treacle with fruit, plain with fruit, egg cakes, apple cakes, potato cakes, buns, bracks, yeast. The list was endless. She was a remarkable woman, the best and most cheerful you would find anywhere.

She predicted her own end. She told us she was going to die at Christmas. This was in October. She was up and about among us, and we couldn't believe or maybe didn't want to. Coming on to November and December we noticed a little weakening, but she still got up and out to Mass and the Sacraments. She was doing the Nine Fridays and had them finished for Christmas Eve. My sister and myself stayed each side of her bed and we could find her limbs going cold. We did our best with hot water bottles but they did not seem to be doing any good. Morning came and her eyes were bright. It came to mid-day, we were still at her bedside paralyzed with grief, but she was not speaking. She must have noticed our distress. She had not spoken for twelve hours. Suddenly she said the wonderful words, "Have ye the turkey cooked? I have a short reprieve. Get me something to eat." The joy and relief of those words from her gave wings to our feet and hands and we soon had everything ready. She had got two months to that very day. She died on the twenty fifth of February three years after my father. We were resigned to her going when the time came and they both have left precious memories that we shall never forget.

*Brigid Healy passed away on the 25th of April, 2006. This article was kindly submitted by her brother Dan Healy.*

# A Night With The Winos

*Mary Kelly-White*

The house did not look good when they reached it, and it stank of stale beer. 'A winos' hut,' they gasped together, and they took a fit of nervous laughter that they couldn't control. Their laughter penetrated the hut and a couple of 'merrier then thou' guys shuffled outside. "Hello! Come in if you're good looking. Come in anyways, good looking or not. Even if you're Red Riding Hood, we're no wolves we won't eat yez."

"Hello and thanks," the women answered.

The smell of booze was desperate, overwhelming, both in and outside the hut, which was more a small shed than a hut. The light was dim but cheerful and there was a nice fire in an open grate. There was neither head nor tail on the kitchen or whatever they called it, but there certainly was a kindly welcome on the mat.

"Did yez run away or were yez flung out?" one fellow asked as he offered two mugs of beer or wine or something towards them.

"It's a long story," Dot said.

"We have all night, come in."

"Can we use your telephone please?" Peggy asked.

"Telephone?" They all laughed. "When was the last time you used a telephone, Jimmy?"

"Never," said Jimmy, "but I remember seeing one in a glass house down the road a long time ago. But where is it now, that's what I'd like to know!"

"What road?" Peggy asked. "Are we near a town? Do yez even know where yez are?" She stressed the 'yez'.

"Ah, we know where we are all right. We are on the outskirts of society. We have no rights and no wrongs. We are not lost, we're found. We have all we need here and no one to bother us. Give us a bar of a song."

"We have to get home," Peggy said, trying to sound normal.

"Not tonight," they said together. "We won't throw you out and we won't eat you. You are welcome to stay and you can leave at dawn, these woods can be dangerous at night. There's corn beef in the cans and soup in packets, and plenty of bread. You might as well settle down for the night and enjoy the company."

Dorothy and Peggy began to tell the boys what had happened to them, and they in turn were able to tell the women where they had taken the wrong direction that landed them in the woods. They also told the women that it would be easy enough to get back on the road once daylight dawned. The women couldn't see any signs of beds, or any other room besides the one that they were in. When they asked to use the toilet the men laughed innocently and said, "Acres and acres and watch the nettles."

"Are we drunk," Dot asked Peggy when they went outside, "or is this really happening?"

They laughed and laughed, admitting that they hadn't laughed as much during their entire lives.

"It's no wonder winos pull away from society, they have the life of Reilly," Peggy said.

"I suppose you'd like to join them?" Dorothy said.

"Well we are stuck with them tonight, and glad of their company. Hurry up or they might think we need help out here."

"Heaven forbid," Dot said. "But I must admit they are good fun and nice enough fellows. Come on, we might find out more about them."

When the women re-entered the cabin, the fire was topped up and the men were making soup and sandwiches. The smell was good. Dot and Peggy were so hungry they did not mind eating bread from newspapers, which were laid beside their seats around the fire. The times on the two clocks were different. The big wall clock chimed 2 am, and the tinny-looking alarm clock said 12.30. The right time was probably somewhere in between.

There were three men, an old man, a very young fellow no more than twenty, and the 'yez' man who could be forty or fifty. In the light of the blazing fire they all looked the same – woollen hats, unshaven, darkish beards, a bit drunk but merry with it, too many jackets all old and scruffy. The oldest man was smoking a pipe but the other two were non-smokers. They gave it up, they said, when cigarettes got too expensive and were getting wet because they were living rough.

"Are you all related?" Peggy asked, trying to compose herself.

"We are not," the young fellow said. "We're brothers, isn't that right Sam?"

"Aye," the middle aged man agreed.

"But you all have different accents," Peggy remarked. "You are from the North," she said to one of them. "What's your name?"

"I'm Sam. Yez are keen. Was it my hat that gave me away?"

"No, 'twas your mother," the young fellow said. "Say no more, these could be spies, they come in all guises nowadays."

"You watch too much TV, or is it them books that you be reading all day?" Sam said. "That's what my old man used to say to me."

"Is that why you left home?" Peggy asked.

"Who said I left home?" he joked. "Home left me."

"How?" Peggy persisted. "Were you a traveller?"

"Are yez listening to that lads?" Sam asked. "Tell them. Tell them what happened, it's an interesting story."

"The truth is that I don't know who I am; I don't remember my mother, I must have had one otherwise I wouldn't be here. My

old man might have been my father but I'm not sure. I had to call him 'sir'. He was fond of the drop and he needed me more as a guide dog when he was drunk than he ever needed me when he was sober. He used to tell me that he found me wandering along the road, that he should have left me where he found me for all the good I was. He was living along in this place; he had a horse and cart and he used to work for people moving stuff and stones, and bringing bonhams and calves to the markets and fairs, things like that. He used to say that he was a hard grafter but that I was useless and couldn't do anything."

"And what age were you?" Dot asked.

"Nine or ten, I suppose."

"And were you at school?"

"No. I never went to school. The old man didn't believe in school, he said it only turned your head and that smart people could educate themselves without ever going to school. He taught me how to read and he read a lot himself, and I thank him for that."

"I wouldn't thank him," Sam said, "He left you with your head stuck in a book and nothing else in your life."

"He did that surely, but I could be worse."

"And what happened to him?" Dot asked.

"What didn't? He sent me to the fair one day to sell the horse. I didn't want to go on my own, but he insisted. The horse didn't want to go either. It was getting old and slowing down. I threw an old saddle over it and I headed off to the fair. The horse galloped, then shied and I was thrown off. I was knocked out for a bit."

"Only for Jack Ruane you were a gonner," Sam said.

"Maybe I should have been one," the young fellow said sadly.

"Then what happened?" Dot pressed.

"The horse went home on its own. The old man was drunk as usual, but he must have been depressed as well. The house was a shambles, as if a war had taken place. The windows were broken. Every dish on the dresser was smashed. I stayed in Jack Ruane's house that night and he and his sons spent the night with the old man. That's as far as I can go. Jack Ruane brought me back here the next day. The house and the barn were burned to the ground. There was nothing left but the horse and this shed. The old man never got over it, and in a way neither did I."

"And did you ever find out what happened?" Dot asked.

"Never, and I don't want to know."

"And who owns this place?" Peggy asked.

"I suppose I do. The horse is dead. I'm here since and no one bothers me. I suppose I should have followed it up." He took a long slow drink from his mug.

"You should write a book, that's a great story. But it is very sad," Peggy said.

"And there's plenty more where that came from, no better man to spin a yarn." Sam said.

"Were you pulling our legs?" Dot gasped.

"Behave yourselves," Sam laughed, "or we might pull your legs. No, it's true, every word of it."

"And what about yourself?" Peggy asked the older man. "What's your name and are you related to either of these two?"

"Me?" he asked, taking a draw on his pipe, and shooting a big tobacco spit straight into the fire.

"Come, on Jimmy," the younger fellow encouraged him. "Tell them your story Jimmy, it's a good one, go on."

"Well, I suppose you could say that I had everything but I'm as far on now as if I had nothing," Jimmy said. "And I have nothing only the clothes on my back, no house, no farm, no family, nothing. I have a few pounds but what use is money at the end of your days when you are all alone?"

"Tell them what happened the farm."

"That was the last straw," he said spitting again into the fire. "Twas a nice bit of land, about six acres. I always thought it was mine. An uncle of mine, a brother of my father who lived in America used to come home now and again when I was young. I was the first child and he used to call me Jamie Lad. He bought the bit of land supposed to be a present from him to me, but my father claimed it for his own and he sold it with rest of the farm. I had to make other plans and I made none. I just left home, left the wife, two daughters and never went back."

"That's not the half of it," Sam said. "Tell them about your wife."

"She was young, and with the land gone there was plenty of money, no strings attached, nothing to hold them in this country."

"Them?" Peggy queried.

"Aye, they must have been planning it for a while. My father took her and the kids on a holiday, and the next I heard from them she was looking for a divorce."

"On what grounds?"

"What grounds did she need? She was gone, he was gone, the kids were gone, the land was gone. I had nothing. I just stood there and let it happen."

"And do you regret it now?"

"Not now, I don't."

"But did you regret it then?"

"I'm not sure. Nothing like that ever happened to me before. I don't know how I felt. Ashamed, astonished, empty. Who knows?"

"And did you never smell a rat?" Dot asked.

"Marrying Lucy was the greatest thing that ever happened in my life. My mother was dead. I was turning forty and my father was delighted when I told him that I was planning to marry Lucy. She was the only girl in a family of boys in the next townland. She was used to men, and hard work. Little I knew that my father had a notion of her himself."

"That was an awful thing to do to his own son," Peggy said. "Where are they now?"

"Dead. It was a good few years ago and time heals the deepest of wounds. She didn't write much,

I think she had regrets once the novelty wore off and the children were young. Besides, my father was with them and Lucy always called him Daddy. That was handy. They settled in Kenya, there was plenty of work and money, and the weather was a bonus; but the sun caught up with them and she died from skin cancer. It was a short illness and far away. I only heard the news when it was all over; a telegram, a little slip of green paper: 'Lucy died. Big C. Sorry. Daddy.' Nothing more."

"What about your children, did they ever try to contact you?"

"Never. And I didn't know where to contact them."

"Either you are as strong as an ox to be able to carry such a burden of grief or else you are as hard as nails and you have no heart at all," Peggy said.

"The heart was torn out of me the day they left. It was worse than bereavement. At least with death there is closure and a grave to visit. This was blight. Electric shock. I think I was in a state of shock for about ten years."

"Did you hit the bottle?"

"I was never one for the bottle. I'm told I wept a lot and stayed alone a lot but apart from that I don't know what I did."

"Did you contemplate suicide?"

"I should have," he said quickly, "but I spent too long thinking about it and I'm this way now."

"Tell them about the newspaper cutting you have," Sam encouraged. "And I'll get more grub."

Jimmy filled his pipe and lit it with a strip of blazing paper from the open fire. He drew long and strong on his pipe and he spat again straight into the fire. Thick slices of buttered bread and chunks of canned meat were handed around and the youngest fellow topped up the mugs from two bottles.

"If yez women would prefer tea yez will have to make it yourselves. We seldom make tea, it's too much hassle and the milk goes sour, but we have dried milk in case of emergencies."

"This is not an emergency, it is like the Last Supper. Are ye all right or would ye like tea?" the youngest fellow asked.

Anxious to hear about the newspapers, the women declined the tea.

"About two years ago… Was it three or maybe four, would it be Sam?" Jimmy began.

"Never mind how long, time means nothing at this stage," Sam said. "Just tell them about the newspapers or I'll tell them myself."

"A travelling woman came by with a basket of junk, crosses and the like," Jimmy said. "She had a few magazines as well. She gave us that crucifix on the wall and a card of safety pins, a few pairs of shoe-laces and of course this eejit went for the magazines." He nodded at Sam. "They were African Missionary periodicals long out of date."

"We didn't want them for nothing." Sam said. "We gave her the spondulicks." He handled the invisible money between his thumb and fingers.

"We did that surely," the young fellow said. "We're not mean. We pay our way. We don't want anything for nothing."

"The bloody newspapers! Will you get to them, what happened?" Dot pushed.

"The magazines lay there for a long time. They were no good for lighting the fire because that glossy paper doesn't burn. They lay there until one day when I had nothing to do and these two were out gallivanting. I began to turn the pages. It was interesting enough and I begrudged them the weather; nothing on them but shirts with no sleeves and the sun shining down on pages and pages of young fellows who had joined the priesthood and were just ordained. The pictures of huddled children and the women with their colourful wraps and skirts were good to look at, but I wasn't taking much notice until I read a few lines under a picture of two nuns from Ireland whose father had died and who had donated their inheritance to build a school beside a hospital in the village."

"So?" Dorothy said. "What harm was that? I'm sure plenty of African schools are founded and funded like that."

"Shush! Let him talk," Sam said.

"I thought I was passed being shocked." Jimmy said "Until I read the names: Sister Lucindajay and Sister Jaymyma."

"Your two daughters?" Dorothy whispered, sniffling.

"My two lovely little girls," Jimmy said. "It gave no surnames but who else would have them two names – Lucindajay and Jaymyma? I thought the 'Jay' was for 'James' after me, but later I realised it was after my father – he was Jacob, 'Jay' for short. And maybe they were his children not mime. Wasn't I the fool? Wasn't I the fool?" he sighed, emptying his pipe and preparing to fill it again.

The women were tearful, and they went outside to compose themselves. With the dawn light they could see a few houses around them, and they could also see that the road was only a few yards away from where they were.

"I'll never criticise winos again for as long as I live," Peggy said. "I always dismissed them as drunks, layabouts, drinking all day long and living off soft touches, anyone who was fool enough to give them money. I never thought that some of them had a past like that."

When they were inside again and hoping that Sam would start telling his story, they were a little disappointed to find that he had turned in for the night. He was just rolled up in covers in a corner of the hut. The other two fellows said that they were sorry that the night had come to an end and that the women were welcome to visit any time they wished.

"You'll have to come again to hear Sam's story, he'd have told it tonight but the postman passes this way every morning, around this time, and he will give you a lift into town. He's good like that," Jimmy said, and they said goodbye.

# A Charming Sight

*Lynda Hart*

From the first frosts of autumn until the warmer days of spring, feeding the garden birds helps to supplement their meagre winter diet. During the winters 2009/2010 and 2010/2011, feeding the birds became a lifeline, ensuring their survival in some of the harshest weather ever recorded in Ireland.

Even now when I watch coal tits at the feeders I wonder how a bird weighing no more than two grams survived daytime temperatures of -5 degrees Celsius and below, and night-time temperatures well down into minus double figures.

Usually during the winter I will feed the birds in the morning, and on very cold days refill the feeders in the mid-afternoon. During the very cold weather we had in 2009-2011, feeding the birds became a four-times-a-day vigil. Providing them with drinking water was nearly impossible as the water was freezing within minutes of it being put outside, and had to be heated to give them any chance. Not surprisingly, they became quite tame and many stayed on the feeding station when I was putting food out for them. The effort needed to fly away was more than their fear of me.

The variety of birds that visit the garden depends on the types of food provided. I have a wrought-iron feeding station placed under a large ash tree. The tree provides shelter, a safe haven and further food for the birds. The feeding station has several 'arms' on which to hang the feeders plus a water container and a large shallow dish. Peanuts will attract the tits and finches. Wild bird food, a mixture of different seeds and grains, will attract a wide range of birds. I place some in a feeder, some in the shallow dish and scatter some on the ground.

Apart from the tree, the feeder is in an open space so cats cannot creep up on them. Chaffinches especially like to feed from the ground as do the wagtails, dunnock and robin. Bird food is not cheap, especially peanuts, so I use a variety of different foods. The best is cheese. The cheapest the supermarket offers. Cut it into very small pieces; it is fat and all the birds appreciate it. Any scraps can be put out, but bread must be soaked first in milk or water so it does not swell up in the bird when they eat it. Cooked rice and pasta, porridge and sultanas are all eaten up.

I never have to worry about vermin because of one type of bird: the rook. I try to like all birds equally, but he tries my patience. But he also amazes me with his brain and skill at getting at food not meant for him. I used to put fat balls hanging on string, but the rook first of all hacked through the string and then learned to pull the fat ball up and wind the string around the arm on which it was hanging so he could easily get the food.

They also learned to unhook the feeders even though that meant manoeuvring them over a scroll of metalwork! Now everything is secured with wire – but they still try. I have at least one rook that will hang off a flimsy feeder to feed from it. They also seem to know when I am there. When I put the food out I watch the birds for a while, and then sit down to have my breakfast. How do the rooks know? Well, according to research, they have exceptional memory. Not only can they remember yesterday, last week and last year, they can, according to scientists, remember up to five years previous, especially faces. So they recognise me and remember how long after I place the food out is a safe time to take the food.

So as soon as I am sitting down for my food, they raid the feeding station. I get up, go outside and shoo them as far as the nearest telephone wire where they sit and mock me, knowing that as soon as I go back inside they will continue their raids.

There are two schools of thought on how long you should feed the birds for. Up until quite recently it was suggested that you only feed them until the springtime. Now many say that you should feed them all year. I belong to the first view and unless there is a very cold snap during the spring which restricts the natural growth of buds etc. , I only feed until late April/early May. And while putting out certain seeds and soft fruit is acceptable at all times, I was always told that the reason for not feeding longer than spring was twofold. Firstly, peanuts fed to young birds could choke them, and secondly the birds become too dependent on the feeders and might lose some of their natural abilities to forage for food. It is up to the individual to decide.

When I first came to Ballymote and started to feed the birds, one of the most prevalent of the birds visiting the table was the greenfinch. However now I only see one or two a season. This is due to a microscopic parasitic disease called Trichomonsis, which, since 2005, has all but wiped out the greenfinches. Other birds are affected such as house sparrows, other finches, doves and pigeon, but it is the greenfinch that has suffered the most.

The parasite lives in the upper digestive tract and blocks the birds' throat, causing them to literally starve to death. Because of this and other parasitic diseases it is imperative to keep the bird table and feeders clean. Hot soapy water is all that is needed. If, for any reason, any of the birds that visit look sick, or if dead birds are found, it is best to stop feeding for a period of about two weeks. The birds can pass the disease on by feeding young and by contact with each other.

Every year Birdwatch Ireland runs a survey to see how many and what varieties of garden birds we have here in Ireland. Volunteers mark the maximum number of a species seen at one time during weekly periods.

You do not need to be a member to take part, and I for one have found it enjoyable and interesting. The top five birds in the Birdwatch Ireland survey for the past two years have been 1) robin 2) blackbird 3) blue tit 4) chaffinch 5) great tit.

In my garden the chaffinch is number one by a very long way. This year on more than one occasion I had over twenty feeding at one time! After the chaffinch come my friend the rook, then the coal tit, great tit and blue tit. This year a family of bullfinches (six of them) have been visiting. So has one of my personal favourites, the goldfinch. This pretty little finch usually travels in groups, known collectively as a 'charm', a term which couldn't be more apt.

Watching birds feeding at the bird table is a relaxing and rewarding pastime, and by helping them, they will help you. The more birds we encourage into our gardens, the more pests they eat, which is really useful to the vegetable and flower grower alike.

And by feeding the birds we help to continue their survival in an increasingly harsh world.

Sources: www. birdwatchireland, www. rspb. org. uk

# Bartholomew Joseph Healy

*Eamonn Stafford*

Bartholomew Joseph Healy is his name, though throughout his life he was mostly referred to as 'Batty Joe' Healy, especially in Ballymote where he was born in 1927.

He passed away in his sleep very peacefully in July 2011. He had returned to live in Ballymote in or about 2005, and took up residence at No. 22 Cuan Íosa, Railway Road, Ballymote. He had been away from his home town for 56 years. He was the eldest of his family and lived in the family home at Ballinascarrow, Ballymote until 1948. He trained as a butler and took up a position with a family named Spiro at Elgin Road, Ballsbridge, Dublin.

He was a member of the local Catholic church from his baptism until his demise. His schooling was in the boys' school in Ballymote. His working life commenced at a youthful age. Being the eldest of a large family there was always the need for the first son to be responsible for some tasks, in order to assist the family. It was the practice then to allow the young boys leave from school to save the turf and hay and also attend to the sowing of crops such as potatoes. So each summer saw him in the bog cutting and saving the turf. His older siblings such as Kathleen would also be involved in these activities.

He also attended at Templehouse to local farms and purchased hens,

**Bartholomew Joseph Healy**

acting as an agent for Carton Bros. in Dublin. I had the pleasure of accompanying him many times on those journeys to Templehouse, which occurred most weeks on Saturdays in season. He also trapped and snared rabbits for the Dublin market and had a big trade in rabbits and skins.

He had a good reputation as a man of integrity with all the people and businesses he traded with. He has a passion for truth and honesty. This was a road his grandmother sent him on. He retained these principles all his life.

Like so many of his friends and family, he emigrated to New York in the early 1960s. No sooner was he settled down in an apartment than the military personnel called and advised him he would have to join the U.S. Army and fight in the Korean war, or otherwise return to Ireland. He found his time with the military a most disturbing experience. He made a very good friend in the army and was in a trench beside him when his friend was shot dead. When that war ended he was promptly demobbed from the army and returned immediately to Ireland. He went to the Westport area and found employment as a television and radio technician in that area.

Eventually he opened his own radio/TV shop in Westport and worked there until returning to Ballymote in 2005. Like many of his relations he was subject to serious attacks of arthritis and most of his time from 2005 until his demise, he suffered greatly from the pain of the disease.

Being confined to bed for several years he relied on his brother Noel and sister Kathleen to comfort him in those trying times. He now lies buried in Carrownanty burial ground. His spirit has returned to the beloved divine.

He is survived by his son Declan and partner, Nora Fadion; his brothers and sisters and many cousins in Ireland, Northern Ireland, the United States, England and Scotland.

May he rest in peace.

# The Miracle of Nature

*Bernie Gilbride*

The wonders of Nature never fail to amaze and delight me.

Winter is past, and immediately the fragile snowdrop pushes its slender stem through the cold, hard earth. All year it has lain buried deep and quiet, while on the surface hoes were pushed and drawn, weeds pulled none too gently, but still it held on to whatever it needed to sustain it. Heat or rain, wind or sun, did nothing to its underground home. On time again this New Year it pushed its fragile stem through the icy clay and opened its snowy-white bell-like flowers to delight our eyes.

As it begins to fade – I cannot bring myself to say die – the daffodils are obeying their call by nature. Standing straight, the flower head just waiting the kiss of the sun to open and show us their frilly edged golden cups and red-tipped stamens. For another few weeks, together with their cousins the Narcissi, they too delight our eyes.

Out in the back garden the old apple tree is pushing tiny tips of delicate colour, barely visible as yet, again in obedience to nature as it has done for over fifty years. Little by little its buds will grow, so that by late April or early May the tree will be a miracle of pale white/pink flowers enticing bees and flies to taste its nectar, fertilising it to produce its usual mass of golden apples by Autumn.

By late May or early June the roses are opening in all their glory – all varieties, standard, floribunda, climbers. They will continue to flourish right into the winter.

Surely the miracle that is Nature is very evident even in one small garden.

# Books

*Bernie Gilbride*

Books, books, books – who would be involved in a writing group?

To think when I first joined our organisation I thought it would be a nice lazy group to be part of. Not for me 'crafts' or anything strenuous, too much like work. But a writing group was just the thing, where I could sit at my leisure and listen to the writings of my colleagues, enjoy the humour, be interested in historical stuff, or tales of long ago.

That illusion was very rapidly shattered. The coordinator, Martin, had a very different perspective and was most ambitious. He proposed writing a BOOK – consisting of contributions from all and sundry, me included. Eventually *Autumn Leaves* was laboriously born, and with no help, or very little anyway. Martin had one of our nicest books printed and on sale in the shops, and I saw my name in print for the first time. The thrill it gave me – I was hooked. After that there was no stopping him. *Halcyon Days* quickly followed with many more in between to *Turf Smoke*, and our newest *Glowing Embers* currently in the shops.

All our conversations invariably included books. My every waking minute seems to be occupied keeping track of those sold or gone to the shops or about to be sent to the shops. My kitchen is partly taken over with special drawers sitting on worktops – invoice books, statement books, lodgement books, cheque books, account books, ledger books, receipt books. Any wonder I hear books in my head, see books in my sleep, listen to any reference on radio or television about books about to be published, trying to keep up to date. I try to appraise the ones I have time to read. My living room is awash with you guessed it – books and newspaper pages assessing current publications.

Beside my bed are all sorts of books waiting to be read, where once, only my prayer books flourished, now sadly neglected – missals, mildewed from disuse, Rosary and Contemplation books festooned with cobwebs, and their spiders of at least three generations living out their senior years in warmth and peace un-accosted by duster or polish.

Now who can that be ringing the door bell? There is a furniture van outside the door. Of course, they are lifting out a new bookcase, which I bought for the landing (only space left in the house), a lovely old oak bookcase with lots and lots of shelves for more books books books!

# Ballymote Memories

*Submitted by Gerry Cassidy*

**At Ballindoon Abbey**
**Garda Peter Sreenan**

**Children of Captain Corr**

**Dr. Frank O'Hart,**
**wife Mona & family**

**Fr. Eustace Cassidy**

**Fr. Mullen & Mrs. Mullen**
**N.T. with Colvert Family**

**Nurse Maureen Mullen and Dr. O'Harte**

**John Hogg at Cathedrae**
**Cliffs circa 1957**

**Garda Brendan Colvert**

# The Bell of Aghanagh Church

*Kathleen Fairbanks*

**The belfry of Aghanagh Church**

**Aghanagh Church of Ireland 1980, past and present church members: Kathleen Fairbanks, Florence Fairbanks, Alice White, Arthur Henry & family, Peggy Lillie, Ruth Lillie, Dorothy Lillie, David Lillie, Elsie White & family, Eleanor Craig & family**

For over a century and a half, the Bell of Aghanagh Church of Ireland has been in use, to signify the hour or the time for worshippers to go to church on a Sunday for service.

The late Ffolliott family of nearby Hollybrook Estate provided the church and its contents for use by the local people, and it was consecrated on September 18th 1855 by the Lord Bishop of Kilmore the Right Rev. Marcus Beresford.

The bell was made in Thomas Wedges Foundry, Lower Abbey Street, Dublin, as inscribed on the bell. It is cup-shaped cast metal with a flared thickened rim and a pivoted metal sticker or clapper hanging from its centre inside. A chain is tied to a pulley on the axile and hangs down to the ground.

The bell ringer pulls the chain causing the bell to swing and the motion causes the clapper to hit the inside rim of the bell as it swings, making a sound.

Recently the bell had some minor repairs and was newly painted. We the parishioners are happy to see it back in the Belfry of our modest church at Culshearmore near the shores of Lough Arrow.

It is the custom to ring the church bell for funeral services and other occasions if requested.

**Aghanagh Church of Ireland 1975, past and present church members: David Lillie Snr., David Lillie Jnr., Ruth Lillie, Philip White, William Henry, James Craig, Susan Craig**

# From Scythe to Set-aside

## *Developments in agriculture over the past century and their economic and social effects on the Tirerrill region*

*Pat Hughes*

The working population in the 1890s was largely composed of people born or reared during the Great Famine. They had learned a hard lesson. The practise of sub-dividing land between family members who then married and attempted to rear families on a couple of acres had ended. Late marriages or non-marriage became the order of the day – a characteristic which continued until the 1940s. They had however under the 1881 Land Act got 'the three Fs: fair rent, free sale and fixity of tenure, which gave some measure of security.

Average farm size was 15-30 acres. Stock was three to six cows and their calves, sow and bonhams and a few fattening pigs, domestic fowl and, on larger farms, a horse. All livestock feed was produced on the farm – grass, oats, hay, skim-milk fed to calves and skim and potatoes to pigs. Fertilisers: guano used on potato crop only, farmyard manure on potatoes and meadows.

Income was derived from butter which was made on the farm, in most cases by hand but with mechanically-driven churns on larger farms. Butter was packed in 'firkins' – made by a local cooper – and taken for sale to the Sligo butter market, which was located at Quay Street. The firkin would hold several churnings, covering a period of weeks. Each churning had its own distinctive shade of yellow so when removed from the firkin it could lose marks for excessive streakiness. The 'old' creamery of the north west was contained in a twenty-mile radius from Sligo, an area capable of being serviced by horse and cart, i.e. a return journey of twenty miles. Facilities were provided in 'The Shambles', Boyle, for a pocket of Roscommon suppliers in the Knockvicar/Croghan areas.

Bonhams and pigs were sold at the local market. Store cattle were sold

at the local fair. Eggs were sold to local dealers and turkeys were sold at local Christmas markets. Cows were of mixed breeds and had low yields.

Potatoes, vegetables, milk, butter, eggs, bacon and fuel required by the family were home-produced. Other groceries were purchased from proceeds of egg sales. The main outgoings were for clothes, shoes, rent and rates.

With the exception of ploughing, practically all work was carried out by hand. On very many farms, all tillage was carried out by hand.

Tools used were: loy, spade, grape, pitch-fork, rake, shovel, slean, drag, flail etc.

There was full-time work for all the family, with the housewife the main contributor – cooking, washing, sewing and contributing to the on-farm chores of milking, churning, feeding pigs, calves and poultry, and general management.

Houses in the main were thatched and required regular maintenance.

The main modes of transport were horse-cart, sidecar, trap and bicycle.

A major change was the establishment of creameries. This provided a local market and generally better prices for milk. Many small farmers who found it impractical to travel to Sligo were now in a position to supply the local creamery. As the creamery required daily delivery, local farmers usually grouped together, and so reduced the number of travelling days per person. Later the 'long-cart' made its appearance, the driver charging the farmer per gallon. This remained a feature of country life up until the 1970s.

Produce prices were low and likely to change from month to month – minimum or guaranteed prices were undreamed of.

Little change took place until First World War.

Farm size was often given as 'the grass of' so-many cows, a forerunner of the Adjusted Acre.

The Great War (WWI) brought strong demand for home produced food, which resulted in increased prices. This continued until the mid 20s. Extra income was used in most cases to improve the home and surrounds. A high proportion of houses were enlarged, and thatch was replaced with slates.

The late 20s saw a substantial fall in prices as recession hit Britain. This was compounded in the early 30s by the 'Economic War'. The tough times were back again.

The Economic War ended in 1938 only to coincide with a virulent outbreak of Foot and Mouth disease, which virtually locked up farms. After strenuous efforts it was finally stamped out, just ahead of World War II. Stock held back because of Foot and Mouth restrictions were now sold at greatly increased prices.

The effects of the war were (a) greatly increased prices for produce, and (b) new opportunities for employment which were non-existent in Britain or America in the 30s. The more adventurous young people braved the war and went to England to work. Compulsory tillage which was introduced, without fertilisers, severely impacted on soil fertility in some land types. Larger farmers who were not geared for tillage, set the required acreage in con-acre. Unavailability of English coal led to

heavy demand for turf. Native coal was reserved, and sold under permit for industrial usage. Employment in the Arigna coalfield peaked at 450 at this time. Employment on the bogs, saving turf for sale, was considerable. Part-time farming was now widespread. For possibly the first time there was a semblance of prosperity. Goods in short supply or not available resulted in enforced savings.

By the end of the war we were a creditor nation to the tune of £400m simply because there was nothing on which to spend the money during the conflict.

One of the first tasks facing the country post-war was the replenishment of soil fertility following the compulsory tillage regime. The Land Rehabilitation Project was launched in 1948. Grant aid was provided for drainage, reclamation and fertilisers. The Agricultural Institute was set up, helped by Marshall Aid funds.

Ground limestone factories were set up and the product subsidised to farmers. Through the use of this lime the pH level of land could easily be brought up to that required for growing barley. The import of maize was severely restricted and the market was reserved for home grown barley and wheat. Co-ops and merchants were grant aided for providing grain intake and drying facilities in tillage areas. The price of barley was fixed so as to allow a fair margin to the grower while ensuring that the price to the pig producer was economic.

A substantial subsidy was applied to phosphate fertilisers, and fertilising of grassland on a systematic basis commenced. Importation of fertilisers by the Co-ops reduced prices further, making them even more profitable to use.

Macra na Feirme was formed, and its emphasis on farmer education and social gatherings lifted farming from a chore to a business.

Greater numbers of young agriculture graduates were deployed by the Department of Agriculture and were able to link up with the increasing numbers in Macra who were hungry for new ideas and skills. Telifis Feirme with Justin Keating became top of the charts in rural Ireland.

Co-ops began to see their role in working closely with local advisory services. Rural electrification in the early 50s removed a lot of drudgery, particularly in the case of the housewife. Mod cons such as washing machines, driers, fridges and so on were installed. The range replaced the kitchen fire for cooking, and with the provision of water supply, hot and cold came on tap. Modern toilets and bathrooms were installed.

The installation of a two-bucket milking machine became the first step in specialised milk production on many farms. The Ferguson tractor made its appearance on the smaller farms in the early 50s and by the end of the decade had almost completely displaced the work-horse. Remarkably, the advance of the tractor marked the beginning of the end of tillage in the Tirerrill region as it was unsuitable for ploughing the conventional two-sod ridge, especially on uneven ground.

The motorcar took over from the side-car in the course of the 50s.

The A.I. Society, set up by the Dept and Co-ops in 1957, led to better conception rates in addition to making better dairy and beef breeds available. The Friesian and Charolais began to displace the Shorthorn and Hereford.

The availability of polythene at affordable prices led to hay being replaced by silage at an increasing rate, which by the end of the 50s meant better fodder and less dependence on weather. Improved land, better stock, more intensive advisory service and lower input prices led to increased production, especially milk. In the late 40s/early 50s butter was being imported to meet a serious shortage. By the late 50s butter was being exported.

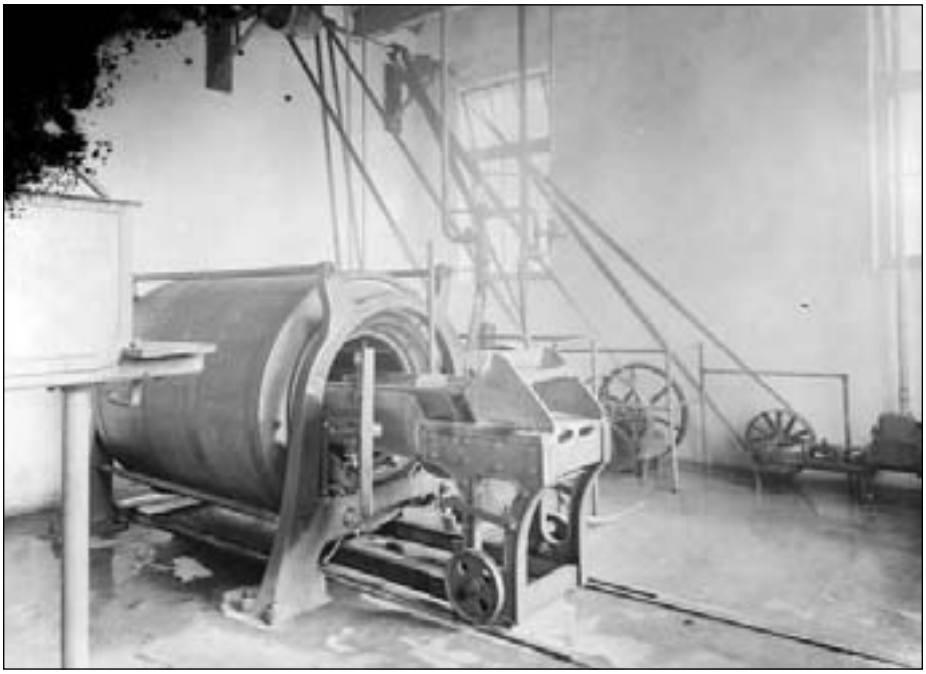
1960 saw the bovine T.B. eradication scheme introduced to Sligo and Clare. Skim milk had to be pasteurised in the creameries before returning it to farms to prevent infection in calves. The big expenditure required to provide all of these facilities on the farm and in the home put a severe dent in the 'nest-egg', saved up during the war, and by the end of the 50s we had gone from a creditor to a debtor nation. Nevertheless, as far as farmers were concerned it was money well spent.

Side by side with developments on the farm, emigration from rural Ireland soared during the 50s. Almost half a million left for England during the decade. The days of the large family staying put in the family home had come to an end.

While the capital costs involved in modernising the farm and home was met from savings, the running costs – fuel for car and tractor, tax, insurance, repairs, electricity, wear and tear – were another matter. These had to come out of income. While milk production increased, prices remained low. Pressure mounted to get increases. Farm organisations – first the Creamery Milk Suppliers and later the N.F.A. – were formed to pressurise the government for price increases. Tensions began to build up

between farmers and urban dwellers. The industrialisation programme being pursued by the government was delivering reasonable employment, while farmers felt they were being abandoned.

New industries established in the County – e.g. Basta and G.W.I. in Tubbercurry – provided substantial employment. G.W.I. relocated to Collooney in 1959 and provided over 500 jobs, many of them going to small farmers, in the Tirerrill region. At the other end of the Barony, Arigna Collieries continued to give substantial employment, although this was well down from its wartime peak. Part-time farming was firmly established.



**Kilmeaden co-operative creamery churn, early 1900s. Picture from the National Library of Ireland.**

The Farm Plan – the 'bible' of the instructor – was now coming to decision time. We were approaching a T-junction. The road to the right said 'Dairying' while that to the left said 'Mixed'.

On seeing it close up for the first time, the road right seemed to contain too many obstacles and the majority decided to postpone a decision but to continue left *pro tem*. However those who chose right continued to develop and are now constrained only by quota.

Three streams began to emerge as follows:

(1) The committed dairyman, who by now had a milking machine and would later progress to a cubicle house, silo, milking parlour and eventually, working closely with the advisory service and using top-class A.I. bulls, would become a specialised dairy farmer, often with pigs as a farmyard enterprise.

(2) The store cattleman, who used his herd to produce milk and good quality beef, breed calves, mainly Charolais, sometimes reared pigs.

(3) Part-time farmers-mainly in the number (2) category above, whose farm was too small to provide an adequate income on its own, got jobs in Arigna, G.W.I. or elsewhere.

Statistics published by the CSO at the end of the 1980s showed farming income being derived as follows: 28% from full time farming, 33% part time employment, 30% state assistance, and 9% from interest from savings and investments and remittances from abroad.

This trend continued and intensified in the 60s, and while the 60s is looked back on as a decade of strong economic progress, farmers saw it differently. Expanding milk production coincided with a collapse in the price of butter on the vastly over-supplied British market, our only outlet. The Irish Dairy Board had in the 50s started to market butter in England as distinct from selling it as a bulk commodity, and had considerable success with the Kerrygold brand, but because of the vast oversupply it was found necessary to sell at way below cost. The result was a massive demand on the taxpayer to meet the increasing subsidies required to maintain the milk price. Farmers, however, seeing other sections of the community enjoying improving standards, became militant.

It became increasingly clear that the future of farming depended on our becoming members of European Economic Community (EEC). Applications by Britain and Ireland for membership of the community were vetoed by Gen de Gaulle in 1963 and again in 1967.

It was assumed that on the retirement of de Gaulle membership would follow, and to this end the second half of the 60s was taken up in getting the country ready to reap the advantages when that day would arrive. Since milk producers would be the main beneficiaries under the C.A.P. (common agriculture policy) of the EEC, every effort was made to streamline the dairy industry and increase the size of the manufacturing units so that they would be capable of diversifying into a wide range of product / manufacture, to meet changing market requirements.

After protracted discussions, N.C.F (North Connacht Farmers Co-op), which encompassed Riverstown, Achonry, Rathscanlon and Kilmactranny Coops, came into being in1972, six months ahead of our eventual entry to the EEC.

NCF was set up on a divisional basis, consisting of Dairy, Farm Inputs and Advisory, with each having the same overall aim, i.e. pay the highest possible economic milk price and have the lowest possible farm input prices. A huge amount of work was required in the milk collection system in order to integrate the old and the new situations. Sligo Dairies, which had recently been acquired by Achonry Co-op, needed attention. The new Dairy Division got involved and in a short time had it in top condition. Then by concentrating on the milk quality it was brought to the number one position, where it stands today.

By the late 60s, markets were opening up for dried skim milk products. By then most creameries in the South and North East were purchasing the skim milk from their farmers and processing it into skim milk powder for sale to Caribbean and Asian countries through An Bord Bainne (Irish Dairy Board). In 1968 a skim milk processing factory was established in Ballaghaderreen by a British company. A reasonably good price was offered to the western creameries for separated milk. Farmers chose to sell rather than continue feeding it to pigs. The result was a rapid decline in pig production, and while some farmers continued production for some time using balanced rations, by the end of the 70s the pig had disappeared from the regular farm. Two bacon factories in Sligo town, one in Tubbercurry and one at Ballaghadereen – both of which catered for the Tirerrill region – closed down.

In the twenty years from 1955-75 the horse, the hen, the turkey, the pig and the dual-purpose cow vanished from the farm.

The new plant in Ballaghaderreen was taken over by a 'troika' of NCF, Kiltoghert and Midwest Galway with NCF the main shareholder. It fitted perfectly into NCF plans – and likewise with the other partners – and was used to research and manufacture a wide variety of ingredients.

The farm inputs division was re-organised and a few weaknesses sorted out, but it was basically a very sound business. Prices charged were rather high but despite this its earnings were somewhat below par. The control system was sharpened up and prices were reduced on a wide range of stock, yet by year's end it showed a reasonable profit. This led to a further reduction in prices, which in turn led to a clamour for more new stores. Eventually it was decided that any further store structure would be at large towns only.

A new automated computerised provender mill was set up in Ballaghaderreen to cater for the growing needs of farmers. It got the full support of its sister co-ops in west Galway and Kiltoghert, and again was very successful.

In 1990, anticipating the returns from a growing acreage of farmer forests, a full scale lumber-mill was established in Cornamona, under the management of P.J.Fahey, one of the outstanding managers in the forestry business. It is highly successful.

The demise of 'Farmyard Enterprises' and the reduction in household work due to mod cons left many farm housewives with time on their hands. Some looked for part-time or full-time jobs. The opening of Snia in 1972 provided 500 jobs and Abbots in 73 provided 900. Many were filled by farm housewives.

Taking advantage of their unique landscape and historic setting, many homes, aided by government grants, set up accommodation for tourists. They met with some success.

Up to the late 60s most of our cattle were exported on the hoof to Britain. Under the 1948 Anglo-Irish trade agreement we had guaranteed entry for 650,000 store cattle per annum and these qualified for British subsidies after three months on a British farm. In the late 50s and early 60s some bacon factories began slaughtering cattle for export to the American forces in Europe. In 1967 – a very difficult year weather-wise – British farmers, who were under pressure from imports, objected to the large amounts of cattle coming from Ireland, and set up blockades at their ports. However an outbreak of Foot and Mouth disease shortly afterwards, and the banning of imports of Argentinean beef into Britain, settled the matter. Taking advantage of the new situation, specialised meat processing plants were quickly erected here, thus consolidating the market as well as providing a considerable number of skilled jobs.

Up until the late 50s, Co-op development work was confined to the 'old' creamery areas of Sligo, Leitrim and north Roscommon, where the Co-op Standard had been first raised by the great Horace Plunkett, founder of the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society back in the 1890s.

However by now farmers, further west, began to take notice. A group of farmers in the Athleague area of Roscommon decided to investigate the possibility of setting up a creamery there. They raised funds and succeeded in getting Kiltoghert Co-op to establish a branch there. It was an outstanding success. A short time later Gurteen co-op established branches in Claremorris and Ballinrobe, while Achonry set up branches in Castlebar and Kilalla. To level things out, Kiltoghert set up a second branch in Castlerea. These new branches were grant aided by the government.

At this stage the foundations were laid and the first floor in place in the NCF 'Vision of the Future'. We became a member of the EEC on Jan 1st 1973. The experience was exciting. On that day we came from the bottom of the class to the top. Farmers now had a solid floor on which to work and live. They would no longer be depending on aid from 3.5m citizens of relatively low income. They were now in a community of 200 million of the world's most affluent people, and their market was securely ring-fenced with arrangements for intervention buying of any farm surplus.

Of course they encountered problems from time to time, such as livestock disease, but every effort was made by the authorities to deal with them. Special grants were given to farmers in disadvantaged areas. A 'Green Pound' was used to protect farmers from the effects of inflation. However the EEC has to conform with GATT (General Agreement Tariff and Trade) regulations regarding 'below cost' selling or 'dumping'.

As farm output continued to expand a number of schemes were introduced with a view to taking land out of conventional cropping. A farm forestry scheme was introduced and was well availed of. Still production moved on relentlessly, and it became clear that a quota production system was required to reconcile production and usage. Accordingly, in April 1984 the quota was put in place for milk producers.

Tillage – which kept pace with milk production was settled by taking land out of production – is referred to as 'set aside'.

# The Bunninadden Murder

## *Taken from the Sligo Independent circa 1892*

*Submitted by Padraig McDermott*

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How Hunt was Arrested

A Police Inspector with a Long Memory

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The arrest of Thomas Hunt seems to have created quite a sensation in Rochdale, one paper at least, publishing a special edition – for which there was a great rush – on Monday morning (May 9) to chronicle the fact. The Rochdale Star says that immediately after the 'murder' in 1876, Mr. Banks of the Inspectors of the Rochdale Borough Police Force, was suspicious of a man who came to Rochdale, but before steps could be taken to connect him with the crime the suspected man disappeared. He returned, however, to Rochdale about a fortnight since and the Inspector, ever having the case in mind, took prompt measures to secure his arrest. On Hunt's whereabouts becoming known, the Irish police were communicated with, and Sergeants O'Brien and McKeown left Galway and proceeded immediately to Rochdale. They arrived there on Saturday (May 7) and Hunt was apprehended in Gillespie's lodging-house next morning. In an interview given a reporter of the *Star*, Sergeant O'Brien said that the prisoner answered the description of the man 'wanted' even to certain marks on the body.

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Prisoner before the Magistrates

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An Adjournment

Thomas Hunt was put forward in custody at Ballymote on Thursday, charged that he did, on November 28, 1876, feloniously kill and slay one John McGloin, at Bunninadden, County Sligo. The magistrates on the bench were Messrs F. B. Henn, R. M (presiding), R. A. Duke, D. L. ; J. O. Cooke and F. Gethin. Mr. W. R. Fenton, Crown Solicitor, appeared to prosecute, and Mr. Mannion, Swinford, to defend.
The prisoner (who was handcuffed) having been brought to court, Mr. Fenton said as follows.
Mr Fenton: In this case of the Queen against Thomas Hunt, a man who is charged with the murder of his brother-in-law (John McGloin) in the year 1876, I am instructed to appear on behalf of the Crown and prosecution. My friend Mr. Mannion, I understand, appears for the prisoner. Taking into account the lapse of time since the murder, and the consequent difficulty in procuring the necessary witnesses, I have to ask your worships to simply take only formal evidence today, and then to grant a remand to Sligo on a convenient date. Mr. Mannion and myself have agreed on Wednesday next, if it would be suitable to your Worship's convenience.
Chairman: So far as I am concerned, my time is the time of the public.
Mr. Fenton: In the interest of public justice I am unable to go into the case today.
Mr. Mannion: As defending the prisoner, I may say I acquiesce in the application for an adjournment. Of course, if I opposed it, it would be granted all the same (laughter); but I don't oppose it.
Chairman: Have you agreed a date?
Mr. Fenton: Yes, sir.
Mr. Mannion: On Wednesday next.
Mr. Fenton: And Sligo would be the most convenient place for every party. All I propose to do today is to examine Mr. Wall, D. I. , who will ask for an adjournment so that he may lay a foundation for the prosecution on Wednesday next.
Mr Wall, D. I. , was then sworn and deposed as follows:
Mr Wall: I am District Inspector of the R. I. C. , at Tubbercurry, and am at present investigating this case, and have been doing so for some time. The evidence is not sufficiently completed as yet, and I, therefore, ask for a remand till Wednesday next, at Sligo.
Mr. Mannion: As I understand it, your evidence is so very shaky that you cannot go on? (Laughter)
The Chairman said it would be well to have the evidence as complete as possible when the case was taken up again, because it was of the utmost importance to liberate the prisoner if he proved innocent of the charge. Would an adjournment till Wednesday suit all parties?
Mr. Fenton: Yes.
Mr. Mannion: At twelve o'clock.
Chairman: Very well, the prisoner is remanded until Wednesday next, at 12 o'clock, in Sligo Courthouse.
Mr. Mannion then applied for liberty to consult with the prisoner, his client, to which the Chairman consented, Mr. Fenton offering no objection.
During the sitting of the magistrates, the Courthouse was crowded, and evidently much interest was excited in the case. The prisoner was quite composed and apparently indifferent to the proceedings.

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When the train (10. 30) arrived from Sligo, quite a large crowd was gathered on the platform, and the prisoner was the object of much curiosity. Many of those who knew Hunt previous to the commission of his crime were there, and some were heard to say that the prisoner was not the murderer, while two or three held that he and the slayer of McGloin were one and the same. In this connection it may be stated that one of Hunt's relatives was in Ballymote, and on seeing the prisoner he is alleged to have said that he was not the culprit. On the other hand, the Constabulary are confident that his identification will be clear, and that they will be able to adduce sufficient evidence next Wednesday to secure his being sent forward for trial.
*The original article does not include the fact that, Thomas Hunt was arrested 16 years after the murder but was at that time tried and acquitted due to lack of evidence against him.*

# 1930s Bunninadden

**Bunninadden Blue Shirts, 1931**. Back row: Patrick J Scanlon, Jack Keenan, Sonny Gardy, Jack Doyle, James Francis Scanlon. Front row: James Martin Scanlon, Johnny Casey, Tommy Murray, Dandy Farrel. Picture courtesy of Pauline Rogers, submitted by Padraig Doddy

**Bunninadden tug-of-war team, 1938 Connacht champions**. Joseph Scanlon (Woodhill), Cormac Marren (Roadstown), Martin Murray (Knockrower), Patrick J Scanlon (Quarryfield), Louis Preston (Carrowloughlin), Tom Doddy (Cartron), Jack Feehily (Meelick Park). Picture courtesy of Pauline Rogers, submitted by Padraig Doddy

# From Pathways to Highways

*P.J. Duffy*

According to historians, in the 1600s and early 1700s our country was very badly serviced with roadways and thoroughfares of any description. All we had got at that time were old pathways and passageways dating back to the period of the old Gaelic Chieftains, and those rights of way set out during the time of the Brehon laws.

As we moved into the nineteenth century, we saw swift action taken by the legislators of the day to improve facilities, thereby making movement in our country much easier. The British government made funds available to the landlords and Grand Juries so that their developers, and works people recruited by them, could get on with the job of improving the country's roads.

During that period of the early 1800s, scores of works people were recruited, many of them drafted in from outside countries, to lay down road surfaces and construct bridges over rivers and streams right across the countryside.

Those people brought in from outside were usually well-skilled works people with considerable experience in the field of road making, bridge building and land drainage, which was also a qualification much sought after by the landlords of the day. These people were usually rewarded for their enterprise by receiving a house and a piece of land, and being made a permanent tenant of the landlord. Many of their descendants are still around today.

Back in those days roads were constructed by placing a layer of coarse stones to form a good solid base. To do this you had to clear away broken topsoil and keep on digging until you found good solid ground. On top of the coarse stone you were required to spread a layer of broken stone and continue the process by using smaller pieces of stone until the surface was ready to receive a coating of gravel, and this was the surface upon which coaches and carriages would be travelling later on.

The quarrymen would be kept busy prising out layers of heavy limestone and making them small using sledgehammers. After these sections of stone were placed in piles, along would come the stone splitter. He would usually sit on the heap and by using a small hammer he would smash the segments of stone into small particles, later to be taken away by horse-drawn vehicles and used on the roadways' surface.

At that time you also had the road contractor. He was a sort of developer who usually signed an agreement with the local landlord, or else the Grand Jury, whereby he would take on the responsibility for the making of large stretches of roadway. At Larkhill and Knockalass in the Bunninadden area you had the Greer brothers, who were well known road contractors during the 1800s. Tradition has it that they made a lot of roads around that part of the country in those times.

Today this may sound unbelievable, but these same old methods of road making as well as maintenance were still in operation during the early years of the twentieth century.

The late Peter Scanlon who resided at Kilshalvy had lots of stories to tell of days spent working on the roadways of the countryside. He was somebody who lived to an advanced age. During the 1850s he worked on a scheme designed to improve the roadway from Gurteen to Ballymote. He used to reckon that this stretch of roadway was at that time in a very bad condition. At Coagh and Clooncunny large stretches of the roads' surface had sunken down. Workers found it necessary to remove sections of peat and give the roadway a new base. The people who worked there could look across the Owenmore River in the direction of Knocknagore and see a group of workers engaged in the process of laying the railway line from Longford to Sligo.

As we move further into the twentieth century we see the arrival of the tarmacadam surface. Although this method had long since been in operation in other countries, it was set to revolutionise the way we travelled. The tarmacadam road was a godsend to both young and old, and a marvel to travel on. Only in frosty weather was it regarded to be a bit dangerous.

The question was often asked, 'Who was this gentleman McAdam who had designed the new surface?' People were later to discover that John Loudon McAdam was a Scottish engineer whose job as a road supervisor took him across large stretches of roadway. The story goes that it was by mere chance he discovered the invention that was to revolutionise road making. One day while going about his business as a road supervisor he came across a young lad, who while transporting a load of bituminous substance called 'tar', let one of his barrels fall and spill all over the road's surface. He tracked down the youth and made him clear up the mess. Despite his best efforts the boy could not remove all traces of the product. The supervisor then called on him to obtain shovelfuls of gravel and spread it over the mess in case it would bother other road users. All parties then dispersed, but a considerable time later while inspecting the roads, the supervisor came across the spot where the incident occurred, only to discover that the road's surface had bonded with the continual traffic and turned into the most wonderful textural finish he had ever seen. This was how he got to discover his idea for a new road surface.

During the period of the early 1800s milestones were erected at a distance of one mile apart along the country's main road, or 'coach roads' as they were called at the time. This action was taken at the behest of coachmen to enable them to assess the distance between breaks at the stage, accommodation situated throughout long-distance routes, and also landlords who often had to travel long journeys to oversee their vast properties.

The old road signs which were erected by the British Government

were in statute measurement, where one mile measured 1,760 yards or 1.61 kilometres, and most of these which were erected on solid ground are still in place to day.

With the coming of motorised transport during the early years of the twentieth century, road markings and signposting became essential at dangerous crossings and bends around our countryside.

Sometimes, due to heavy traffic, many of these markings would become obliterated and worn with the result that road users were often left confused and baffled when travelling around. Back in 1933 a Yorkshire road worker invented a system of traffic regulations that became adopted right across the world. Percy Shaw was constantly employed repairing the roads in his area, and he observed what was taking place around him on the roadways. He was well aware of the fact that public authorities were looking out for a new system of marking other than paint to regulate the increasing traffic flow.

The story has been told that one evening as darkness was falling and Percy was about to pack up work for the day, he saw a misguided cat pussyfooting along the opposite side of the road. It was just after lighting up time, and the unfortunate animal was heading straight into the lights of oncoming cars. Although there was a continual stream of vehicles, each one of them on seeing the cat moved out on the roadway to avoid hitting her.

'It's her eyes reflecting in the headlights that are saving her', he thought to himself. He went home and thought over the happenings of the day. He had often travelled in cars at night-time and saw how cats' eyes reflected the lights even at long distances. Wouldn't this be the solution to faulty road markings, he thought? Tiny reflectors placed on dividing-lines would solve a lot of traffic problems.

He got to work and designed a completely new reflecting system. Using rubber for a base he inserted tiny reflectors into a small sloping dome to be fitted onto the road's surface. Using a row of these inventions between traffic lines, he tested out his idea and discovered it worked perfectly. He later patented his invention and decided to call it 'cat's eyes'.

His idea caught on in a big way and very soon countries around the world were adopting 'cat's eyes' as a means of regulating traffic. As a result of it all Percy ended up becoming a rich man, yet the modest road worker never let it go to his head. He continued on living his usual lifestyle and never gave a thought to the fact that, as a result of his invention, he had become world famous.

*References*

*Pears' Dictionary of Prominent People, and taken from the stories and lore of a previous generation, coupled with some personal experience dating back to the early decades of the twentieth century. John Loudon-McAdam (1756-1836) became surveyor-general of the Metropolitan Roads during his lifetime.*

# Auction of Farm at Larkhill, 1900

*Submitted by Padraig Doddy*

*This notice originally appeared in the Sligo Independent of 1900.*

Auction of Superior Farm of Land with Dwelling House and out office to be sold by public auction on Wednesday the 2nd of May, 1900, at 1pm.

Subscribers have been instructed by P Taaffe Finn esq., MD, to dispose of his interest in his farm of land situated at Larkhill containing approx 96 acres, statute measurement. Held from Captain Hippisleyand Miss Sullivan at the low yearly rent of 62 pounds and 10 shillings, Poor Law valuation 65 pounds.

This is one of the most desirable investments that have been offered for sale by public auction for a considerable length of time and intending purchasers who wish to procure a most comfortable home should endeavour at once to procure it. The lands are of a superior quality and entirely free from all disease, are well fenced and sheltered, and all under grass. There is a plentiful supply of water all through the year.

The dwelling house which is thatched is a good substantial building containing four rooms and a kitchen. There is a splendid slated barn having accommodation underneath for 16 cows with a large loft capable of containing 10 tonnes of hay. There is also another out office with corrugated iron roof to hold about 10 calves, with the car house attached. The dwelling house and out offices are in good repair. The farm adjoins the public road from Ballymote to Boyle, within about one and a half miles of the former town. Farm is subject to a yearly instalment of 8 pounds 9 shillings payable to the boards of works which will be paid off in about eight years. The rent and taxes will be paid up until 1st of November, 1899. The purchaser to pay a deposit of one fourth of the purchase money together with 5% commission on the day of sale. Private proposals will be received up to the day of sale.

For further particulars apply to Mahon Brothers Auctioneers 16 April 1900.

# Whistle While You Work

Dan Healy's music career has continued to flourish. He is recognized here and beyond these shores as a flute player with a classical traditional style. He has released three more CDs including Whispering Strains from the Past, Cómhrá na dTonn and The Giblin Legacy. He has also contributed to books that his good friend Maura McDonnell Garvey wrote – A Traditional Music Journey from Erris to Mullaghban, 1660 – 2000 A.D. and Cómhrá na dTonn.

On his retirement from Iarnród Éireann he was given the use of a train for a day from Bray to Howth and back, for the enjoyment of him, his family and friends. Dan has returned to live in his family home in Cloonmonagh, Ballymote, where his musical talent was first nurtured by the many musicians who came to play at the dances which were frequently held in his home. Dan was influenced by some of south Sligo's well-known traditional musicians. His wonderful home of a traditional cottage from a bygone era set in an idyllic natural setting of a tranquil landscape hopefully will inspire Dan to produce another great CD.

Dan no longer drives the train but he continues to whistle – every Friday night in Durkin's pub in the village of Ballinacarrow where he went to school.

## WHISTLE WHILE YOU WORK

### Acclaimed CD Launched By DART Driver

• Pictured Above: Michael Murphy, Manager Suburban Rail and Dan Healy, DART Driver and Musician.

**Renowned concert flute player and DART driver Dan Healy has just released a new 17 track CD featuring a diverse range of traditional tunes entitled the "The Wyndy Turn".**

The album features a variety of 17th, 18th and 19th century traditional Irish jigs and reels, some of them recorded for the very first time and many of them personal favourites of Dan.

It is available in all good record stores nation-wide, is distributed by Gael Linn and has already been highly acclaimed. Posters advertising The Wyndy Turn have been placed in many rail stations, DART carriages etc. and Dan told Commuting Times that he very much appreciated the support given him by Iarnrod Eireann.

Recently he was featured in a major RTE documentary for his musical talents. A specially talented concert flute player, Dan's skill has taken him all over the world to the major cities of the United States and England.

He has also represented Ireland at the Celtic Congress for some years past in Dublin, Inverness in North Scotland, in the Isle of Man, Falmouth Cornwall, Swansea and Russia.

The television documentary traced the Healy family, who have a long association with the railways in Ireland.

The family hail from Cloonmonagh, Ballymote, County Sligo, where Dan's grandfather worked on the Sligo and North Counties Railways all his life.

Dan's father followed these footsteps in the same job. The third generation of Healys - Dan became part of Railway life in Colloney, County Sligo in 1953.

He spent his childhood listening to traditional music wherever it was played - mostly in people's homes. He moved to Dublin and while working as a driver of the Dublin trains took part in the Gaelic social life of the City.

Dan started work in Dublin on the outer suburban Dublin, Dundalk and North Walls lines. Their headquarters was what is now known as The Point Depot now.

Eleven years ago Dan became a driver on the DART line - a far cry from when his grandfather had to walk 16 miles to Sligo.

Dan is now continuing to make his name as a top calibre musician while commuting thousands of passengers on the DART line each day.

**Article from the *Commuting Times*, January 1998**

# A Ballymote business in a time of change, 1915-1922

## *J. J. Benson, drapery, millinery, boot and shoe warehouse of Market Street (Lord Edward Street)*

*John Coleman*

I inherited a collection of 211 cheques relating to my grandparents' business in Ballymote during the period from 1915 to 1922 which give an interesting insight into business and indeed politics in that period of great change. Those of my generation or older will remember that cashed cheques were returned with the monthly statements from the bank so that one could compare one against the other – and indeed importantly, against your chequebook stubs – to keep track of uncashed cheques,which were outstanding liabilities.

My maternal grandparents John Joseph Benson and Jane Walsh were married in Ballymote in 1913. My grandfather was born in Carrickbanagher and had emigrated to the USA in 1893, becoming a citizen on 3 September 1896. I have a copy of his declaration under oath 'to renounce for ever all allegiance and fidelity ... to Victoria, the Queen, whose subject he then was.' He is recorded in the 1900 census in Nashua, New Hampshire, together witha brother and a sister. My grandmother had trained in the drapery business in Whites in Knox Street, Sligo (the shop is now Mullaney's and the street renamed for Daniel O'Connell, like so many main streets in Irish towns, commemorating the anniversary of Catholic Emancipation in 1829).


**Photograph of Benson's shop during the Corpus Christ procession. Note that the shop shutters, which were put up over the windows each evening. Keenan Johnson and his sister Sheelagh are at the door of Sheelagh's chemist shop next door, where they both grew up.**

My grandmother's brother Michael had set up a shoe shop in the premises now occupied by Cassidy's at the corner of Gaol Street and Market Street. When 'Uncle Michael' emigrated to California my grandparents took over the shop premises. However, sometime after that, they were given notice to quit at very short notice by the owners of the premises. Through the kindness of James Hannan, the leading businessman in the town at the time, they were immediately able to reopen their business in a premises he owned further up the hill along Market Street opposite the Hibernian Bank where I grew up (now part of Bank of Ireland Group since the great bank merger of 1966).

Over the next few years they established a successful business and a number of cheques paid to James Hannan demonstrate that over a few years they were able to buy the premises from him.


**Benson's shop with boots hanging in the door**

The first year for which there is a significant number of cheques (44) is 1916. The most remarkable thing about this group is that well over half (58%) are made out to companies based in England, and endorsements show that they were cashed mainly in Birmingham, Bristol, Leeds, London or Manchester. The surprise here is not that they were buying English manufactured goods – England was the workshop of the Empire after all) but that they were sourcing so much of them directly rather than through Irish wholesalers. And this in a time when communications were much removed from what they are today.

A further revelation is that one quarter of the cheques are made out to Belfast firms and only 18% to suppliers based in Dublin. This pattern must reflect the fact that the extensive rail network, with five railway stations in Collooney including one servicing trains to Belfast, made deliveries of stock from there convenient. It must be remembered that until the 1970s the main means of freight delivery throughout Ireland was via rail.

This was also the era before partition, when Sligo was as much part of the hinterland of Belfast as of Dublin. The Belfast Bank had a branch in Sligo and among the cheques is also a money order drawn on the Belfast Bank in favour of my grandfather.

In 1917 there were 15 cheques paid to firms in England, 12 in Belfast and 11 in Dublin. In 1918 the figures were England 11, Belfast 12 and Dublin 9. The troubled situation in the country during the War of Independence is reflected interestingly in a dramatic drop in payments to Dublin firms in 1919,with 13 cheques to England, 18 to Belfast and a mere five to Dublin. This is even more marked in 1920, with 11 to England, 13 to Belfast and only two to Dublin. It is interesting to note how channels of commerce with Belfast and England remained open throughout the period.

The business bank account was with the Ballymote branch of Ulster Bank, but I understand from my mother that as a result of political pressure business was transferred to the Hibernian Bank around this time, and so I was not surprised to find only three cheques for 1921.

Over the entire period from 1915 to 1922, the greatest number of cheques to any firm in Dublin are to Pim Brothers, the Quaker drapery business which included the great department store in George's Street, one of the largest in the city until it closed in the 1950s. Small numbers of cheques are also made out to businesses in other Irish locations – A. M. Sandler of Cork; Martin Mahony of Blarney (I remember that they were still suppliers of woollen goods in the 1960s);

**This photograph was taken in 1922 or 1923 and shows the back garden in Market Street with the church spire in the distance. Pictured are John and Jane Benson with their children Annie (died in 1926 from a burst appendix), Maisie on the left, Kathleen on the right and Johnny in the centre.**

Robert Usher of Drogheda; Michael Governey of Carlow and Providence Woollen Manufactory, Foxford. Sligo business W. A. & A. F. Woods (sadly only recently demised) and Henry Lyons are also represented.

The collection of cheques give us a glimpse of a different Ireland which was still a single political entity, albeit part of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and of a wider Empire. It shows a significant link between Sligo and Belfast which was severed by partition.

Allowing for the fact that they don't present the whole picture (one doesn't know the extent of cash transactions), this collection of cheques forms a small reservoir of evidence to contribute to the history of the period. I hope this article will inspire others to look in their attics and to take care of such objects. I would personally be most interesting in seeing any historical documentation which can provide authentic evidence to help establish the truth about the past and disentangle myth from fact.

(After my grandparent's deaths, he in 1949 and she in 1951, the business was run first by my mother and then by both my parents from their marriage in 1959 until it was sold in 1980. )

# Sligo Lights

*Eugene Gillan*

Before the erection of lighthouses and navigational aids, mariners were guided by the names given to the shape, size and colour of the cliffs and headlands before entering the harbour.

The earliest navigational aids on the Irish coast were fires. These were circular in shape, with a radius of six feet. The fires would be lit at twilight and would be maintained for about four hours. On the Sligo coast for guidance to Sligo Harbour, one of these was erected, where a Leading Light for Coney Island was built in 1908. Another was erected west of the present Lighthouse on Oyster Island. According to the late Peter Gillan, a Perch existed at Rinn Point and on what is now called Deadmans Point.

Perches or 'standals' as they were called in Irish, were erected on various places in the channel. For instance Carrig Standal (Rock Perch) was erected on the spot which the present Metal Man occupies. A Perch was erected at Lower Rosses where a lighted beacon was set up in 1908 and a number were assembled in Ballysadare.

The last of these Perches was built opposite the Deep Water Berth and was called Standal Abhainne. Most of these perches would have had lights.

**Blackrock**

A beacon had been established on Blackrock sometime in the 18th century but had been washed away by 1814, according to the merchants of Sligo, who were looking for the beacon to be re-established. This was carried out by a local man in 1816 but found to be inadequate, so another more substantial beacon of solid limestone faced on the outside was built by Thomas Ham of Ballina. Completed in November 1891, it was 51 feet (15.5m) high.

During 1821 the ship owners of Sligo requested that the Blackrock beacon be converted into a lighthouse and the Metal Man which was proposed to be placed on a pedestal on Perch Rock off Oyster Island. This happened in 1821 but Blackrock beacon was not converted into a lighthouse until 1833-34 using the solid beacon as the base of the tower hence, the outside spiral staircase to the entrance door well above the high water mark. The light was established on 1st June 1835. Panniers were added in 1863 to give extra accommodation. These were subsequently removed in the early 1970s. The light was converted from oil to acetylene and made unwatched, and the lantern truncated on the 19th November 1934. Prior to this the character was changed from Fixed White with a red sector to double flashing white every five seconds visible all round. The tower's colour was changed from white to white with a black band in the centre. It was converted to electric on 15th September 1965 when its character was changed to Fl W 5 secs.


**A drawing a perch ('standal')**

An auxiliary light was established over the Wheat and Seal rocks on the 1st December 1891 and discontinued on 11th November 1893 when a red sector was integrated into the main light. The red sector was discontinued in 1898. The auxiliary light was re-established in 1934 with a character of a single red flash every three, seconds visible from 107˚ to 130˚. Like the main light

the auxiliary was converted to electric on 15th September 1965.

**Oyster Island**
Two lights were established on 1st August 1837 which formed leading lights from Sligo Bay into the channel to Sligo Port. When they ceased to give an accurate lead they were discontinued and replaced by a sectored temporary light on 15th February 1891. By February 1893 the two discontinued towers had been taken down and the north tower was being rebuilt towards the north west point of Oyster Island. It became a rear leading light with the Metal Man in 1932. In 1965 its character was changed to Occ W 5s along with the Metal Man (front leading light). The light was converted from acetylene to propane on the 9th October 1979 and its character was changed to Occ W 4s with a range of 10 nautical miles.

**Metal Man**
The Metal Man, who is an identical twin to the Metal Man at Tramore, Co. Waterford, was established on Perch Rock in 1821. In 1934 its character was changed from a single red flash every three seconds to a double red flash every five seconds. It was intended to be placed on the Blackrock Beacon but when the merchants of Sligo looked for Blackrock to be converted to a lighthouse, the sailor, on their suggestion, was placed on Perch Rock. An acetylene light was established beside him on 16th October 1908. In 1965 its character was changed to Occ W 5s along with Oyster Island (rear leading light). It was converted to propane on 9th October 1979.

**Lower Rosses**
Lower Rosses was established as a lighted beacon on 16th October 1908 being constructed on timber piles in the sand off Lower Rosses. In 1965 its character was changed to Gp FI(2) WRG ev. 5 secs. Like the Metal Man and Oyster Island it was converted from acetylene to propane on 9th October 1979

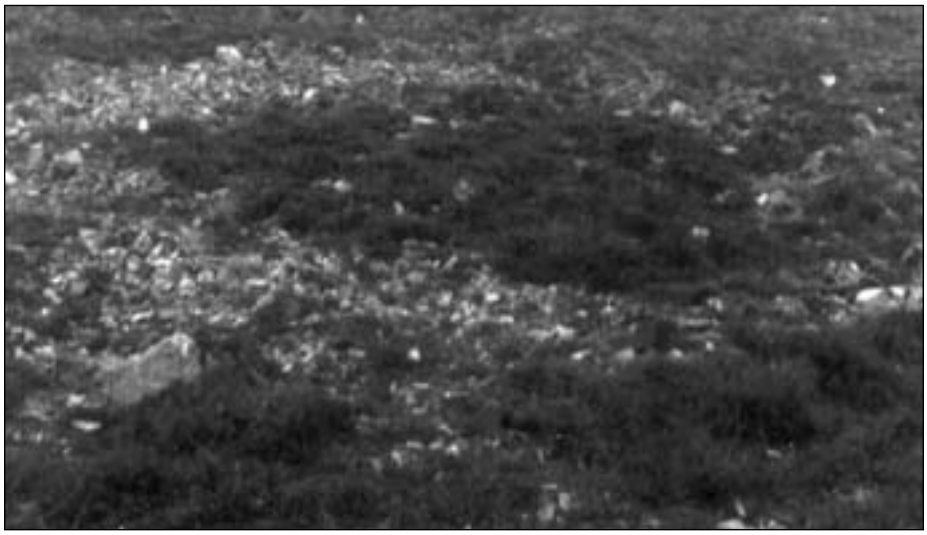
**Blackrock lighthouse**

and its character changed to Gp FI (2) WRG 10s with a range of 10 nautical miles (white) and 8 nautical miles (red and green). In 1999 the entire superstructure was replaced and subsequently a new lantern with a 100-watt tungsten halogen lamp with a character of FI(2) WRG 10s was installed, increasing the range to 13 nautical miles (white sector) and 10 nautical miles (green and red sectors). The light is powered by a sealed lead-acid battery charged from a newly laid mains electricity cable.

**Coney Island**
Two acetylene leading lights were established on 16th October 1908. They were moved to give a different lead on 31st August 1951. The rear light was discontinued 15th September 1965 but its structure left to give a daytime lead. The front light was discontinued 1st June 1977 and both structures were removed.

**Bomore Point**
Established at the same time as Coney Island and Lower Rosses on the 16th October 1908, this was moved to the golf course on 31st August 1951. In 1955 the colour of the tower and lantern was changed from white to yellow. Bomore Point was discontinued on 8th June 1964.

*Thanks to CIL (Commissioners of the Irish Lights), Robert Sparks, M Costello, Frank Pelly and Sally O Neill for assistance with this article.*



**The remains of a stone circle in Co Cork where a coast fire would once have burned**

# Mary Fleming O'Gara in Pursuit of her Marriage Settlement

*Maura O'Gara-O'Riordan*

Lady Mary Fleming was the daughter of Randal Lord Slane. Her first husband, Captain Richard Fleming of Stahalmock, Co. Meath, was a supporter of James II and was killed during the siege of Derry on 4 June 1689.[1] They had two children: James, who died young, and a daughter, Bridget, who survived and married. Mary Fleming was a young widow when she was married for the second time, to Colonel Oliver O'Gara, late of Moygara and Coolavin, in the year 1690 or 1691. They went on to spend over thirty years in exile in France and had a large family. Although Mary's first marriage to Richard Fleming had been short-lived, after a lapse of many years she took legal action to secure her entitlements to land income from the union, a course that would lead to her case being presented in the Houses of Parliament in both London and Dublin.

Mary's third son, Charles, assisted her in pursuing her case. Charles was born in France. His baptism on the 6 July 1699 is recorded in the Registers of l'Eglise Royale in St. Germain-en-Laye.[2] There was one sponsor at Charles's christening: 'the very noble and powerful Prince, James II, King', who signed himself, 'Jacques Roi'. James II was the last Roman Catholic king of Scotland, England and Ireland. The royal chapel stood close to the palace of Saint-Germain,[3] the residence of the Stuart court in exile in the western suburbs of Paris.

On the death of her first husband, Richard Fleming, in 1689, Mary had been attainted for high treason. Before her second marriage, to Oliver O'Gara, he had also been attainted for the same offence. Following the defeat of the army of James II in 1691, Oliver and Mary went to France in the winter of 1691/2, along with many other followers of James, and settled in St. Germain. Between 1692 and 1708 the eleven children who were born to the couple were baptised in St. Germain but not all survived beyond childhood. Some records for the careers of John, Oliver, Charles and Joseph, the four sons who reached adulthood, are extant. No records have been located for the three O'Gara daughters.

Oliver O'Gara continued with his military career in France for some years and by the spring of 1718 both he and his wife were in receipt of small pensions. Mary was receiving a pension of 25 livres per month from Queen Mary of Modena, widow of James II. The note which accompanied the pension record reads: *Wife of Colonel Olliver O'Gara, who commanded the Queen's Regiment of Dragoons in France. She is sister to my Lord Slane who lost a considerable estate for his loyalty. She has a son unprovided for. Her husband has a Pension, as Reformed Colonel in the Court of France.*[4]

The son in question could only have been Joseph, born in 1708, as two of Mary's older sons, John and Oliver, had commenced their military careers in the Irish Brigades in France, and Charles had very likely commenced his employment in the house of Lorraine by 1718. The Lord Slane referred to above was Christopher Fleming, one of Mary's half-brothers from her father's second marriage, who sat in the Irish Parliament of James II, as did his future brother-in-law, Oliver O'Gara. Christopher, who was also attainted following the defeat of the Jacobites, went to France and joined a regiment of foot in the French service. However, he retired with the rank of colonel in 1703 to give his allegiance to Anne, Queen of England, Scotland and Ireland.[5] The youngest daughter of James II and a Protestant, Anne became queen on the death of her brother-in-law, William III. She ruled from 1702 to 1714. Christopher Fleming conformed to the Protestant religion some time before January 1706[6] and was restored to his peerage, but not to his estates, by an Act of Parliament in 1708.[7]

In 1720[8] – after living in France for nearly thirty years – Mary and Oliver O'Gara submitted a memorial through the office of the Duke of Liria seeking the restoration of title to lands in Ireland. No documents have been discovered to suggest that earlier memorials existed. By 1720, Oliver had been acquainted with the Duke for at least thirty years. They both fought with the army of James II in Ireland and later served with the Irish regiments in France.

James Fitzjames, the natural-born son of James II, held the title of Duke of Liria along with several other titles. His father had created him James, Duke of Berwick, Earl of Tinmouth and Baron Bosworth in 1687. Philip V of Spain created him first Duke of Liria and Jérica, and Lieutenant of Aragon in 1707; Louis XIV created him Duke of Fitz-James in the peerage of France in 1710. The Spanish and French titles were given to James as a result of his success as leader of the Franco–Spanish army at the battle of Almansa in 1707.

On 15 December 1694 the duke signed himself 'Berwick' as baptismal sponsor to James Oliver, second-born son of Oliver and Mary O'Gara. Some years later, Oliver and Mary's eldest son John, who was a captain in the duke's regiment in 1715, received a reference from the duke, who signed himself 'Count of Tinmouth Berwick' and who described John O'Gara as 'a gallant man and good officer'.[9] In 1722 when John's name was put forward for the award of the Spanish knighthood of Santiago, the duke, described as a brigadier in Spanish service, signed as a sponsor for John using the title 'Duke of Liria'.[10] It appears that the duke used his English titles up to at least 1715 but by 1720, when Mary's memorial was recorded in his office, he was signing with his Spanish title. This document in the Duke of Liria's office was described as 'A memorial in behalf of Collonel Oliver O Gara and Mary his wife, one of the Daughters of Randal late Lord – Baron of Slane'. [11]

It is not clear to whom the memorial was submitted but the recommendation was that 'This person must apply to Court of Revenue in Ireland'. Details of Mary's claim are given in the

following extract:

*Mrs OGara on the death of her first husband wch happened in the year 1689, became intitled to Lands in Ireland, then of the value of 200 pounds a year, wch had been settled on her for the Term of her life as a Jointure on her first marriage. After her intermarriage with Collonell O Gara, she and the Collonell were indicted and outlawed in Ireland by the management & Contrivance of her first husband's Relations; who for about twenty nine years last past have taken the Rents and profits of the said Jointure Lands, and absolutely refused to give any thing thereout to the Collonel or his Lady, on pretence that they may hereafter be accountable to the Crown for the profits.*

A further extract refers to one of Mary's sons: 'Mr. O Gara the ladies Son and heir apparent is ready to make out the title of the Crown to the said fforfeited Lands, and the mean profits thereof for many years; and humbly hopes that in so hard a case he will meet with due Encouragement'. The 'Mr. O Gara the ladies Son and heir apparent' referred to in the 1720 document can be identified as Charles, who was involved in Mary's affairs for some years prior to 1728.[12]

In a later, undated – and more lengthy – memorial,[13] much of the text of the 1720 document is included but with additional information and a stronger sense of urgency. An approximate date of 1722/23 can be suggested for the second memorial as it is clearly stated that Mary's in-laws had enjoyed the rent from her jointure for about thirty-two years, whereas the memorial noted in 1720 gave a benefit for about twenty-nine years to her in-laws from her jointure land. A major difference in the additional text is that the second memorial is a direct appeal from Mary O'Gara to the highest authority, the king, with a request to have an Act of Parliament passed in the House of Commons 'enabling certain Trustees on yr Pet[itione]r's behalf to recover the sd Jointure Lands'. A further point of difference is the statement that the then Mary Fleming was outlawed before her second marriage to Colonel Oliver O'Gara: *waived or outlawed for high treason on Acct of the late War in Ireland, by the name of Mary Fleming late of Monaghan Widow, being then under the Age of 21 years soon after whose death, and she afterwards married Coll O Gara who was also outlawed for high treason on the same Acct.*

The question arises as to why Mary Fleming O'Gara took action to restore her rights to land in Ireland after such a lapse of time. Living conditions in St. Germain appear to have deteriorated considerably for Oliver and Mary in the three years between the preparation of the two memorials, as attention is drawn to their plight: 'That yr said Petr's present Indigent Circumstances render her an object of your Majestie's great Goodness & Compassion'. Mary also refers to 'Mrs Baggott's Case' which is listed in 'Reversal of the outlawry of Elianor Bagot' in 1708 (7 Anne) but does not mention her half-brother's case.

A further development in the case appears in correspondence dated 25 February 1725/26 between John Carteret, the lord lieutenant of Ireland, and the duke of Newcastle:[14]

*In my letter of the 14th of May last I had the honour to represent to your Grace that Several persons of distinction here were alarmed at the bringing in of a Bill into the House of Commons in England for reversing the Outlawry of the Honourable Mary O Gara wife of Oliver O Gara Esq. which Bill was afterwards dropd. Fresh Applications having been made to me upon that Subject, I herewith transmit to your Grace a memorial relating to the Case of Mary O Gara vs. and the Copy of an Address of the House of Commons of Ireland to His Majesty dated 7th December 1717 refered to in the said memorial, and desire that you will please to lay this matter before His Majesty.*

Carteret is reminding the duke of Newcastle of an address which was made to the king in 1717[15] imploring him not to grant permission to reverse any outlawries of the Irish who were found guilty of treason in the rebellions of 1641 or 1688. Carteret states that Mary's bill was dropped but according to the new memorial[16] which he had received and was now submitting – an appeal not to pass the Bill on behalf of the Protestants of Ireland – a further memorial had been presented on behalf of Mary"

*The said Mary hath not been heard of in these Kingdoms for these thirty five yeares past and is now in France or in other parts beyond the Seas with her said husband Oliver but – the said Mary pretending that she is intitled to a joynture on part of the Estate of the Sd. Richd. Fleming by vertue of some dormant settlemt. which hath not been heard of in Forty years hath lately given notices that she will apply to the parliamt. of Great Brittain for an Act of Parliamt. to reverse her said Outlawry: Or to enable her to sue for her said joynture tho her said husband Oliver be yet alive and under the Attainder for high treason.* [17]

The assertion that Mary O'Gara had 'not been heard of' for thirty-five years needs clarification. Although she may not have been physically present in Ireland during this period, documentary evidence in pursuit of her case connects her to the country from at least 1720.[18]

In the memorial, there is a reference to Oliver O'Gara being alive at the time the memorial was submitted in February 1725/6. If Oliver was alive on that date then he must have died shortly afterwards. In the bill instigated by Mary that was passed into law in 1726, she was described as a widow: 'A Bill to enable Mary O'Gara, Widow, to sue for her jointure-lands', 1726 (13 Geo. 1), Case 31.[19] However, given that another memorial would have had to be prepared following his death, causing some time to pass before the case was heard, a date early in 1726 is the more likely for Oliver's death.

Mary returned to Ireland shortly after the 1726 Act was passed in the British parliament, and continued with the task she had set herself. She presented her bill to: 'his Majestys High Court of Chancery in Ireland against Michael Fleming Esqr. & against others partys debts in sd Act as well as for recovery of ye Arrears of her sd Joyntures…'

A Deed of Assignment dated 26 December 1728 and a Memorial to the Deed were signed by Mary O'Gara and were delivered to the Deputy Register under 'O'Gara to Barnewall et al.,' on 8 January 1728/9.[20] In the deed, Mary empowered her first

cousin, Sir George Barnewall, fourth Baronet of Crickstown, Co. Meath and John Brown (who may have been John Browne, Mary's cousin through a Barnewall/Bellew connection) to act on her behalf if necessary to fulfil all the legal requirements resulting from the anticipated financial outcome of her case against her brother-in-law, Michael Fleming of Stahalmock. One extract details how she would like the money to be distributed: *after payment of ye sd Marys Debts pay unto her beloved son Charles O'Gara out of ye sd Arrears ye sum of one thousand six hundred pounds in Discharge & Satisfaction for the money by him Advanced for sd Mary in obtaining sd Act of Parliamt.*

A further extract gives a list of all other persons whom Mary would like to benefit from her anticipated financial situation:

*[S]hall pay thereto overall sums thereinafter mentioned to ye respective persons therein named that is to say ye sum of one hundred & thirty pounds to such person or persons as ye sd Mary shall Direct or Appoint to the sd Marys Grandchild ye Honble Ann Plunkett ye sum of fifty pounds Ster to Mary Berford the sd Mary O'Garas kinswoman the sum of thirty pounds Ster and toher kinsman Richard Berford Gent his Exrs Admint or Assigns the sum of five hundred pounds Ster And as to the residue of ye sd Arrears to the furtherence so that they ye sd Sr George Barnewall & John Brown & ye survivor his Exrs & Admrs Shall Dispose & pay ye sums in manner following one fourth thereof to the sd Marys Eldest Son John O'Gara, one other fourth part to ye sd Marys Second Son Oliver O'Gara, one other fourth part to her third Son ye sd Charles O'Gara & the remaining fourth part thereof to Joseph O'Gara the sd Marys fourth & youngest Son and to his Exrs Admts & Assignes of such Son & Sons respectively as to their respective shares.*

The Honorable Ann Plunkett, Mary's granddaughter, was the eldest daughter of Bridget Fleming and Randal Plunkett, eleventh Baron of Dunsany. Bridget Fleming was Mary's daughter from her first marriage, born two months before her father Richard was killed at the siege Derry in 1689. It is possible that Bridget remained in Ireland with some relatives when her mother Mary and her new husband Oliver O'Gara went to France as exiles in the winter of 1691/2. When Bridget was twenty-two years old she married Randal, Lord Dunsany as his second wife in 1711.[21] The couple had a family of two boys and four girls. The present Randal, twenty-first Baron of Dunsany, is a descendant of Bridget Fleming and Randal.

Mary took up residence as a parlour boarder with the Dominican sisters in Channel Row, Dublin[22] at an unknown date between April 1726 and April 1729.[23] She remained there until her death in the winter of 1741/2 (she signed her will on 4 November 1741[24]). In 1717, six Dominican sisters who had been evicted from their Galway convent received permission from the Archbishop of Dublin to take possession of a former convent building in Channel Row. A community of Benedictine sisters had abandoned the building some years earlier due to political pressure from the government of William III. Mary's first cousin – Mother Mary Bellew (daughter of Sir Patrick Bellew and Elizabeth Barnewall) – was the prioress between 1717 and 1726. She was succeeded by Mother Julia Browne, also understood to have been a relative of Mary's. As the Penal Laws were being enforced at this time the sisters dressed in secular clothes and were referred to as 'Mrs'. For their livelihood the sisters took in boarders who rented accommodation on a short or long-term basis. Adult permanent dwellers were referred to as 'parlour boarders'. The sisters also ran a school for Catholic women. Among the students listed in 1728 were two daughters of Lord Dunsany who would have been grandchildren of Mary O'Gara; one of these girls was Ann Plunkett who had been named in Mary's deed. With perhaps one or two exceptions, all categories of occupants came from the privileged classes. Names listed in the account books were mainly Anglo-Irish, but also contained surnames of the former leading Gaelic families.

Mary's financial affairs with reference to her accommodation at Channel Row were recorded by the sisters, where the entries were noted in the name of 'Mrs'or 'Mistress O'Gara'. Extracts from the account books taken in isolation appear rather vague to the casual observer, but no doubt were quite clear to the nuns who signed the books each month.

Mrs. O'Gara signed for a £50.00 bond between 1726 and 1729. She made a number of payments during 1730, 1731 and 1732 but in April 1732, she is recorded as having a debt of sixty-two pounds. By February 1733, she had acquired a servant and two years later in May 1735 debts due had amounted to one hundred and thirty-four pounds, five shillings. By April 1738 her debts had reached two hundred and thirty-nine pounds.[25]

It is evident from the mounting debts revealed in her accounts at Channel Row that Mary's legal affairs had continued for many years before a settlement with her Flemings connection was reached. A thirty-two page report was printed in Dublin in 1736 with the title: 'An ACT for the Relief of the Protestant Creditors and Lessees of Sir John Fleming, Knight, Deceased, and of Michael Fleming, Esquire, only Son of the said Sir John Fleming; and for effectually executing certain Articles of Agreement entered into between the said Michael Fleming and Mary O'Gara, Widow'.[26] Mary's situation is explained in some of the following extracts where she had to settle for less than was owed to her:

*And whereas several Suites, both at Law and in Equity, were commenced and prosecuted in the Kingdom of Ireland for Recovery of her said Joynture and the said Mesne Rates thereof against the said Michael Fleming, and the said Mary O'Gara obtained a Decree to account in the High Court of Chancery, in Ireland against the said Michael; but the said several suites being likely to be of long Continuance and very expensive the said Michael Fleming and the said Mary O'Gara entered into Articles of Agreement, whereby the said Michael Fleming agreed to pay into the said Mary O'Gara and her Assignes Four thousand Pounds Sterling, in full Satisfaction of the said Mesne Profits of the said Joynture Lands, to the first Day of May, One thousand seven hundred and thirty four; and that he*

*the said Michael Fleming should yearly and every year during the Life of the said Mary O'Gara, pay unto her Two hundred Pounds per Annum by way of Rent Charge, payable half-yearly, from the said first of May, One thousand seven hundred and thirty four.*[27]

Mary's difficult situation as a creditor of Michael Fleming is further explained:

*And whereas the said Mary O'Gara is by means of the said Suites reduced to extream Wants, and the said Creditors and Lessees are very uneasy to the said Michael, and threaten to confine him and sue him for Breaches of Covenants. And whereas the said Michael Fleming stands indebted unto the said Mary O'Gara, or unto her Assignee Charles O'Gara, Esquire, her Son, who hath been at the Expence of maintaining the said Mary procuring the said recited Act, and prosecuting the said several Suites, in the Sum of Four thousand Pounds.*[28]

Five pages of the report are given to lists of the people who had gone to the Court of Common Pleas or another such institution to get a judgment against John and Michael Fleming, who held joint responsibility up to 1714, and afterwards against Michael Fleming only. Debts of about £5,340 had accumulated from about 1700. It was agreed that a number of townlands would be sold to clear Michael's debts:

*[S]hall within the Space of five Years, from the first Day of May One thousand seven hundred and thirty six, by publick Cant, sell or mortgage a sufficient Part of the said Lands and Premises in them sovested; and out of the Money arising by such Sale or Mortgage, in the first Place pay unto the said Mary O'Gara, or her Assignes, the Sum of Four thousand Pounds and Interest for the same, at the Rate of Five per Centum per Annum from the Date of the said Articles;*[29] Despite her success in establishing her rights as the widow of Richard Fleming, the accounts of the Dominican convent in Channel Row do not indicate any significant increase in Mary Fleming O'Gara's income throughout the 1730s. The Flemings had accumulated huge debts, and many other creditors had secured judgments against them. The sale of land to discharge these debts, including those owed to Mary, would take several years to complete.

The records show that parlour boarders with a servant paid £7-10-0 a quarter for food and lodging in 1741. An inventory of the items in her room dated 10 May 1735 suggests that Mary lived in comfortable surroundings. The furniture and effects included a red canopy bed, two pairs of red window curtains, an easy chair and several rush chairs, and two oak folding tables. The room contained a grate fender with irons, and she also had a dressing glass and a pair of brass candlesticks with a brass snuffer.

In Channel Row, Mary had the company of family members. Her daughter, Bridget Plunkett, Lady Dowager Dunsany, also became a parlour boarder at the convent for some months from 1st September to 1st December 1741 and a further quarter's payment was made in February 1742 but the date of her stay there is not recorded. Mary's two if not three granddaughters, Ann and Jane Plunkett and Ellis (Alice), received their education as boarders in Channel Row between 1728 and 1743. Visitors to Channel Row during the penal years included priests and bishops. It is possible that Oliver O'Gara's two cousins, Bernard and Michael O'Gara, who studied in Paris, visited Mary. They both served as Archbishops of Tuam during the Penal Law years: –Bernard 1724 – 1740, Michael 1740-1749.

Mary Fleming O'Gara died in Channel Row in the winter of 1741/2. In her will, dated 4 November 1741, she left £100:0:0 to Katherine Cruise, a Dominican sister at the convent, and £10:0:0 to her servant, Hellen Plunkett. She appointed Denis Daly of Raford, Co. Galway her executor. The witnesses were Jo. Fergus and Thady McDonagh.[30] As Mary's daughter Bridget was lodging at Channel Row at the date on which Mary made her will it is possible that she was also present there around the time of her mother's death in the winter of 1641/2.

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# Wheeling and Dealing

*Anne Maguire*

Cattle dealers lead a busy life, travelling to and from marts several days a week. There is plenty of legwork at the marts themselves to get the best cattle at the best prices and then find the best customers to sell them on to. There are long tiring days, and the end result depends on the skill and judgment of the dealer. It is, possibly, a young person's game. However this is the life known and loved by John Kerins for many years now, and he has no intention of retiring. Remarkably, at the time of writing John is within days of his ninetieth birthday, blessed with plenty of energy and a great memory.

John was born in Carrowcushacly, Ballymote, the youngest of six children, and is the last surviving member of the family. He attended Carrigans National School as a boy, helping out on the family farm like all country children of his generation. Farming then was labour-intensive and there were no tractors or machinery. The farm horse or pony was a vital member of the team, being used for mowing, ploughing, going to the bog and various other activities as necessary. John has clear memories of cutting oats with a scythe, ploughing and saving hay. However he thrived on activity and remembers that he could never sit still for long as a child or teenager.

Aged eleven, he made his first visits to the local fairs with his stepbrother Batty McGettrick, who was a few years older than John. There were fairs in all the local towns and villages at the time, and John made his way to Riverstown, Collooney, Tubbercurry and of course Ballymote, initially buying fowl and rabbits with his brother. The fowl were for John Healy of Sligo and the rabbits went through the late Bob Hogge to the fur sellers in Dublin. John enjoyed the fairs and often helped to drive cattle there and back for local farmers. The fact that he had to walk never bothered him, and his interest in buying and selling grew all the time.

**John Kerins (hat & long coat) leads a group heading to Corran Park on the day it was officially opened**

Aged "about fourteen", he first tasted alcohol and unfortunately for him he liked the taste. A pint of Guinness cost nine pence at that time, and drink played a prominent role in John's life until he made a decision in his forties to give it up completely, which he did successfully. He regrets his time spent drinking and would advise any young person to "stay well away from it". While giving up the drink was difficult, his 60-a-day cigarette habit was much harder to stop and he struggled for several weeks with sleepless nights after giving them up.

In his late teens and early twenties, John progressed to dealing in cattle and the occasional pony, often buying in the morning and selling later that day for a profit. In the evenings he would frequent local county dances, where he developed a love of Irish music and song. Possessing a fine singing voice he still loves to sing, and often entertains his travelling companions on longer journeys. He never played any football but his brother Martin was a good footballer and played on the Derroon team at the time. John was then and still is a regular weekly Mass goer, and says he "would never miss it". He remembers the area around the Loftus Hall in Ballymote would be "black with bicycles" while Mass was on, and his bike was among them.

He started to spread his wings further afield around this time and managed to get lifts to fairs in Ballina regularly. On one occasion, however, he and a companion

found themselves without a lift home from Ballina one very cold winter's evening. The late Josie Maye said they could travel home on the roof of his cattle truck, the cab being full already and the back full of cattle. Desperate to get home, they took him up on the offer, in spite of the bitter cold and the showers of hail. Having had a few drinks at the fair, John was slightly insulated against the cold but his companion was less fortunate, suffering with swollen and very painful eyes for several days afterwards.

Another incident he remembers from this time happened on a hot summer's day when he walked to the fair in Collooney, driving a batch of cattle with his faithful dog to help him. John headed to the nearest pub on reaching the fair and the dog, parched with thirst, discovered a bucket of discarded stout and drank his fill from it. "I had some job to get her home," says John "for the two of us were drunk!"

There was always good fun at the fairs and lots of deals were concluded in the pub. The cattle of the time were all bucket-fed as calves, and as a result were easy to manage and move around. They were hardy breeds like Shorthorn and Aberdeen Angus, and were capable of being outwintered without any ill effects. John remembers droves of cattle heading for the station in Ballymote after the fair, some of them destined for Northern Ireland and more going to Scotland. John himself decided to sample life in England and took himself off to Blackburn in 1955, working as a labourer on the building sites there. "I thought I'd never get home," he says of his time there, and he lasted just six months before returning to Ballymote.

Delighted to be back home, he struck up a working partnership with Des Timbs, the pair buying calves in the south of Ireland weekly and reselling them to the local farmers. This meant a 2am start every Monday morning on the long trek to Kilmallock, Co. Limerick, where about 20 calves would be bought and taken home. Eventually, rising costs depleted profits and made it impossible to continue. Fairs were no longer being held on the streets of towns and villages, replaced instead by structured sales in purpose-built cattle marts. Local farmers would ask John to buy their stores for them, his reputation as a top judge of cattle having grown and spread.

**John as a young man with a working pony.**

John bought his first lorry around this time, a Commer, which he says was "Always breaking down and cost me a fortune."

In the early seventies John married Molly Hever, a widow, and he and Molly built a new house at Carrowcushacly. Molly died in 2005 but by this time her grandson Fergus had come to live with the couple, and John and Fergus continued to farm and attend marts weekly. Fergus describes John as a "great role model with a terrific outlook." They are on the road three to four days a week, heading off to sales at Castlerea, Balla, Manorhamilton and Ballymote. They are also regulars at the Connemara pony sales at Clifden. John will always be found at the ring side, while Fergus looks after the paperwork and the driving amongst other tasks. The upsurge of interest generally in riding ponies led to John acquiring the registered Connemara stallion Glenayre Silver Fox, whose progeny have a very high profile on the performance pony circuit nationwide.

When asked about his diet, John says he likes to have a good dinner every day and is especially fond of "a nice bit of beef." He also likes to have a few mugs of tea throughout the day but has no time for fast food. And what about retirement? "Never", he says without hesitation.

It was indeed a privilege to get an insight into the life of this remarkable man whose absolute passion for what he does and positive attitude energise him every day. One can only wish him many more years of good health and happiness.

# The Closure of Ballymote Franciscan Friary Graveyard in 1948

*Mary B. Timoney*

The graveyard of the Franciscan Friary in Stoneparks, Ballymote, Co. Sligo, was closed in 1948. Before the closure a Commission was held in the town with notices for closure being erected beforehand. Applications for future burials had to be submitted by the family stating their justification. After that a hearing was held in Ballymote. Dr. Kirby, County Medical Officer, reported that the graveyard was 'overcrowded and for the maintenance of decency, interests of public health and for the prevention of the violation of the respect due to the deceased persons' that the graveyard should be closed.

An alternative graveyard for the parish, St. Columba's cemetery, had been opened in the late 1890s in Carrownanty a short distance out on the west side of the town. These records are held in the National Archives of Ireland, Bishop St., Dublin. The result of the Commission is not given in these papers. Information in square brackets is not in the Commission documents.

The following fourteen families applied for exemptions:

**1 Katherine Rogers** 19, Marren Park, unmarried, exemption for herself as she wished to be buried here with her father, d. 1879, mother, Margaret, d. 1931, sister, d. 1893, and aunt, d. 1908.

**2 Michael John Berreen**, Rinbane, Ballinacarrow, representing his mother, Marion Berreen, whose husband is buried here. The last interments were John Berreen, d. 1903, Brigid Berreen, d. 1908, Anne Berreen, d. 1923, and J. J. Berreen, d. 1945. There is a headstone.

**3 Mathew Doddy**, Rathdooney, aged sixty-four, exemption for himself, his brother, Patrick and sister, Mary. The last burial here was in December 1927 with three previously, and there is a headstone and kerbing on the plot.

**4 Michael Connolly**, Doorla, Collooney, aged seventy-six, his wife is buried here claiming for himself, his son, Thomas L. Connolly, Laghagh, Drumfin, and daughter, Mary. Three generations of the Connolly family are buried here, the last in 1945. Plot can only be recognized in 1948 by stones and position in relation to other convenient headstones. [There is a headstone today commemorating Michael Connolly, d. 1958 and his wife, Mary, d. 1922. ]

**5 Francis Davey**, Ballinacarrow, claiming for his mother Annie, aged eighty-four, whose husband Batty is buried here. The last burial was in 26/1/1944. [There is a headstone on the plot commemorating Batty's mother, Mary, d. 1871 and father, John, d. 1907. ]

**The Franciscan Friary graveyard in Ballymote, October 2008. Alignment of grave markers dates to 1986.**

**6 Bridget Gallagher**, Portinch, not present due to her great age, claiming for herself. [She was eighty years old as she was thirty-three years in the 1901 Census, living with her eighty year old father, Patrick. ]

**7 Thomas Gethin**, Emlagh, aged forty, claiming for himself, his brother, James and sister, Eileen, all unmarried. Last burials here were his father, d. 1928, his mother, d. 1931 and his sister, d. 1935. There is a headstone.

**8 John Healy**, Rathmullen, claiming for himself and his wife. The burial plot is marked by a small iron cross and the last burial was in 1944.

**9 Michael Hever**, aged sixty-seven, claiming for himself, his wife and family, though there is a burial plot and headstone in Boyle but 'Ballymote is my place'. The last burial was in 1945. [The memorial here in Ballymote is probably that to James M. Hever, Rockingham Arms, Boyle, d. 1927, and his wife Mary J. ]

**10 Thomas Kilcoyne**, Ardnaglass, aged about sixty, claiming for himself and his son and daughter. The plot inside the Abbey walls is about forty-two sq. ft. and is about fifty years old. His mother, d. 1921, father, d. 1922, and his wife, d. 1945, are buried here. [This plot is probably the one with the recent headstone to Bridget Kilcoyne, d. 1945 and her husband, Tom, d. 1946. ]

**11 John Kilcoyne**, Cloonlurg, Drumfin, claiming for himself, his son, daughter. His father, mother, son, daughter and wife are buried within the Abbey walls. The last burial was in 1940.

**12 Patrick Scanlon**, Carrickbanagher, Drumfin, aged forty-three and married, claiming for himself, his mother, Elizabeth, aged seventy-four, and his brother, John, aged forty-one and married. His father is buried here in a plot measuring 4' by 6' which is only identified by a tree.

**13 Thomas Wims**, Rathdooney More, aged seven-six, claiming for himself and his family also for his unmarried sister, Kate, aged seventy-two. Last burial here was in 1941. A headstone and kerbing were erected in 1945 or 1946. His father, Patrick, d. 1905, mother, Mary, d. 1929, and sisters [Sarah] d. 1894 (but 1896 is

on the headstone), [Mary A. ], d. 1897, and [Bridget], d. 1918, are all commemorated.

**14 Mary Pilkington**, widow, her husband and daughter are buried here, claiming for herself, her unmarried sons, Frank and John-Joe, and unmarried daughter, Susan. There is a headstone on the plot and the last burial was about 1932. [There is no Pilkington memorial but there is a recumbent stone to Perkington family. ]

For comparison Old Kilmorgan graveyard to the east of Ballymote was also closed in 1948, having been described as overcrowded in 1935. There were forty-five burials there between 1940 and 1945 and only five plots were opened in New Kilmorgan cemetery in this period. The number of applications for continued burial in Old Kilmorgan graveyard was fifty-one, even though the new cemetery had been opened for eight years. St. Columba's was opened for about fifty years before the Friary graveyard was closed. New Kilmorgan was only open for five years, the local people were not yet ready to leave it. Keenan Johnston, Sr., represented most of the people as they were taking the opportunity of the good weather to make hay during a summer of bad weather.

# First Communion in Days Gone By

**The Ballymote First Communion group of 1967. Some of the class are shown here in a party in the school after the mass.**

**The complete 1969 Ballymote First Communion group.**

# Confirmation and First Communion 2012

**The First Holy Communion class at Knockminna National School, 2012.**
Left to right, back row: Mrs.O'Donnell (Tch), Emily Richardson, Sonny Muldoon, Fr. James McDonagh, Jenny Waters, Erin Curran, Mrs. Caffrey (Sec)
Left to right, front row: Ellen Langton, Stephanie Kane, Kieran Quinn, Ciara Hunt, Shaun O'Connor, Eimear Kerins, Marie-Claire Kane. Picture submitted by Annette Caffrey.

**Confirmation 5th Class 2012, Scoil Mhuire gan Smal, Ballymote**
Back row, left to right:: Fr. James McDonagh, Ms. Siobhan O'Dowd (teacher), Bishop Brendan Kelly, Fr. Gregory Hannon
4th row, left to right: Joseph Donohoe, Jake Flannery, Dylan Martin Harkin, Jonathan Murtagh, Max Kolak, James Gardiner Egan
3rd row, left to right: Ciara Perry, Ada McDonagh, Mark Mulligan, Cian Quinn, Patrick Murtagh, Adam Murtagh, Jack McGrath, Mark Devlin. 2nd row, left to right: Terri Kelly, Dylan McLoughlin, Aaron Scanlon, Kathlyn Kyle, Niamh Currid, Brendan Whitehead, Lauren Kilcoyne, Laura Kerins, Roan Mooney. Front row, left to right: Saoirse Cunningham, Eimer Conlon, Roisin Durey, Chloe Egan, Katie Anderson, Edel Rafferty.

**Confirmation 6th Class 2012, Scoil Mhuire gan Smal, Ballymote**

Back row, left to right: Fr. James McDonagh, Ms. Patricia Hunt (teacher) Laura Finn, Katie Kilcoyne, Lisa McGrath, Bishop Brendan Kelly, Oisin Conlon, Patrick Finan, Noel Muldoon, Fr. Gregory Hannon, Callum Tonry.

3rd row, left to right: Ines Fontes, Carrie Ann Downes, Emma Rawl, Gabriela Chaves, Caolan Mooney, Ciaran Gardiner O'Dowd, Patryk Klaman, Odhran Johnson.

2nd row, left to right: Ania Gwizdz, Sarah McGlone, Katie Walsh, Shannon Scanlon, Rachel McGlone, Mark Keenan, Max Cryan, John Benson, Martin Ward, Niamh McGee

Front row, left to right: Nicole McGowan, Eva Devaney, Cameron Lumsden, Aaron Reynolds, Feargal Kilgariff, Darragh Keenan.

**First Holy Communion Class 2012, Scoil Mhuire gan SmaI, Ballymote**

Back row, left to right: Fr James McDonagh, Ms Davey (teacher), Sean Woods, Adam Benson, Leo Walsh, Kacper Bielecki, Danny Kerins, Nikodem Krupa, Kian Reynolds, Mrs Burns, Fr. Gregory Hannon

Middle row, left to right: Nicola Maguire, David Hannon, Naoise Kelly, Anthony Mulligan, Elizabeth Tighe, Cormac Finn, Grace McGlinchey, Jim Sweeney.

Front row, left to right: Gareth Scanlon, Caroline Ward, Anthony Rawl, Christopher Downes& Corey Cawley.

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