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The Corran Herald

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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.

The views and interpretations expressed in *The Corran Herald* are those of the respective authors and should not necessarily be considered to reflect those of the Editor or The Ballymote Heritage Group

32nd Annual Ballymote Heritage Weekend

**Friday 4th August - Monday 7th August 2023
and Saturday 19th August 2023**

Lectures at the Teagasc Centre, Tubbercurry Road, Ballymote, Co Sligo.
(Immediately on the right over the railway bridge on the Tubbercurry Road)

Admission fee €10

Friday 4th August

8.30pm

Official opening and Lecture



"Ireland: where are we going?"

Speaker: Tommie Gorman

Tommie Gorman is a retired Sligo born journalist with an international reputation. He reported for the Western People. He worked for RTE News and Current Affairs from 1980 to 2021 as Irish North-West correspondent, as Europe Editor in Brussels and as Northern Ireland Editor at Stormont. Tommie's autobiography "Never Better – My Life in Our Times" has recently been published. Mr Gorman will declare the 32nd Ballymote Heritage Weekend officially open.

Saturday 5th August

8.30pm

"Ballymote Castle and Ballymote Friary. The Mendicant Friars in the West of Ireland in the late Medieval Period".

Speaker: Dr Yvonne McDermott, Atlantic Technology University.

Dr. Mc Dermott lectures on the History, Geography and Archaeology Programme at the Mayo Campus. Her PhD research investigated the Franciscan and Dominican friaries in the west of Ireland during the late medieval period (1350-1550).

Sunday 6th August

8.30pm

"Discovering your Family Tree - Its Roots and Branches in Sligo".

Speaker: Martin Curley, Genealogist, Mountbellow.

For the past decade Martin has worked full time in genealogy and local history research, delivering workshops, presentations and conferences. He works with individuals and families in researching their connections and analysing DNA matches.



Family Tree

Monday 7th August

8.30pm

"Archaeological and Historical Monuments in Ballynaglogh, Ballymote, Co. Sligo.

Speaker: Fiona Doherty

Fiona has a keen interest in the folklore and heritage of the north west and is based in Ballymote. She is a member of the Sligo Field Club and Ballymote Heritage Group and is currently the Assistant Editor of the Sligo Field Club Journal. She is on the staff at ATU Sligo and is also a part time music educator/heritage officer at Ceoláras Coleman in Gurteen, Co. Sligo.

Saturday 19th August

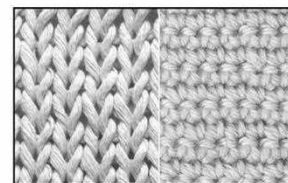
National Heritage Week Event

10am to 12 noon
Ballymote Library

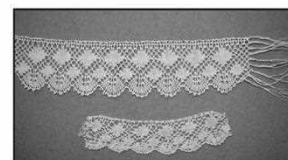
Ballymote Heritage Group will host a demonstration of crocheting and knitting as well as an exhibition of lace in Ballymote Library from 10am to 12 noon. This event is acceding to the National Heritage Week theme "Living Heritage".

Demonstrators:

Mary McGettrick (Cartron),
Mary Brennan (Lackagh),
Marian Foley (Carrigans Upper).



Knitting/Crochet



Sample of Lace

Ballymote Heritage Group would like to acknowledge financial support approved by Sligo County Council under the Community and Voluntary Sector Grant Scheme 2023.



Ballymote Castle



Emlaghfad Old Church of Ireland



The Ruined Franciscan Friary, Ballymote



Ballynaglogh Abbey

Ordnance Survey 0171 9133409

Organised by Ballymote Heritage Group, Ballymote, County Sligo.

www.ballymoteheritage.com.

Further Information 086 3542905

Contents

	<i>Page</i>
Remembering Pam Benson (<i>By Ralph Benson</i>)	4
Tribute to John C. Mc Ternan 1930- 2023 (<i>By Fiona Doherty</i>)	5
Muintir Eolais Chalice returns to its roots (<i>By Liam Kelly</i>)	6
The Lady Who Wanted to Help (<i>By Andrew Marsh, Submitted by Derek Davey</i>)	7
A Selection of Sporting Activities in Eighteenth Century Sligo (<i>By Pádraig Deignan</i>)	8
Douglas Hyde - Scholar and Statesman (<i>By Garreth Byrne</i>)	13
The Touch Of The Master's Hand (<i>Submitted by Joan Gleeson</i>)	16
The O'Connors of Spurtown (<i>By John Mc Donagh</i>)	17
Fonts at Carrownree, Co. Sligo and Castledermot, Co. Kildare (<i>By Martin A. Timoney</i>)	18
Killavil to Carnegie (<i>By Joan Gleeson</i>)	19
Observations of Birds from a Ballymote Garden (<i>By Michael Bell</i>)	20
Drainage Operations on the Owenmore River, 1925 (<i>Submitted by Derek Davey</i>)	22
The Boy who Started Celtic (<i>By Alison Healy with Paul Francis Wilkie, Submitted by Neal Farry</i>)	23
The Healing Power of Nature (<i>By Lynda Hart</i>)	24
What's in a Name (<i>By Declan Foley</i>)	25
The Dromore West Union Workhouse, Co. Sligo (<i>By Kathleen Flynn</i>)	26
An Emigrant Voyage (<i>By Michael Mc Ritchie</i>)	33
The Local Fairs written by a Child in 1938 (<i>Submitted by Gerry O'Dowd</i>)	34
Séamus Keevens (<i>By Séamus Whelan, Submitted by Gerry O'Dowd</i>)	35
A Local Story from 1798 - The year of the French (<i>Submitted by Pádraig Doddy</i>)	36
The Winds of Change Through Time (<i>By Kevin McLoughlin</i>)	38
Fenagh - The Forgotten Centre of Christianity (<i>By Karin Holzschneider</i>)	44
The Big Snow in 1947 (<i>By Stan Mc Williams</i>)	46
Voyage of the Erin's Hope (<i>By Joe Mc Gowan</i>)	48
Let Me Breathe the Sky (<i>By Aisling Doddy, Edited by Philip Doddy, An appreciation by Neal Farry</i>)	51
The Land Question and Land Ownership in Ireland (<i>By Owen M. Duffy</i>)	55
Baron of Ballymote (<i>Submitted by Derek Davey</i>)	59
The Protestant Exodus from Sligo (<i>By Pádraic Feehily</i>)	60
Forges in South Sligo (<i>Submitted by Pádraig Doddy</i>)	64
Country Kitchens (<i>By Mary Kelly White</i>)	67
Customs Associated with Death in Rural Ireland (<i>By Micheal Murphy</i>)	68
Lough Talt - A Deep History (<i>By Pat Mc Carrick</i>)	70
The Lost letters of Father Michael O'Flanagan (<i>Submitted by Martin Byrne</i>)	72
An Old Man's Memories: Expressed in Poem and Story (<i>By Andrew Hegarty, Submitted by Neal Farry</i>)	77
Restoration of Ballymote Church Railings and Gates (<i>By Owen M. Duffy</i>)	79
A Woman Proud of her Roots (<i>By Diane Keevens</i>)	81
From Sligo to Stringybark (<i>By Michael O'Connor</i>)	82
Sligo Field Club Journal, Vol.8, 2022 (<i>By Martin A. Timoney</i>)	85
Stained Glass in Ireland (<i>By Marian Foley</i>)	89

REMEMBERING PAM BENSON

By Ralph Benson

Pam Benson, who died on 20 October 2022 from injuries sustained in a road accident, was a member of Ballymote Heritage Group for many years and served as its treasurer.

Going back 200 years, the Benson family has roots in Collooney. Pam restored the connection. Moving to Sligo in 2006, she worked for a time at the University Hospital as a nurse, the profession which enabled her to travel the world and participate in innovative medical work throughout her career.

Pam trained at St Thomas's hospital in London in the 1960s, and soon moved to Southampton General. From here, she ran away to sea, spending two years working as a nurse for Saga Cruises, seeing the world from Japan to South Africa.

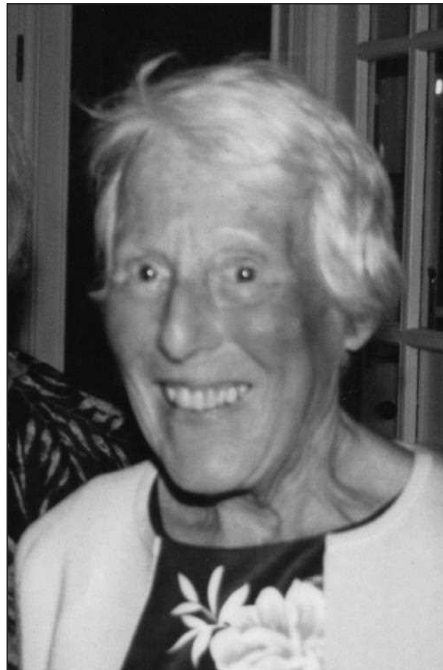
Returning to the UK, Pam took a job at Addenbrooke's Hospital in Cambridge.

The late 1970s and early 1980s were pioneering years in the field of organ transplantation, and Addenbrooke's was a world leader.

Pam was part of the transplant team and criss-crossed the UK and Ireland, flying in to collect a kidney or some other organ and grant a new lease of life to a patient in her care.

It was in Cambridge that Pam met the theoretical physicist Stephen Hawking, and began to work for him alongside her main job.

It was not an easy gig as Stephen's motor neurone disease grew worse. But it was a passport to see the world – from extended stays in Caltech University in Los Angeles, to visiting lectures across Europe and Asia.



Pam Benson

Pam accompanied the great scientist on all his major foreign trips, meeting three popes and two US presidents along the way.

Pam would become one of Hawking's longest-serving carers; for nearly half his life in fact. She was sought-after for her care whenever he was travelling abroad. His daughter Lucy paid the following tribute:

We all loved Pam so much and knew her for so many years. My father's life would not have been possible without her, and she was a true friend right to the end of his life.

They were kindred spirits and found true friendship and mutual respect in each other.

Pam Benson was born in Hatch Street nursing home on 15th January, 1944. She grew up at Clonmethan Glebe in Oldtown, north County Dublin.

At a young age, Pam was sent to live with her aunt in Blackrock, Co Dublin, so she could attend school in Leeson Street. She then continued on to boarding school in Rathnew in Co Wicklow.

In 1962, Pam entered Trinity College Dublin, maintaining a family association with the University which goes back to her great great grandfather.

After her years in the UK, Pam returned to Dublin in 1992, starting work in the neurosurgery section of Beaumont Hospital.

She worked in Sligo University Hospital for two years before retiring, and continued to raise money for the local hospice and the Sligo branch of Acquired Brain Injury Ireland up to her death.

Less publicly, Pam volunteered with the Samaritans in Sligo town.

Pam had long enjoyed athletics, and did long-distance running for many years before moving to Sligo, completing marathons both on her own account, and as a guide for blind runners.

She represented Ireland as a veteran, her team beating England, Scotland and Wales in cross-country. Pam's favourite surface was mud. While others sank, her light frame kept her on top.

Pam was 63 when she bought her first real bike. From the Kilcoosey hill climb time trials, to trips across Europe and Asia, she made up for lost time.

Through the beloved Innisfree Wheelers, Pam made many friends, and the personal challenges cycling involves fitted the independence and determination that she brought to everything she did. Up to the end, Pam was routinely doing bike trips of 80 kilometres or more in a morning.

TRIBUTE TO JOHN C. MC TERNAN (1930-2023)

By Fiona Doherty



John C. McTernan (Image from Sligo County Library).

The well-known former County Sligo librarian, historian, author and genealogist, John C. McTernan passed away on 18 January, 2023. John was a major chronicler of Sligo's history and heritage and was a frequent and valued contributor to the *Corran Herald*.

A native of Conway's Cross, Geevagh, Co. Sligo, he joined Sligo County Library as Library Assistant in 1950, after completing his school education. In 1958, he was appointed Assistant Librarian in Cork City Library and in 1969 he became Chief Librarian in Kilkenny County Library. In 1979, John returned to Sligo to become

County Librarian, a post he retained until his retirement in 1995.

He devoted many years to researching and writing extensively on various aspects of the history of County Sligo. His first publication in 1965, *Historic Sligo*, was a bibliographical introduction to the antiquities and historical records of Co. Sligo and provided an inspiration to many enthusiastic local historians and researchers. He later published two more extensive editions under the title *Sligo: Sources of Local History* which revealed the large quantity of materials on Sligo that he had tracked down in far-flung libraries and gentry houses. As a result of his meticulous research, copies of these materials have been included in the collections that now belong to Sligo Library Local Studies and Archive in Bridge St.

His contributions were not just in print, John also lectured and researched for individuals and local publications. Ballymote Heritage Group, Sligo Genealogical Society, Sligo History Society and Sligo Field Club, of which he was an Honorary Life Member, all benefited from his resources and expertise.

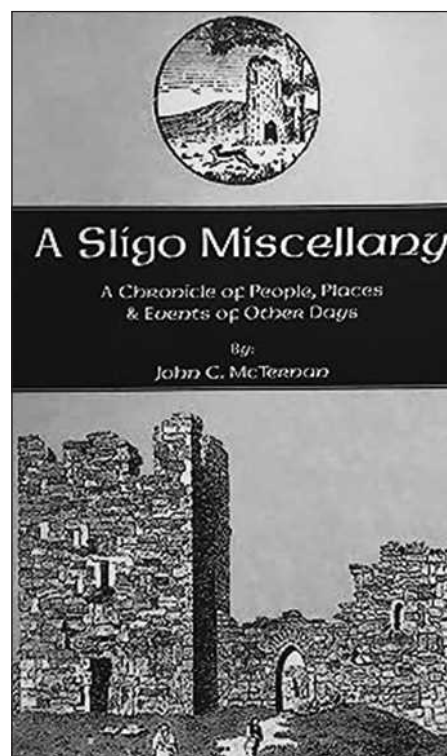
John had a lifelong interest in Gaelic Games and edited the "Sligo GAA: A Centenary History 1884-1984". He was a stalwart member of the Coolera Strandhill GAA club - his parents had moved to Graigue on the Cúil Iorra peninsula in the 1940s.

John contributed 39 articles to *The Corran Herald* between 1988 and 2019. He continued to share his vast knowledge of Sligo's history and heritage by publishing over 18 books and numerous articles. His dedicated

research work and many publications have left an immense legacy and contribution to libraries and future generations.

The members of Ballymote Heritage Group offer their condolences to the family, particularly his sister Sr. Delores of the Mercy Convent in Sligo, and many friends of John C. McTernan. May He Rest in Peace. Access to his many articles that he authored for this journal can be found on our website

- www.ballymoteheritage.com.



A Sligo Miscellany: A Chronicle of People, Places & Events of Other Days by John C. McTernan, published in 2000.

MUINTIR EOLAIS CHALICE RETURNS TO ITS ROOTS

By Liam Kelly

There were two Franciscan friaries in County Leitrim, one in north Leitrim and the other in south Leitrim. Creevelea Friary was set up in the year 1508 beside the village of Dromahair in north Leitrim and Muintir Eolais Friary was set up in 1643, near the village of Jamestown in south Leitrim.

In 2017, when researching and writing the chapter 'Franciscans in County Leitrim 1508 – c.1800' for the *Leitrim History and Society* volume, I learned that a chalice had been given to the Jamestown Friary in 1644 which had the inscription *Pro residentiafratru[m] minorum de Munterolius 1644* [For the residence of the Friars Minor of Muintir Eolais 1644] inscribed on its base. I also discovered at that time that the chalice was still in existence and that it was in the Mount Saint Joseph motherhouse convent of the Sisters of Charity in Cincinnati in Ohio.

In 2017, with the help of an American friend who was working in Cincinnati at the time, I established contact with Veronica Buchanan, the archivist for the Sisters of Charity. Neither she, nor the religious community there had any idea where Muintir Eolais was nor from where the chalice had originated. They were delighted to learn that Muintir Eolais was an area of approximately seven parishes in south County Leitrim, an area within which the Jamestown Friary had been situated and that the chalice which they had in their possession had begun its life in County Leitrim in Ireland almost four hundred years earlier. The archivist provided photographs of the chalice at that time and these were included in the *Leitrim History and Society* volume which was published in 2019.

The Muintir Eolais chalice has had a chequered history. It is possible that the chalice was used for the celebration of Mass at the National Synod of church leaders which was held in Jamestown throughout the second week of August 1650. However, on 19 March 1653, just nine years after it was given to the friary, Jamestown fell to the Cromwellian forces and the friary was suppressed. The friars and other priests were ordered to leave the country within a period of one month and they were 'not allowed to exercise their function' until they did so. The Franciscan priests of Jamestown ignored this edict and instead they fled and hid in the woods and mountains of south Leitrim, bringing the chalice with them and using it when they celebrated Mass in secret wherever they considered it safe to do so. This use of Mass rocks and other out of the way places to celebrate the Eucharist continued until about the year 1750, when the Penal Laws were eased and Catholics could safely gather to celebrate Mass in public once more.

Since 2017 people on both sides of the Atlantic have been trying to find out when and how the Muintir Eolais chalice was brought to America. Little progress has been made to date but it is thought that Irish Franciscan priests brought the chalice with them to America, possibly to Santa Fe or Albuquerque in the state of New Mexico, in the decades after the Great Famine. The American Sisters of Charity also had a mission there and the Franciscan missionary priests used to celebrate Mass in their convent which may explain why the chalice came into their possession.

There were, throughout the 1900s, a few written references to the chalice which proved invaluable in tracing its whereabouts. The reference to it in April 1916 in "*The Catholic Bulletin*", a weekly newspaper published in the city of St Paul in Minnesota, merely stated that among the treasures held in the Sisters of Charity Motherhouse in Cincinnati was 'a precious gold chalice of 1644'. In that same year a Washington quarterly journal called "*The Catholic Historical Review*" gave a more detailed description of the chalice stating that:

Among the many valuable possessions of the [Sisters] of Charity...in that fascinating center of Catholic historic associations, Mount St. Joseph-on-the-Ohio, there is a gold chalice, 9 inches high, with a cup 3 inches in diameter, a base 4 ½ across, and a paten about five inches broad. On the base of this chalice are inscribed the words: *pro residentiafratru[m] minorum de Munterolius, 1644*.

Then thirty years after the above reference Fr Canice Mooney OFM (1911-63), a Drumshanbo, County Leitrim native and a gifted Franciscan historian, wrote about the chalice in his article 'The Franciscan Friary of Jamestown' which was published in "*The Journal of Ardagh and Clonmacnois Antiquarian Society*" in 1946. So, it is clear from these references that the chalice has been in the convent of Mount Saint Joseph in Cincinnati for more than one hundred years.

I had hoped to travel to Cincinnati sometime just to see the chalice. However, to my delight, I received an email last May from Veronica

Buchanan saying that the convent there was downsizing and that they were looking for a new home for the chalice. It was then agreed that St Mary's Church in Carrick-on-Shannon, the parish in which the chalice began its life, would become the new owners of the chalice and that I would travel to Cincinnati to collect the chalice and bring it safely back home.

On the 17 October 2022 I visited Cincinnati and received a wonderful welcome from the Sisters of Charity. They gifted the chalice to me and on 26 October I flew back to Ireland, bringing the chalice home with me.

This chalice, which has been described as 'a wandering symbol of Irish faith' was presented to Fr Francis Garvey, the parish priest of Kiltoghert, at the

12 noon Mass in St Mary's Church in Carrick on Shannon on Sunday 11 December 2022. It will be on display in the St George's Heritage Centre in Carrick on Shannon. This historic and much travelled chalice has returned to its roots and will be retained in the parish where it began its life 379 years ago.

THE LADY WHO WANTED TO HELP

By Andrew Marsh (press columnist). Submitted by Derek Davey

The following was published in the Evening Press September 1982

In some surprising ways the 18th century "was ahead of our own". There was, for instance, a recognition of the unpopular and unpalatable fact that many women lack an adequately developed maternal sense. If they can afford it they engage a nurse to look after their baby for them. If they have an indulgent mother or mother-in-law they let her play her old maternal role in the rearing of grandchildren, freeing themselves for gadding about or going out to work.

Sometimes, when none of these alternatives is open to them, they simply place the infant where someone else will find it. Or they may even kill it or attempt to. The 18th century recognised that this tendency does in fact exist, the corollary being the need to have some institution where a child could be placed and no questions asked. The 18th century solution was the notorious Dublin Foundling Hospital. A basket on a swivel was inserted in the main door, one half protruding on the outside. An infant could be placed in this at night, and the basket turned around the infant was then picked up on the inside and taken into 'official care'.

The swivel basket was, by the way, the idea of Hugh Boulter, Protestant

Archbishop of Armagh. The system would probably have worked well if humanely operated and if a vigilantly supervised fostering service were made part of it. But most of the control was vested in Dublin Corporation and as usual, the result was a tragic disaster. The mortality rate for Foundling babies was reckoned to be about 80%. Horrifying stories told of babies lying dead in their cots for days, apparently without anyone noticing. Eventually the little corpses were dropped into a big coffin kept under the stairs. Only when a full load was obtained was the coffin buried. The graveyard was the hospital yard itself. It was so over-packed with the dead that digging of a new grave brought other remains to the surface.

This was the situation in the Foundling Hospital during the first half of the 18th century. Then a Kerry woman intervened and affected a marvellous improvement. She was Arbella (this was how she signed herself) Denny, daughter of the Earl of Shelburne, who had married a man much her senior and on becoming a widow in her thirties announced that never again would she go into servitude by taking a husband.

She occupied herself by organising a committee of fashionable ladies (the only kind available) to help clear

up the administrative mess at the Hospital. The task was too much like hard work for the fashionable ladies. They melted away, leaving Arbella to get along on her own. Which she did. She may have been very relieved to be rid of her committee.

She seems to have put the fear of God into those sadists who swarm to jobs involving the control of children. (One of them had young boys in the hospital put in stocks and given twenty lashes for daring to complain at being given a maggoty bone to gnaw). Had Arbella been succeeded at the Hospital by another such capable woman all would have been well. But on reaching her seventies she retired without having trained a successor. Perhaps she assumed that her reforms would be permanent. She died in 1792 aged eighty-five.

Needless to say, the moment she went the old state of affairs returned. Arbella evidently had a good opinion of herself, as is shown by this titbit of information sent to me some years ago by a Sligo reader. She happened to visit Ballymote where her family (the Fitzmaurices') owned property. She caused an obelisk to be built on a hill near the town to commemorate the honour she bestowed on Ballymote by coming there. The obelisk stood until a decade or so ago, when some too near digging made it tumble down.

A SELECTION OF SPORTING ACTIVITIES IN EIGHTEENTH CENTURY SLIGO

By Pádraig Deignan

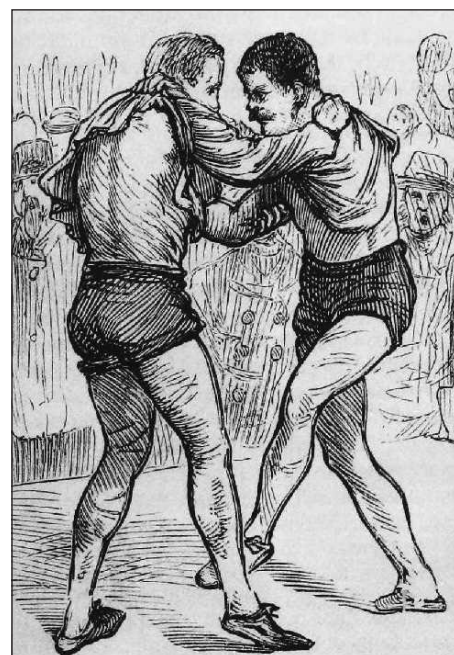
The study of sporting activities in Ireland in the 1700s is challenging as there is a lack of records available. Some sports, including horseracing, attracted the attention of the upper classes and required a financial investment resulting in capital returns. This resulted in a variety of records and in particular publications such as the *Racing Calendar* allowing historians an ability to conduct research. However, for the vast majority of sports, and in particular for the first half of the century, there are few records outside some references in the newspapers of the period. These references increase significantly following the famines of the mid 1700s and in particular from the 1760s onwards when a relatively more economically stable environment was developing. It is clear that although sporting records are sparse, people in the eighteenth century from various socio-economic backgrounds devoted much of their spare time to sporting pursuits and displays of prowess. This article discusses a few of the more popular sports in the county at the time ranging from team sports to individual feats of strength and athleticism which include hurling, wrestling, pugilism, cockfighting and horseracing.

The main team sports in the eighteenth century were hurling (*iomáin*), commons and football – they bear some comparison to the modern sports of hurling, shinty and Gaelic football.¹ They were not codified and there were various arrangements, patterns, practices, numbers on a team, duration of a game and size of playing area. Hurling was the most popular of all three and was a ‘deeply-rooted popular recreational pastime’.² However, in

the words of Arthur Young, hurling was the ‘cricket of the savages’³. Nevertheless, he did admirably report on the ‘feats of agility’ of those engaged in the game.⁴ Early in the century, Protestants were suspicious of the sport, along with all team sports, as it involved mass gatherings of Catholics.⁵ However, it was not banned or specifically targeted by the authorities. After mass on Sunday people would either participate in or watch the sport. Sometimes matches took place on a grand scale and ‘A barony, and even sometimes a county, will hurl against another... The respective parties are drawn up like two little armies, and distinguished from each other by their colours’. The goals were generally placed about 200 yards distant; and guarded by two keepers called *coolhbara*, while active parties are termed *tridagh*, meaning ‘on the alert’. Sligo woman Sydney Owenson praised hurling writing in *Patriot Sketches* that ‘The might that slumbers in the peasant’s arm is by them roused to an incredible exertion; and the address, spirit, and dexterity, displayed during the game, are truly wonderful’.⁶ Hurling was not pursued with the same enthusiasm, in Connacht and Ulster as it was in Leinster and Munster. In those provinces it enjoyed the patronage of the remaining Catholic gentry.⁷ However, there were no significant resident Catholic gentry to sponsor hurling in Sligo in the 1700s as the county had been extensively planted with Cromwellian officers.

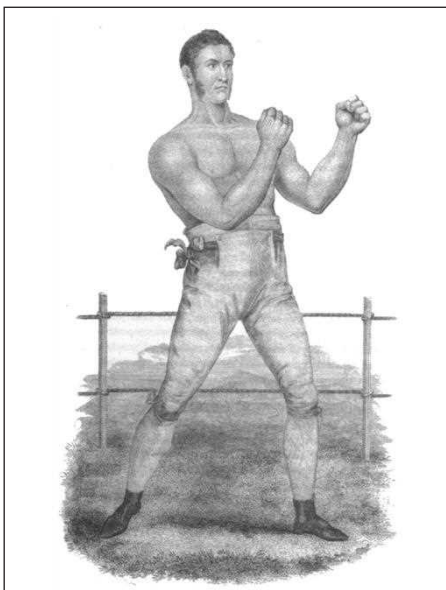
A sport similar to hurling was ‘commons’ and it was very popular in Sligo. Hurling and commons may possess a common origin but the two sports existed largely independently

of each other with hurling focused overwhelmingly in the south of the country with pockets in Connacht, while commons was played across a band of south Ulster, Cavan and Monaghan, north Leinster, Longford, Westmeath, Louth and Dublin and in north Connacht, Sligo, Leitrim, Roscommon and Mayo.⁸ Like hurling, commons was played with a curved stick that was colloquially known in the eighteenth century as a *cumin* and with a ball known as the *cnag*.⁹ Football was another popular team sport played on a Sunday and was strongly encouraged in north Leinster, south and east Ulster and in north Connacht.¹⁰



Another sporting activity much enjoyed in Co. Sligo was the ‘flinging of the stone’ or the *cathu-clogh*. The thrower would hold a heavy stone in his right hand, incline his body a little forward, take a step forward and ‘after two or three balancing motions, fling it from him to a considerable

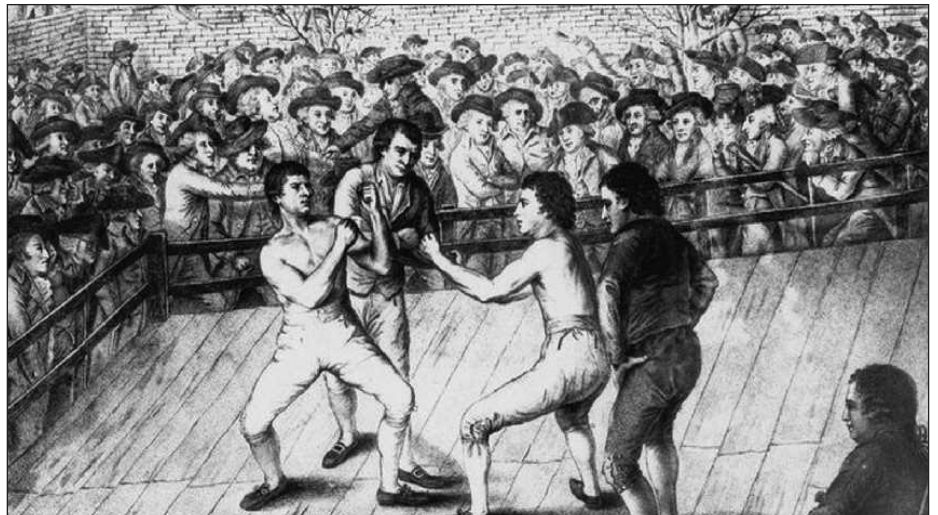
distance'.¹¹ Other manly sports such as wrestling also had a very large following and Collar-and-Elbow (*Coilear agus Uille*) Wrestling was very popular.¹² Even before the eighteenth century, Sligo had a strong tradition of wrestling. In the previous century Thomas Costello, Tumas Loidher or 'Thomas the Strong' was a famous wrestler in the county. He was originally from Tullaghanmore on the north Roscommon/east Mayo border. On one occasion he accepted a challenge from a wrestling champion or 'bully' who had previously killed a number of wrestlers and was resident in the Sligo borough. In the match, Costello broke the man's spine after squeezing his opponent's harness so powerfully.¹³ Clearly no attempt was made to moderate these matches at this time.



By the time of the eighteenth century, Irish wrestling 'shed much of its lethal roughness' while still 'a bit on the rough-and-ready side'.¹⁴ Matches were held extremely frequently 'and generally performed with singular skill and adroitness'.¹⁵ Wrestling was reduced to a scientific art form by the Irish and the sport was divided into two distinct sub categories, one called *sparnight*, which translates to English as a scuffle or a contention where the combatants engaged 'the arms only' while the other, *carriaght*, involved the whole body and was probably a backhold throwing style

similar to the Scottish style which saw the combatant engage 'the whole body'.¹⁶ *Carriaght* was part of the May Day celebrations.¹⁷ It was described as almost identical to the Scottish Western Isles method and before a bout the referee shouted 'lámh an íochdar, lámh an uachdar' one hand up, one hand down. The victorious wrestler was nominated 'King of May' and ceremonially placed his sporting crown before a local beauty.¹⁸

'to see a match of bruising between two stout reapers, one a Leinster man, the other a Connaught man, who had mutually given and accepted a trial of skill in honour of their respective provinces'.²¹ They agreed to adhere to the 'strictest rules of single combat...' which suggest that there were mutually approved or general rules in place.²² The fight was deemed to have ended in a draw although the bout would have appeared to have

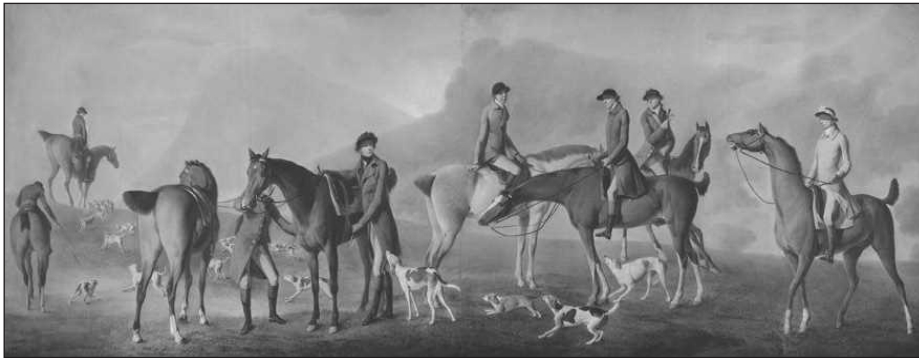


In addition to wrestling, pugilism was also attractive to physically active young men in the county especially in the late 1770s and early 1780s when the sport was becoming much more popular in the country.¹⁹ It was essentially an unstructured sport and didn't have the venues and financial backing that it enjoyed in Britain. However, as the century progressed a greater number of venues and prize money was on offer.²⁰ On 28 August 1788, a large mob gathered at Common of Broadlays, near Ballymore Eustace

carried on indefinitely if it were not for gentleman there who '... proposed a cessation of arms on the principle that having already given the most convincing proofs of equal manhood, it would be scandalous for two brave fellows to maim each other through so mean a motive of malice'.²³ Both '... parties shook hands and a handsome collection was made on the spot for their entertainment at a public house, where a few of the neighbouring gentlemen and farmers adjourned to preserve good order'.²⁴



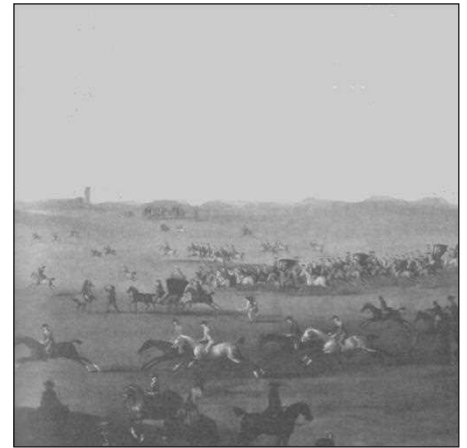
The people of Sligo, both gentlemen and ordinary folk, were addicted to these games of physical prowess and ‘... even the amusements among the lower Irish are calculated to strengthen their frame and to insure them in supporting the greatest burthens and the greatest fatigue’.²⁵ While the English peasant reads religious tracts ‘... the Irish peasant devotes himself to an exercise which may render him a less pious, but certainly forms him to be a more serviceable member of the community’.²⁶



A tremendously popular sport enjoyed by all classes in the county in the eighteenth century was horse racing. Horseracing had always been popular in Sligo but only after the famine crisis in the country in the late 1720s did the sport attract great interest. With an improvement in the country's economy after the famine of the 1740s, an explosion of interest took place in horseracing which became very noticeable by the 1750s.²⁷ James Kelly describes horseracing ‘as the most ‘fashionable’ recreational activity of the ‘nobility and gentry’ in the eighteenth century.’²⁸ The first recorded organised horseracing event in Sligo took place in Drumcliff in July 1732.²⁹ Prizes were on offer to the winners but the main purpose of the race was to auction John Phibbs's pedigree horses of ‘about 80 in number, consisting of saddle horses, breeding horses, colts and fillies’.³⁰ In 1768 a large meeting was held at Beltra Strand, Co. Sligo and in addition to prizes for the competitors, the main reason behind the meeting was ‘to encourage the breeding in this county [of] serviceable road horses

and hack hunters.’³¹ Sligo bred horses were in high demand throughout the country and into the 1790s horses reared in Sligo were winning races regularly.³²

Bowmore Strand in Rosses Point was also a popular place for horse races in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. The annual race meeting there lasted a week, ‘with the final ‘heat’ sometimes being run-off by torchlight’.³³ The earliest recorded meeting at Bowmore took place in September 1781. It was a four-day festival of racing over a three-mile



of fifty guineas sponsored by the ‘Ladies of County Sligo’.³⁷ However, generally speaking horseracing venues were not that comfortable for ladies to view the events. The organisers realised the potential economic and commercial value of a strong female presence at meetings and so they instituted ladies’ days, advertised post-race balls and other activities including plays and theatrical performances to entice them.³⁸ After the Sligo races a dance or post-race ball was organised afterwards in the Linenhall. By the end of the century horseracing experienced a large slump in interest, which appeared due to lack of significant financial investment. The Ormsby family in particular were unable to sustain their engagement with the sport and this replicated the pattern of many landed families.³⁹

Hunt racing was also popular in the county and many of those involved in horse racing were also occupied with hunting and organised hunts were a privilege of the upper classes. They held the legal right to hunt on their lands and prevent poaching. However, hunting provided significant employment and involved people of all social classes, including gamekeepers, beaters, grooms and dog handlers. The Gore-Booths had a pack of hounds and used to hold gatherings near Tullyhill. The Wynnes also organised hunts along the shores of Lough Gill, while the O’Haras, with a famous pack, were well renowned for hunting in the Coolaney area.

James Kelly in his study *Sport in Ireland 1600-1840* has argued that ‘horseracing was the most

course with the stakes totalling 200 guineas. Successful owners present at the meeting included Nicholas and William Ormsby, William Fenton, William Spence and Sir Gore Booth.³⁴ Race meetings were held in the county in September and October 1790 with the October event consisting of a five-day racing card and sponsored by amongst others Freemason Lodge No. 530, by Charles O’Hara of Annaghmore and Joshua Cooper of Markree.³⁵ Charles O’Hara (1746-1822) of Annaghmore, Collooney, MP for Co. Sligo for over forty years, was one of the leading figures in horse racing in the country and was noted far and wide for his fabulous feats of horsemanship. He held the office of Ranger at the Curragh from 1760-1765.

In September 1793 it was reported that a race meeting at Bomore was attended by the ‘beauty and fashion of the County’.³⁶ Successful owners included Ormsby Jones, Nicholas Ormsby, James Wood and Jeremiah Fury. The final day of the meeting consisted of two mile heats for four and five year olds with prize money



organised, most respectable and, by a large margin, the most publicised sporting activity in eighteenth century Ireland'. However, 'its closest rival was cockfighting ...'.⁴⁰ Advocates of cockfighting in Ireland argued that it had a long established tradition dating back to antiquity and the sport 'seemed as firmly anchored in Irish society as horse racing'.⁴¹ The link between horse racing and cockfighting can be traced to Reginald Heber who took over as editor of the *Racing Calendar* in 1750 on the death of John Cheny. Cheny had previously published the *Rules and Orders for Cockfighting* in 1743 for English audiences. Heber published the same rules in Ireland in 1750. The strong interest in cockfighting quickly spread from England to Ireland and '... the emergence of 'battles royal' and team encounters involving the gentlemen of towns or counties must have impressed Irish gentlemen and encouraged them to do likewise'.⁴² Both horseracing and

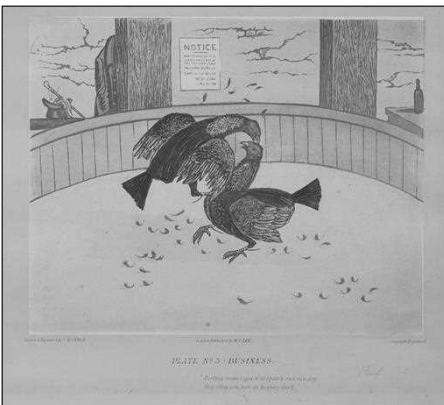
cockfighting were sports where strict guidelines were important as gamblers would not wager on an activity unless it was conducted fairly with clear rules. A symbiotic relationship developed in many places between both activities and cockfights were often held on the mornings of race meetings.

Cockfighting was not perceived as vicious or barbarous at the time or seen as cruel to animals because it was a blood sport. As long as the activity was codified and conducted with a 'civilised code' in force then the sport was allowed. It was a sport which was closely followed by the social elite and attracted individuals from all classes. Cockpits were established in Dublin and some other large urban centres in the country. There was considerable interest in the sport as prize money was significant and it also attracted a large amount of gambling interest. Judges were present at fights but more in a capacity to regulate and control betting than to adjudicate over the actual fights. Cockfights never occurred on Sundays or fast days.⁴³ Large parts of Ulster and Leinster were involved in the activity, however only small pockets could be found in Munster and Connacht. In Connacht activity was strongly centred around Galway.⁴⁴ Cockfighting teams from various localities travelled to compete. However, they could not transport the cocks very far indicating that

cockfighting was very regionalised. Local teams from baronies and towns moved within a particular county but '... inter-county competition was fundamentally province based'.⁴⁵ In the 1760s and '70s the sport had a widespread following and a number of established cockpits were vital in assisting the growth of the sport. It proved to be very lucrative to the local economies where it was practiced with large crowds attending. This gave rise to a need to supply people with food, accommodation and alcohol. Organisers wished to regulate and profit from the sport and charged fees to attend the cockpit and entrance fees for competing teams. Also those who operated a tent or booth would have to pay the organisers.⁴⁶



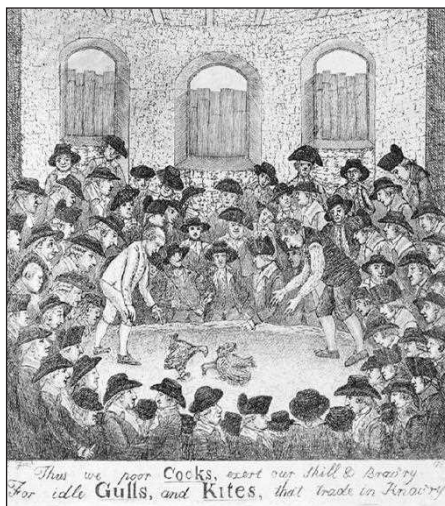
Although the cockfighting was most likely practiced in the Sligo region before the eighteenth century, a renewed interest in the sport in the area was perhaps enhanced by the Cromwellian settlers and garrisoned troops who came to Sligo in the latter part of the seventeenth century. In the second half of the eighteenth century it proved to be very popular with local army officers garrisoned in Sligo and contests were held from the mid 1760s to the mid 1780s. In May 1766, a cockfighting contest was held in Sligo town with a short main of thirteen cocks 'between the officers quartered there and the gentlemen of the county'. The county team was victorious.⁴⁷ In July 1781, Nicholas Ormsby of Castledargan and Philip Perceval of Templehouse 'fought for two hundred guineas the main, and ten guineas the battle'. Of the thirty-one cocks that were shewn, twenty-



three fell in and the engagement was won by Perceval. For the first three days the betting had been three to one in favour of Mr. Ormsby.⁴⁸ In March 1785 a cockfighting bout was organised between the gentlemen of the town and the gentlemen of the Tírerrill. Sixteen battles were fought with eleven won by the Tírerrill faction.⁴⁹ Cockfighting was generally a local, county or regional sport as it proved difficult to transport cocks over long distances although Sligo cockfighting teams took part in regional bouts and would have travelled to contests in the regionally important cockpit of Birr, Co. Offaly.⁵⁰

Unlike bull baiting and throwing at cocks, the authorities were not so keen to prohibit cockfighting.⁵¹ However, by the end of the century people's attitudes, social impulses and religious influences impacted on the sport with many voices against it arguing that it was brutal, violent, cruel and encouraged a significant amount of gambling and fighting. Cockfighting popularity began to decline from the 1780s when 'the respectable, who had previously tolerated when they did not encourage this activity, not only distanced themselves but also actively urged its discontinuance'.⁵² A sharp decline of interest in the sport occurred in the early 1790s which was 'not easily explained' although it was becoming more distasteful and the public disliked the cruelty of the sport.⁵³ In March 1792 a letter to the editor of the Belfast Newsletter argued that it was a '... disgrace to humanity that so many of these noble animals should be murdered for the sport and pleasure, the noise and swearing of those who have the effrontery to call themselves with all their impiety, Christians, men of benevolence and morality'.⁵⁴ The sport declined nationally but hung on in pockets here and there until outlawed in the nineteenth century.

A variety of sporting activities was pursued in eighteenth century Sligo ranging from individual sports to



team sports and events involving animals. Some sports proved to be extremely popular for all classes and religious groups while others never held the same appeal. However, by the end of the century the regulation, standardisation, control and codification of sports had begun which set the groundwork in place for the next century when sporting activities were strongly influenced by morals, societal values, politics and cultural backgrounds.

More information concerning sport in Sligo during the eighteenth century can be found in Pádraig's book, *Sligo in the Eighteenth Century*, which is available in local bookshops.

(Endnotes)

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DOUGLAS HYDE

SCHOLAR AND STATESMAN

By Garreth Byrne

Douglas Hyde was born at Longford House in Castlerea, County Roscommon, while his mother, Elizabeth (née Oldfield; 1834–1886) was on a short visit. His father, Arthur Hyde, whose family were originally from Castlehyde, Fermoy, County Cork, was Church of Ireland rector of Kilmastranny, County Sligo, from 1852 to 1867, and it was here that Hyde spent his early years.

His Sligo and Roscommon childhood moulded his cultural and social attitudes.

Mabel Acheson from Boyle in County Roscommon in the 1937 UCD Folklore schools collection (dúchas.ie) supplied this personal description of St. Thomas's Church Carrickard, Kilmastranny Co. Sligo.

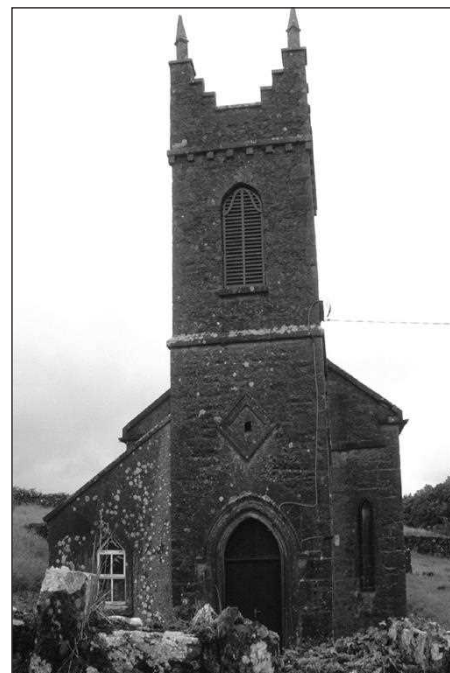
“Kilmastranny church seems very old as mention is made of it in the Four Masters as far back as 1236. In this parish are situated the famous Moytura monuments. Inside the church the walls are beginning to crack and it was mended a few times, but it seems to be of no use. There are two memorial tablets; one is in the memory of Edward Frazer and the other is in memory of Elizabeth Gether. At the back of the church in a corner by itself is a curiously shaped “giant’s grave.” The main tomb is 44 feet in length and 6 in width. There is a cross on the top of the grave. There is also a rocking stone in the neighbourhood, but for some years past it has ceased to function.”

Hyde was born in 1860. In 1867, his father was appointed prebendary and rector of Tibohine, and the family moved to neighbouring Frenchpark, in

County Roscommon. Initially he was sent to a school in Dublin, but after contracting measles he returned to the south Sligo countryside adjoining Lough Arrow and was home schooled by his father and his aunt. Douglas Hyde’s father had an ample personal library and the growing boy read many erudite books freely.

He learned French and at the tender age of thirteen wrote a poem in French. His father helped him to master Latin, with young Douglas wading his way happily through classical writers like Ovid, Livy and Horace. He mastered ancient Greek. He read translations of old Gaelic poetry. This and his easy acquaintance with Gaelic speakers in the area stimulated a lifelong passion for the old language, which by his time had been relentlessly replaced by English in most parts of Ireland. According to the 1891 Census, there were 680,000 people in Ireland who could speak Irish, down from 1.5 million 40 years earlier. The West of Ireland had a heavy concentration of Gaelic speakers, while emigration and the spread of English continued to erode the numbers. People in Gaeltacht areas knew they had to learn English if they wished to find new lives in America and Great Britain.

As a growing boy, Hyde became fascinated with hearing the old people in the Frenchpark area speak the Irish language. He was influenced in particular by the gamekeeper Séamus Hart and his friend’s wife, Mrs. Connolly. Aged 14, Hyde was devastated when Hart died, and his interest in the language faltered for a while, but by meeting other native speakers he gained fluency.



Kilmastranny old church

In 2018 President Michael D. Higgins delivered at University College Dublin, bilingually, the inaugural Hyde Lecture entitled ‘The Legacy of Douglas Hyde’. He commented on the influence that local speakers of the ancient tongue had on Hyde’s attitude to language and customs and, importantly, to how he conducted himself in the presence of people from differing social classes:

“Douglas Hyde learned his Irish from the gamekeeper, Séamus Hart, a local woman, Mrs. Connolly, and from his friend John Lavin and his wife. One very intriguing consequence is that he adopted different modes of address for his parents in English and Irish. In English he refers to his father as ‘Pa’ or, alternately, ‘the Governor’, and his mother as ‘Ma’. Learning Irish from the perspective of the people, he referred to his parents as ‘An Mháistir’ and ‘An Mháistreás’, ‘The Master’ and ‘The Mistress’.”

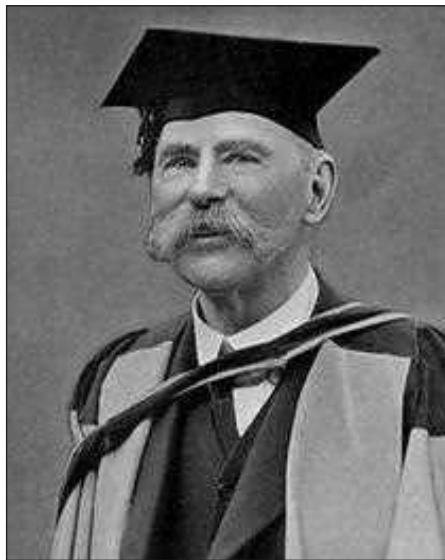
Mrs. Connolly milked the cows for the Hyde family in Frenchpark. In his diary, in English, Hyde noted: "Mrs. Connolly's Irish is improving; she is better able to get her tongue around it, and it is coming back to her memory." This indicates that the cow milker, like many others, did not use Irish much outside their own homes.

Hyde came to love native songs, stories and customs practiced by the locals. The boy enjoyed the outdoors during childhood, watched sporting events and was taken on wild duck shooting expeditions by his father and friends. Although from a relatively privileged social background, the distinguished scholar and future statesman never forgot his country roots and the ordinary people who nurtured his cultural curiosity.

In his father's personal library were books about the languages of the Old and New Testaments. Rev. Arthur Hyde most likely interested himself in the Irish of Bishop William Bedel. The diary entry for the Christmas after Séamus Hart died records the gift of "*An Bíobla Naomhtha*", the Irish Bible translated in the seventeenth century by William Bedel, Church of Ireland Bishop of Kilmore. This supplemented the Irish copy of the New Testament left in the Hyde family home by a clergyman friend of his father. It enabled young Douglas Hyde to read the language he was learning *viva voce*.

His Scholarly Beginnings

In 1880 he was sent to Trinity College Dublin. He studied Divinity for a time but decided not to go for the Church; instead he took a degree in Law. While studying Law he pursued his interest in Gaelic language and folklore in Hebrew, in German and in linguistics. Apparently he ignored many of the formal lectures and spent his time profitably in the college library instead. He dipped into Irish history and he was influenced by John Mitchel's book "*The Last Conquest of Ireland*". He also went a lot to the



Douglas Hyde professor.

National Library in nearby Kildare Street. At Trinity he joined the Gaelic Union. Through this and by attending events and social meetings outside the College he met the old Fenian, John O'Leary, the poet William Butler Yeats whose interest in folklore inspired immortal lyrical verse and T.W. Rolleston, a writer and translator.

Hyde wrote learned articles on language matters and had them printed in scholarly journals in England and on the continent. He began to acquire an international reputation among scholars.

Hyde found the social scene in Trinity College off-putting. Many students looked to English culture and history and turned their backs on Irish traditions. This alien atmosphere motivated his attraction to literary and language circles in the wider city. In 1892 he became president of the National Literary Society and gave a famous inaugural address, entitled "*The Necessity for De-Anglicising Ireland*". In 1893 he founded the Gaelic League and began touring the highways and byways of Ireland promoting the cause. People from various social backgrounds flocked to the new national enterprise. He did not intend that Connacht people would strengthen their ability to speak Gaelic and abandon English. He thought it essential that they learn

English for transactional purposes in Ireland and when they emigrated. Bilingualism was the way forward.

Such was his fame that in 1900 John Redmond, leader of the Irish Party after the tragic Parnell split, offered Hyde a safe seat in the House of Commons. The scholar and cultural activist politely turned down this offer, not wishing to mix the Gaelic League with politics. Other young people who joined had other ideas and used their cultural connections for clandestine planning that led to the 1916 rising. Hyde married Lucy Cometina Kurtz, a German, in 1893 and had two daughters, Nuala and Úna.

In 1905-1906 Douglas Hyde visited the USA and made an 8-month speaking tour to fundraise for the Gaelic League. The wealthy Irish-American lawyer John Quinn organised this tour. Quinn also encouraged projects like the Abbey Theatre and was to have dealings with Lady Augusta Gregory. During the eight months he spent in America he visited up to 50 cities and 12 university campuses, along with two invitations to lunch in the White House with Theodore Roosevelt. His efforts yielded a staggering \$50,000 [another source puts it at \$64,000] – the equivalent of more than a million dollars today.

Hyde's tour was so successful, that he returned as a conquering hero to Ireland and he received the Freedom of Dublin, Cork and Kilkenny. He was a national celebrity.

In scholarly matters he was most active. Here are just a few details. He was appointed a member of the Royal Commission on University Education in 1906; established Gaelic as a matriculation subject for NUI entrance, 1908 - in face of opposition from the Catholic hierarchy. He was appointed 1st Professor of Modern Irish at UCD, 1909-32; was appointed Dean of Faculty of Celtic Studies, and elected to the Senate of NUI, 1909-19. His compilation "*The Love Songs*



Douglas Hyde 1943 stamps.

of *Connacht*” appeared in 1893, and went into further printings. In 1899 appeared *“A Literary History of Ireland”*. He published *“Legends of Saints and Sinners”*: Collected and translated from the Irish (1915); *“An Leath-ranna”* (1922); issued *“Maistín an Bhéarla”* (1913), a play. The list could go on.

In 1915 Hyde regretfully resigned from leadership of the Gaelic League when he realised that Pearse, Mac Diarmada and other political activists had achieved dominating influence. Hyde had been in attendance at the Glasnevin funeral of the old Fenian leader O’Donovan Rossa, when Patrick Pearse made a dramatic oration. Many years later, he was persuaded to accept honorary presidency of the language organisation that he had founded in the 1890s. By nature Hyde was, not necessarily a pacifist, but a quiet individual who preferred peaceful progress by persuasion to hopeless violence against overwhelming odds.

During the tumultuous years 1916-1923 Hyde experienced family tragedy and political bewilderment. He took comfort in academic matters and corresponded with foreign linguists. He was persuaded to serve as a Senator of the Irish Free State in the years 1925-26, but the world of scholarship was his real life after that.

The First President

The new Constitution, Bunreacht na hÉireann, was enacted in 1937. In 1938 Douglas Hyde was appointed by Éamon de Valera to the Senate but only attended the first sitting. Then he was nominated as a crossparty Fianna Fail-Fine Gael agreed candidate for President.

After being sworn in as Ireland’s first president at Dublin Castle he was taken in a presidential motorcade slowly along Dame Street towards O’Connell Street and was greeted by huge cheering crowds. He became the first occupant of the Viceregal Lodge, renamed Áras an Uachtaráin. He didn’t abandon scholarship and went on to write *“Sgéalta Thomáis Uí Chataisigh”* (1939); *“The Children of Lir”* (1941); *“Songs of Columcille”* (1942); *“Dánta Éagsamhla”* (1942) among other achievements.

But he served as President and performed his public duties with dignity and sophistication. His wife became incapacitated and died. President Hyde was thereafter accompanied on state duties by his married sister. She typed many of his official speeches and statements and as First Lady looking after her physically incapacitated brother (he rested often in a wheelchair). She greeted visiting diplomats and political visitors. She deserves more recognition from historians for her dedication. Annette



Douglas Hyde later stamp.

Hyde was born on 19 May 1864, in Elphin, County Roscommon. Her father, Arthur Hyde, was then 45 and her mother, Elizabeth Oldfield was 29. She married John Cambreth Kane on 4 December 1902, in Ireland. She died on 27 August 1952, in Frenchpark, County Roscommon, at the age of 88. She was known after marriage as Mrs. Annette Cambreth Kane.

Hyde admired Gaelic culture, but in 1938 officially attended a friendly international soccer match between Ireland and Poland at Dalymount Park, firmly making the point that the sport one played or favoured was not a definition of nationality. During the war years 1939-1945 President Hyde, despite becoming physically handicapped after a heart seizure in 1940, steadfastly upheld Irish neutrality and conducted diplomatic relations judiciously with American, British, German and other legates.

He allowed 25 acres of Phoenix Park ground to be cultivated for vegetables. He personally donated money to the poor of Dublin who were affected by the wartime hardship. He did not seek re-election in June 1945, but was given permission to reside quietly in a building on the grounds of Áras an Uachtaráin. Sean T. O’Kelly became the second President. Douglas Hyde died in 1949. After solemn funeral ceremonies in Dublin his remains were brought to Frenchpark and

interred at the family plot.

Most photos of Dr. Douglas Hyde, first President of Ireland, show a bearded old man formally posing for the camera on official occasions.

Dr. Máire Nic an Bhaird of the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education at Maynooth College NUI wrote in a paper about Dr. Douglas Hyde: "Liam Mac Mathúna and I visited Michael Carty (1918-2019), a gentleman from Tibohine who personally knew Hyde when he was a child. During Carty's recollections, the image that struck me most was his description of Hyde's moustache. "Hyde had the biggest mustache of them all."

Hyde had a presence and you knew when he entered a room. On his passport it states that he was 5ft 10 inches in height, though Carty's description of Hyde highlights his immense aura. He was larger than life with a magnetic aura, whose features stayed in your memory long after meeting him. Douglas Hyde was a very big tall man about 6 ft. 4 inches, remembered Carty."

Dr. Mac an Bhaird stresses the social and emotional intelligence combined with a creative personality that helped Hyde to function as President

during the difficult wartime years. He had developed from childhood a chameleon personality. She says:

"If I had to choose an animal to represent Hyde, it would be a chameleon. He was a shrewd character capable of adapting to any situation. He could socialise with ease with the Anglo-Irish aristocrats at Coole Park [Lady Augusta Gregory's ancestral home] or just as easily mingle with the local workers and native Irish speakers in Tibohine."

*Garreth Byrne, originally from Kilcullen in Co. Kildare, is a member of Dromahair Heritage Group and has been active in Dromahair Development Association. He has spent periods abroad in China, East and Central Africa, and Oman in the Middle East.

Many Irish children remember learning to recite a poem about the blind musical poet Raftery. He has become the secular patron saint of street buskers. In the West of Ireland busking festivals are periodically held to draw tourists from several lands. If I encounter a busker on a street in Sligo or any other town who is skillfully strumming a banjo, a guitar or a tin whistle or is singing heartily, I dip into my pocket for a few coins to drop into a collection plate or cap.

I Am Raftery

*translated from the Gaelic
by Douglas Hyde*

I am Raferty the Poet
Full of hope and love,
With eyes that have no light,
With gentleness that has no misery.

Going west upon my pilgrimage
By the light of my heart,
Feeble and tired
To the end of my road.

Behold me now,
And my face to the wall,
A-playing music
Unto empty pockets

Is mise Raifteirí

Mise Raifteirí an file,
Lán dóchas is grá,
Le súile gan solas,
Le ciúnas gan chrá.

'Dul siar ar m'aistear
Le solas mo chroí
Fann agus tuirseach
Go deireadh mo shlí.

Féach anois mé
Is mo chúil le balla,
Ag seinm ceoil
Do phócaí folmha.

THE TOUCH OF THE MASTER'S HAND

Submitted by Joan Gleeson

The Touch of the Master's Hand

By Myra 'Brooks' Welch

'Twas battered and scarred, and the auctioneer
Thought it scarcely worth his while
To waste much time on the old violin,
But held it up with a smile.
"What am I bidden, good folks," he cried,
"Who'll start the bidding for me?"
"A dollar, a dollar. Then two! Only two?
Two dollars, and who'll make it
three?"

"Three dollars, once; three dollars, twice;
Going for three..." But no,
From the room, far back, a grey-haired man
Came forward and picked up the bow;
Then wiping the dust from the old violin,

And tightening the loosened strings,
He played a melody pure and sweet,
As a caroling angel sings.

The music ceased, and the auctioneer,
With a voice that was quiet and low,
Said: "What am I bid for the old violin?"

And he held it up with the bow.
"A thousand dollars, and who'll make it
two?

Two thousand! And who'll make it three?
Three thousand, once; three thousand, twice,
And going and gone," said he.

The people cheered, but some of them cried,
"We do not quite understand.
What changed its worth?"
Swift came the reply:

"The touch of the Master's hand."
And many a man with life out of tune,
And battered and scarred with sin,
Is auctioned cheap to the thoughtless
crowd
Much like the old violin.

A "mess of pottage," a glass of wine,
A game — and he travels on.
He is "going" once, and "going" twice,
He's "going" and almost "gone."
But the Master comes, and the foolish
crowd

Never can quite understand
The worth of a soul and the change that is
wrought
By the touch of the Master's hand.

THE O'CONNORS OF SPURTOWN

By John Mc Donagh

The only visible feature that now remains of a once proud family's dwelling, is a well worn cut stone door-threshold that is currently used to mark the location of a water fitting. Judging by the amount of wear on that limestone block, many, many feet must have trodden it over the years when it was in situ under the front door of the O'Connor residence. At least two generations of the O'Connors lived here for the greater part of the nineteenth century, before the entire family emigrated, scattered, or passed on to their eternal reward.

Accordingly, at some future date, some of their descendants may come seeking information on their roots. I feel that their story needs to be recorded before it is lost forever. O'Connors were a well-to-do family. Griffith's valuation records them farming 110 acres in Spurtown. The landlord was Myles George O'Reilly. They also had 38 acres with a herd's house in Knockmoynagh, Kilmorgan. The landlord here was John Trimble. Local tradition has them milking 14 cows on their Spurtown farm, a very large herd for that time.

In the late 1800s dairy products were in great and constant demand. Before the development of the Co-op creameries, many farmers specialised in producing firkins of butter for sale in the export market in Sligo. Then, as well as now, dairying was one of the most lucrative farm enterprises.

In my early years, there was a feature in the garden at the back of the ruined O'Connor house, the remains of a system where, I learned from the older generation, that horses were used to operate some sort of apparatus for churning the butter, which was subsequently taken to the market in Sligo, again using horse transport.

The earliest record that I can find, is the marriage of "Michael O'Connor

to Attracta Killoran, in the Church of Kilshalvy, Kilturra, on 10th November 1842. Witnesses were Domnick O'Connor and Brigid Egan". Because Domnick O'Connor was a well-known member of the illustrious Roadstown O'Connors, we can only conclude that they were part of the one family. This particular family, claimed direct descent from the aristocratic Sligo O'Connor clan and maintained notions, aspirations and ambitions in keeping with their perceived royal lineage.

It is known that Michael and Attracta had at least four in family, one daughter who married Pat Doherty, (Achonry) and three, sons Batty, Antony and Pat, the son who inherited the farm and who is the subject of most of the content of this article. Pat married Mary Taylor on 16/03/1876. Witnesses were Michael O'Donnell and Richard Taylor. Like most of the marriages from that period it was a "made match" but as the saying goes, "it was not a match made in Heaven." Pat had been courting a neighbouring woman, Maria Haran for a number of years. Maria had taught, at various times, in Bunninadden, Carrowreagh and Emlaghnaughtan schools. Most people in the neighbourhood, including Maria, expected that it would end up at the altar. It didn't!

Mary Taylor too, came from a well-to-do farming family. Aged just 22 she fell in love with one of her father's workmen. They were preparing to elope when their plans were discovered. Her parents vehemently objected. (It was completely reprehensible and socially unacceptable in a conservative farming society, for a family member to marry a humble labourer). Mary was locked in the house and kept under strict supervision until a more acceptable match could be arranged. In due course, a match, more acceptable to her parents, was

made and she was "married off, out of harm's way" to Pat O'Connor, complete with a dowry of £200, a huge sum of money at that time. An irresistible enticement to someone, whose perceived aristocratic lineage and illusions of grandeur left him perpetually strapped for cash! Poor Mary had absolutely no say in the matter.

Things could only go downhill from there and that's the way they went. Pat, because of his perceived social status acted the part of a country gentleman with all the expensive pursuits applicable to his status-gambling, horses, parties, etc. All manual work was beneath his dignity, so the farm work was all done by paid labour. Poor Mary, very dissatisfied with her lot, was reluctant to help out and had few scruples about wasting the O'Connors' money. Allegedly, shortly before her death, an elderly member of the past generation recalled her proudly telling my grandmother "The day that I came to Spurtown, I swore that I would put the old O'Connors out of it and I did."

It didn't take long until the country gentleman's highly extravagant lifestyle brought the farm into an unmanageable debt. The first to go was the Knockmoynagh land. A few years later Pat O'Connor's brother-in-law Pat Doherty, paid off some of his debts and in return, acquired a sizeable portion of the Spurtown farm, but it didn't end there. Sometime in the 1890s Pat O'Connor sold the last piece of his remaining land to Doherty, but Doherty was slow in registering the sale and the desperate Pat O'Connor sold the same piece of land again to another neighbour thus getting paid twice. Despite the double payment Pat and Mary O'Connor ended their days in abject poverty, their house collapsing and absolutely no income except "outdoor relief" which was very paltry indeed.

Pat O'Connor died on 3rd of May 1902, in their crumbling, tumbledown residence in Spurtown. He had been in poor health for several years. The cause of death on his death certificate is "Paralysis." Ironically his profession is recorded as "Labourer."

Mary lived on for a further six years in one room of an unoccupied house in the neighbouring townland of Deechomade. She finally succumbed to Pulmonary Tuberculosis on 14th of October 1908 aged 54. The death was

witnessed by her oldest child and only son Michael.

Pat and Mary O'Connor had five in family.

- (1) Michael, born April 1878
- (2) Belinda, born Dec 1879.
- (3) Mary Anne, born Dec 1881
- (4) Ellen born, May 1884
- (5) Sarah Jane, born January 1890.

After his mother's death, Michael moved to Sligo where he worked as a driver, he never married and died in the Nazareth House in 1955.

I can find no record of Mary Anne and Ellen but both Belinda and Sarah Jane emigrated to the U.S.A. Belinda left Ireland in 1897. Sarah is listed as one of the passengers on the liner 'Celtic' in April 1913.

'This is the poignant story of "the Spurtown O'Connors" as relayed to my father by Michael O'Donnell who was a workman for the O'Connor family for many years. I wish to express my thanks to Theresa Finnighan for her help in researching this article.'

FONTS AT CARROWNREE, CO. SLIGO, AND CASTLEDERMOT, CO. KILDARE

By Martin A. Timoney



Fig 1. Castledermot Franciscan Friary, looking west from under the east window towards the west gable, 43 m away.

In a recent issue of *The Corran Herald*, published in 2022, I published a font from Carrownree, Skreen, Co. Sligo. That one is partly concealed by having a wall built over the eastern side of it and being partly sunk in the ground so we cannot see it properly. This brief note is to show a similar full font – there are many others, but I chanced to see this one on the way to Wexford earlier this year.

In south Co. Kildare is the small town of Castledermot. This place is well known for its Early Medieval ecclesiastical site. It has two high crosses, a round tower, a seemingly-unique for Ireland Viking hogback tomb (Fig. 4) and the reconstructed Romanesque arch of its former church. See any of Dr. Peter Harbison's guides to the National Monuments of Ireland for brief descriptions,

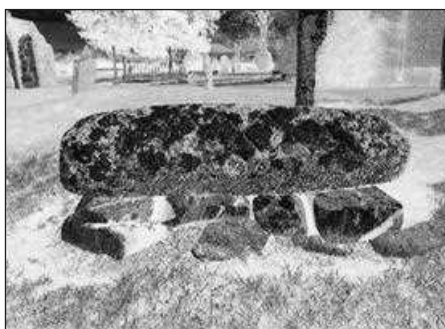


Fig 4. The Castledermot Viking hogback, a Scandinavian grave marker, the only known example in Ireland.

Gwynne and Hadcock (1970, 244-245) for historical background and archaeology.ie for summary.

Not far away, at the southern end of the town, is the Franciscan Friary, founded in 1302 by Thomas, Lord of Ossory, though Gwynne and Hadcock (1970, 244) say it was 'fully established' in 1247. It had a good history, its sheer size shows that. It was suppressed in 1541. The present entry to the building is directly in off the street through a gate under what must have been a magnificent east window of which only the sides survive. The medieval lengthening of the choir has left us now with a nave and chancel (Fig. 1) total length of 43 m, though it feels much longer, and with a width of 10 m.

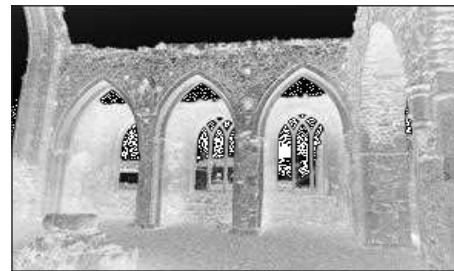


Fig 2. The added large north transept of 14th century date which has three chapels at Castledermot Franciscan Friary.

There is a north aisle and an added large north transept of 14th century date which has three chapels (Fig. 2). These buildings are architecturally substantial but have few decorative elements except for the niches over the piers of the arcade. Its former elaborate north window is only to be seen in Grose's *Antiquities of Ireland*. The expected elaborate east window no longer exists. There is a tower attached to the south side. The complex is massive.



Fig 3. The font in Castledermot Franciscan Friary.

Now set on a low pedestal in the transept, for safety as well as display, is a broken font (Fig. 3) which on first sight reminded me of the Carrownree font. The Castledermot font has suffered through time. It is broken, though now reassembled on this pedestal. It shows its former almost

octagonal format. It measures about 70 cm in diameter with a bowl, 35 cm in diameter and 20 cm in depth. It is believed to have come from the nearby St. James' Church. The font probably dates to the 14th century. The Carrownree font, which I argued came from a chapel in Ardnaglass Castle

built by O'Dowd, Lord of Tireragh, would be broadly contemporary.

Timoney, Martin A., 2022-2023: "A Holy Water Stoup at Carrownree, Skreen, Co. Sligo", *The Corran Herald*, Issue 55, pages 68-69.

KILLAVIL TO CARNEGIE

By Joan Gleeson

While North Sligo is known as Yeats Country, South Sligo is all-out Coleman country, so called after its most famous son, the celebrated fiddle player Michael Coleman. Times were hard in the early nineteen-hundreds and no child was born with a silver spoon in their mouth but, in South Sligo, many arrived with a fiddle tucked under their arm. Without exception, every family in that area had a musician, be it with a fiddle, flute or melodeon. Entertainment consisted of country house dances with storytelling, twenty-four verse songs with no verse forgotten, poems and tea and porter to wet their whistle. Schools were in their infancy and much of our culture was handed down ó ghlúin go glúin.

Emigration was at an all time high. Young people, musicians and fiddle players included, had to join the throngs for the UK and America to make a living. Their luggage consisted of their musical instruments, a head full of tunes and a backload of culture. One of those musicians was Killavil native, Michael Coleman. While there were very accomplished traditional musicians in his area, some of whom taught Michael himself, he developed a distinctive style which he taught to his pupils in New York.

Michael's music was captured in radio broadcasts and gramophone recordings from Carnegie Hall. His unique style captured the hearts and minds of all who heard it and it wasn't long before it came to the attention of world-renowned violinist, Austrian-American Fritz Kreisler who contacted Michael about his playing.



Michael Coleman

Michael in turn was influenced by Kreisler's classical style which he incorporated into some of his compositions and this brought the influence of Austrian ballrooms back home to the gramophones of Ireland. Mrs. Kenny's Waltz is one such tune, named after Michael's boarding house landlady and this waltz quickly found its way back to Killavil and was in Peter Horan and Fred Finn's repertoire (*see footnote below). Fritz and Michael made a number of recordings together but Kreisler was not the only famous person to join Michael's sessions. The famous *Ford Motor Company* giant Henry Ford is known to have played in some of those famous sessions. In all, Michael made approximately eighty recordings from *The Irish Hour* radio programme where he played four nights a week from Carnegie Hall and was accompanied by many Irish musicians.

Despite the political turmoil of the country after the nineteen-sixteen rising and executions, World War I, Black and Tans, civil war and fierce rivalry on the football pitches, the Irish kitchens rang out the jigs and

reels inspired by great musicians like Michael Coleman and his contemporaries.

I have many memories of Coleman's records being played for us in the fifties for Irish step dancing and *The Boys of the Lough* was a particular favourite. During the Ballisodare music festivals in the eighties, visiting performers were guests in many houses in the local area. Our house was one of those and what a joy to have a band called *The Boys of the Lough* staying with us. As another generation of musicians grew, those same tunes that had criss-crossed the Atlantic took on a new life with Coleman's influence at the heart of every session.

As a fiddle player herself, my mother passed on her love for music and culture and recited to me a beloved poem from her school days, *The Touch of The Master's Hand* by Myra Brooks. Just as Irish music made its way to America, this poem sailed the Atlantic waves back to Ireland. It was recited at Irish gatherings in Boston and New York by my mother's sisters as well as at our fireside in Killavil by my mother. Not all traditional musicians were successful and even many of those who found success ended up falling on hard times, a fate that's reflected in Brooks' poem. The inspiration and legacy of Michael Coleman's music grows with every new generation of musicians who continue to celebrate *his* touch of the master's hand.

Michael Coleman's original recording of Mrs. Kenny's Waltz can be heard on YouTube at the following address: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5mjamZ0STow&ab_channel=MartinByrne

OBSERVATIONS OF BIRDS FROM A BALLYMOTE GARDEN

By Michael Bell

Being a keen bird watcher I have kept notes on birds seen in and around my garden since first moving to the town in 2006, and in that time I have recorded 52 species. Some have been observed in the adjacent area or flying over and not using the garden itself. The list of birds recorded is shown in Table 1 with those not directly using the garden denoted by an asterisk.

The garden is in an estate on the edge of Ballymote and is quite small, but benefits by being bordered along one edge by a mature hawthorn hedgerow that also includes elder, ivy, bramble and a variety of herbaceous plants. I have also planted alder, birch and a single rowan tree which adds to the diversity of the site. Behind the hedge is a large unimproved pasture. I regularly feed birds during winter providing peanuts, fat balls, mealworms and scraps from the kitchen. I also take part in BirdWatch Ireland's annual Garden Bird Survey. This survey runs from November to February involving weekly counts of the variety and numbers of birds visiting the garden, so it does encourage me to keep an eye on the bird feeder regularly at this time of year.

Perhaps the most noticeable birds throughout the year are several members of the crow family. **Jackdaws** and **Rooks** are ever present and will come into the garden to feed on scraps. In the evenings, many can be seen wheeling and circling overhead before going to roost in the large trees near the entrance to the estate. Both **Magpies** and **Hooded Crows** are less likely to venture into the garden, though small numbers are regularly seen in the adjacent field.

From time to time, one or two **Ravens** may pass overhead, their presence given away by their guttural croaking call.

The **Robin** is another conspicuous year-round visitor to the garden. These birds are highly territorial year-round, and it is unusual to see more than one at a time. Flocks of **Starlings** feed in the field in winter, and often a pair may nest in the ivy along the hedgerow or even inside the garden shed. **Pied Wagtails**, common in the estate, are easy to spot on the patio with their striking black and white plumage as they strut around incessantly wagging their tails. Also common but less obvious are **Dunnocks** and **Wrens** which tend to stay hidden in the hedge, only to be revealed by their distinctive songs. Occasionally, a **Goldcrest**, Ireland's smallest bird, may visit, and it is usually detected by its high-pitched song. Even scarcer visitors to the hedgerow include **Treecreepers** and small flocks of **Long-tailed Tits** that are generally only seen once or twice each year. In summer, **Willow Warblers** can be heard singing their beautiful mournful song from under the cover of the hedge.

Both **Blackbirds** and **Song Thrushes** are regular visitors throughout the year, though **Mistle Thrushes** have become increasingly scarce recently. All are accomplished singers, but the Blackbird song has a particularly beautiful quality. In spring, it is often the first bird to sing in the morning and can be heard proclaiming its territory well before sunrise. Two other members of the thrush family, **Redwings** and **Fieldfares**, are winter visitors that feed on berries in the hedge. Like the Mistle Thrush, the



The loud bubbling song of the Wren is a common sound emanating from the hedgerow for much of the year.

Fieldfare has become something of a rarity in recent years.

Occasionally **Herring Gulls** visit the estate and can be quite raucous, tending to perch on the roofs of nearby houses, rarely venturing down to the ground. In summer, they may be joined by one or two **Lesser Black-backed Gulls**. Gulls are regularly seen throughout the year at nearby Cloonacleigha Lough.

One surprise visitor to the estate was a **Canada Goose** that showed up on 11th March 2018. This bird was extremely tame and allowed me to approach closely and showed no attempt to take flight. Fearing it may become the victim of a dog attack if it were to stray into the wrong garden, I decided it would be best to move it to a safer location. It was easy to catch by throwing a blanket over it and I was able to wrap it up securely. After consulting with Eagles Flying, it was decided that their grounds would be a good location for releasing the bird. However, the following morning when I looked out my front window I once again spotted the Canada Goose walking down the street! As it was obviously able to fly well and it decided to return I thought it best to



A feral Canada Goose was an unusual visitor to the estate during March 2018.

leave the bird to take care of itself and it was not seen again. This goose was undoubtedly one of the feral Canada Geese that are now found throughout much of Ireland and may well have been part of the flock of geese that inhabit the Templehouse area.

In winter the loud trumpeting calls of **Whooper Swans** often give away the presence of a flock flying overhead. These swans are winter visitors to Ireland migrating here from their breeding grounds in Iceland, though a small number remain here for the summer with occasional breeding taking place. During the winter months they move around between different lakes and this is when they are observed flying over. Some local water bodies used include Templehouse Lake, Cloonacleigha Lough, Ballygawley Lough, Bellanascarrow Lough and Knocknawhishoge Turlough. Other water-birds that I have seen flying over include **Mallard**, **Grey Heron** and **Cormorant**. On one occasion a small flock of migratory **Whimbrel** flew by, their identification confirmed by their distinctive call. Another wading bird to be recorded on a single occasion is the **Snipe**. One was spotted in my garden during the 'Big Freeze' over the winter of 2010-11. Under such harsh conditions, snipe may seek refuge in gardens when their favoured wetland habitat is frozen over.

Pheasants are often heard calling in the field next to my garden and occasionally I am lucky enough to see

a male strolling by close to the hedge. There are few records of birds of prey though both **Kestrel** and **Buzzard** have been observed overhead. The Buzzard became extinct in Ireland in the early part of the 20th century but has naturally recolonized the country and is now widespread in Co Sligo. A **Sparrowhawk** did once make a brief stop in the garden when it landed on a garden bench, no doubt striking fear into any garden birds present.

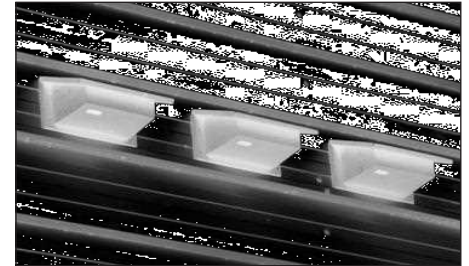


Buzzards have been seen flying over the garden on a couple of occasions.

Woodpigeons are often seen feeding in the adjacent field, especially during autumn and early winter. Most years a pair will nest in the hedge concealed in ivy. The **Collared Dove** is a species that appeared for the first time in Ireland in 1959 following a rapid range expansion across Europe. They are now a familiar site in villages and towns, including Ballymote, across the country. One or two appear in the garden from time to time, but being shy birds they rarely stay long.

Although I am yet to see a **Cuckoo** from the garden, their familiar song is regularly heard in summer. Other summer visitors from Africa include **Swallows** and **House Martins**. Swallows patrol over open areas feeding on insects and House Martins build their mud nests on several houses in the estate. Unfortunately numbers of both species have been declining across Ireland in recent decades. Also declining are **Swifts**, which may be seen circling overhead on warm summer evenings. I have noticed numbers dwindle to just a few pairs in Ballymote in recent years. Nest sites are often lost to renovation works and

modern buildings rarely provide the crevices they need for nesting. With that in mind, in 2018 several specially designed nest boxes were placed on the TopChem Pharmaceuticals Ltd building in Ballymote Business Park with the support of Sligo Branch BirdWatch Ireland and Sligo County Council. A single pair has taken up residence for the last two or three years and it is hoped in time that a sizeable colony can be established.



Specially designed nest boxes installed on Top Chem Pharmaceuticals Ltd building in Ballymote Business Park.

Due predominantly to the bird feeder, the number and variety of birds visiting the garden is greatest during winter. Both **Blue Tits** and **Great Tits** are never far away and **Coal Tits** regularly pop in to grab a nut and take it off to a quiet spot. **House Sparrows** are generally the most numerous visitors with several **Chaffinches** also usually in attendance. **Goldfinches** are less frequent but add a welcome splash of colour when they do show up. **Siskins** tend to occur in small numbers in late winter and it is always a joy to watch these acrobatic finches dangling from the feeder.

Greenfinches used to be regular visitors also, but I haven't seen one in my garden for three or four years now. Recent declines in this species have been linked to Trichomonosis, a highly contagious disease that affects many bird species but Greenfinches have been particularly susceptible, leading to heavy declines in some areas. Affected birds become lethargic and weak and may show swelling of the eyes or throat. If such symptoms are evident, it is recommended to remove feeders for a couple of weeks

to avoid other birds coming into close contact with infected birds. It is also important to make sure feeders are regularly cleaned and disinfected. Other finches that occasionally visit the garden, though not seen on the feeder, include one or sometimes a pair of **Bullfinches**. In autumn and winter, small flocks of **Lesser Redpolls** can be seen feeding in the birch trees that I planted in the front garden.

One interesting visitor to the garden during recent winters has been the **Blackcap**. In 2018 a female made a brief visit to the bird feeder and this past winter a male was seen several times at the feeder. This species is a common summer visitor to woodlands in Co Sligo. There is also a small wintering population in Ireland and recent studies have shown these birds mostly originate in Central Europe, whereas our breeding population



A female Blackcap at the bird feeder in March 2018.

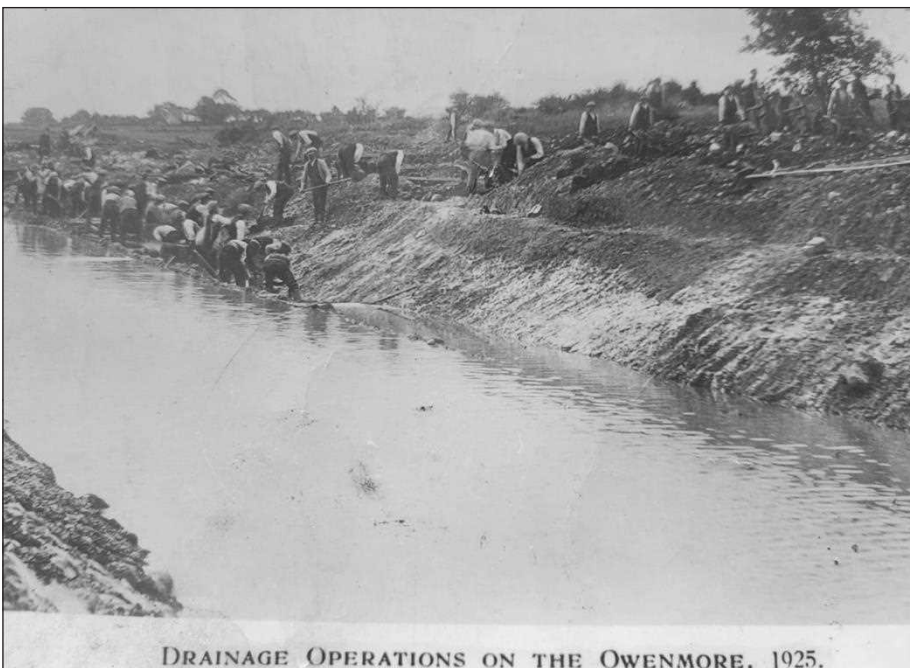
spend the winter in Iberia and North Africa. It is these wintering birds that tend to venture into gardens to supplement their diet with peanuts or fruit that is offered at bird feeders.

Linnets, Meadow Pipits and Reed Buntings are mainly grassland birds that have been seen in the hedgerow on a handful of occasions. Reed Buntings occasionally feed in the garden on wild bird seed sprinkled on the ground. Meadow Pipits and Linnets are rarely seen, though they would be common locally.

It is clear that quite a variety of birds can be seen without leaving the confines of our gardens. Having a bird feeder will allow for good views of small song birds that may otherwise go unnoticed. Planting trees and shrubs that provide food and shelter for birds is also highly beneficial. With increasing pressures on bird populations in the general countryside our gardens can become havens for wildlife throughout the year.

Table 1. Common and Irish names of birds recorded from the garden.* denotes species either seen or heard in adjacent area or flying over and not directly using the garden.

COMMON NAME	IRISH NAME
canada goose*	Gé Cheanadach
whooper swan*	Eala ghlórach
mallard*	Mallard
pheasant*	Piasún
grey heron*	Corr réisc
cormorant*	Broigheall
sparrowhawk	Spioróg
buzzard*	Clamhán
whimbrel*	Crotach canaigh
snipe	Naosach
herring gull*	Faoileán scadán
lesser black-backed gull*	Droimneach beag
woodpigeon	Colm coille
collared dove	Fearán baicdhubh
cuckoo*	Cuach
swift*	Gabhlán gaoithe
kestrel*	Pocaire gaoithe
magpie	Snag breac
jackdaw	Cág
rook	Rúcach
hooded crow	Caróg liath
raven*	Fiach dubh
coal tit	Meantán dubh
blue tit	Meantán gorm
great tit	Meantán mór
swallow*	Fáinleog
house martin*	Gabhlán binne
long-tailed tit	Meantán earrfhada
willow warbler	Ceolaire sailí
blackcap	Caipín dubh
goldcrest	Ciorbhui
wren	Dreoilín
treecreeper	Snag coiteann
starling	Druid
blackbird	Lon dubh
fieldfare	Sacán
redwing	Deargán sneachta
song thrush	Smólach ceoil
mistle thrush	Smólach mór
robin	Spideog
house sparrow	Gealbhan binne
dunnock	Donnóg
pied wagtail	Glasóg shráide
meadow pipit	Riabhog mhóna
chaffinch	Rí rua
bullfinch	Corcrán coille
greenfinch	Glasán darach
linnet	Gleoiseach
lesser redpoll	Deargéadan beag
goldfinch	Lasair choille
siskin	Siscín
reed bunting	Gealóg ghíolcaí



DRAINAGE OPERATIONS ON THE OWENMORE, 1925.

Drainage operations on the Owenmore River, 1925

Submitted by Derek Davey

THE BOY WHO STARTED CELTIC

By Alison Healy with Paul Francis Wilkie (a feature). Submitted by Neal Farry

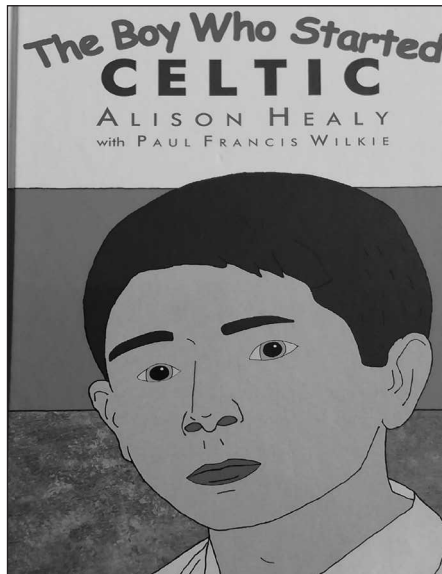
Alison Healy is an Irish writer from Derroon, Ballymote, Co. Sligo. Millions of Glasgow Celtic supporters discovered the football club they love so dearly through the media or by being members of Irish communities in many parts of the world. Alison discovered Celtic as a child when it was revealed that her mother Mary Healy (née Kerins) was a grand-niece of Brother Walfrid Kerins the founder of Celtic FC, and that she herself was a great grand-niece of Andrew Kerins of Cartron Phibbs, Ballymote. Andrew became Marist Brother Walfrid after he emigrated to Scotland in 1855.

Perhaps if I replicate Alison's introduction, the catalyst that encouraged her to write such a compelling children's book will attain lucidity and definition. The ensuing thoughts below reveal the mindset of the author:

'This is a story of a boy, a calf and one of the biggest football clubs in the world. It is also a story of how one person can change many people's lives. All great journeys begin with a single step. As a boy, Brother Walfrid did not know he was starting a great journey when he sold a calf at County Sligo's Ballymote Fair and took the boat to Scotland.

Every day people are starting great journeys and they don't even know it. They are just trying, like Walfrid, to make people's lives better by helping others who are not as lucky as them. Walfrid helped people and started one of the world's most well-known football clubs.'

A number of people collaborated with Alison and helped her to turn Walfrid's story into a book. They include Dr. Michael Connolly, the author of 'Walfrid, A Life of Faith, Community and Football', Brother Geary of the Marist Order and the people of Ballymote who erected a monument to Brother Walfrid and named a park after him, Tony Hamilton of the Celtic



Front cover of *The Boy who started Celtic*.

FC Foundation, Celtic journalists, Derek Rodger of Argyll Publishing and her closest supporters, the Healys and Loughlins.

Alison's delightful chronicle is a children's book. Nevertheless, it soon becomes clear that it is a thorough and infinitely accurate rendering of the life of Walfrid, and is within the reading capability of most children in the middle and senior classes in primary schools. This narrative at €12 per copy will make a very appropriate gift for a young person with an interest in football or history. Many older people may indeed find this literary creation a worthwhile purchase.

The contribution of the illustrator Paul Francis Wilkie, the Coatbridge born Celtic supporting graduate of the Glasgow School of Arts, is essential to augment the reality of the story by providing twenty-two powerfully authentic and relevant cartoons. Alison and her friends have certainly presented a real-life drama that is important and inspirational for Ballymote, Sligo and Celtic people of all ages. Alison writes in a natural revealing style where she frequently anticipates the curious probing of the querying juvenile mind.

When the author had completed the life-story of Walfrid she provided an exhaustive compilation of facts about Celtic FC since its foundation. Walfrid's initiative in combining sport and charity and the example he gave to others are examined in the case of Marcus Rashford of Manchester United who organised free food and free books for poor children in Britain. United States tennis player Serena Williams gave 50,000 meals to needy families during Covid -19 by following the stewardship of Walfrid. The American basketball star Le Bron James of Ohio set up a foundation to help poorer families in his home town. The Celtic FC Foundation has raised £30 million to assist people with health and social disabilities. Walfrid would surely approve. The achievements of Celtic FC are proudly listed. Cartron Phibbs has surely produced its heroic son.

Alison Healy's first children's book *How Billy Brown Saved the Queen* was published by Little Island Books. She also writes for the Irish Times.

Alison Healy's book can be bought in Liber Bookshop, Sligo and Henrys, Ballymote.



Bro. Walfrid Kerins sells a calf at Ballymote Fair to raise money to travel to Scotland.

THE HEALING POWER OF NATURE

By Lynda Hart

During the pandemic lockdown many people discovered, or rediscovered the beauty and diversity of an outside space. For some that was a balcony with perhaps few pots of flowers and herbs, for others a garden, an allotment, park, a beach or the roadside verges within the 2km restriction. Many mental health issues were soothed or averted by the explosion of an early warm and sunny spring, which meant many of us could get outside and explore the natural world about us.

One benefit of a total lockdown was the lack of cars, lorries and planes which meant a reduction in pollution, which in turn caused an increase in the bee and insect populations.

For many of us gardening is more than a hobby. It quietens the mind, exercises the body, and also provides a haven for all types of flora and fauna, and yes that includes even the weeds! Gardening has been prescribed by doctors as it is seen to be beneficial to mental health, as well as been a cardiovascular workout, building a stronger heart, as well as stretching and suppleness. I am lucky, I have a large garden, and I have always been conscious of the need to help and encourage wildlife. For me, gardening is a way of life, having been introduced to it at a very young age by parents and grandparents who were avid gardeners and lovers of the natural world.

My garden is a mixture of fruit, vegetable, flowers, trees, a wildlife area with a wildlife pond.

The pond was up and running by the end of 2019 and had frogs spawning in the first year. Because of lockdown I was able to give it my full attention and landscaped the pond and surroundings to both encourage wildlife and provide animals and birds with water, and the Blackbirds with tadpoles, which they were rather partial to. In no time I had dragonflies and damselflies around the pond (Fig. 1).



Fig 1 My Garden

Helping wildlife can be achieved for little cost. Small off cuts of timber can be made into a bug hotel and the interior filled with pieces of stick, fir cones and any dried garden material. A few small logs picked up from a wood can be stacked and will provide shelter and food for insects and shelter for frogs and even hedgehogs. The shop bought bee and insect hotels are generally not deep enough for purpose. The internet has plenty of videos showing how to construct a simple bee/insect hotel. Mason bees really benefit from a well-made bee hotel. It needs to be placed about one metre off the ground and in a south facing position near to some early flowering plants. I am not precious about my garden, and became even less so when I realised that the dandelions especially provide much needed sustenance for emerging bees and insects. I do try to pick the heads as soon as they die however, as I have an abundance of them already!

If you can leave a small area of grass uncut then you can start a small wildlife meadow. My area is approximately four metres by three and in the last two years I have managed to get Yellow Rattle to establish. This is an important wildflower if you are not starting from a bare patch of earth, as it is a parasite plant and restricts the growth of the

grass, thus allowing the wildflowers you sow to become established. I also let everything in the garden self-seed (except the dandelions). Some of the seed heads attract small birds such as the Goldfinches, others self-seed around the garden providing plants for myself and my neighbours.

During the lockdown I moved the bird feeders nearer the house so that the birds could be easily observed from the kitchen window. Luckily I had stocked up on bird food just before the lockdown and I don't feed the birds after about April as by then there is plenty of natural food for them. But the lockdown during winter of 2020/2021 provided an opportunity to observe many different species. Even himself who had never shown any real interest armed himself with a bird identification chart and was suddenly enthralled by all the different, colourful and enchanting visitors.

His favourites are the Goldfinches. These gregarious and colourful small birds are a treat to watch. In recent years the garden bird populations have declined, due to lack of habitat and disease. The latter affects some of the birds that were once abundant but have now declined in our garden, Greenfinches, Chaffinches and House Sparrows. This may be in part due to the fact that they feed in flocks so any disease is easily spread. It is therefore essential that the bird feeders are kept clean, and food not left in them for long periods. No chance of that here with the Rooks. Rooks are some of the cleverest of the crow family. They recognise humans, and tests have shown that they can remember humans faces for as long as five years, knowing if that face belongs to a friend or foe. Some may have been reading this article and be wondering what this is to do with heritage. Well, heritage is about the past, remembering and preserving it. But it is vital for us to conserve our future. With the

growing population and the need for housing, many new houses have only small gardens, and many are covered with hard standing for car parking.

But without the bees and insects to pollinate our crops we will be facing food shortages in the future. Plant a sunflower in a pot. Teach the children

or grandchildren how to grow some salad leaves, tomatoes and lets all do our bit for future generations.

WHAT'S IN A NAME

By Declan Foley

Place and personal names have a meaning or interpretation behind them. Names date back to time immemorial. Pre-Christian era, 'Pilgrimages' existed to places such as Lough Derg, Carrowmore and Carrowkeel in County Sligo: and not alone for the Irish residents of the day, Europeans pilgrims came to Ireland. Place names evolved because of what people saw or because of the crops produced, thereon. Rivers, streams lochs etc gave their names to areas, as did causeways, fords, and passages throughout the land. There is a spiritual similarity the world over in place names from the practices of tribes.

Some get upset when a different viewpoint arises, as has occurred with the name Sligo over recent years. Is it 'Shelley River' or 'Way of the two fords'? Why can't it be both?

Let us go back to the initial time of the Carrowmore and Carrowkeel monuments, some thousands of years before the birth of Jesus, with no Esso road maps, Google or road signs. Reading and writing was confined to small numbers of people, thus travel was by oral direction which was passed on from generation to generation. Ergo the traveller had to keep an eagle eye for markers along the way. Heading south from Ballyshannon to the area that is today Sligo town, the first instruction would be 'keep the sea to your right' Then 'direction marks' to watch out for along the route. Bear in mind Ireland was heavily forested, most clans lived on heights, as this allowed to watch out for invaders, likewise a scout would seek a high place to look ahead along the way. This route was in the main along the shore line.

From O'Rourke's History of Sligo: "In those early times the Ulster men, after crossing the Erne at Ballyshannon or Belleek, moved on through Bundoran, Bunduff, Bundrowes, Cliffoey, Grange keeping all along as close to the sea as they could, till they reached Breaffy, when they turned towards Lissadell, and passed on through Ballygilgan and Carney, then to Finned. Here, if necessary, they halted till the tide was out, when they passed the strand to Doonierin road. From Doonierin they moved through Gregg and Ballincar to the point called in *The Annals of the Four Masters*, Reanna-an-Liagain, and know at present to the pilots of the 'Rosses as Stand-alone-point;' and now instead of going up to the site of [the present] Sligo town, where there was no means of crossing the river, they crossed the channel and strand to the Finisklin side."

It must be kept in mind that the Garavogue River north of what is today Hyde Bridge differed greatly from today. Markievicz Road, then came into existence. The east bank was earthen and would have been aligned with the slant up to St. John's Estate on Forthill, hence there was nothing south of 'Stand-alone-point' of interest to the travellers.

"Leaving Finisklin or Gibraltar, they soon reached Carrowcrin passed easily the Fiontragh strand, when the tide was off it, to Streamstown, over a *fearsat* or ford in the channel, marked in the *Down Survey* map and much frequented down to half a century ago. At Streamstown, the whole of Connaught lay before them. So late was the year 1536, we find the forces of Hugh O'Donnell following this line of marching."

P.W. Joyce in his two volume 'Irish Names of Places' includes examples of different names or interpretation for the same area:

The interpretation of a name involves two processes: the discovery of the ancient orthography, and the determination of the meaning of this form. So far as Irish local names are concerned, the first is generally the most troublesome, while the second, with some exception, presents no great difficulty to an Irish scholar. There are cases, however, in which although we have very old forms of the names, we are still unable to determine the meaning with any degree of certainty. P.2

In numerous . . . cases, when the original forms are so far disguised by their English dress, as to be in any degree doubtful, they may be discovered by causing the name to be pronounced in Irish by the natives of the respected localities. . . Lisnanees is the name of a place near Letterkenny, and whomever would undertake to interpret it as it stands would find himself puzzled; but it becomes plain enough when you hear the natives pronounce it with a 'g' at the end, which has been lately drooped: -*Lios-na-naosg*[Lisnaneesg], 'the fort of the snipes (*naosg*, a snipe). Pp.2-4

Travelling north from Sligo north towards or Manorhamilton the accent begins to change to a more northern accent. Irish place names all those eons ago would sound differently from travellers from the north and from Scotland, which allow for elision which will change anything. For example in a book on Rosses Point, a woman writes of a ship the "Iron Door Star" which in fact was The Arandora Star'. So Sligda Atha, could indeed be sounded 'Sligida'.

THE DROMORE WEST UNION WORKHOUSE, CO. SLIGO

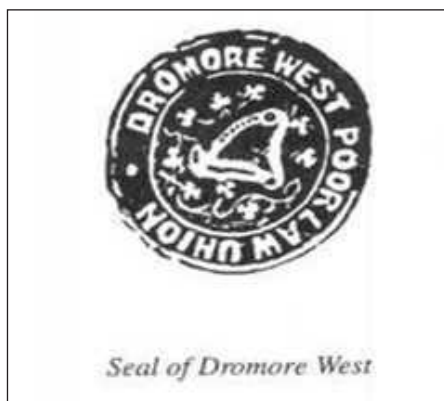
By Kathleen Flynn

Dromore West Union was one of the second phase of Union Workhouses formed and constructed in the period 1849 – 1852. Dromore West is a small village in west Co. Sligo located at the junction of the N59 (Sligo-Ballina National Primary Route) and R-297 (Easky/Enniscrone road), 34 km (21 miles) to the west of Sligo town. While the village increased in size and population during the so-called “Celtic Tiger” years of the late 1990s and early 2000’s, the village itself is still a relatively small settlement. The village of Dromore West was also a small settlement in the pre-famine years. Lewis, in his *Topographical Dictionary of Ireland* gave the following description of the village of Dromore West in 1837:

‘DROMORE-WEST, a village and post-town, in the parish of KILMACSHALGAN, barony of TYRERAGH, county of SLIGO, and province of CONNAUGHT, 18 miles (W. S. W.) from Sligo, and 113 (N. N.W.) from Dublin, on the mail coach road from Sligo to Ballina; containing 109 inhabitants. It consists of about 20 houses, and in the vicinity are several gentlemen’s residences, of which Dromore House is the seat of John Fenton, Esq. Fairs are held on the first Thursday in Jan., June 6th, and Dec. 29th. A revenue police force has been stationed here, and there is a R. C. chapel.’⁽¹⁾ (Lewis 1837, p.509)

Location, Construction and Opening

Dromore West Union formally came into existence on 30th September 1849⁽²⁾. The new union was created from the western part of the Sligo Union and the eastern part of the Ballina Union. The new union occupied an area of 152 square miles. It comprised



the following electoral divisions: *Co. Sligo*: Aughris, Buncrowey, East Castleconor, West Castleconor, East Dromard, West Dromard, Dromore, East Easky, West Easky, Kilglass, Mullagheruse, Rathmacurkey, Skreen, North Templeboy, South Templeboy, East Toberpatrick, West Toberpatrick⁽³⁾.

Dromore West Workhouse was designed by the architect George Wilkinson and was built in the period 1850-1852.⁽⁴⁾ The workhouse covered an area of 6 acres,⁽⁵⁾ (site and lands), at Carrigeens, Dromore West, Co Sligo and opened in 1852.⁽⁶⁾ A total area of 13 acres and 8 perches had been purchased by the Poor Law Commissioners from Robert Jones Esq.⁽⁷⁾ The workhouse was designed to accommodate 400 persons with a cost of £4,650 for the building and fittings costing £815.⁽⁸⁾ The Workhouse and its grounds were surrounded by high stone walls on all sides, with tall pillars and iron gates at the entrance, separating the Workhouse and its inmates from the rest of the population.

The Dromore West Union Workhouse is situated in the townland of Carrigeens, about 3 kilometres west of the village on the main

N59 primary route to Ballina, Co. Mayo. The workhouse occupied an isolated position when it operated as a workhouse, situated away from the local village in a rural, agricultural area, with very few houses nearby or services adjacent to the workhouse. The location of the workhouse was somewhat unusual in this sense, as most of the Irish workhouses were situated very close to or in a village or town. The reasons why a workhouse was built in such a location may be due to the availability of a suitable tract of land at this location.

According to available Census data, Dromore West rural area (which is comparable with and contains the same townlands as the former Dromore West Poor Law Union and Dromore West Electoral Division) had a population of 6,837 persons at the time of the 2006 Census of Ireland.⁽⁹⁾ According to surviving census summary information and population data, in 1841 the population of the Dromore West Electoral Division was 29,869 persons and in 1851 it was 19,563 persons.⁽¹⁰⁾ By 1881, the population of the same area had fallen to 17,349 persons.⁽¹¹⁾ Two observations can be made from these figures. The first is the significant decrease in population between 1841 and 1851 of 10,306 persons, which can be attributed to the effects of the famine in the intervening years. Secondly, the population of the area, in 1851 around the time the Dromore West Union workhouse was constructed, was relatively large, at 19,563 persons when compared with more recent available data from the Census of 2006 when it was only 6,837 persons. The population of the area in 1851 would have consisted primarily of small tenant farmers,



Entrance to Dromore West Workhouse, Co. Sligo.

fishermen and cottiers, many of whom would have needed poor relief as a result of the effects and aftermath of the famine. Dromore West village and its hinterland would have required a workhouse given the significant population of the area at that time.

Board of Guardians

Each Poor Law Union had its own Board of Guardians who oversaw the running of the union, rate collections and the administration of the workhouse. Two thirds of the Guardians were elected by the rate payers within the union and one third comprised unelected members (*ex-officio* members) who usually held significant posts within the union area – such as Justices of the Peace, Magistrates, Doctors and such like but excluding members of the Clergy. Elected Guardians had to be rate-payers occupying property worth at least £25 a year,⁽¹²⁾ Therefore Guardians were mainly local landlords.

On Wednesday, 5th December 1849, the following announcement appeared in a local newspaper, the 'Ballina Chronicle' in Ballina, Co. Mayo: 'DROMORE WEST UNION - We have much pleasure in announcing that Thomas Jones, Esq.

has been elected by a large majority to the chairmanship of this union.'⁽¹³⁾ Thomas Jones was therefore the first Chairman of the Board of Guardians.

In 1850 the 'Ballina Chronicle' mentioned the construction of the Dromore West Union Workhouse in its edition of Wednesday, September 4th 1850 when it made the following comments: 'PUBLIC WORKS IN PROGRESS: The Poor Law Commissioners are erecting the following union workhouses, according to drawings furnished by their architect, Mr. George Wilkinson, viz., Killedysart, County Clare, to cost £5,000; Clonakilty, £5,000; also one at Dromore West, cost £4,500; and at Newport, Mayo, £5,100.'⁽¹⁴⁾

Early Years

The first inmates were admitted to the Dromore West Union workhouse in 1852.⁽¹⁵⁾ The first Clerk of the Union was Robert McMunn with James McMunn as the first Medical Officer.⁽¹⁶⁾ James Gordon was the first Master of the workhouse with his wife Catherine being matron.⁽¹⁷⁾ There does not appear to be any original records surviving for the early years of the workhouse, however some local directories published at the time give

details of the Boards of Guardians and the members of the workhouse staff at various periods throughout the 19th Century.

In 1862, the following description of the Board of Guardians and administrative staff of the Dromore West Poor Law Union was published in 'The Sligo County Directory 1862'.⁽¹⁸⁾

'DROMORE WEST UNION (Co. Sligo), 17 Electoral Divisions.

The Board of Guardians meets on Fridays.

Chairman: Captain King, Fortland, Easkey.

Vice-Chairman: Richard John Verschoyle, esq., Kilglass, Enniscrone

Deputy Vice-Chairman: Richard Hale, esq.

Treasurer: Provincial Bank of Ireland, Ballina.

Clerk and Returning Officer: Michael McMunn.

Master and Matron: Arthur and Anne Fry.

Chaplains: Established Church, Rev. Edward Lowe; Roman Catholic, Rev. James White, P.P.

Medical Officer: James McMunn, M.D.

Relieving Officer: John Connolly, Fortland, Easkey.

Medical Officers of Dispensary Districts: Castleconnor, James J. Nolan, M.D.; Easkey: James McMunn, M.D.; Skreen: Robert McMunn'.

The Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Deputy Vice-Chairman of the Board of Guardians were all large landholders in the area at the time, particularly Captain King, who owned vast amounts of land and mountain in the parishes of Templeboy and Dromore West.

According to the OS name books, the Verschoyles held land in the parishes of Kilglass and Kilmoremoy, Barony of Tireragh. Rev. Joseph Verschoyle held Glebe lands in the parish of Kilmoremoy and occupied buildings valued at £30 in 1857.⁽¹⁹⁾

A Poor Law Commission Return up to the year ended the 29th September

1865 contained the following details in relation to Dromore West Union Workhouse: There were 26 people in the Workhouse Infirmary; There were 424 other people in the Workhouse giving a total number of 476 workhouse inmates; The workhouse did not have a Fever Hospital at the time. There was 1 Medical Officer for the workhouse and he was paid a salary of £50.⁽²⁰⁾

In the next decade, information as to the Board of Guardians and the staff of the workhouse was given in a local Almanac and Directory published with contemporary newspapers of the time. The following description of the Board of Guardians and administrative staff of the Dromore West Poor Law Union was contained in *'The Sligo Chronicle – Illustrated Almanac and Business Directory for 1878.'*⁽²¹⁾

'Dromore west union — The guardians of this Union assemble for the discharge of business at 12 o'clock each Friday.

Chairman: Richard Hale, Esq., Easky;

Vice-Chairman: Henry Brett, Dunowla;

Deputy-Vice-Chairman: John Doudican, High Park;

Ex-officio guardians: Richard J. Verschoyle, Peter O'Connor, R. W. Hillas, R. W. Armstrong, C. P. Webber, John Christie, John Boyd, Alexander Crichton, W. H. Halliday, John L. Brinkley, Colonel Cooper, Colonel Sir R. W. Palmer, Bart., Sir Charles J. Knox-Gore, Bart., Lord Harlech, Harper Campbell, Capt. Win. Griffith, Jemmet Duke.

Elected guardians: Richard Hale, Henry Brett, John Doudican, Thos. O'Dowd, Wm. Colvin, Thos. Gordon, Patrick Correll, John Correll, Wm. A. Mitchell, Thaddeus Conboy, James Ormsby, Francis Hart, James Keane, Daniel Devanney, Thomas Kilgallen, Ed. Lenaghan, Peter Tempny.

Clerk: Mr. Michael Doudican;

Master and Matron: Thomas and Mary Lavelle;

Chaplains: Rev. Ed. Lowe, (Protestant); Rev. John Gilvarry, P.P. (R.C.);

Medical Officer: Dr. Charles J. Mahon;

Relieving Officers: John Connolly, Easky; Thomas Higgins, Screen;

Dispensary districts: Easky, Drs. Scott and Mahon; Screen, Dr. Robert McMunn.

The information available in relation to the Board of Guardians in 1878 indicates that it was made up primarily of large landowners and businessmen of the time. In the late 1870s, the Chairman of the Board of Guardians, Richard Hale, address Easky, owned 866 acres in Co. Sligo valued at 272 pounds 10 shillings.⁽²²⁾ James Hale, Templeview House, Easky, owned 2,952 acres in Co. Sligo valued at 1,695 pounds 14 shillings.⁽²³⁾ The Hales also had merchant interests in the town of Sligo but also held extensive landed property in Tireragh barony.

Workhouse 1880 - 1901

A return to the Poor Law Commissioners from 1887 gives details of the state of the Dromore West workhouse in that year. It outlines that there were 58 adults and 19 children giving a total of 77 inmates in the Dromore West workhouse for the half year ended 25th March 1887.⁽²⁴⁾ The average daily number of persons relieved in the workhouse in the previous half year was 74 with 195 persons in receipt of Out-Relief on 25th March 1887.⁽²⁵⁾ The number of workhouse officials employed at this date was 9 persons and the Total Poor Relief Expenditure, including salaries for workhouse Officers, Poor Rate Collectors and Relieving Officers was £868 for the half year to 25th March 1887.⁽²⁶⁾

Prior to the 1880s, the people who were elected as Guardians were mainly members of the Established Church and men holding local status such as landowners, businessmen or substantial farmers. Certainly

almost all the chairmanships and vice chairmanships in 1877 were held by landowners.⁽²⁷⁾ By the middle of the 1880s, however, the composition of the Boards of Guardians was changing. The rise of nationalist politics and the onset of the Land Wars saw more competition for seats on the Boards of Guardians with tenants taking places at the expense of landlord interests. In the late 1880's, this change becomes apparent in the Dromore West Poor Law Union when one reviews the names and standing in the community of the people elected to the Board of Guardians by 1889. The following details of population, certain members of the Board of Guardians and administrative staff of the Dromore West Poor Law Union were given in *'The Sligo Independent – County Directory, Almanac and Guide, 1889'*.⁽²⁸⁾

Dromore west union.

Population: 1881, 17,349; 17 electoral divisions; valuation, £36,883.

The Board of Guardians meet on Friday.

Chairman: Thaddeus Tiernan, Woodhill;

Vice-Chairman: Henry Brett, Dunowla.

Deputy Vice-Chairman: Francis Hart, Port Royal, Dromard, Ballisodare.

Treasurer: Provincial Bank of Ireland, Ballina.

Clerk and Returning Officer: Michael Doudican.

Master and Matron: Patrick Tiernan and Ellen Tiernan.

Chaplains: Protestant: Rev. Robert Rowan; Roman Catholic: Rev. David O'Donoghue.

Medical Officer: H. Mahon.

Relieving Officers: John Connolly, Easky; Thomas Finnegan, Ballyuskeen.

Superintendent Registrar of Births, Deaths, and Marriages: Michael Doudican, Clerk of the Union.

Dispensary Doctors: Easky. Dr. H. M. Scott and Dr. Charles Joseph Mahon; Skreen, Dr. John Joseph MacNulty.

The Chairman of the Board of Guardians in 1889 appears to have been a man of considerable means but was not a member of the traditional “landed gentry”. He is living at “Woodhill” House. When the property was offered for sale in the Landed Estates Court in May 1875 the house is described as “a handsome modern residence valued at £30”. The Wingfield King estate sold their interest in the property in 1879 and the sale notice mentions Thaddeus Tiernan as occupying the house at that time. In 1906 a house here valued at £20 was the property of Thaddeus Tiernan. McTernan states that this gentleman had amassed a fortune in Australia and South America. He became involved in public life, including Board of Guardians and County Council, on taking up residence at Woodhill.⁽²⁹⁾

Administration in 1901

Information available on the administration and running of the Dromore West Union workhouse becomes more detailed with the availability of more comprehensive information in the 1901 Census. The following people were living in the Administrative wing of the Dromore West Union Workhouse (and therefore running the workhouse) at the time of the 1901 Census:⁽³⁰⁾

Patrick Tiernan, age 65, (Master of Workhouse);
Ellen Tiernan (wife), age 60, (Matron of Workhouse);
John. A. Tiernan, (son), age 15, (Scholar);
Julia Kelly, age 35, (Hospital Nurse);
James Fergusson, age 27, (Workhouse Porter);
Mary Scott, age 21, (Wards Maid);
Mary. E. Hallinan, age 20, (Wards Maid).

It appears that Patrick Tiernan and Ellen Tiernan were Master and Matron of the workhouse from at least 1889 to 1901, a period of twelve years.

Inmates in 1901

The description of the Dromore West Union workhouse in 1901 from the House and Buildings Return is

interesting from a social as well as a historical perspective. The building was classed as a 1st Class house.⁽³¹⁾ The building is noted as having 6 rooms inhabited.⁽³²⁾ These were presumably the rooms occupied by the staff in the administrative wing of the workhouse, as the overall workhouse was much larger than 6 rooms. The census return also states that there were 52 windows at the front of the building.⁽³³⁾ There were 4 out-offices and farm steadings listed, a stable, a coach house, a turf house and a shed.⁽³⁴⁾ The number of rooms occupied by each family was given as 48 rooms with the total number of persons given as 68.⁽³⁵⁾ There were 34 males and 34 females in the workhouse on the night of the census, (including staff and inmates) with 66 inmates Roman Catholic, 1 female who was Church of Ireland and 1 male who was Presbyterian.⁽³⁶⁾

The 1901 Census also contains details of the inmates in the workhouse in the ‘Return of Paupers in Workhouses.’ The full names of the inmates were not entered on the Census Return, as the Return only required that the “Initial Letter of Christian name or names and of Surname” be entered on the form. The Return has separate pages for male inmates, female inmates and children. A review of this return provides quite an amount of information from both a historical and social perspective. It seems that by 1901 the workhouse was being used mainly as a local hospital and home for the elderly. The workhouse was also home to children and appears to have been a refuge or home for unmarried mothers of the area. Examples of the diseases listed that the male inmates suffered from include Bronchitis, Rheumatism, Cancer, Epilepsy and Debility.⁽³⁷⁾ The youngest male adult inmate was 18 years old while the oldest was 81 years old.⁽³⁸⁾ All of the males were listed as Roman Catholic and as ‘labourer’ except one who was a ‘cobbler.’⁽³⁹⁾ Examples of the diseases listed that the female inmates suffered from include Rheumatism, Cataracts,

Epilepsy, Paralysis and Debility.⁽⁴⁰⁾ The youngest female adult inmate was 18 years old while the oldest was 89 years old.⁽⁴¹⁾ The majority of the female inmates occupations were either ‘domestic servant’ or ‘mendicant.’⁽⁴²⁾ One of the women was described as ‘cook’ with another described as a ‘laundress.’⁽⁴³⁾ These descriptions would seem to indicate that these were jobs they carried out inside the workhouse in 1901. Only 3 of the 34 female inmates were married, with the others either widowed or not married.⁽⁴⁴⁾ The youngest child in the workhouse was 1 year old while the oldest was 13 years old.⁽⁴⁵⁾ There were 9 boys and 7 girls in the workhouse and none were listed as having any illness or disease.⁽⁴⁶⁾ One child was listed as having been born in the workhouse.⁽⁴⁷⁾

Administration of The Workhouse in 1911

Further details on the workhouse are contained in the 1911 Census of Ireland. The following people were living in the Administrative wing of the Dromore West Union Workhouse at the time of the 1911 Census:⁽⁴⁸⁾

John Devaney, age 38, (Workhouse Master);
James Fergusson, age 28, (Workhouse Porter);
Julia Kelly, age 56, (Hospital Nurse);
Mary Ellen Conway, age 35, (Workhouse Matron);
Margaret Caheny, age 35, (Hospital Nurse);
Mary Scott, age 32, (Cook);
Kate Conlon, age 25, (Wards Maid);
Anne Millan, age 22, (Wards Maid);

After 10 years, James Fergusson was still the Workhouse Porter. Mary Scott had been promoted from Wards Maid to Workhouse Cook and Julia Kelly was still a Hospital Nurse. However, Julia Kelly had gone from being 35 years old in 1901 to being 56 years old in 1911, and increase in age of 21 years! This sudden increase in age might have had something to do with the passing of the Old Age Pension Act in October 1908, which provided

for the payment of pensions from January 1909. It was not unknown at the time for people to “add a few years” to their age rather than give their true age so that they might qualify for the pension a bit sooner, especially those who had been born pre-1864 and the requirement for Civil Birth Registrations!

Inmates in 1911

The 1911 Census also contains details of the inmates in the workhouse in the ‘Return of Paupers in Workhouses’. Even though the Return only required that the “Initial Letter of Christian name or names and of Surname” be entered on the form the full names of the inmates of the workhouse were entered on the Return in 1911. The Return has all the inmates listed together, making no distinctions between males, females and children, except as required where their age is to be filled in on the return. A review of this return shows that by 1911 the workhouse was primarily used as a hospital with the majority of the inmates having an illness or disease. The workhouse was also home to some children and appears to have been a refuge or home for unmarried mothers of the area as some of the children are noted as being “born in the workhouse.” Examples of the diseases listed that the inmates suffered from in 1911 include Paralysis, Rheumatism, Anaemia, Burns and Debility.⁽⁴⁹⁾

Only 1 of the 20 male inmates was married,⁽⁵⁰⁾ indicating that there was most likely no-one else to look after them at home and therefore they entered the workhouse while sick or elderly to be cared for. The youngest female adult inmate was 21 years old while the oldest was 101 years old.⁽⁵¹⁾ Most of the female inmates occupations were either ‘servant’ or ‘farmers wife or farm helper.’⁽⁵²⁾ Only 3 of the 27 female inmates were married, with the others either widowed or single,⁽⁵³⁾ again suggesting that there was probably no-one else to look after them at home. The youngest child in the workhouse was 2 months old and had been born in the workhouse

while the oldest was 16 years old.⁽⁵⁴⁾ There were 4 boys and 1 girl in the workhouse with 3 listed as having an illness or disease.⁽⁵⁵⁾ Two children were listed as having been born in the workhouse.⁽⁵⁶⁾

Life in the Workhouse

Perhaps the least accessible figures and the category of people with a connection to the workhouses about which least is known were the inmates. People in need of poor relief entered the workhouse in one of three ways: by written order of the Board Guardians, by written order of the local relieving officer or, in an emergency or where they simply turned up at the workhouse gate, by the Master of the Workhouse.⁽⁵⁷⁾ Admission to the local Workhouse was based on strict criteria. Priority went to the old and / or infirm, and destitute children who were unable to support themselves. The Guardians were also given discretion to admit the destitute poor. In Ireland, in order to qualify for relief under the Poor Laws, those who held more than a quarter of an acre of land had to surrender it.⁽⁵⁸⁾

Anyone who entered the workhouse had their details recorded in the Indoor relief registers. Unfortunately, only a handful of such registers exist for the nineteenth century and these records no longer exist for the Dromore West Union Workhouse.

In the nineteenth century inmates in the workhouses were kept apart day and night with separate yards and duties for the male and female inmates. Workhouse living accommodation was generally cold, damp and cramped, sometimes with sleeping dormitories situated in attics. The sleeping quarters consisted of separate male and female dormitories and separate boys’ and girls’ dormitories. Beds consisted of straw mattresses placed on the raised platform wooden floor, with old rags used for sheeting. Beds were usually no more than 2 feet apart.

Meat was notably absent from the diet. From 1842 Unions were also given

the option of providing soup instead of milk at dinner time. The workhouse diet improved a little in the later years of the workhouses at the end of the nineteenth and start of the twentieth centuries. However there was still an emphasis on stirabout, milk and potatoes. The Dromore West Union Workhouse large pot for making the stirabout contained 80 gallons.⁽⁵⁹⁾ There was also a large weighing scale for precisely measuring out exactly what was to be cooked at each meal. The weighing scale has the insignia and name of the Dromore West Union workhouse on it and both it and the large 80-gallon cooking pot are still in the former workhouse.⁽⁶⁰⁾ There were also contracts let on tender in the local area by the workhouse in the years 1911 – 1922, for milk and bread, as there were large quantities of these consumed in the workhouse.⁽⁶¹⁾ It was often the case that the suppliers supplied their most inferior quality milk to the workhouse, if it was acceptable to the Board of Guardian.⁽⁶²⁾

There was a hinge-bottomed coffin used in the workhouse for burials. When someone died in the workhouse they were wrapped up in a sheet and placed in this coffin. If no relations turned up within a certain time to pay for the burial, the deceased was given a ‘paupers funeral’. When they were brought to the graveyard, the hinged bottom on the coffin opened and they were dropped in to the grave. The coffin was then returned to the mortuary for the next corpse.⁽⁶³⁾ There was a small square graveyard in one corner of the 6-acre site, which is still recognisable as the graveyard today, as it is walled off from the rest of the site. There are no headstones or grave markers in this graveyard and it is not known how many people were buried in this graveyard.

The End of Dromore West Union Workhouse

The closure of the Dromore West Union Workhouse was first proposed in 1921, due to the Free State Governments decision to abolish



Memorial to those who are buried in the Cemetery at the Dromore West Union Workhouse. This is located in the wall surrounding the Cemetery, which is located in a corner of the workhouse grounds.

the workhouse system in Ireland. In May 1922 the local Anti-Treaty IRA (without official sanction) burned the entire complex of buildings.⁽⁶⁴⁾ The inmates were put on carts and sent to St. John's Hospital and the Nazareth House in Sligo. Part of the workhouse, the men's and boy's dormitories, reportedly burned for 3 days. As this part of the workhouse burned, locals looted other parts of the workhouse including the kitchen, women's and girl's dormitories and the hospital. The workhouse closed down after it burned.

Phil Connolly, the last Clerk of the Union, inherited a grocery shop from his uncle directly across the road from the former workhouse. He then bought the former workhouse building and land from the Free State Government and part of the workhouse was used, until 1983, for storing animal feed, coal, fertiliser, cement and other type of agricultural and hardware supplies sold by the shop. Much of the stone from the part of the workhouse destroyed by the fire of 1922 was sold for building houses in the area. There are no remains of this section of the workhouse today.

Phil Connolly's grandson, who is an artist, converted some of the former workhouse buildings to residential use after 1983 and lives in the former workhouse with his family, in what was once the church and dining area.⁽⁶⁵⁾ There is also an artist's studio on site.

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Front of remaining buildings of Dromore West Workhouse, Co. Sligo.

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AN EMIGRANT VOYAGE

By Michael McRitchie



The barque was the workhorse of the 19th century and carried many thousands of emigrants.

All down the west coast of Ireland we can still see the mossy, crumbling piles of rock that once were people's homes – humble they were, but they were home. Faced with starvation and disease, thousands of people were forced to emigrate to the far side of the world.

Most Irish people went to North America but less well known were the tens of thousands who went to Australia, where their descendants prosper today. But Scotland too suffered terrible privation in the mid-1840s and among the travellers were my Scottish great-great-great aunts Margaret and Christina. My family were sailors, innkeepers and ferrymen for hundreds of years, running the Queen's Passage across the Firth of Forth north of Edinburgh. The ferry community comprised about 200 people working in a co-operative from the tiny village of North Queensferry and farming the hills above the Forth. But the community had reached its limit, famine was tightening its grip and in 1848 my great aunts left their home for ever.

The girls boarded the barque William Stewart at Gravesend, east of London, whence she sailed to pick up more emigrants at Plymouth, setting sail on January 25 for a voyage round the Cape which would take 111 days. Like most sailing ships, the William Stewart used prevailing westerly

winds to reach Australia, winds which would take her east across the Pacific to sail around the world and return to England a year later.

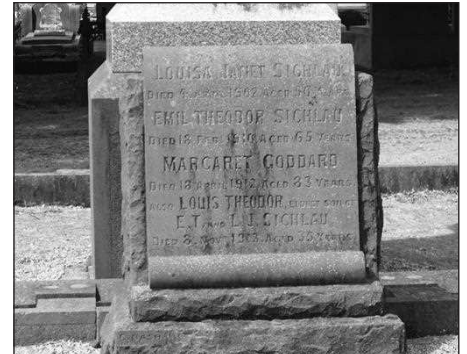
Conditions would have been appalling by today's standards, each traveller remaining in little more than a bunk for months, with a short trip on deck most days provided it was not stormy. Sanitation was a couple of buckets. In the tropics those between decks must have sweltered. However, for its time the four-month voyage was a good one and Christina and Margaret appear very happy in a letter which has become a classic account of an emigrant voyage.

Melbourn June 5th 1848

Dear Father

We are happy to inform you of our safe arrival in Melbourn on May 16th. We had a good passage, a good Captain, a doctor and officers with temperate sailors. We intended keeping a journal but our part of the ship being so dark many day we could not see. Their was nothing of but we caught a few fish and sharks and they played away the time cheerfully. There was some children died but none of the old people died. It would have been a great deal worse if there had been but the children were never much minded. There was eight births no marriages on board but there was two of the children baptised named Eliza and William Stewart.

We had Church on board every Sunday weather permitting. We never wanted a meal of vitals all our passage so you may thank the Lord for our safe arrival. There was 51 single women all in our room and we were very happy. There was but 16 English and 35 Scottish were all engaged on board but ourselves. It was like a Fair. We went to whom we had our letter to and they found situations for us and we got more wadges than was given on board.



The grave of Margaret Goddard in Geelong Cemetery.

We have good situations and we are getting £25 per year. The house maids have no grates to clean. They all burn wood. There is not such a thing as a grate to be seen. The work is not so hard as it is at home nor the mistresses are not so sassy. They are glad to get any person to work to them. Melbourn(e) is as large a place as Dunfermline. The most of the houses are brick. It is wonderful to see such a place only to be 13 years old. It is all Bush round thousands of miles what we call a plantation at home. The natives live there and large Sheep Stations and Bolix [Bullocks!] Stations there and the natives live like the soldiers. They occupy so much ground and they have Kings and Chiefs and any of the rest of them goes on one another's ground they fight with them.

The beef is 2d per pound, rice 6d per pound. Bread cheap. Barley 6d per pound. Clothing and drink very high. There is no beggars here. Rich and poor lives all alike. If people is willing to work they can get plenty to do. The people is great Tea drinkers, the tea is 1/6 per pound. They have it after every meal. The weather has been very bad since we arrive and the streets is not for females to walk. They are in such a state they will not let us out. They bring everything to us that we want. The people are so kind that we are quite ashamed of their kindness to us...

Christine married another emigrant, William Stephens and had two children but Stephens turned out to be a bigamist who deserted her for the Australian gold rush, where he took a third wife. Christine disappeared for almost 25 years until she died alone in the Melbourne workhouse, aged 72. She rests in an unmarked grave under the fierce Australian sun.

THIRD SCHEDULE.					THIRD SCHEDULE.				
DEATHS in the District of <i>East Melbourne</i> in the State					of Victoria, Registered by <i>Marian Clark</i>				
DESCRIPTION.					IF MARRIED WAS MARRIED				
(1) When and where Died.	(2) Name and Rank, or Profession.	(3) Age and Sex.	(4) Cause of Death. If Death of an Infant, the Medical Attendant by whom certified, and If Woman has not been Drugged.	(5) Name and Residence of Father and Mother (Single Death), of Father, with Rank or Profession.	(6) Signature, Designation, and Residence of Informant.	(7) Signature of Registrar. If Deceased, and If Where Registered.	(8) Signature of Registrar. If Deceased, and If Where Registered.	(9) Name and Rank, or Profession, of Informant.	(10) Name and Rank, or Profession, of Informant.
1 st April 1902 James 8 th Miles Road Melbourne Cause of Death Melbourne	Christina	Female	Spontaneous Scurvy	Not known		<i>M. Clark</i>	<i>M. Clark</i>		
1 st April 1902 James 8 th Miles Road Melbourne Cause of Death Melbourne	Stephen	Male	L. C. H. Fever	Not known		<i>M. Clark</i>	<i>M. Clark</i>		
1 st April 1902 James 8 th Miles Road Melbourne Cause of Death Melbourne	Stephen	Male	L. C. H. Fever	Not known		<i>M. Clark</i>	<i>M. Clark</i>		

Christine's death certificate issued by the Melbourne workhouse.

Melbourn June 5th 1848

Dear Father

We are happy to inform you of
our safe arrival in Melbourn on May 16th
we had a good passage a good Captain a
doctor & officers with Temperate sailors we
intended keeping a Journal but our part
of the ship being so dark many day we
could not see. There was nothing of Speakey
about but we caught a few Fish & Shrimps
& they passed away the time cheerfully

Emigrant letter

Local Fairs

Share Tweet

Local Fairs

4-5-1938

In each month of the year there is a fair in some local town in which the farmers bring their cattle, horses and other animals to sell.

The fairs that are held locally in this district are in are in Tubbercurry, Ballymote, and Bunnanadden. On a certain day of each moth there is a pig fair and a cattle fair held in these towns. The pig fairs that are held in Tubbercurry are held on the second Tuesday of the month and the cattle fairs are on the second Wednesday.

At those fairs there are always crowds of people. Those fairs are held on the streets in towns. The people who bag those cattle are called jobbers or cattle dealers. At a fair it is very nice to be watching the people making bargains. There is also what is called lunch money given to the person who buys and animal from another person. The people who are going to fairs have to rise very early that morning. The people who go to fairs be in the town very early as the fair starts very early.

Birdie O'Dowd

Transcribed by a member of our volunteer transcription project.

History | Edit »

COLLECTOR

Bridie O' Dowd

Gender

female

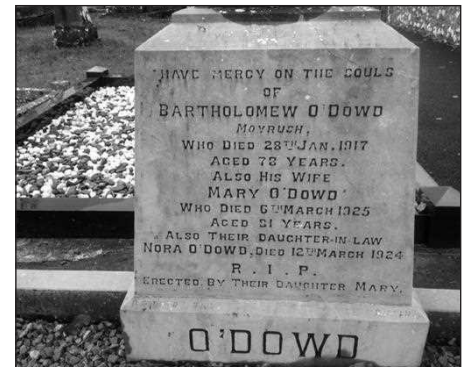
Address

Moyrush, Co. Sligo

LANGUAGE

THE LOCAL FAIRS WRITTEN BY A CHILD IN 1938

Submitted by Gerry O'Dowd



O'Dowd Grave

SÉAMUS KEEVANS

by Séamus Whelan. Submitted by Gerry O'Dowd



Séamus Keevens

The Wexford branch of the Garda Síochána Retired Members Association decided to make an award to the outstanding Garda Sportsman of the Century (1922-2022), covering all sporting activity. The committee had no difficulty in deciding that Séamus Keevens was a worthy recipient of this award.

The late Séamus Keevens was born in Taghmon in 1933. He attended the local national school and continued his secondary education at St. Peter's College, where his passion for Gaelic football was nurtured. He played in Leinster colleges finals in 1950-1951. He joined An Garda Síochána in November. His first posting after training was to Skibberreen in West Cork, then he went on to Togher in Cork City. He played on the Cork senior football team in 1955. He was then transferred to serve in Olyegate in his native home county.

He was moved from Olyegate to spend two years on border duty in Ballyhaise, Co. Cavan, where he won a county senior championship

with Cavan Gaels and was picked to play for Cavan in the Ulster Senior Championship in 1960. Back in Wexford, he lined out for St. Munn's Taghmon and Olyegate/Glenbrien. He was an active local garda and community member, founding the local camogie club and training them to win county senior titles.

In 1964 he was appointed Gamesmaster and P.E. Instructor of the newly opened Garda Training Centre in Templemore. On promotion to Sergeant he transferred to Kill in Co. Waterford. He immediately got involved in the local club as player/trainer and was midfield on the team that won the Waterford Senior Championship in 1966, 1967 and 1968.

In 1971, he was transferred to Carrick-on-Barrow and in 1974 he was appointed to Ballycullane where he finally settled permanently until his retirement in 1993. He won a Wexford Senior Football Championship with Gusserane in 1975 and spent a lot of his retirement time coaching local children there.

He has the unique distinction of being the only player to have played Senior Football Championship in all four provinces: with Sligo in Connaught (1953 to 1955); with Cavan Ulster (1960); with Wexford in Munster (1969) and with Wexford in Leinster (other years from 1956 to 1968). He also played for years for Cork in the National Football League in 1983.

He continued to play senior club football until the age of 49, incidentally on the same team as his eldest son Michael in the Wexford Senior Football County Final in 1982. He won seven Senior Football

Championship medals and also refereed seven County Senior Football Finals. He was manager of Wexford senior footballers in 1976 and 1977. He was also manager of Wexford underage teams up to under-21, reaching two Leinster finals. His promotion of Gaelic Games was phenomenal, running the Jim Byrne Cup 1966 and 2008 and the Keevens Cup Secondary Schools Competition between 1963 and 2008.

Séamus married Ann O'Connor from Enniscorthy in December 1963. Of their family of seven, two sons also joined the Garda Síochána, Michael and Shay.

Séamus passed away suddenly in March 2008 having collapsed at a GAA Match in Wexford Park the previous Sunday. He was a great servant to both An Garda Síochána and the GAA, and is still missed by many friends and colleagues from both organisations.



Senior Football Championship

A LOCAL STORY FROM 1798 - THE YEAR OF THE FRENCH

Submitted by Padraig Duddy

Wolfe Tone's United Irishmen tried to free Ireland from English domination by starting a rebellion in 1798. On 22 August 1798, over 1,000 French soldiers landed at Killala Bay in Mayo under the command of General Humbert to provide military assistance to the United Irishmen. More than 3,000 Irish recruits from Mayo and Sligo joined their ranks on the march to Castlebar. At first they defeated the English forces and drove back the British troops opposing them on four separate occasions. After the successful Battle of Castlebar, Humbert's forces marched towards Sligo via Swinford and then to Tubbercurry where they again fought off the British. When the French arrived in Collooney on September 5th they were halted by British cannon. Humbert turned east to avoid a larger confrontation. The Franco-Irish forces were finally surrounded by English troops on 8 September 1798 at Ballinamuck in Co. Longford. Here, the French surrender was accepted, but some 2,000 Irish were massacred. The following 1798 story is taken from the book - *The Way That It Was IV*, Histories, Memories, Poems, Folklore

and Photographs from Tubbercurry District in the Barony of Leyny in South Sligo – 1860 to 1920. Compiled by members of Tubbercurry Active Retirement Association.

Our Thatched Houses and Fireside Stories: *Phyl Flannery*, pages 45-49.

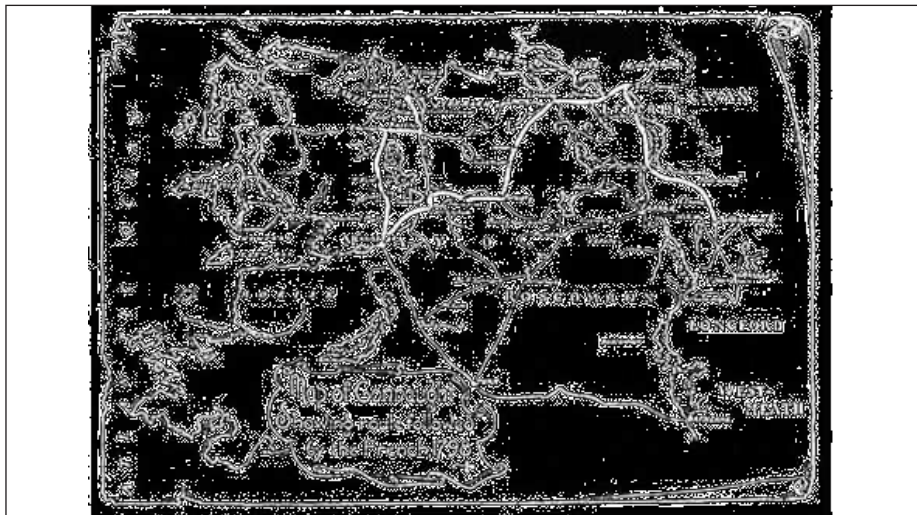
Rory O'Toole

Did I ever tell ye the story of Rory O'Toole who used to live in the old days at the foot of Muckelty out there behind ye? My grandad loved to tell that he remembered seeing the ruins of the small cabin there when he was a gasúr. We're talking now of a long time ago, back over a century.

Well, this man, Rory, lived there with his wife, Eileen her name was I think, and his son, also called Rory. You know that in those days the eldest son was always called after his father. They had two to three acres of land on Muckelty and the father worked every day tilling the land and looking after their one cow. Remember that work was very slow then as there was no machinery and all had to be done by hand, with a hook and a loy. But he was always happy at his

work and could be heard whistling and singing to himself as he came and went. Young Rory, about eight or nine at the time, used to help and also did jobs around the house for Eileen. Life was hard, food was scarce, but they were happy together and, at night and during the long winter evenings, they would sit together round a turf fire-no oil lamps, no electricity, etc in those times, just the light of the fire. They talked, they sang many Gaelic songs and sometimes on Feast Days, sang some of the hymns they learned in the chapel above and Rory used to love telling stories, many of them about the wrongs that the Irish had suffered since the 'Sassanachs' had come. Eileen worried about his rebellious talk and that he had lately been telling them that the French would be coming to help the fight for Freedom.

Well, on a September evening, as the sun was setting and all was calm and still, Rory was crossing the fields on his way home when, in the far distance towards the town of Tubbercurry and in the Ballina direction he saw a cloud of dust on the horizon and heard from the distance a muffled sound of marching and a few strains of music. Some men were running down the road and he heard them shouting - "It's the French, it's the French", Here's a chance to strike a blow for his country, so down the hill he ran, grabbed his pike from behind a rafter, kissed Eileen and his son goodbye, and off he went. Near Tubbercurry he joined up with some other local men, headed for the Ballina road or track as it probably was then, joined up with the French and they came face to face with a garrison of English soldiers, who had hastily gathered in the town. A small skirmish followed but the English troops soon retreated



Map of Connacht showing route followed by the French in 1798.

towards Sligo, followed by General Humbert, his men and the local volunteers - sure isn't there a street in the town there still called after that great French General. There was a bit of sniping going all along the road and both French and English soldiers were killed. Don't you remember me pointing out to you that field over there in Drimbane where there is supposed to be one of the French buried? The Lord have mercy on him

At Carrignagat outside Collooney there was another battle fought. You have often seen the monument of Bartley Teeling there that commemorates a great victory over the English army, who then fled north and east to await help from their colleagues in Dublin, The French and Irish followed, Rory among them, and marched all through Sligo, Leitrim and Longford until, at Ballinamuck, the large English force was waiting. The Irish were overwhelmed and slaughtered. Sure the Irish retreat there was often called the 'Races of Ballinamuck'. That was the end of the French invasion. A few, including Rory, escaped by hiding in woods and later, over many days and nights, by hiding during daylight and stumbling through bogs, woods and mountain tracks overnight, he made his way back to Muckelty only to find his cabin burnt down and in ruins and not a sign of Eileen or his son. The neighbouring houses were also in ruins and the crops were burned down in all the fields. He had nothing to live for, house, family, small farm gone and he himself a wanted man by the Redcoats. Nothing for him now but to escape to America to where, with the help of a few friends, he sailed on a steamer from Sligo Quay.

But, luckily it turned out that Eileen and young Rory were not dead after all. When they had seen the Redcoats coming, they had hidden in a heathery hollow way up on the hillside, staying there until all was quiet again. When they stole out, Eileen saw their house in ruins and believing that her husband was already dead in the Ballinamuck

battle, she went off to some relatives near Ballisodare. There Rory Jnr. got some schooling and finally, what did he do but make up his mind to be a priest. Poor Eileen was very proud - sure it was a great honour to have a priest in the family in those times. Ordained he was when he was about 28 or 29 years old after a lot of study and having become a Friar in the Franciscan Order. There was a Franciscan Abbey or two around the country then, one above at Court Abbey, which is now in ruins. He got a new name when received into the Order and was now known as Fr. Paíric.

What happened to his Da? Well he had a tough time in New York and seems to have been working on the streets there for most of it, hard work through heat, rain, frost and snow. Living in one room, he kept to himself, his thoughts always going back to his old home, his wife and son whom he would never see again and to the quiet green fields and the fireside songs. Indeed, he sometimes whistled all these favourite tunes as he swept the streets of Broadway. But the heart wasn't in him. He had been putting aside a few dollars every week to help him in his old age - there was nothing for him back in Ireland now. About 20 years later, when he was shovelling over 3ft of snow to open up the streets to the constant traffic, he felt so tired and worn that he decided to give up work and live on his small allowance.

Back to young Rory, He was now doing missionary work and it happened he was sent off to New York with two other priest to preach a mission there.. It was the custom that before each sermon, there was a hymn sung in which the congregation were encouraged to join. On the Friday evening, the church was packed and the sermon was to be preached by Fr. Paíric. When he went up on the pulpit, he called on all to sing with him and chose an old hymn that he remembered from his youth. The people were slow to join but, from the back of the church came the strong

voice of an old white haired man who seemed to know every word and sang loudly to the end. Fr. Paíric gave his sermon, a bit distracted with an almost impossible thought. When he went back to the sacristy the old man was waiting for him - they gazed at one another - tears poured from the old man's eyes - he threw his arms around the priest whispering, "My God, it is you, it is my son, my son Rory".

All good stories come to a happy ending. Rory returned to Ireland, was reunited with Eileen and they lived happily together for a further ten years. He became a local hero and never tired telling of his part in the '98 rebellion and his life in New York. They were both buried beyond in Court Abbey cemetery and a large stone marks the spot where they now lie in peace.



Tubbercurry Streets named after 1798 heroes.

In 1898, on the centenary of the Rebellion, the local Wolfe Tone '98 Club passed a resolution that the streets of Tubbercurry, which up to then were just called Main Street, The Square, The Hill and Pound Street, should be named after the 1798 heroes.

They were to be named as follows - Teeling Street, Wolfe Tone Square, Emmet Street and Humbert Hill. The co-operation of the traders was asked for and, with their agreement, boards with those names were put up on the four streets.

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THE WINDS OF CHANGE THROUGH TIME

By Kevin McLoughlin



Keash Cave

As a Neolithic man made his way home five thousand years ago, a cold blustery wind and a heavy mist filtered into his temporary home in the caves of Keash. Delighted with his catch of fish caught in the lake below and with a hare from his trap thrown across his shoulder, he knew a warm welcome awaited him from his hungry family as he lugged the food up the steep hillside. Despite the inclement weather, he turned to view the land below with its distinctive lakes and gentle hills propping up the horizon. He pulled his tunic closer to his body as he conceived the idea of clearing away some of the brush and fencing off a space to enclose some

of the animals that roamed across the countryside. As he made his way along the stony passage to their settlement deep into the cave, he was anxious to tell his family of his plans for the new direction they would take in their lives. The life they had led as hunters for deer and birds, anglers for all sorts of fish and gatherers of fruit and birds' eggs would change and a new type of settled living would begin as roaming for food would finish.

The spirit of the Neolithic man stayed on in this world, drifting in the air from the caves through the townlands towards Ballymote and Bunninadden, watching the development and progress of the two hundred generations that followed him though time.

At Tonaponra, a hammering sound could be heard in the distance and soon a group of circular thatched houses came into a clearing. Some of the houses were surrounded by ditches keeping fowl and young calves inside. Men, no longer clothed in rough skins but wearing wool-woven leggings and cloaks, were making clanging noises as they worked with metal tools. A **Bronze Age** woman cooked a meal at her 'fulacht fian' beside her house where hot stones heated water for cooking. The woman's



Country Path

husband poured melted bronze into a hollowed-out stone, having moulds for making axes, swords, spearheads, knives, razors, buckets, and bracelets such as worn by his wife. The bronze arrived by trading as they sold animals in return for the metal.



Crannóg site

[The quiet life enjoyed by Neolithic Man in the caves still pervaded one thousand years later as life at this Crannóg site appeared a haven of peace].



Keash Cave



Metal Bridge

At Knocknacroy the pathway became wider and much improved with little bridges made from a different metal than bronze for crossing the wide trenches. A thatched building on a hill top had many smaller houses close by with children in coloured clothing at play. They all ran towards the man on horseback who jumped off and began instructing the children as they eagerly sat around him. "We are Celts and our predecessors came from Europe. As you know by now, I am the chief druid of this area and it is my job to oversee sacrifices, judge all sorts of quarrels and give suitable penalties. We believe in many gods and that the soul is immortal." He then brought the children over to observe the iron works where the ore was heated to extremely hot temperatures to extract the iron. "This metal has improved our ability to make weapons and help us in fighting our battles with other tribes. We live in a warring tribal society and those ring forts you see across the countryside are used for defending ourselves in times of combat. Some day we will be able to record an account of the times we live in, like the way the people from Rome who invaded Britannia developed a way of writing, detailing events of the past. We could call it the **Iron Age**. We are making a lot of progress however and have come a long way since Neolithic man walked these paths, some three thousand years ago."



Hermit's Hut

Rain clouds gathered on the horizon as the Irish Dark Age (**100-300 CE**) passed by. Forests were now being cleared for farming and crops of barley and oats were quite common. Herders in fields at Ardsallagh tended to their cattle and sheep

and harmonious chanting came from a stone building located in an orchard further on. Women in long cloaks picked fruit from the trees as Attracta, the abbess, carried her basket of apples into her convent where comfort and contentment pervaded the place. She had taken her vows as a nun under St. Patrick at Coolavin near Monasteraden. After his capture by raiders as a young man in England, Patrick was sent as a slave to Ireland but having managed to get his freedom he returned to England, became educated and returned as a priest to Ireland. He was achieving some success in getting the people to reject the gods of the past and embrace Christianity, practicing the gospels depicting the life of Jesus who lived a few centuries earlier.

At Ballinascarrow, a man living in a small stone-walled shed and who called himself a hermit was explaining his way of life to a passer-by. "I believe that living alone in a remote, austere environment for a period will lead me closer to God. Many of my friends have gone to Scotland, France, and other countries to spread the word of God and are helping Colmcille in providing centres of learning for people in many places. Some of my writings and illustrations detailing the four gospels got to Colmcille in Donegal before he set sail for Iona in **563**. We have used Latin, a new language that has come from the Romans and many great manuscripts are carefully handwritten in the language back at the monastery where learning is flourishing, though some are now also being written in Irish."

Conflict and fighting were now commonplace and in **971** news spread across the region about the great **Battle of Ceis Corran (Kesh)**. It was one of the greatest battles of Celtic Ireland, fought between, Murchadh, a King from Donegal and Cathal, the son of Tadhg, King of Connacht. Cathal was killed in battle and buried at Toomour Abbey.

Since the murderous **Vikings** arrived in Ireland, people were living in fear. Monasteries were ransacked, religious ornaments stolen and monks killed while defending their property. The Irish army led by Brian Boru tried valiantly but failed to defeat the Vikings in the great battle near Dublin in **1014**. Boru lost his life with thousands of others in the brutal combat. There were signs of hope however, as the Vikings were becoming less troublesome of late with many inter-marrying with the Irish and settling in various towns they were helping to build on the east coast of the country.



A group of women at Keenaghan

A group of women at the end of a lane in Keenaghan were in a disturbed state. Some were weeping and asking people passing by if anybody had any word about their husbands who were away fighting the **Anglo-Normans** since they invaded in **1169**. They had learned how the kings from all the kingdoms in Ireland had joined to fight against Strongbow's army, but word was getting back that the country was conquered and in control of King Henry II who was taking ownership of large areas of land from the Irish.

[Unknown to all there was what would follow - a progressive colonisation of Ireland by English and Scottish settlers and a tragic outcome that would mean suppression of the Irish by the British for the next eight hundred years.]

A massive stone castle now stood at the heart of Ballymote. Building of the castle began in **1300** by Richard de Burgo who was later defeated by Edward Bruce in **1317** in the Battle of Connor in Co. Antrim. Despite its great walls and towers and being the strongest fortress in Connacht, all



Ballymote Castle

de Burgo's possessions were ruined and burned after the defeat, while the town of **Ballymote was also destroyed**. Damage to the castle was repaired by the Mac Donagh clan who did great work in arranging for that compilation and completion of **The Book of Ballymote** within its walls. The manuscript was finished in **1391** and is written in Irish (some Latin) and deals with a wide variety of subjects, including genealogy, topography, biblical stories, and lives of saints. The historical writings contain some material that was copied from earlier sources.

[The book shows the considerable knowledge of the world held by people in Ballymote at that time].

In **1442** the Franciscan friary was opened near the castle grounds by the Coleman brothers. They were using the new numbers 0 to 9 which were recently introduced for counting and were gradually replacing the old Roman numerals.

The year was now **1670** and a man working as a guide for people visiting the castle was speaking. "The castle was sold by the Mac Donaghs to Hugh O'Donnell at the end of the last century and it was from here that Hugh assembled his army for that ill-fated march to Kinsale in **1603**. John Taaffe, who was a Viscount and called Barron Ballymote, became the owner of the castle in **1610** but the family lost the castle to Cromwell in **1652**. Terrible battles have taken place since Henry VIII took control of the country in the last century (King of Ireland in 1541) and declared himself head of the church. He continued to confiscate land and worked to remove

all semblance of the Catholic faith by plundering churches and monasteries as he had done in England. Then he moved Scottish and English protestant settlers in, taking the land from the Irish who then became tenants on their own land. The Irish-speaking Catholic province of Ulster was now turning into English-speaking and protestant."

This was the beginning of sectarian conflict on the island which would last for centuries into the future.

The guide went on to say "The Irish rebelled in **1641** and thousands of settlers were killed but the evil Cromwell soon defeated the Irish with almost all lands owned by Irish Catholics confiscated and given to British settlers. The remaining Catholic landowners were sent to Connacht. After the restoration of the monarchy in England, Theobald Taaffe (John's son) had the castle and lands restored to the family, but the Irish had suffered a terrible toll from the Cromwellian invasion with over a half million deaths and tens of thousands sent as forced labour to English colonies. I am lucky to have a job here, though the castle itself is not in great shape now."

At Carrownanty, people looking forlorn and destitute were praying with a priest in a meadow hidden by trees as they had to practice their faith secretly since the Penal Laws were introduced (**1695**). Catholicism was proscribed to ensure conversion to Protestantism. Among the many prohibitions, Catholics were banned from the Irish parliament and the legal profession, could not vote, or serve in the army, navy, or work in any civil office, all of which meant more economic deprivation for the Irish.

Coloured fields with crops overflowing with sky-blue blooms covered the landscape at Ballybrennan. People were working at harvesting the flax for the linen industry which had recently started in the town by Lord Shelbourne. Several weavers were



Flax

brought to the town in the **1770's** and each given a cottage with a little land to sow potatoes and keep a cow. Work as a weaver was varied along with spinning, scutching and bleaching in the linen mill near the millrace at the end of Mill Street. This work was a life saver for so many local people who hadn't any skills apart from herders on the land. It was good for the town of Ballymote which also had a corn mill built by Robert Gorman at Keenaghan and powered by water from Ballinascarrow lake. There was now a new street layout in the town with many new buildings including a Market House and Earlsfield House built by the Fitzmaurices in **1775**.

A troop of men at Cloonkeevy, armed with pikes were on their way to Tubbercurry to join General Humbert's 800 strong French army who had recently arrived on ships into Killala Bay (**1798**). Heavily influenced by Wolfe Tone and his republicanism, they came to Ireland following his appeal for help in their mutual crusade against the English. After defeating the English in Ballina and following a tough battle in Castlebar, they were now heading towards Sligo where they expect to meet the English garrison at Collooney and hope to win that battle also. Men from across the west were joining the United Irishmen as they marched along.

[That rebellion was later to fail with the Irish parliament being absorbed into the British House of Commons in London under the Act of Union 1800. The Irish nationalist Daniel O'Connell MP successfully campaigned for Catholic emancipation in 1829 but failed to win a repeal of the Act of Union.]

A terrible smell now filled the air with fields full of rotting vegetation and the awful sight of the bodies of dead people lying by the roadside. A woman and her child stood outside a hovel at Oldrock, looking starved with hands outstretched to any passer-by for food. In a feeble voice she would tell them of the hardship since the potato crop failed (1847), how her other children had died of hunger and her husband was away in search of food. Her sister had fled for the ship in Sligo to go to New York, but she doubted if she managed to get there.

Horses and traps were now used for carrying people and their supplies. Michael Corcoran from nearby Carrowkeel was on his way to Sligo and emigration to America (1849).

Michael later became Brigadier General of the Fighting 69th Regiment in the Union army in the American civil war and a close confidant of President Lincoln.

The boneshaker, the first pedal-driven bicycle with its solid wheels was making its first appearance for anybody who could afford this expensive new mode of transport. At Cloonameehan, a loud whistle in the distance signalled the first train to travel from Sligo through Ballymote on its way to Longford (1862). The derelict abbey by the roadside was built by the Dominicans in 1488 and later passed on to the Taaffe family. Andrew Kerins was heading to the station in Ballymote on his journey to Scotland.

[Andrew, later known as Brother Walfrid was the founder of Glasgow Celtic Football Club in 1887. (Celtic Park was opened by Michael Davitt in 1892).

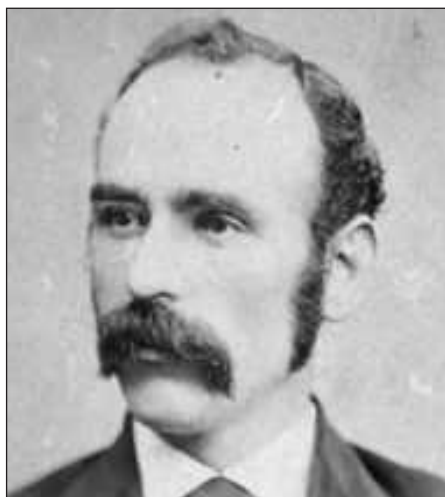
The countryside was now dotted with closed-up houses after a million dying in the famine and another million emigrating. Yet enough money was gathered to build two churches in Ballymote whose spires are visible



Ballymote Church

from the Iron Age burial ground at the top of Caran Hill in Deechomade. The catholic church was opened in 1864, and the high altar consecrated in 1884 taking 24 years to build at a cost of around £3000. The Protestant church was built about forty years previously with a similar cost.

The cruelty of the English that ebbed and flowed through the centuries was more evident once again with evictions commonplace due to farmers merely having the option of paying rent to the landlord and starving in dire poverty or not paying and facing eviction. A house in Bunninadden parish was burned recently just to get the people out. Tensions were rising strongly against the British and though the Fenian rising was unsuccessful, John Devoy was now out of jail and helping Charles Parnell (who was a member of parliament) and Michael Davitt from Straide (whose own family had been evicted when he was a young boy) in forming the National Land League movement. They were having some success for the rights of Irish Catholic tenants in the Land



M Davitt

War through organised resistance to evictions, boycotts and huge protests with Davitt giving powerful speeches imploring the community to stand together. A political movement looking for Home Rule was working alongside and getting more attention in London but with fierce opposition in Ulster.

A new ball alley was built in Ballymote in 1910 but a cruel twist of fate saw the second decade of the new century muddled in terrible turmoil. The Irish Nationalist, John Redmond was successful in having the Government of Ireland Act passed in 1914 granting a limited amount of self-government in Ireland. The World War then broke out and implementation of the Home Rule was put on hold. To ensure it would come to pass, Redmond encouraged Irish volunteers to join Irish regiments in the British army in the fight for freedom on the continent as the war was expected to be of short duration. The Easter Rising of 1916 and the subsequent executions resulted in Irish public opinion shifting in favour of militant republican and full Irish independence resulting in the demise of Redmond's Irish Parliamentary Party after the 1918 general election. Victory went to the Allies in the Great War but with a cost of thirty-four soldiers with Ballymote addresses losing their lives in the conflict.

The sounds of shouting and gunfire filled the air as a lorry full with men rushed by at high speed on the road at Ballinaglough with shots coming from a field high above. The tragic mistake of the civil war was taking place across the country following the treaty (1921) with the Irish fighting each other after centuries of battles with the English, family members often on opposite sides of the treaty at war with each other. Collins had said the Treaty was freedom to achieve freedom but now he and Arthur Griffith were dead. John Cawley from Deecho made, a strong advocate for freedom from British rule, has not been seen and gone into hiding since the Black



Arthur Griffith and Michael Collins.

and Tans arrived during the War of Independence. Everybody believed the future was bright when the newly formed break-away government, Dáil Eireann, declared independence from England in **1919**. Local people were proud when Alec McCabe won the election and was part of that first Dáil. The ambushes and attacks on British army barracks started and then the conflict intensified after the Bloody Sunday massacre in Croagh Park in **1920**. Burning of towns by the Black & Tans took place as reprisals for ambushes on their units. The terror they caused in Ballymote after the shooting of Sergeant Fallon was appalling. Fallon was not a popular man and his anti-republican activities became too well known around the place. It was the fair-day in the town in **November 1920** when he was shot near the Top of the Rock. Lorry loads of Auxiliaries roared into the town that night and set the place ablaze. Many of the townspeople left earlier in the evening in anticipation of trouble and watched the flames from a distance. Cork city was burned the following month and the Treaty dividing the country was signed a year later after more than a thousand casualties. Michael Gray from Ballinaglough was



Owenmore River

arrested for the shooting of Fallon and was put in Crumlin Road Jail awaiting execution. Although innocent, he was lucky to walk free when the Treaty was signed.

Following the atrocities and executions of the civil war, the new impoverished Irish State came into existence with partition of the country leaving a lasting and bitter legacy. The state slowly bedded down and in 1930 a statue of Michael Doyle, national secretary of the INTO, was unveiled at the courthouse in Ballymote in recognition of his advocacy for teachers' rights. Many people travelled from Ballymote to the Eucharistic Congress in Dublin in **1932**. Douglas Hyde (who became the First President of Ireland in 1938) visited Ballymote to open the new Vocational School in **1934** and again in June **1936** for the opening of Féis Báile an Mhota. Three years later, the death of WB Yeats in France was reported. Some local men met their death fighting in the second World War in bringing down Nazi Germany. A freezing blizzard (**1947**) over several weeks covered the country with difficulty getting from place to place. Snow drifts were several feet high, yet people were able to walk across the frozen Owenmore River at Ardconnell to reach the town for supplies. The powerful influence of the Catholic Church resulted in

conservative social policies in place with bans on divorce, contraception, abortion, and the censorship of books stretching out over decades. Corran Park was opened in **1949** and the new cinema the same year, notable achievements for the town at that time. In **1950** the Sisters of St. John of God came to Ballymote. and opened 'Castle Lodge' as a Maternity Home which lasted for eighteen years before becoming a nursing home. The Sisters of Mercy (in Earlsfield House as a convent since 1904) opened a new coeducational secondary school in **1957**, built at a cost £16,000. This provided a life-changing opportunity for young people from the area to follow the five-year Leaving Certificate course where previously the two-year Group Certificate was available. The depressed economic decades of the fifties and sixties saw people emigrate in search of a better life in England where the construction industry was booming following the war. Paddy Lavin and his Hillman hackney car provided the transport to Ballymote train station, the first leg of a sad and lonely journey for so many people ahead of the long trip to Holyhead before travelling on to the various English cities but mainly to London.

The town was fully connected to the electricity grid in **1957**. Yearly

carnivals were held in the grounds of the Boys' National School to fundraise for parish activities. Men walked on the moon in **1969**. Ballymote Mart was taken over by NCF in the early seventies resulting in the demise of the monthly fair-day. The genetic code, DNA, and cloning Dolly the sheep along with the great technological and scientific advances such as the mobile phone developed in the second half of the last century. Lord Mountbatten was killed in **1979** during the Troubles in the North that spanned over three decades. The first issue of the Corran Herald came out on October 25th, **1985**. The fall of the Iron Curtain occurred in **1989**, the same year the Credit Union opened in Ballymote. The creamery in the town closed in **1994** as a milk-intake centre after ninety-eight years in operation. The signing of The Good Friday Agreement in **1998** brought great rejoicing across the island of Ireland. The world of email and the internet came at the end of the century and before the attack on the Twin Towers in New York in **2001**. Michael Bloomberg, the mayor of New York visited Ballymote in **2006** to unveil a monument in memory of Michael Corcoran and the Fighting 69th Regiment. The new Garda station opened in **2010** and Queen Elizabeth's visit to Ireland was in **2011**, the year the new Community Library and Fire Station were formally opened in Ballymote, but the 200-year-old courthouse closed its doors for the last time. The Ulster Bank closed in **2017** and a new primary health care centre opened in the town in **2018**. Ballymote was left without a bank after its last bank, Bank of Ireland closed its doors in **2021**.

Delighted to be back in the pub for a chat with friends following the shut downs during the pandemic of **2020-2022**, the social and economic costs of the pandemic are subjects for discussion with new added burdens of inflation and the threat to energy supply due to the war in Ukraine. There is talk of the trials and tribulations facing the



Ballymote

Ukrainian refugees in conjunction with the centenary of our own Civil War and how far life has progressed over the one hundred years in the locality. Great praise is shared for the contributions made by the people of Ballymote who put themselves forward to make this corner of the world a better place to live in; the local community groups that ran the projects that have made vital contributions in providing services and amenities for the people. Among



Cross on Keash Hill.

the various clubs that kept our people focussed and together through time, a special mention is given to the GAA, Soccer, Handball, Dramatic Society, Comhaltas, ICA, Golf, Tennis, Brass & Reed Band, Macra na Feirme, Heritage Group, Girl Guides & Boy Scouts, Junior Chamber, Bridge, Family Resource Centre and Angling on Templehouse, Cloonacleigha Lake, Feenagh and the Owenmore River. Some people were called out as born leaders in the community (*not named here as names may get left out, excepting our TDs*), from the time of Alec McCabe, Frank Carty and PJ Rogers to Eugene Gilhawley and more recently John Perry and Eamon Scanlon. They provided a voice where it mattered for our people.

A contributor in the pub discussion said "Yes, a lot has changed over the years. In 1910 there were twenty-seven pubs in Ballymote and here we are now sitting in John Doddys, one of the few pubs left in the town. But are our lives that much different from the time they lived out there in the caves of Keash? Do we not have the same hurdles to cross in every facet of life and try just the same to overcome the challenges when we all stumble and fall now and again before we get to the finishing line up ahead?"

"Ah don't get all philosophical on us, sure we're just out here to enjoy ourselves" came a reply. "While it is important to look back, let us also look to the future and we could finish this discussion for now on this; I think if Neolithic Man could resurrect himself and stand by the cross on Keash Hill peering down over the countryside, he would smile and say, you've done well everybody, take a bow, it hasn't been easy!"

Note: *A special thanks to the people who contributed articles to the Corran Herald over the years covering the times our people lived through and which I dipped into for a line or two here and there for this article.*

FENAGH – THE FORGOTTEN CENTRE OF CHRISTIANITY

By Karin Holzschneider

Nowadays, Fenagh is a seemingly non-descript village in south Leitrim that you pass through on your way to Ballinamore or Mohill. Of note are the stop sign and extreme bend at the Abbey Pub. But if you look a little closer, you will find there is a lot more to the small village of Fenagh.

In Neolithic times, hunter-gatherers became farmers and settled down in Fenagh. They chose Fenagh primarily because of the quality of the soil which was easy to till and very productive². The existence of these first settlers can be proven by their burial rituals: there is evidence of two, possibly three passage tombs, one court tomb and one portal tomb which can be dated back to 4000BC to 3500BC³. The island within Fenagh Lough, a crannog⁴, possibly dating back to the Bronze Age, is linked to the sacred nature of water places and may have been re-used in the Early Medieval period⁵. Other evidence of Fenagh's ancient past are standing stones which are difficult to date and likely represent either boundary or territory markers.

Even today, the court tomb and the portal tomb are still visible in Fenagh, as are standing stones and the ruins of two abbey churches (called the Old Abbey and the New Abbey) which are the focal point on the main road in Fenagh. Interestingly, the tombs and churches are closely connected.

It was actually the ancient burial sites which proved to be crucial for establishing a centre of Christianity in Fenagh. St. Caillin, the patron saint of Fenagh, founded a monastery in the sixth century at the site where the ruins of today's New Abbey stand. He



The new Abbey and the graveyards, viewed from the main road in to Fenagh¹.

chose that area because of the spiritual importance of the various prehistoric and pagan tombs located within the vicinity of the monastic site⁶. The monks were aware of the court tomb and the portal tomb⁷. In the case of the portal tomb, they used it to bury the Irish king Conall Gulban, who died in battle (c. 464⁸) and was buried in Fenagh.

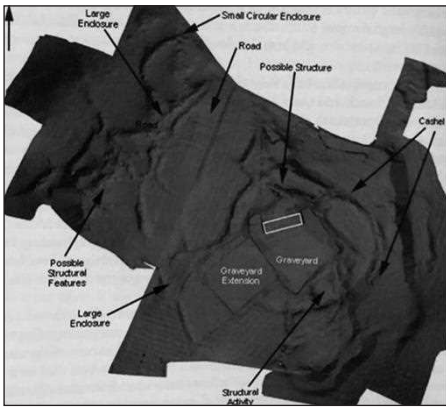
Conall Gulban was the son of Niall Noígiallach (Niall of the Nine Hostages) who captured St. Patrick⁹. Conall's by-name Gulban derives from Benn Ghulbain (Benbulbin) in County Sligo¹⁰. Conall founded the kingdom of Tír Chonaill in the fifth century, comprising much of what is now County Donegal in Ulster¹¹.

It is said that St. Caillin resurrected Conall and baptised him, before he reburied him again in the portal tomb and thus christianised the tomb. It is also said that nineteen Irish kings have been baptised at the monastery in Fenagh¹².

Not a lot of evidence of the sixth century buildings has survived, however, in a topographical survey from 2007 it was discovered

that the first monastic buildings were surrounded by a cashel¹³, approximately 100m in diameter¹⁴. The cashel is the only remaining feature that may be dated to the Early Medieval period¹⁵. Over time, many buildings were added to the site, of which the survey was able to reveal remains of upstanding features, such as walls and banks, mainly showing as arcs, circles and curves and can still be seen around the ruins of today's New Abbey and the enclosed old graveyard¹⁶. The extended site and the cashel were later surrounded by a large enclosure with a diameter of approximately 200m¹⁷.

Fenagh was a major centre of Christianity from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century and the monastery itself had control over a substantial amount of land, enough to provide for a large population of religious and lay people¹⁹. By the fourteenth century, Fenagh had two abbey churches²⁰. However, it cannot be established how many earlier churches existed at the site, especially because historical records tell us that the monastery and its buildings were burnt in 1244 and in 1360²¹.



Topographical survey from 2007¹⁸

Fenagh was known to be an area where lay and cleric people were educated and where many learned and scribal families lived²². At the same time, the monastery was famous for its divinity school which was also attractive to and attended by European students²³. There was a rise in the production of manuscripts especially in old Gaelic during the late 1400s and early 1500s, mainly focusing of saints' lives²⁴.

One of the manuscripts from Fenagh was the Book of Fenagh²⁵ which was commissioned in 1516 by the O'Rodaighe family who had been the coarbs (managers) of the local church property in Fenagh for more than a century²⁶. It was copied from an earlier, possibly mid- to late-thirteenth century, book²⁷. The manuscript was written during a time of unrest, and the main intention to commission it was to affirm the importance of the community of Fenagh²⁸. However, it was too late – by the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century, the standing of Fenagh as a centre of Christianity was diminished²⁹.

What remains is the importance of Fenagh as being one of the earliest Christian monasteries in Ireland. Other monasteries from the sixth century include Devenish (Lower Lough Erne, Enniskillen) and Drumlane (Cavan)³¹.

But what distinguishes Fenagh and its abbeys from other sites is the continuation of it being a sacred site from the Neolithics to the Middle Ages. Even today, people remember

St. Caillin and his prophecy which promised those of strong faith at their time of death to go straight to heaven, if they were buried in the abbey. Nowadays, many Fenagh residents still wish to be buried inside the abbey.

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3. Christopher Read and Shirley Markley, "The Fenagh Archaeological Project Fenagh, County Leitrim", in *North Atlantic Archaeology*, Vol. 1, 2008, p. 1
4. A crannog is a man-made island.
5. Chris Read, "Sacred landscape of Fenagh, County Leitrim", in *Making the Book of Fenagh*, edited by Raymond Gillespie, Salvador Ryan and Brendan Scott, 2016p. 13.
6. Christopher Read and Shirley Markley, "The Fenagh Archaeological Project Fenagh, County Leitrim", in *North Atlantic Archaeology*, Vol. 1, 2008, p. 1.
7. Chris Read, "Sacred landscape of Fenagh, County Leitrim", in *Making the Book of Fenagh*, edited by Raymond Gillespie, Salvador Ryan and Brendan Scott, 2016,p11.
8. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conall_Gulban#cite_note-1, accessed 09/06/2023
9. Francis J Byrne, Irish Kings and High-Kings, Table
10. https://wikitree.com/wiki/Mac_Niall-5, accessed 09/06/2023
11. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conall_Gulban#cite_note-1, accessed 09/06/2023
12. <https://www.fenagh.com/history/the-bell-of-fenagh/>
13. A cashel is a wall made of stone.
14. Christopher Read and Shirley Markley, "The Fenagh Archaeological Project Fenagh, County Leitrim", in *North Atlantic Archaeology*, Vol. 1, 2008, p. 7.
15. Chris Read, "Sacred landscape of Fenagh, County Leitrim", in *Making the Book of Fenagh*, edited by Raymond Gillespie, Salvador Ryan and Brendan Scott, 2016, p. 11.
16. Chris Read, "Sacred landscape of Fenagh, County Leitrim", in *Making the Book of Fenagh*, edited by Raymond Gillespie,

Salvador Ryan and Brendan Scott, 2016, p. 16 2016,as well as Christopher Read and Shirley Markley, "The Fenagh Archaeological Project Fenagh, County Leitrim", in *North Atlantic Archaeology*, Vol. 1, 2008, p. 8.

17. Chris Read, "Sacred landscape of Fenagh, County Leitrim", in *Making the Book of Fenagh*, edited by Raymond Gillespie, Salvador Ryan and Brendan Scott, 2016, p.16.

18. Ibid page 14.

19. Ibid page.13.

20. Ibid page.18.

21. Liam Kelly and Brendan Scott, "Fenagh in 1516: the social and religious context for the Book of Fenagh", in *Making the Book of Fenagh*, edited by Raymond Gillespie, Salvador Ryan and Brendan Scott, 2016, p. 32 and Chris Read, "Sacred landscape of Fenagh, County Leitrim", in *Making the Book of Fenagh*, edited by Raymond Gillespie, Salvador Ryan and Brendan Scott, 2016, p.16.

22. Chris Read, "Sacred landscape of Fenagh, County Leitrim", in *Making the Book of Fenagh*, edited by Raymond Gillespie, Salvador Ryan and Brendan Scott, 2016, p. 28.

23. Ibid pages 28-29.

24. Ibid page 28.

25. Copies of the Book of Fenagh survived and can be found at the Royal Irish Academy in Dublin. A link to the manuscript can be found here: <https://www.ria.ie/library/catalogues/special-collections/medieval-and-early-modern-manuscripts/book-fenagh-leabar>

26. Raymond Gillespie, "Imagining St. Caillin: the making of the Book of Fenagh", in *Making the Book of Fenagh*, edited by Raymond Gillespie, Salvador Ryan and Brendan Scott, 2016, p. 69.

27. Ibid page 73.

28. Liam Kelly and Brendan Scott, "Fenagh in 1516; the social and religious context for the Book of Fenagh", in *Making the Book of Fenagh*, edited by Raymond Gillespie, Salvador Ryan and Brendan Scott, 2016, p. 34.

29. Ibid pages 37-38,

30. Photo: Karin Holzschneider.

31. Raymond Gillespie, "Imagining St. Caillin: the making of the Book of Fenagh", in *Making the Book of Fenagh*, edited by Raymond Gillespie, Salvador Ryan and Brendan Scott, 2016, p. 68.



East window of the new Abbey³⁰.

THE BIG SNOW IN 1947

By Stan McWilliams

Ena McWilliams, nee Davis (1923-2013), from Boggaun in County Leitrim, worked in SJ Gillmor's shop in Dromahair during The Big Snow of 1947. She was twenty-four. The Gillmors were cousins on her mother's side. Her memories of The Big Snow form the basis of this story, narrated by Cassie, her co-worker. Her brother Rico (Richard) with his wife Dorothy lived and farmed at Woodhill near Buninnadden, Co Sligo.

'Cassie! Cassie! Come into my bed I'm freezing I can't sleep. Bring your blankets!' Ena called across the dark room.

It wasn't the first time I slept in Ena's bed that winter. Our attic room above the shop, under the slates, the water jug frozen in the basin. The little roof window covered by Jack Frost, and outside the moon-lit village deep under snow. The next day we were going to Ena's place, if we could make it through.

Ena and I worked in Gillmors in Dromahair, in the shop and yard. Sometimes she looks after the Gillmor childer. She's well used to it with plenty at home. I come from Fermanagh and had been there for about a year.

Before Christmas the wind came hard from the East and soon everything was white frozen, day and night. I thought the turn of the year might bring a change but devil the bit of it! We wore our heavy coats all the time, often two pairs of stockings. Warm tea in the kitchen was always bliss.

Then in the middle of February the snow came. There was a blizzard for a full two days. Everything stopped. The shop stayed closed. The roads and railway were blocked. No on eventured out at all, you couldn't.



Ena Davis (right) and Ms Mc Tiernan in yard at Gillmor's shop circa 1947.

The day after it stopped a few hungry souls started to move about. Dug their way out probably and came in for what supplies we had. It was another two weeks before we got deliveries again. The train was the first to bring bread from Coyle's bakery in Manorhamilton a few miles away.

I went out after the blizzard, but I couldn't get far. There was a wind that would cut you to the bone. I didn't

even recognise the village in the dazzling light, deep snow everywhere. Drifts were ten foot high, up to the eaves of the bigger houses. Some cottages were completely smothered, only the chimney's wispy smoke rising above the snow.

Mr. Gillmor kept us busy clearing snow to keep the front and back doors open, in case anyone came. But each night a good deal of it would be



A typical scene during The Big Snow of 1947.

blown back again. And he would put us at it again the next day. In the yard, the snow was up to our waists. That took us a couple of days to clear but the work kept us warm, and we had fun in it when the old man was out of the way. We were lucky having the electric light, it came from Jeiter's mill on the river. It rarely went out. In the evening we stayed in the kitchen listening to the radio for as long as we could, and then went off to our cold beds.

Before we set out for Ena's home we ate a good breakfast in their snug kitchen. The wind had dropped but the roads were still thick with snow. Ena filled the pockets of her heavy coat with sweets for childer and neighbours we would meet along the way. She regularly cycled home on Wednesday's half-day. This time we would walk. I had met some of her brothers in Dromahair, big handsome fellas they were. We sent a message on the bus that we would be there for the 1 O'Clock dinner that Saturday and that we'd stay the night. I was excited, but fretting about the six-mile walk through the snow. Ena told me not to worry. She'd cycled home many's a time in the pitch dark. But I was still anxious. I didn't know the area at all. The day was so bright. No snow had fallen for a few days, and the wind was light. We left the village, passed the castle and over the bridge at the Bonet River. I was thrilled to be away from the shop and the village where we'd been cooped up for so long. A few gossons of boys threw snowballs at us from behind the walls of the bridge, but we ran past them not wanting to delay.

Two long weeks it had been, waiting for the roads to open. The men's had been working every day clearing the drifts, some of them blown up again by the next morning. We met few cars, zig zagging around the drifts trying to keep on the hard road. Near the railway station we helped push one out of a drift. Warm work it was but the sweets helped us recover.



Ena sits on a bank with her house in the background, late spring 1947.

We thought about going a longer way past Carrigeencor lake. It had long frozen over and there were usually a crowd of young people playing there. We heard that some of the boys were now walking all the way across it. But we decided to stick to the main road. Along Sox Line the drifts were deeper, and we often pushed each other down into the soft snow, shouting and laughing. The few houses along the road heard us coming and came out to greet us and exchange news. Ena knew them all. The offers of hot tea we sadly refused, as we were taking longer than we'd expected. Our supply of sweets running low, the first signs of tiredness set in as our feet dragged in the deeper snow.

"The Bonet runs deep and dangerous just over the hedge there." Ena said as we walked on. "A few have drowned in there."

"I can see nothing, hear nothing. Don't be scaring me." I replied, the silence now eerie, on such a beautiful day. Another mile or so on we stopped to rest at Ena's old school at Mullaghduff and sucked the last of the sweets. She pointed out the black summit of O'Donnell's Rock standing against the white landscape, the snow blown to drifts on the lower slopes.

"Only another mile now." She said we saw a group of five or so childer playing on the road ahead.

"It'll be the Giblins and Kellys - trouble."

"Here comes Ena with the sweets!" they shouted when they saw us.

"No! No! I have none today!" she called as we got closer.

"Ye are not getting through if we don't get sweets!" they chanted over and over. We stopped a short distance off. Snowballs were thrown at us. Half-heartedly we threw a few back, but we're very tired now, so in the end we made a dash through them, taking a good few hits as we did. They heard the ructions up at the Larkfield farmhouse, they told us later.

"Ye better have sweets on the way back or you'll get the same!" They shouted after us. "We'll be waiting!"

"Póg mo Thóin!" Ena shouted back at them. We stopped briefly to shake the snow off our coats, then trudged on. Ena pointed to the house, now in sight.

Turning off the road onto the lane, it comes to us, stopped us in our snowy tracks. A waft of wonderful cooking smells drifting down over the snowy field. From the house above on the hill. We are laughing, giggling, with relief mostly, two silly girls. Then Ena pushed me over into a deep snow drift. I gasped as she rubbed snow in my face and I heard her laughing.

"Come on! The dinners ready! Don't forget to wash your face." And she is running up the lane towards the house. Up to a dinner I had dreamed of, those last hungry and snowy miles.

Stan McWilliams.

www.thecurlewscall.com

Notes

The second picture is taken from the Donegal Weather Channel facebook site. For more see <https://www.facebook.com/DonegalWeatherC/posts/the-big-snow-of-1947-ireland-in-pictures/763021333807618/>

VOYAGE OF THE ERIN'S HOPE

By Joe McGowan

New York City
April 12th 1867

Sir; - You will proceed with the vessel under your command to Sligo Bay on the coast of Ireland, or to any other part of the same coast of Ireland where you may more safely land your cargo and passengers. You will use every precaution to ensure the delivery of the cargo and passengers to the persons authorised to receive them

If possible after you land your cargo and passengers, you will return with your vessel to New York and turn her over to the proper authorities; but in case you see no chance of escaping with her, destroy her if practicable. You will in all cases use your own judgement.

God bless and speed you.

Yours fraternally,

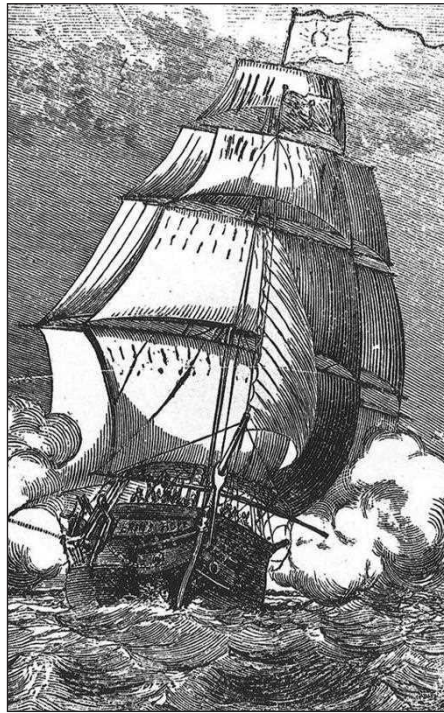
*John Powell, Chief of Naval Affairs,
F.B.*

To Commander John F. Kavanagh

By this communication was the scene set for one of the most remarkable sea voyages in Irish history.

The story begins with the establishment by James Stephens, on St. Patrick's Day 1858, of the Irish Republican Brotherhood. The IRB was a revolutionary body with the object of establishing 'a free and independent Republican Government in Ireland'. Stephens himself was with William Smith O'Brien who on July 29th 1848 led an abortive uprising in Ballinacorney, Co. Tipperary. Wounded three times in this fight he was smuggled onto a ship bound for France where he spent the next eight years. On his return to Dublin in 1856, along with Charles Kickham and others, he once again set about organising revolution.¹

The IRB and the Fenian Brotherhood in America were closely linked. Because of those connections any plan of organising an insurrection



'Erin's Hope' brigantine.

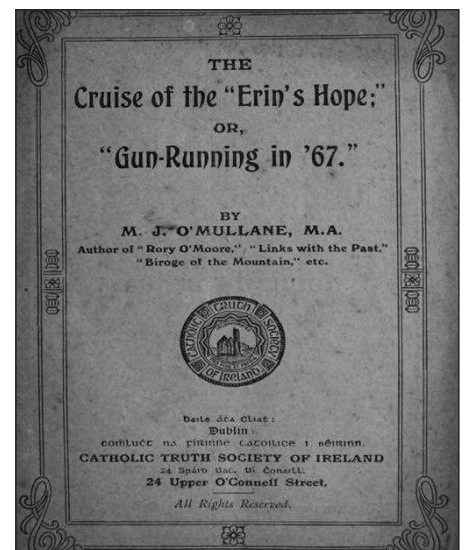
in Ireland was postponed until the American Civil War (1861 - 1865) was concluded. Assistance from the Americans was crucial to the success of any uprising in Ireland.

On March 5, 1867 the revolt commenced in Dublin, Drogheda and Cork. As with many a previous attempt at achieving freedom, it shortly became apparent that victory was once more going to elude them. General Massey, in command of the uprising, betrayed by the traitor J. J. Corydon, was arrested and imprisoned.² Without a central command the uprising was in trouble. Determined to fight on however, Col. James J. Kelly, who had replaced James Stephens as head of the IRB and was now stationed in London, sent urgent word to America for more arms and expertise.

The Fenian Brotherhood immediately sprang into action commencing with the above letter of authorisation from

John Powell. In answer to the call, a two hundred ton square-rigged brigantine, the *Jacknell*, sailed from Sandyhook, New York the following month carrying three batteries of artillery, a thousand sabres, five thousand modern rifles and a million and a half rounds of ammunition. Many of the forty or so men aboard who signed up for the venture, had been sent out from their homeland on coffin ships during the Famine of a few years before. Almost all of them had been officers or privates in the service of the American government and had distinguished themselves in the recently concluded American Civil War. Filled with enthusiasm they would now use this experience to help overthrow the rotten system that held their homeland in captivity.

Due to the strictness of the American neutrality laws and in order to maintain secrecy, the ship sailed without papers or colours. John J. Kavanagh was appointed commander of the enterprise. A brigadier-general in the American army, he was also at one time a member of the American Congress. As a well-known figure in Fenian circles, he was closely watched by spies of the English Government. In



'Erins Hope' pamphlet.

order to conceal the contraband cargo effectually, most of the weaponry carried on board was packed in piano cases, cases for sewing machines and wine barrels. The packages were consigned to a merchant firm in Cuba. On April 12th the *Jacknell* left Sandy Hook, N.Y. and in order to avoid suspicion, steered for one day towards the West Indies before setting her course towards Ireland.

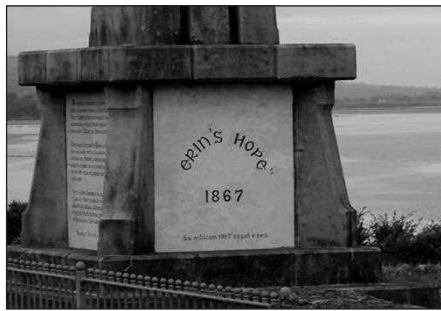
Arrival in Sligo Bay

Nothing remarkable occurred until Easter Sunday, April 21st, nearly nine days after they had sailed from New York. On this date Captain Kavanagh summoned a meeting of his principal officers. Considering the *Jacknell* an unsuitable name for the first Fenian transport to Ireland the group decided unanimously to re-christen it the *Erin's Hope*. The parties, determined to celebrate the day as a festival, hoisted the green sunburst flag, fired a salute, and sang a rousing ballad as they changed the name of the vessel:

‘When the setting sun on our bivouac proud,
Sudden burst through a riven cloud...
... We honoured the omen, and thought on times gone,
And from chief to chief the word was passed on.
The ‘harp on the green’ our land-flag should be,
And the sun through clouds bursting, our flag at sea,
The green borne harp o’er yon battery gleams,
From the frigate’s topgallant the ‘sunburst’ streams...’³

Kavanagh then produced sealed orders, commanding him to sail to Sligo Bay and there land his men and arms. If he found it impracticable to land there, he was to proceed to some other suitable place in Ireland.

Some days afterwards they came in sight of the Limerick coast and steering their course northwards they arrived in Sligo Bay on the 10th of May. For six days they sailed north



Monument in Helvick, Co Waterford, to the Erin's Hope.

and south between Sligo and Donegal Bays anxiously sending signals to shore. To the great disappointment of those on board, the signals remained unanswered - nor was there any sign of the insurrection they came to help.

Local fishing boats, anxious to know who they were, visited but on questioning, the fishermen said they knew nothing of a Fenian Rising. The British authorities ashore viewing the ship with great suspicion soon sent signals from the Coastguard stations at Raughley and Mullaghmore to the ship demanding that they identify themselves and state their business. When unsatisfactory answers were received, coastguards from Mullaghmore boarded the ship in Donegal Bay. Finding nothing suspicious they returned to base making no attempt at an arrest.

Captain Kavanagh, after two weeks of waiting, landed two of his men, Col. O'Doherty and Lieut. O'Shea at Sligo town with the intention of hooking up with the local Fenians. He had high hopes that the men of the Northwest would rally to his call and strike a blow for freedom just as the men of Mayo



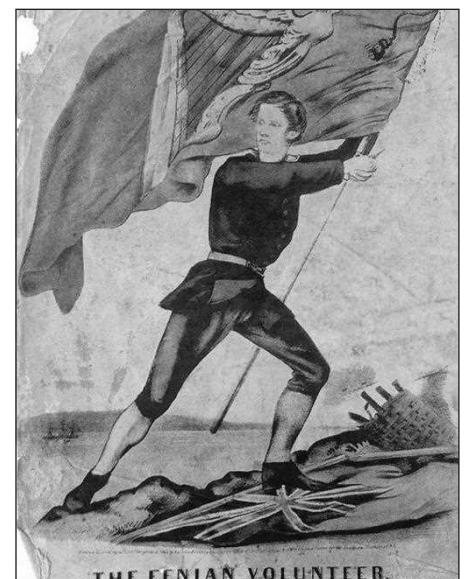
Ruin of Raughley Coastguard Station. Burned out in 1922.

did when the French boats came to Killala. The plan was to run the vessel into Sligo, seize the town, land the arms and stores and muster the friends of the Fenian cause to arms. They would then entrench themselves, ‘to await the general insurrection that he confidently expected would follow once the news spread that an American force had landed and that the Irish flag floated over Sligo town.’

Consequently a pilot was taken aboard at Raughley and the ship set course for Sligo harbour. As the vessel glided stealthily through the approaches a message came from Col. Kelly, chief organiser in Dublin of the I.R.B, informing the captain that the insurrection was in disorder and ordering him to proceed to Skibereen. The Captain, devastated by the news, immediately despatched a search party ashore to recall O'Doherty and O'Shea, but failed to find them.

Departs Sligo

The *Erin's Hope* had been too long in the bay so the Captain reluctantly hoisted sail and headed south. In doing so he narrowly avoided a confrontation with an English gunboat that had been summoned to the area from Blacksod Bay station — more than likely as a result of the boarding incident at Mullaghmore. Around this time, two of the crew, Coffey and O'Connor, were injured by the



The Fenian Volunteer.

'accidental' discharge of a weapon by a man aboard named Buckley. This same Buckley it turned out would later betray his shipmates - and may indeed have been a paid informer. The injured men were put ashore near Streedagh where they were discovered some time later by a Coastguard patrol. They were arrested, tried before Ormsby-Jones J.P. and sent to prison. The *Erin's Hope* departed Sligo and arrived offshore near Skibbereen on May 27th. For the following three days, it cruised between Toe Head Bay and Galley Head near Rosscarbery in Co. Cork in hopes of contacting the Fenian leader there, a Captain Lomasney. Once again, reminiscent of Roger Casement's experience in a later period in Irish history, no ship came out to meet them, nor was there any reply to their signals.⁴

Undaunted, the courageous Captain and crew headed for the Old Head of Kinsale. Cruising between Old Head and Baltimore for two days they waited for a signal from shore but, yet again, in vain. Still hopeful of striking a blow for Ireland, the *Erin's Hope* set sail once more, this time for Dungarvan. Short of rations now, thirty two men of the crew were put ashore to make contact with locals and secure a supply of food and water for the ship's provisions. Once again bad luck dogged the venture; all were spotted and immediately arrested by police and coastguards.

The prisoners were brought before the magistrate in Dungarvan but, according to the *Freeman's Journal* of June 5th 1867, there was insufficient evidence to convict them. The following day they were transferred to Kilmainham Jail. After some weeks passed, without any incriminating evidence being found, the men were about to be released - but then in a cruel twist of fate the infamous Buckley betrayed his comrades and revealed everything about the mission.

On 28th November three of the crew were charged in Dublin with having

formed part of an armed expedition destined to aid a rebellion. A verdict was returned as follows

John Warren, 15 years' penal servitude.

William Halpin, 15 years' penal servitude.

Augustine E Costello, 12 years' penal servitude.

'The most afflicted and miserable land on Earth'

Contemporary accounts record that: 'The prisoners heard their sentence pronounced in good spirits. General Halpin remarked that he would take 'fifteen years any day for Ireland'. Colonel Warren informed the Court that he did not think a lease of the British Empire worth thirty-seven-and-a-half cents, and then all three, followed by a posse of warders; disappeared from the dock.'

'And thus were three men of education and ability added to the hundreds who are now rotting their lives away in British dungeons; because of the love they bore to Ireland and their hatred of the misrule that makes her the most afflicted and miserable land on earth.'

Return to New York

After many more adventures and attempted landings along the Irish coast, Captain Kavanagh was forced to abandon the mission. Grieving for his comrades held in British dungeons because of the aforementioned informer, Buckley, he reluctantly set sail for New York where they arrived safely on August 1st 1867.

The *Erin's Hope* may not have rendezvoused with the Fenians as expected, but her Captain had outmanoeuvred the English navy in Ireland for over three weeks, landed men, exchanged communications and, after a voyage of over 9,000 miles, returned safely with his ship and cargo. The craft made three landings in Ireland and one in England, during which time they came close to capture several times. At no time were they over twelve miles from a British man-of-war, a frigate, ram, or gunboat,

and were continually harassed by Coastguards. They were 107 days at sea during which they sailed a total of 9,265 miles.

In the wake of the *Erin's Hope* voyage three gunboats which had attempted to capture her were sunk: the gunboat *Lapwing* lost in Killala Bay, the *Revenge* wrecked on Daunt's Rock and another gunboat that foundered in a gale off Cape Clear. Following his safe return, Capt. Kavanagh's cherished hope was that he would soon again set out on a more extensive and elaborate mission to Ireland - but it was not to be. Today, however, one hundred and fifty six years after those stirring events of 1867, we remember with pride this gallant captain and his crew that once sailed to Sligo Bay under a Fenian flag to help free the shackles that bound us.

(Dedicated to grand uncles Pat and James McGowan. In February 1881 they waited patiently for three days near Inishmurray Island aboard their yawl the *Charmin'Molly* to take on a shipment of arms in defiance of winter gale and foreign law.)

Further reading:

History Ireland Issue 6 Nov/Dec 2011
Waterford Museum.ie
irishtimes.ie/culture/heritage 24/02/2015
The Cruise of the *Erin's Hope*, M.J. Mullane, Published by Catholic Truth Society of Ireland

Endnotes

1 The executions of the Easter Rising of 1916 went close to wiping out the supreme council of the IRB necessitating a reorganisation. Following the release of the prisoners in 1917 Seán McGarry was elected president, Michael Collins secretary and Diarmuid Lynch treasurer.

2 Doomed from the start the Fenians were infiltrated by informers, the most notorious traitor being JJ Corydon, a trusted confidant of the leadership who told the police everything.

3 Thomas Davis (1814 - 1845)

4 *Lonely Banna Strand*:

"...We have twenty thousand rifles all ready for to land,
But no answering signal came to them from lonely Banna Strand..."

LET ME BREATHE THE SKY

Writings on Sligo's heritage and history by Aisling Doddy (1982-2020), Edited by Philip Doddy, An appreciation by Neal Farry



The late Aisling Doddy and her mother Mary Doddy attending a 2018 Ballymote Heritage Weekend lecture. Aisling has Issue 51 of the Corran Herald in her hand.

When Aisling departed this life in November 2020 her brother Philip decided to collect her diverse writings pertaining to local history, customs and folklore. Philip informs us that Aisling had written many pieces about these subjects, often focusing on stories she had heard as a child growing up in Aughris near the Owenmore River in the parish of Bunninadden. Aisling relished her involvement in the Sligo Heritage and History Club and many of the articles in this book were posted on the club's internet page. Numerous photographs in "Let me breathe the sky" were captured during outings to various historical and archaeological sites in County Sligo and beyond.

I believe it is appropriate to quote some words of tribute accorded to Aisling by her historian friend, Joe McGowan: "We can celebrate her passion for life, her enthusiastic engagement with friends, her fervour for her many projects. A Gaelgeóir and lán le tír-grá, she loved to delve into Irish place-names and field monuments. She inspired all of us

who knew her, and kindled in us a flame and a thirst for knowledge that will forever burn bright".

It is not evidently manifest that Aisling intended to compile a meritorious, colourful and informative book illuminating Sligo's heritage and history. Consequently, we are indebted to Philip for his skilled editorial work that allows the reader to share the memories, stories and observations of Aisling's environment, and which defined her short life.

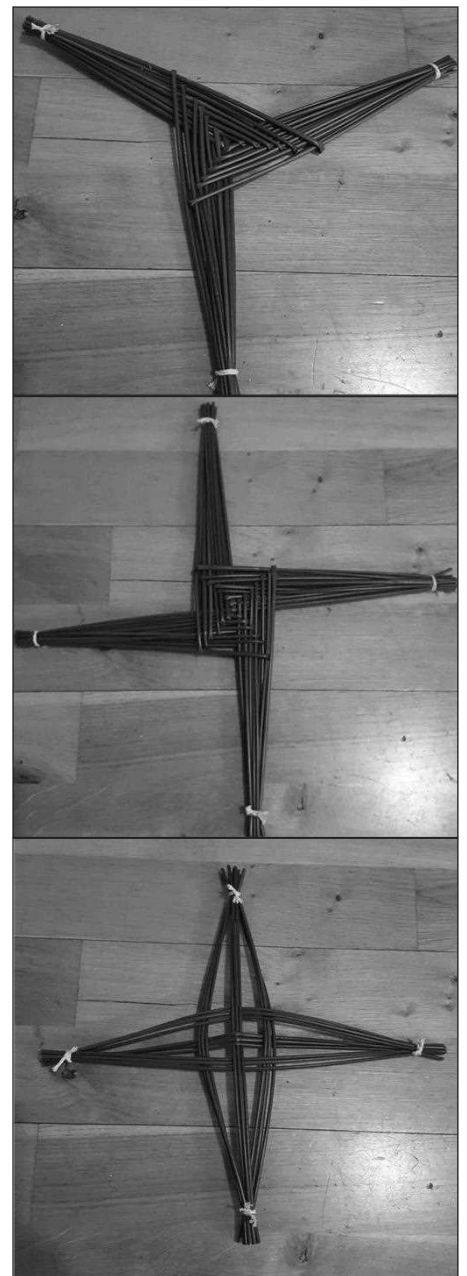
Aisling's accounts of the Hedge Schools in Sligo, including the Aughris school close to her home, are truly inspirational. Such acknowledgement of our local ancestors' thirst for education in extremely wretched conditions displays a powerful esteem for their oppressed cultural yearning. The five Keash Fairy Stories that Aisling reproduced from the 1930s Schools' Folklore Collection chronicle for us how young and old created entertainment before the advent of modern mass media.

Aisling's portrayal of the traditions of well-merited respites for the women of her locality on the feast day of Nollaig na mBan or Women's Christmas i.e. Little Christmas or the Feast of the Epiphany (January 6th), brings to mind an awareness that women's rights existed in an emergent form before the twentieth century.

The interlacing techniques for the making of St. Brigid's Crosses on the eve of that Saint's feast day, February 1st and the employment of such crosses for fertility and security purposes in farms and homes indicate how profoundly connected religious beliefs and secular work projects were in days gone by.

Naturally Aisling provides a field guide for us so we can visit a number of Holy Wells in Sligo dedicated to

St. Brigid. On this revealing list we are directed to Toberbride, Collooney, Temple More, Riverstown with its 15th August Visitation Day, and the Forthill, Sligo that is renowned for its great powers. There are three holy wells on the road to Strandhill and the one dedicated to St. Brigid has curative powers in its water. The best-known St. Brigid's well is at Cliffoney where a pattern and fair were held annually during the 19th century.



St. Brigid's crosses

Paying such attention to Ireland's great heroine of religious care and devotion has prompted Aisling to direct our attention to modern women who are quiet heroes. She characterises such people in the following terms: "Women who seldom complain, who never look for sympathy and who always manage to be there to support other people regardless of what they are going through themselves. I wish you all a very happy International Women's Day." Aisling passed away eight months after these sentiments were expressed. May she rest in the peace that she has so aptly defined in this book.

In Aisling's article about May Day the gathering of May flowers like primroses, dandelions and yellow flowers to scatter on the doorstep or for a May altar display to honour Mary, is highlighted. Whins placed on the doorstep could keep the fairies at bay. Avoiding the throwing out of ashes protected the family's luck for the rest of the year. Our author explains the occurrence of Imbolc (1st Feb.), Baal Tine (1st May), Lughnasa (1st Aug.) and Samhain (1st Nov.) i.e. the four Celtic festivals that were quarter days between each solstice and equinox. Traditions associated with milk churning and May Day divination are taken into account, when girls in the past performed certain activities to identify the natures of their future husbands.

After Aisling and Stewart Sullivan found the Lavally Curing Stone in the Ballintogher area she thanked Seamus Kerrigan for locating the stone and outlining the actions necessary for them to make its curative powers most effective.



Knocknashee



Mullaghmore

The story of the dullaghan or headless ghost that was frequently reported to be observed near the home of the Chief of Loughnacaha (Chaffpool) is related in wonderful detail.

Seamus Kerrigan's account of a holy well and a ringfort near Ballintogher where Mass was celebrated surreptitiously during Penal Times makes fascinating reading.

Aisling's visit to Cairns Hill to discover some of Sligo's remarkable archaeology, mythology and natural landscapes was a venture of civil zeal and keen environmental scrutiny. The East and West Cairns were significantly evaluated from an archaeology standpoint. Shortly before her passing Aisling expressed a wish that her family and friends would spread a portion of her cremated ashes at the East Cairn.

We are provided with a brief, concise and immensely accurate mini-biography of Constance Markievicz who contributed so much to the establishment of Ireland as a member of the free nations of the world. The role of Constance as a fearless freedom fighter, a champion of suffragettes and a Senate representative of the Irish electorate will always be cherished by the people of Sligo.

Our author's affection for Celtic festivals finds further expression in Aisling's illustration of Garland Sunday, the last Sunday in July which is clearly a Christianised version of the ancient festival of Lughnasa associated with the ripening of corn and the weaning of calves and lambs.

The traditions of the ascent of Croagh Patrick, Keash Garland Sunday festivities and religious services at the Holy Well of Tobernalt are enduring examples of the people's affection for this ancient celebration.

Christian and pagan feast days are never far from Aisling's mind. The association of the Púca's spit, or worse, with the local prohibition of the consumption of blackberries after Michaelmas (Sept 29th), is humorously recounted. The mischievous activities of the Púca late at night or in the small hours display a wise warning to late night ramblers.

The origin and the political significance of the Baronies of Co. Sligo are clearly outlined. These are **Carbury** (north of Ballisodare), **Tireragh** (west of Ballisodare between the Ox Mountains and the sea), **Corran** (the parishes of Keash, Ballymote and Bunninadden), **Tirerrill** (Ballintogher, Riverstown, Ballyrush and Geevagh), **Coolavin** (Gurteen and Monasteraden) and **Leyney** (Coolaney, Tubbercurry, Curry and Tourlestrane).

The variety of topics undertaken by Aisling is quite astonishing. Her account of the Sligo 1919 Municipal Elections when proportional representation was first used with great success in Ireland is again written with logical clarity. This PR experiment made an enormous contribution to the creation of a stable democracy in this state over the past century.



Ballymote Castle

The Oíche Shamhna or Halloween customs as recorded in the Cloghogue N.S. Schools' Collection Vol.182 induces Aisling to provide an amazing explanation of the astronomical cross-quarter meaning and effect of this festival, that separates the light half of the year from the dark half, and the unique happenings that people have associated with this changeover.

Our researcher leaves Co. Sligo for a brief visit to Moyne Abbey near Killala. The burning of this Franciscan Friary by the Ballymote based Richard Bingham is noted. The reader is advised to observe the unique architectural idiosyncrasies

that both Moyne and Sligo Friaries have on display.

Adrian O'Neill and Aisling paid a visit to Joe McGowan who led them to the Fairy Rock or Dostann na Breana outcrop below Classiebawn Castle in Mullaghmore. The eerie mysterious events that are believed to have occurred close to this rock are gripping in the extreme. Again, with the generous assistance of Joe McGowan, we become acquainted with further beautiful features of Mullaghmore. These include Bishop's Pool, Illaunee (Oileán Aodh or Hugh's Island), The Béalach waterway, Thomas McHugh's Mullaghgarr



Chaffpool House

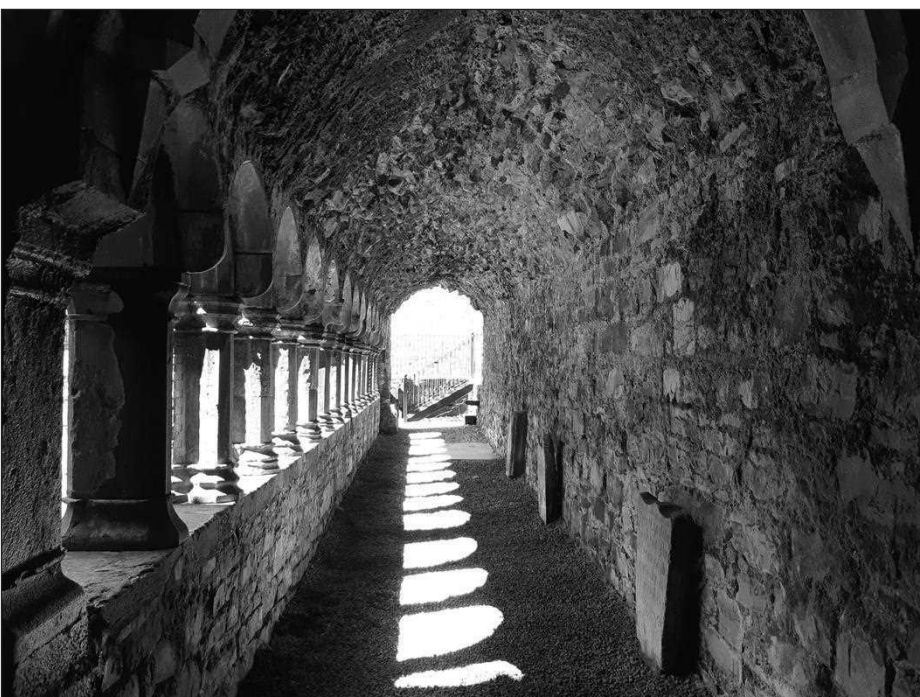
memorial, the Pollachurry outcrop (Poll a'Churraigh or Inlet of the currach) and the Stone Tower coastal lookout point.

Philip Doddy's visually eloquent photographs of Ballymote castle and the nearby ruined Franciscan Friary suitably complement the brief textual references to the castle itself, the Book of Ballymote manuscript, the papal bust and the stone grave markers in the Friary graveyard.

Sligo Dominican Friary (1253 A.D.) with its noteworthy architectural quirks is presented with great effect with vivid photographs. The additional notes on the Friary, provided by Tamlyn McHugh are enlightening and extremely helpful.

The placing of a lit candle in the window of the home on November 2nd, All Souls' Day, and the practice of leaving a good fire on the hearth, accompanied by food and water as a gesture of welcome to the souls of ancestors, were common practices in days gone by.

The thrilling escape from Mountjoy Prison on October 30th 1921 by Cumann na mBan members, Linda Kearns of Dromard, Co. Sligo and her comrades Eithne Coyle, May Burke and Aileen Keogh is a story well told by Aisling and is indeed an event that should interest some ambitious and visionary film maker.



Sligo Abbey

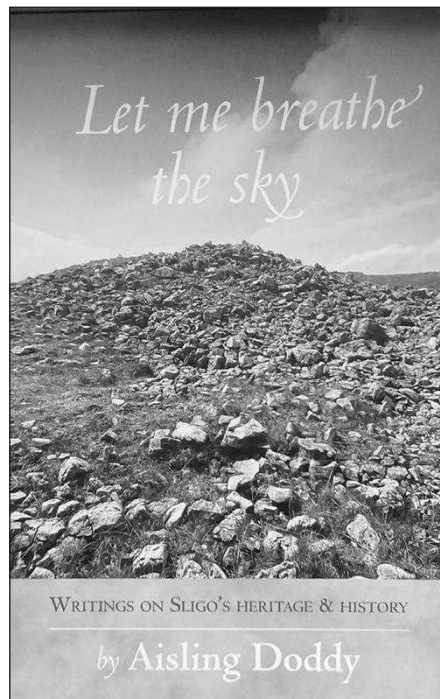
Aisling was curious about the custom reported in the Schools' Collection Vol. 171 concerning the sprinkling of the blood of a fowl in the four corners of the house in honour of St. Martin on November 11th. Her investigations led her to consult her great-grandmother Mary Ellen, the Collected Works of W. B. Yeats and Joe McGowan's book "Echoes of a Savage Land".

The Centenary Remembrance Day article (11th November 2018) is a poignant statement of a plea for peace. I quote Aisling thus: "So let's absolutely remember and acknowledge today the almost unfathomable loss of so many lives (16,000,000), and mourn for those we've never met, if we so wish, but I would hope that everybody does so in the knowledge that glorifying and legitimising that tragedy is only paving the way for it to happen again". The Killaville Mill Apparition from P.J. Duffy's *Killaville & its People* is a mystery tale well worth reporting.

The discovery of the Moylough Belt Shrine in 1945, the cultural awareness of the Towey family and of the local postman John Nicholson, and the exquisite description of this Early



Emlaghfad



The front cover of 'Let me breathe the sky'

Christian artefact exhibit a proud salutary model to all Irish people, emphasising the need for cultural awareness in all corners of society.

Aisling demonstrates the essential value of awareness of stories in the local folk memory when she recalls St. Patrick's Chair in Lissananny, the Haunted Gate in Aughris, fairy paths, changelings and the fairies in the fort at Deechamid.

Endeavouring to emphasise the fact that her beloved Irish language still survives in one sense in her native county, Aisling posted thirteen articles on-line detailing the English version of the original Gaelic place-names that we find throughout County Sligo. These topics can be found interspersed at various stages throughout the volume. Thirteen key Gaelic words that give hundreds of places more meaningful names are provided. These are (1) bun = base, as in Bunninadden, (2) carrow = quarter of land, as in Carrowkeel, (3) cartron = half-quarter of land, as in Cartronroe, (4) acadh = field, as in Achonry, (5) cluain = meadow, as in Cloonagashel, (6) baile = town, as in Ballymote,

(7) dún, rath & lios = fort & ringfort, as in Rathmullen, Lissaneena & Dunmoran, (8) cashel = stone fort, as in Cashelgarran, (9) tobar = well, as in Tubbercurry, (10) shee or sí = fairy, as in Knocknashee, (11) knock = hill, as in Knockgrania, (12) emlagh = margin of marsh, as in Emlaghfad, (13) magh = plain, as in Moygara. Our author studies over a hundred Sligo place-names to demonstrate that the Irish language is living and thriving in the manner our ancestors have named our localities. This portion of "Let me breathe the sky" will prove valuable to students and teachers of our native language in Co. Sligo.

The summaries of Aisling's topics that I have provided are mere allusions compared to the vastly more comprehensive representations of Sligo's heritage and history provided in her book, considering the expansive range of photographs, numerous relevant quotations from the Schools' Collections (1937 to 1939) and germane commentaries composed by Aisling herself.

The tributes penned to Aisling's memory by Leona Cornally, Brenda Croghan, Stewart Sullivan, Shannon Gravelle, Seán McManus, Jennifer O'Grady Fowley and Tamlyn McHugh accentuate her precious contribution to Irish culture, history and political life. Tamlyn McHugh speaks for us all in the final words of her tribute. "Aisling is greatly missed, she was a shining light in heritage, always so passionate and enthusiastic about Sligo and was keen to discover its rich heritage and share that with everyone. She would be so proud of her brother Philip for this incredible book, a tribute to a beautiful soul".

'Let me breathe the sky' is currently on sale in Cryan's and Henry's, Ballymote and in Liber Bookshop, Sligo, selling at €20. The book is also available to purchase from Philip Doddy, email: philipdoddy@gmail.com.

THE LAND QUESTION AND LAND OWNERSHIP IN IRELAND

By Owen M. Duffy

The story of Irish land ownership over the past six hundred years is of singular importance to the broader narrative of Irish history and in this article, it will be asserted in a singular way. In fact, the land ownership question has dominated Irish life and Irish politics for over six hundred years. From approximately 1600 and up to the 1920's, the plantation of Irish owned land by the British was to have profoundly serious consequences for most of the Irish population.

Previous invasions by the Vikings and Normans had little consequences for the native Irish farmer as the main victims were the Gaelic chieftains. The Vikings who arrived in the ninth century tended to base themselves along the coast and caused the development of coastal towns like Dublin, Wexford, Waterford, Cork and Limerick. When the Normans arrived in the 12th century, they brought a whole new culture to farming. The Norman chieftains centred themselves along a fertile low-lying strip of land that stretched from Dundalk down to Dalkey, with Dublin as the centre and surrounded it with a ditch or pale. This area became known as 'the Pale'. Parts of this pale or ditch are still to be seen west of Clane and on the grounds of Clongowes Wood College. Around the rest of the country, the Normans assimilated into Irish culture and made alliances with Irish chieftains and farmers.

The first real attempt at the plantation of Irish land by the British was under the reign of the Tudors. However, by the end of the Tudor monarchy in 1603 and despite successive confiscations and plantations, 90% of Irish land was still in the hands of

Irish Catholics. From 1603 on, a huge political change happened in Ireland. This had a profound impact on Irish rural life and land tenure. King James 1st (1603-1625) was the first King to develop the plantation of Ulster by the Scots. This saw the development of a new Anglo Irish landlord class that England set up in place of the Irish lords with Irish farmers now becoming 'tenant farmers' and paying of rent to the landlord. The result was that by 1640 and due mainly to the success of the Ulster plantations, less than 60% of Irish land was now owned by the Irish.

That figure was significantly reduced further by the Cromwellian plantations (1649-1653), whereby all confiscated Irish land was given to his loyal soldiers in lieu of payment for their services. An Act of Settlement of 1652 formalised this change in land ownership. Also, a series of penal laws were introduced against the Irish Catholic population. The penal laws barred Catholics from sitting in the Irish parliament. They also barred Catholics from marrying Protestants. Catholic landowners were given the option of being transplanted to Connacht. The practice of Catholicism and communicating in the Gaelic language was banned. Catholic priests were banished. Also, transportation of the Irish to English colonies in North America, the West Indies and the Leeward islands as indentured labourers, took place. Estimates of up on 50,000 of indentures and prisoners were transported to these English colonies during this period. The indentures agreed to provide up to seven years of labour in return for passage to the new world, housing as well as food and shelter during their

indenture. They were also promised "freedom dues" at the end of their term.

The rules surrounding the ownership of land had the most impact. The Popery Act, passed by British parliament, forbade a Catholic to pass down their land to their eldest son and instead required the Catholic landowner to distribute the land equally amongst all his sons. However, a Catholic eldest son was allowed full inheritance if he conformed and changed his religion. No Catholic could acquire land from a Protestant by marriage or inheritance. The land became a tool used to bribe the Irish Catholic to convert to the Established Church. No Catholic could purchase any interest in land other than a 31 year lease or under. The penal laws resulted in a continuation of movement of Irish owned land from Catholic to Protestant ownership. That resulted in squalid living conditions for the majority of Irish Catholics. Jonathan Swift (1667-1745) the Anglo-Irish author and poet commented "that whoever travels this country will hardly think himself in a land where law, religion or common humanity is professed"

For the best part of the next 200 years, the Anglo-Irish landlord class owned and controlled the land of Ireland. 300 of them owned estates of more than 10,000 acres and 340 owned estates of between 1000 and 10,000 acres. By the end of 1703, Irish Catholics who made up 90% of Ireland's population owned less than 10% of the land. Rents rose ten-fold between 1660 and 1800 and the surplus income permitted an architectural revolution among the new landlord class. Their flourishing rentals and assured political positions

initiated a sustained period of house building in the Georgian architectural style. By 1740 the number of large estate houses had shot up in every county. The zest for these lavish houses was both utilitarian and symbolic. The plight of the Irish farmer on a tenanted holding and the exorbitant rents levied on him is well documented in the Griffith Primary Valuation of Tenements of 1857 (Sligo). All records in relation to rental valuations can be examined in the Valuation Office at The Irish Life Centre or The National Archives in Dublin.

The trend of absentee landlordism also became commonplace with letting and sub-letting through “middlemen” being practiced. When subletting became common, the highest rent was being paid by the tenant farmer at the bottom of the pile. Little investment in land improvement was taking place. The economic historian Cormac O’Grada has estimated that the landlord class invested as little as 3% of their wealth in developing rural Ireland. Paying inflated rents for inadequate land was to have disastrous consequences in the 19th century, leading up to the Great Irish famine. Landlords encouraged subletting and small tenant farms as political clout could be extended by increasing tenant farmer numbers on their estate. Before the famine there were almost 690,000 tenant farms in rural Ireland and almost half of these were between one and five acres in size. The land of Ireland was now farmed mainly by a tenant farmer population.

The Bogland Act 1771

The first land act to make any concession to Catholics on land ownership came in 1771 with The Bogland Act which allowed Catholics to acquire leases of up to 61 years on 50 acres or under of unprofitable land. The first of two Acts introduced by Luke Gardiner and passed in 1778, enabled Catholics to lease land for 999 years and inherit land on the same terms as Protestants. Luke Gardiner



An eviction scene in C 1860's being carried out by three hired RIC officers and being supervised by the Landlord and his sons

(1745-1798), first Viscount Mountjoy and property developer, was admitted to Cambridge to receive his MA in 1769 and although he supported the English government, he also displayed a marked degree of liberalism. He distinguished himself by his efforts to relieve Irish Catholics from the effects of the penal laws. His other achievement was the development of Mountjoy Square and he contributed to the architectural development of Georgian Dublin. His main residences were Number 10 Henrietta Street and Mountjoy House in the Phoenix Park. By 1782, Catholics were finally allowed to buy, hold and inherit freehold land and leases on the same terms as Protestants. However, as a safeguard against Catholics now asking for a re-examination of earlier claims to land, the Yelverton Act of 1781 confirmed earlier land settlements.

Leading up to the Great Irish Famine 1845 – 1848

The history of Ireland from 1784 to 1845 is in large measure the history of land changing from pasturage to tillage, with the main crop grown for survival being the potato. Because of the unparalleled letting and subletting of land by landlords, middlemen and land agents, combined with the massive growth in population, a failure of the potato crop would always result in famine, potatoes being the staple

diet for most tenant farmers. While partial crop failure and yearly famines were quite common in rural Ireland, the introduction of the disease Potato Blight from South America caused the massive famine from 1845 to 1848. The famine was at its worst in the west of Ireland where approximately 65% of tenant farms were between one and five acres and no other industry to fall back on. Efforts, such as that of Lord Fitzmaurice in the Ballymote area, to set up an alternative weaving industry in the 1760's, by bringing weavers from the North and investing heavily in it, had failed. The failure of the potato crop resulted in mass starvation of tenant families. The inability to pay the rent resulted in mass evictions which became commonplace. The possibility of entry into the barony workhouse or assisted emigration became the options for a good percentage of surviving tenant classes. Because of inability to pay the annual rent, the landed gentry who previously had developed lavish lifestyles, suffered due to the non-payment of rents with many becoming bankrupt. The exchequer revenue from Ireland suffered also. The famine resulted in the development of militant agrarian organisations set up to defend the rights of tenant farmers.

The Irish National Land League

Tenant unrest in 1878, because of high rents and evictions, resulted in a

monster meeting that launched the Irish National Land League and the Land War on 20th April 1879 at Irishtown County Mayo. At this time there was a significant drop in agricultural prices across Europe. Cheap grain from America and refrigerated meat and butter began to be shipped from New Zealand and Argentina. Following several years of wet cold Summers, poor harvests, lower prices and a decline in the demand for seasonal labour in England and Scotland, western tenant farmers' ability to pay their rents, satisfy creditors or buy food was seriously worsened. James Daly, proprietor of the Connaught Telegraph, Matt Harris, a member of the supreme council of the Irish Republican Brotherhood and John O'Connor Power MP and former Fenian, promoted the formation of tenant-defence associations. Their efforts came to fruition in Dublin when Michael Davitt who had been released from prison in 1877, met with John Devoy of the USA-based Clann-na-Gael and Charles Stewart Parnell, leader of The Irish Parliamentary Party. Davitt who was a former Irish Republican Brotherhood organiser in the UK and a radical politician, organised the monster rally of tenant farmers at Irishtown, Co Mayo and

launched the Irish Land League. The Land League gained impetus and the movement spread beyond the west of Ireland. Charles Stewart Parnell was elected president of Davitt's newly founded Land League in Dublin on 21st October 1879, with Michael Davitt as Secretary. Parnell, who was also leader of the advanced wing of the Irish Parliamentary party, saw the opportunity to further the cause for tenant rights in the Houses of Parliament. The first aim of the Land League was to end evictions and bring about a reduction in rack rents and secondly, to obtain ownership of land by the tenant farmer. The Land League united all the different strands of land agitation and tenant rights under one umbrella. The Land Wars continued up to 1892.

On 2nd of November 1879, a monster Land League Rally was held in Gorteen, Co Sligo in a large grazing field lent for the occasion by J. Callely. It was estimated that up on ten thousand farmers from all over Connaught attended the rally. Michael Davitt, James Daly and John Killeen addressed the large gathering. Following the rally all three men were arrested on 18th November and brought to Sligo jail to stand trial on the charge of sedition. Parnell immediately organised an indignation meeting in the Rotunda, Dublin to denounce the arrests. Parnell then headed to Sligo to attend the trial of the prisoners and voice his support. The trial began at Sligo Courthouse on Monday November 24th, 1879. The trial collapsed after two weeks and the publicity generated by the collapse, had a profound impact on furthering the Land League's cause. Davitt later referred to the case as "one of the most successful legal farces ever acted off a theatrical stage". The priceless assistance rendered to the Land League by the blundering tactics of the Sligo prosecution broke down almost all barriers hitherto operating against its progress outside of Connaught. It's influence in the country grew by leaps and bounds.



Inscription
 Michael Davitt 1846 – 1906
 Founder of the Land League
 Erected to commemorate the centenary of the death of Michael Davitt and the Land League meeting which he addressed at this spot in November 1879
 Gorteen, Co Sligo

Memorial erected on the spot where Michael Davitt, James Daly and John Killeen addressed the Land League meeting in Gorteen, Co Sligo on the second of November 1879.

The Transfer of Land Ownership 1870-1916

In 1870 almost 10% of the land of Ireland was owned by 20 Anglo Irish landlords and 80% of the land was owned by less than 4000 people and only 3% of native Irish householders owned any land. However, by the year 1916, that 3% had grown to 65% and the battle for land ownership by the native Irish was almost won. This was due to pressure being brought on the British Government to change its economic thinking in relation to the Irish land ownership situation. Dissatisfaction with the landlord class, revenue and pressure from militant land groups like the Land League, encouraged the British government to introduce several far-seeing radical measures or acts which favoured tenant farmers. With the enactment of land transfer legislation between 1881 and 1923, the ownership of most of the landlord estates passed to the tenant farmers of Ireland.



Scene outside Sligo Courthouse during the 'State Trial' of Davitt, Daly and Killeen. As depicted in "The Graphic" December 1879

A general election in Spring 1880 saw the liberal leader W.E. Gladstone elected. He was an advocate of land reform in Ireland and with Parnell becoming leader of the Irish Parliamentary party, change was on the way.

The Gladstone Landlord and Tenant Act 1870 attempted to protect the rights of tenants in a practical way by requiring landlords to pay some compensation for improvements carried out by tenants to land. It also gave tenants security of tenure if they paid their rents. However, this Act had little effect. The Land Law Act of 1881 also introduced by Gladstone, on account of pressure from the Land League, was much more effective as it extended the Ulster custom to the whole country and gave “the three F’s”. Fair rent, Fixity of tenure and Free sale. It also included compensation for improvements to land. It set up “A Land Court” to rule on the three Fs. The Irish Land Commission was also established under this act with the purpose of establishing fair rents under ‘the fair rents clause’. It was also given the role of providing the money for tenants to buy out their holding. However, the provision of three quarters of the purchase price as a loan had little effect as most tenants did not have the other quarter of the price. These loans were to be repaid over 35 years at an interest of 5%. Under this Act, 731 tenants became proprietors. Also rent reductions of between 15% and 20% were awarded on average by the Land courts.

A big change came about in 1885 with the Ashbourne Act which was referred to as “The Purchase of Land Act”. This act was introduced on account of pressure brought about by the Land League, the land war and resulted in limited numbers of tenants becoming proprietors. The act allowed the tenant to borrow 100% of the full purchase price which was to be repaid at 4% over 49 years. The purchase of estates was also made more attractive to the Landlords with extremely attractive

prices being offered by the Land Commission. A total of £5 million was made available to the Irish Land Commission to fund this scheme. Approximately 25,500 tenant farmers purchased their holdings up to 1888. The purchase price was equal to 17 ½ years rental. The Act was later amended and a further £5 million was made available under The Ashbourne Act.

In 1887 Arthur Balfour introduced a new land act because of further tenant agitation and unrest. This act provided £30 million in 1891. A sequence of highly publicised bad years, culminating in near famine in the western counties in 1889-1890 led Balfour to create “The Congested District Board” in 1891. Horace Plunkett was on the original board. The board dealt with distress in the poorest parts of rural Ireland from Donegal to West Cork which covered an area of 1.4 million acres. The board encouraged infrastructural development, roads, railways, piers, and harbours, agricultural improvements (new breeds of cattle, sheep, pigs, asses, and poultry). It also encouraged domestic industry, Donegal tweeds, woollen products and lace making. It encouraged domestic economy, hygiene, promoted beekeeping and potato crop spraying. The Balfour Act was amended in 1896 which increased the amount of money available for land purchase. The Land Courts were empowered to sell 1500 bankrupt estates to tenants. A total of 47,000 tenant holdings were bought out between 1891 and 1896.

The Wyndham Act of 1903 allocated £100 million pounds towards estate purchase. It also provided 100% loans. Approximately 252,400 tenants purchased their holdings under Wyndham act. Under the Birrell Act of 1909, a further 66,500 tenants became landowners.

Between 1885 and 1920 the Land Commission had bought up and distributed over 13 million acres



of farmland where freehold was assigned under mortgage to tenant farmers. Their focus was on the compulsory purchase of untenanted estates so that they could be divided into smaller units for tenants and local families. The history of land usage from 1846 to 1914 is a history of land usage changing back from tillage to pasturage. The chief motivator agent in this immense change was cheap wheat imports from the U.S.A.

After 1922 the Congested District Board (CDB) was absorbed into the Irish Land Commission. From then on, the Land commission concentrated on three areas of work. They were still responsible for the transfer of ownership from landlord to tenant. Secondly it assumed the role of the CDB in congested areas of the West. Thirdly, it was responsible for acquiring and distributing land in other areas of the country and transplanting congested area tenants to other areas. The Land Commission continued its work of making uneconomic holdings more viable. The Land Commission was dissolved on 31st March 1999.

The Labourers (Ireland) Act 1906 and 1911.

The purpose of these Acts was to tackle the problem of housing landless labourers in cottages with one acre. This programme of large-scale state funded rural social housing saw over 40,000 labourer-owned rural cottages erected on one-acre sites. These small parcels of land were for the owners to grow their own vegetables and fruit as well as being able to produce poultry, bacon and honey.

The Irish Land (Provision for Sailors and Soldiers) Act of 1919.

Following the first world war a further 5,000 houses were built in Ireland for returning army soldiers following the war. The act was designed to provide a cottage and a small parcel of land for men who had served in the military, naval and air force in the Great War. These small estates of houses were built at the edge of towns for returned army personnel.

Conclusion:

Five Land Acts were introduced by the United Kingdom between 1878 and 1909. Further Land Acts have been introduced by the Government of the Free State and more passed in Northern Ireland. The success of the Land Acts in reducing the concentration of landlord ownership is indicated by the fact that in 1878 only 3% of Irish farmers owned their own land while 97% were tenants. By 1929 the ratio had been reversed with 97.4% of farmers holding their farms in freehold. However, as Michael Davitt had foreseen, peasant

proprietorship did not cure all ills in the Irish countryside. Emigration and economic disadvantage continued apace while the greatest beneficiaries of land reform were the middle-class medium farmers.

During the Anglo-Irish Trade War which took place 1932-1938 between Great Britain and the Irish Free State, the Irish Government refused to continue reimbursing Britain with the land annuities from the financial loans granted to Irish farmers by the Land Commission under the Land Acts from the 1880's. This provision had been part of the 1921 Anglo-Irish-Treaty. However, De Valera interpreted that these annuities were part of the public debt from which the Free State had been exempted. The Irish Government did not however end its own collection of the annuities (Rent and Rates) that were costing the Irish farmers over £4 million annually. De Valera passed the Land Act 1933 that allowed this money to be spent on local government projects. A settlement to the Economic War in 1938 saw the

potential £3 million per annum land annuities liability to Britain removed by a once off payment to Britain of £10 million. From 1978 on a complete exemption from rates on agricultural land was introduced for most farmers under the Rates on Agricultural Land (Relief) Acts. However, farm taxation was soon to become a reality for the Irish farmer.

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BARON OF BALLYMOTE

Submitted by Derek Davey



Baron of Ballymote - photo taken March 1980.

L-R: Anthony Pettipiece, Noel Reynolds, John T. Regan, Martin Grady, Larry O'Dowd, Tony Pettipiece, Enda Walsh and Gearoid Cassidy.

THE PROTESTANT EXODUS FROM SLIGO

By Padraic Feehily

The early twentieth century saw the transformation of the southern Irish Protestant from a once strong people into an isolated consenting society. Imperialism receding, leaving behind those who for generations upheld its authority and flourished under its umbrella.

Prior to 1641 the population of Sligo town was estimated at 500 souls of which 250 to 300 were English Protestants. It appears Sligo was more successfully planted than many Ulster towns where the average Protestant population was 200.

In the wars of the seventeenth century Catholics and Protestants took opposing sides: Catholics supporting James II whilst Protestants supported William of Orange. The defeat of King James resulted in the Catholic classes losing all power and influence. The Protestant class now became the dominant power.

By the mid-eighteenth century Sligo was the more Protestant populated area in Connacht with a population of 3000 of which half in number were of that faith. Links with Ulster remained strong with Methodism establishing throughout the county. John Wesley, the founder, visited Sligo on no less than eleven occasions, winning many converts.

In 1782 the independence of Ireland came about under Henry Grattan. It became known as Grattan's Parliament and was followed by a period of unprecedented prosperity. Unfortunately, the passing of the Act of Union and the ending of the wars with Napoleon, saw the country go into a period of decline. However,

prosperity returned in the years after the famine. With the coming of the railways opening up trade, the Protestant merchant classes were central to the advancing prosperity of the town. The years following, witnessed the rise of the Catholic middle-class, who for the first time could be proud to see their names share a place with their Protestant business neighbours.

The dawn of the twentieth century witnessed major changes for the governing classes with the passing of the 1898 Local Government Act, whereby power through the ballot box was transferred from the Grand Juries landed Sligo classes to elected county, urban and rural councils. In the following few years the passing of the Wyndham Act, further consolidated the passing of landed estates to the small landowner. This consolidated the ending of political and economic power that comes from ownership of extensive domains, though, in Sligo town, the Protestant upper classes remained influential in financial, business, industrial and legal circles.

The introduction and enforcement of the Ne Temere decree in 1908, made mixed marriages between Roman Catholics and partners of other faiths conditional on the children of such unions being brought up in the Catholic faith, and for the said partner to submit to religious instruction with the aim of converting to Catholicism. The effect of the law would over time deplete the non-Catholic population to a serious extent, especially among the working classes who were mixing every day with their Catholic neighbours.

The continuing administrative problems of distributing the landed estates continued into the twentieth century with the Congested Districts Board (set up by the British Government) attempting to satisfy the demand for land among smallholders and the landless. Local nationalist politicians encouraged poorer farmers to agitate and confiscate the lands still in the hands of large ranchers who still owned over 70,000 acres in the county. The action of the land hungry was spontaneous to the shortage and increasing value of land and had the effect throughout the county with Protestants of being under siege and existing in a state of dislocation from their Catholic neighbours and the protection of the law.

The Protestant Community in Sligo 1914-49. Padraic Deignan

The agrarian troubles were nothing new but the process of the Protestant population becoming a silent, even silenced minority had begun. It accelerated rapidly in the years to follow reaching a peak between 1919 and the period of rebellion and civil war.

Buried Lives. The Protestants of Southern Ireland by Robin Bury.

The Protestants of Sligo, were in the troubled years, almost entirely loyalist. During October 1921 memorials to the dead of the Great War were dedicated in Calry Church and Sligo Grammar School. Despondency was reflected in the church services and functions commemorating the departure of the British Military. "A big loss to Sligo" was the heading of a short editorial in the "Sligo Independent". The same paper during the troubled period in its editorial reinforced the impression of



Queen Mary meets the nuns at Maynooth College in Kildare during a visit in July 1911. Photo: Getty Images February 04 2016 02:30 AM

a people who, if fearful for the future were still proud of their stance and self-confidence.

As early as 1916 there were signs of dissatisfaction among Protestant loyalists with the growth of Sinn Féin. Sir Malby Crofton wrote *"I suppose there is no use in trying to wake up the authorities to the state of things in parts of this county...."*. Interviews with Sligo Unionists in 1916 revealed their poor opinion of government policy and the Chief Secretary A. Birrell who, they claimed, didn't represent the loyalists of Ireland. The general comment on Sligo Loyalists was that they drift from day to day not knowing either what to expect or what to hope for. Charles O'Hara of Annaghmore, a major landlord wrote in 1918, *"Home Rule in any form would be absolutely unthinkable under the existing state of affairs."* After the truce was signed in 1921, he frequently wrote to IRA leaders recognising their de facto positions of authority.

Following the ratification of the Treaty, Sligo Unionists recognised the inevitability of some form of self-government and were weary of the disruption caused by the War of Independence. They were strongly

on the side of ratification while their reaction was positive, they failed to take an active part in the election campaign of 1922.

Having expressed the acceptance of the Treaty, the Protestants of Sligo found it did not result in the much-desired outcome, that of achieving peace. Numerous incidents of intimidation and petty crime continued against them, including commandeering of vehicles and raids for arms and valuables.

Protestants as Victims

Without question there was a sharp and exceptional exodus of Protestants between 1911 and 1926, some of which was caused by intimidation or harassment. Migration and apprehension followed the ending of the Union with Britain. With serious concerns about their future in the new Irish Free State, a list drawn up by Mr. James Cooper, solicitor of Enniskillen, for the Boundary Commission in 1925 suggests that 2117 Protestants migrated from the 26 counties to Co. Fermanagh alone, including seventeen families from Sligo town and county. Three sisters, teachers, Annie, Ruby and Fanny Brown left Sligo town for the new state of Northern Ireland. The late Mrs. Corrie Jones (nee Watson) told the writer some years ago that the congregation at St. John's Church would on some special occasions be as high as eighteen hundred when she was a young girl singing in the choir.

The Flight of Sir Charles Phibbs

One of the families that relied on the British presence were the Phibbses of Lisheen and Doonbeg, Bunnanadden. Originally a Lincolnshire family first mentioned as having taken land at the Baronies of Corran and Tiretagh in 1659.



Queen Mary visiting Maynooth July 1911.



Dickie Chambers at Bellews Shop on extreme right in picture.

From the evidence available they were always on the lookout for more land. In 1877 Charles Phibbs purchased the townland of Doonbeg and built himself a mansion overlooking his domain. One contemporary describes it as “an awe-inspiring effect, something in the nature of a courthouse, something dreary and dangerous.”

At the outset relations with the tenants were cordial though this was believed to be due to the popularity of his wife. Rents were raised in depressing times and constant disputes over whom had rights to what and where were ongoing. In 1901 the United Irish League were on his case over lands on Co. Leitrim. Here he was boycotted. In a letter to the Chief Secretary he complained about the lack of action on the part of the government to protect his interests. In an letter he complained: “The smith who promised to shoe for me refused to do so; the miller sent me a note that he will charge me more than others for meal and this day at the drapery shop an assistant told one of my daughters, that Mr. Keane had given them orders

not to supply my family with any goods at present.”

In 1916, Charles Phibbs died and was buried in the family plot near his home. He was succeeded by his son Charles Jnr. Though regarded as a good and progressive farmer, it was claimed he inherited the arrogant traits of his father.

During the War of Independence he was viewed as the chief British sympathiser in the district, a situation he seemed to relish at first. He refused to retire as a Grand Juror on the quarter sessions (district court) even though the local IRA unit kidnapped him and threatened to shoot him but the British military presence seems to have guaranteed his safety.

The truce and subsequent Anglo-Irish Treaty further compounded his difficulties. Charles Phipps was now on his own and the IRA had not forgotten his stand during the troubles. On the night of 21st May 1922 a grave was dug in front of his own front door with the epitaph:

Here lies the remains of Charles Phibbs

Who died with a ball of lead in his ribs.

His tenants are all aggrieved at how quick he went

For he went of a sudden without lifting the rent.

Slogans were also painted on the walls of his house. The writing was on the wall for Charles Phibbs. The threats and attacks were taking their toll. In the end he packed his bags and left Ireland, attempting to start a new life in North Wales. Not all were glad to see the Phibbs family leave. The Easter Vestry of the Church of Ireland unanimously passed a resolution sympathising with his family. “For having to leave their home in Doonbeg and the loss they have sustained in doing so!

In 1925 the Irish Grants Committee was set up by the British government accepting responsibility for the losses suffered by loyalists during the troubles. A wide range of cases were considered, including claims of losses by landlords, shopkeepers, farmers, disbanded RIC officers and their dependents, ex-servicemen, business people and some Protestant clergymen. Both Catholic and Protestant denominations submitted claims.

Mr. Joseph Graham carried on an ironmongery and gunsmith business in Castle Street and was an ardent supporter of the Crown and one who was most vocal in the local press in his opposition to the 1916 Rising. During the years 1919 to 1921 when murder and anarchy was rampant, Joseph Graham did not content himself with disunification but took an active part in bringing to justice the perpetrators of crime through his assistance to the offices of law enforcement but his unbridled enthusiasm was to have unexpected results.

After the Truce his business was boycotted, and he was forced out of



The flight of Sir Charles Phibbs

business in 1924. Though he blamed his treatment on republican elements, he was unable to produce documentation and accounts to that effect, thus his application for compensation from the Grants Committee was turned down. Catholic shopkeepers, though small in number also suffered as badly as Protestants. John R. Keating had a hardware business in Thomas Street. he was on friendly terms with the RIC and suspected of giving information which led to the arrest of a prominent republican in 1915. He claimed to have rendered other assistance to the police though he was unprepared to commit information to paper. Keating was awarded £2050 pounds.

The most detailed claim submitted came through the offices of Mr. George Williams of Oakfield and Union Place. Georgie, as he is remembered by in rhyme and song – even one hundred years hence was a man of imagination, flexibility and dexterous application, though when the occasion warranted, displayed a formidable talent for converting loyalty to the Crown into hard cash.

Williams claim for compensation is noted from the year 1912, when he claimed his loyalty to the Crown had an adverse effect on his business earnings. Though his patriotic credentials were established years earlier, in 1901 he instructed his staff to put in place and light tar barrels at strategic positions around the town to mark the succession to the throne of Edward VII.

Mr Williams had a substantial flour importing business shipping into Sligo as much as seventy tons a month. His submission claim account showed a falling off in trade (sales) from as far back as 1912 and continued thereafter the years following the signing of the Treaty, until 1928.

The terms of reference of the Irish Grants Committee were narrow: *those who suffered for their loyalty to the Crown.*

Some businesses were boycotted though unable to prove it was as a result of loyalty to the Crown. Williams used a number of approaches and differing sources to substantiate his claim. As a landlord he claimed his agent could not collect rent and was threatened by the tenants who were “now” paying the rent to Sinn Fein. His detailed documentation made him one of the more successful applicants being awarded £7000 pounds in compensation.

Many years ago, the writer visited the home of the late Dickie Chambers to view some old photographs. Dickie was for many years manager of Bellew Bros. in Grattan Street. In the course of conversation over a cup of tea he broached in a friendly way the subject of discrimination against Protestants in Southern Ireland.

At the outset he suggested that, many did not want, at the formation of the Irish Free State, to serve in the Free State Civil Service. This point was confirmed years later by Ted Smith of Barton Smith who stated, “*they felt they had better prospects of promotion in England.*”

Dickie further claimed that applicants of the Protestant faith had difficulty securing a placement in the new Free State. Reacting to this assertion the writer thought of a gentleman who didn’t live a mile away; worked in a government department and was of the Protestant faith.

“*Ah yes*” said Dickie “*but how did he get the job?*” To which the writer admitted he had no idea! Dickie smiled “*he put his name on the application form in Irish.*”

The above claim was confirmed by Dr. Padraic Deignan and expanded. His research revealed that the Free State government was in the first instance loyal to those of whom supported them during the Civil War. Again, the question of allegiance to the fledgling new State was a competing factor. If the powers were to be believed applicants of other faiths who showed a favourable disposition towards Gaelic culture, this would be considered in their favour. (*Concluded Dr. Deignan*).

The desire to force black and white conclusions on events that happened or believed to have happened is an ever-ending temptation. This applies in our own county as elsewhere. The facts, seldom searched for, would not in truth stand up in a court of law for two minutes but it’s a comforting ignorance to believe them. The tragic element of the power shift that took place was that those who suffered most were those who never had much power in the first place, even those refuted to be defined by decline. (*Smyllies Ireland*)

In the 1911 census for Sligo town are listed hundreds of those Protestant denominations. Sadly, forces far beyond their control forced many to forego the religion of their birth. Listed here are some of those names: Mahon, Henderson, Nairn, Meldrum, Blain, Monds, Young, Stuart, Holms, Johnson, Smith, Williams and Walls.

Copies of Padraic Feehily’s books may be purchased in Liber and Eason’s Bookshops in Sligo and in bookshops throughout the country.

FORGES IN SOUTH SLIGO

Submitted by Padraig Duddy

The following two stories about Corley's Forge and O'Grady's Forge were written by P.J Duffy in the 1990's and included in the 1997 Coleman Heritage Centre publication - *'Place of Legend : Place of Genius, Stories and Lore of Coleman Country.'* Pat James Duffy (1930-2015) born in Killavil, was a great storyteller and writer and was a major contributor to *'The Corran Herald'*. He has also written several books on the history of the local South Sligo area.

Paddy Corley was a blacksmith and a musician and lived close by to the renowned fiddle player Michael Coleman. He was well known for his shebeen, his homemade poteen and mighty sessions of music.

Session Down At Corley's Forge

At Knockrower, just a couple of miles down the road from Coleman's abode, Paddy Corley, the blacksmith kept his door open to all musicians who came from near and far. Corley was unique, in the fact that he operated a shebeen, a sort of illegal 'speak easy', where beer and spirits were on offer in small quantities. Usually stocks held here consisted of a couple of barrels of beer and a few bottles of spirits. When a large crowd turned up, Corley would push his anvil to one side and make his forge available for the sale of liquor. Music and dancing would take place in the dwelling house which was situated opposite the forge.

The Coleman brothers played frequently here and were, it would seem, great friends of Corley. The forge was the place where almost every travelling man stopped for a chat and to rest his weary bones. The smith would be there by his anvil, pounding the red hot iron into shape. When the smith was a musician, you were likely to find many people calling. Corley's was the focal point

where musicians like Kipeen Scanlon, Pat Coyle, Johnny Gorman and many lesser known names, intermittently dropped in for a session. There was Thomas (The Blind) Healy, who was, according to reports, the great exponent who taught them all. There was yet another reason why they all stopped in at Corley's: the dropeen of porter or the deorim of spirits on a cold winter's evening. Paddy was never without a drop in th coffer.

Then you had the regulars who called once or twice a week for a tune and a drink. For them, this was a great social occasion and they enjoyed every minute of it. From the Culfadda area came John (Darkie) Hannon, a noted melodeon player, and a very fine tin whistle player, named Martin Gallagher, who worked for a number of farmers in and around the Killavil area. Also from Culfadda came John Joe Brehony, a very sweet violin player, and others including Derrig, Feeney and Killoran.

There were often times when Corley's tiny kitchen would be packed to capacity with nothing else but musicians and their instruments. Not only would there be musicians, but ballad singers and step dancers as well. In the Summer time, sessions would be held out of doors in a garden beside the dwelling house. Corley would remove the forge door from its hinges and lay it down on the street, then the dancers could display their agility and skill by stepping it out on the door. Set dancing would take place on the roadway, right between the dwelling house and the forge.

Paddy Corley passed away in 1912 at the age of 47 years. He died following a bout of pneumonia, contracted after a heavy day's work, sledging red hot iron in his forge. Corley's wife, Mary, and four daughters survived him.

Mary lived on until the mid-forties, and up until a couple of years before her death, she kept the old session going at her house. As a young boy, I distinctly remember being present at one of the last of them, and can clearly recall Paddy and Winnie Horan playing their fiddles. Little did I realise that I was then witnessing the end of an era in music, which in bygone days had brought together some of the greatest music makers of that particular period in time.

There was also some fine ballad singers around at the time. Michael Philips lived next door to Corley's. He possessed a lovely voice and usually sang the songs of Percy French. There were many more, including from Culfadda, a very talented singer named John O'Gara.

Some people would say that it was at Corley's that Coleman learned and found titles for two of his famous tunes - 'Bonnie Kate' and 'Jenny's Chickens'. The story being that Bonnie Kate was Corley's little girl Kate, and Jenny's chickens were hatched from a setting of eggs given to the Corley family by a woman named Jenny Freehil.

During the thirties, Corley's daughter Annie, met Michael Coleman in New York. Among the many things the pair discussed were the parties and sessions held at her fathers place back in the old country. Although Corley had been dead for a few years before he left home, Coleman still harboured very fond memories of the days and nights he spent "down at the forge" and of Annie's dear father, "the great little man who made it all happen."

During a conversation I had with Corley's daughter, Mrs Kate McTiernan, in the early sixties, she talked about her father and the mighty

sessions of music held at their home when she was a little girl. She recalled the Coleman brothers, Jim and Michael, sitting beside the kitchen fire playing their fiddles. They were accompanied by Johnny and Jimmy Hunt, who were very good flute players. She also made reference to seeing Michael Coleman step dancing on their kitchen floor.



James Gormley (grandson of Paddy Corley) with Paddy Doddy outside Corley's Forge, May 2023 - ready for some music!

There are other articles about Paddy Corley in previous Corran Herald's - 'The Village Blacksmith' by P.J. Duffy, TCH, Issue 4, 1986 and 'Corley's Christmas Party' by P.J. Duffy, TCH, Issue 16, 1988.

O'Grady's Forge, Gurteen

For a period of time that reaches well back to the days of the last century, members of the O'Grady family have



Seamus McTiernan (grandson of Paddy Corley) at Corley's Forge in Knockraver.

been engaged in the ancient craft of metalwork in a forge situated near hand to Gurteen village. In days gone by, those people used to be referred to as 'Blacksmiths', 'Farriers', and 'Shoers' of horses and donkeys. They played a very important role in society and a good smith was much in demand when it came to instances where a good job of welding was required.

Martin Joe O'Grady and his son Pat, at the present time, carry on many of the arts and crafts of a trade that was taught to them by their forefathers. Although they have extended and revamped their forge and added such facilities as electric welding, angle grinding and power drilling, they have, I am glad to state, retained the old elevated forge hearth which holds the coal furnace and bellows. Besides this stands an old cut stone tank, almost three hundred years old, which was used and is still being used to cool the hot irons. In times gone past, many people sincerely believed that there was a cure in the water that cooled the smith's iron. People afflicted with infections like festering sores, ulcers and septic wounds would dip their infected limbs into the water and hope for relief.

Some members of the O'Grady family were renowned for their abilities to relieve and cure ailments in both horses and donkeys. Martin Joe's grandfather was reputed to have the ability to correct and cure impediments like sprains and spavins in the limbs of those working animals. It has been said that the secret of his success lay in the methods he adopted when shoeing the animal. These singular gifts have no doubt been passed on to the present generation of O'Gradys who now reside in our midst.

During the course of a conversation I recently had with Martin Joe O'Grady, he told me of times in his youth when there would be long queues of people, many of them in charge of horses and donkeys, waiting at the forge to get jobs of work done,

This type of congestion usually took place during the early months of the year, when the farming community would be preparing to do their spring work.. There would be animals to be shod, plough irons to be pointed, and mountings to be fitted to swingles and harrows. This was a time of year when the going was tough and you certainly 'earned your money by the sweat of your brow'.



O'Grady's Blacksmiths Forge, Gurteen, Co. Sligo (photo courtesy of the Coleman Heritage Centre).

He also told me of the time leading up to World War 2, when somebody tipped his father off that war was coming and stocks of iron, which were necessary for his trade, would be difficult to obtain. His father, at once, set about storing up large stocks of iron to steer him over the crisis. It was a wise move and one that was to repay rich dividends. Not alone did iron become scarce, it was rationed and therefore difficult to obtain.

Martin Joe's grandfather also had a reputation for shoeing horses for the landed gentry. The McDermotts of Coolavin and the Costelloes of Kilfree called regularly to his forge to have their valuable bloodstock shod and treated for various ailments. Despite all the professional advice available to them at the time, they had always great confidence in the smith's ability to look after their animals.

Down through the years, Martin Joe O'Grady, who is also a musician (flute player), has been an outstanding figure in the social and entertainment life of Gurteen and its surrounding areas.



The Travelling Smithy (photo courtesy of the Coleman Heritage Centre).

Reference:

P.J Duffy, Chapter 2, Session Down At The Forge in Place of Legend: Place of Genius, *Stories and Lore of Coleman Country*, Coleman Heritage Centre, Gurteen, Co. Sligo 1997, pp19-26.

Martin Joe passed away in 2018. His son Pat O'Grady continues the family owned business, O'Grady & Son Engineering. making both old style and new wrought iron gates and all types of metalwork products.

Another forge in the Ballymote area

In The Schools Collection (duchas.ie), there is a story, 'The Forges in My District', by Seán Ó Faoláin from Ráth Maoláin NS dated 22nd June, 1938. He says – "The nearest forge to one

in Rathmullen is Patrick Gaffney's. There is a stream beside the forge for giving horses drinks and for cooling the irons." There is also an article about the Rathmullen blacksmith, Pat Gaffney, in The Corran Herald, Issue 17, 1989, pp 7-9, written by P.J. Duffy. Pat Gaffney came from a family of smiths - his father (also Pat) and his brother, Batty Gaffney, were also blacksmiths further in the Culfadda road. Sometime before the outbreak of World War 1, Pat joined the British Army and ended up in the trenches at Flanders. He was taken from the combat zone when he volunteered to shoe the Colonels high spirited horse and afterward, he became employed shoeing horses for the whole cavalry away from the battle. He returned to Ireland where he continued as a blacksmith in Rathmullen. Pat was, by all accounts, a man with a great sense of humour. He died in 1960 at the age of 83 years.



The remains of Patrick Gaffney's forge beside Rathmullen Bridge on the Ballymote to Gurteen road.

A local forge in Bunninadden

A forge in Bunninadden is mentioned in 'Local Forges' submitted by Dorothy McDonagh from Doocastle NS for The Schools Collection (duchas.ie). She says – "There are three forges at present in use in this parish. One is owned by Pat Henry of Lugmore, another by Tom Gorman of Quarryfield and the other by John Feehily of Bunninadden." The Feehily forge was located nearby the ruins of Cloonameehan Abbey and the cemetery and is in the townland of Meelick Park, Bunninadden. John

(Jack) Feehily's father, Patrick, was also a blacksmith here.

Dorothy goes on to describe the local forges in the area – "There are only plain doors and roofs on all those forges and there is one fireplace in each of them. The implements used by smiths are a sledge, big hammer, anvil, punch, hack-saw, pliers, pincers, rasp and wrench. Each of the smiths shoe donkeys and horses, they also make farm implements, such as turf spades, loys, harrow-pins and the parts of ploughs. The only forge-work done in open air is the tightening of cart-tyres, this is done beside the forges. It is believed that forge-water has the power of curing toothache."



Niamh Doddy and Jamie Doddy getting a foal ready for the farrier in Ardconnell, Ballymote - May 2023.



Pat O'Grady with Padraig Doddy, May 2023.



John (Jack) Feehily's forge in Bunninadden.

COUNTRY KITCHENS

By Mary Kelly White

The smell of turf smoke has always enchanted me since I was a little girl and my uncle John took my two sisters and me on a holiday with our Granny in the country. We only had two hours' notice and we got our few clothes together with great anticipation and excitement. We were two miles out of Sligo when my younger sister said "Will this bus ever move, everything else is moving?" and right enough houses and telephone poles and fields and trees were flying past. "We are at Carraroe" my uncle laughed. "It is we who are moving not everything else."

We walked the two miles from the bus stop in Riverstown to the thatched house in Rossmore. I didn't know we had arrived when we stopped to talk to "the crinoline lady" with the big long skirts and the low, low voice. While we chatted at the gate my lungs were filled with the smell of turf smoke. I didn't realize it was the smell of turf smoke. I thought it was just the smell of the country because we lived in a three storey street house in the heart of Sligo town and the smells we got were from coffee grinders, bakeries and tobacco shops. It was only years later when I came to live in a bungalow in suburbia and was burning turf myself that the reality of the tantalizing scent dawned on me.

After the pleasantries at the gate we were ushered into the yellow lamp-lighted kitchen where the flames from the fresh turf fire licked the big black three-legged pot which was hanging from the crane crook on the open hearth fire. While we were eating, the crinoline lady- our Granny, removed the coals and the lid from another black metal oven revealing a big white crack in the brown crust of a delicious smelling soda cake. I was drunk on smells and still reeling as I write. How did they do it?

There was an old dresser converted into a bookcase in the kitchen and I'm sure there were lots of good books in it but my favourite was *The Old*

Man Book Of Limericks. I almost learned it off by heart. I used to read the limericks out loud for the ever busy granny while she was baking or making vast pots of porridge, or huge dinners of cabbage and bacon – more delicious smells- but she never got the jokes and she always explained the limerick;

*"There was an old man
who drank whiskey
Which made him exceedingly frisky
He stood on his head
At the foot of the bed
And his wife said my dear
but that's risky."*

"He was drunk." And she continued sifting the flour for the cake.

Our Granny must have had great patience but we were well advised too. Our mother warned us to stay in bed in the mornings until Grandma told us it was time to get up. Luckily she did because Granny didn't seem to go to bed at all. She was up moving quietly around the kitchen when the grandfather clock on the wall over the open fire chimed all hours of the night.

One morning we thought she had forgotten about us, then she crept quietly into our room filling the doorway with her big skirts and shawled head and shoulders. She had a sheaf of ironed and folded gents' handkerchiefs in her hands. The smothering iron was something else. It was a box-iron, boast in the middle, with a wooden handle, triangular shape with a trap-door at the flat end. There were triangular metal irons to fit into the box which were heated red hot in the fire, or else the box was filled with hot coals and emptied when the coals got cold. How they managed to iron anything clean I'll never know and why they ever bothered to iron gents' hankies at all is beyond my liberated woman's brain nowadays, but iron they did, in the small hours of the morning, while the men were peacefully at rest almost to the point of R.I.P.

The good granny, God rest her, stood there in the room apologising for losing one of our socks. We had hung our tiny white socks on the crook with the men's homespun and one of our socks had gone missing.

"I searched everywhere for it" the poor sad Granny lamented but I cannot find it. You will have to get up and look for it yourselves."

There was a great burst of aborted laughter when Granny turned to put the folded hankies into the bag with the running string which was hanging on the back of our bedroom door and there on her shoulder was the sock.

"You look after them Owen" she said to our uncle Owen one day as we sat around the big table laden with huge dinner plates full of potatoes, chicken and vegetables and she went outside. I was finished first, I got up from the table and I crossed the floor to the bookcase.

"Come back here" my uncle said, "I forgot to look after you." When I was leaving the table the second time there was a loud crack from the logs on the fire.

"No need to look after you," he laughed, "you are ok." Everyone laughed.

Ramblers came to the house at night, neighbours, mostly men and they sat around the open fire, talking and laughing. Uncle Owen would coax us to sing songs and recite recitations and he would play the concert flute if he had remembered to soak the wooden parts in water for an hour or two earlier that evening. Between us we would make tea and a big feed of fresh soda bread, butter and raspberry jam from the big 2lb jar. No wonder my nostrils twitched. Then we would say the Rosary on bended knees with our rear ends towards the fire and go to bed. I think this was siesta time for Granny.

CUSTOMS ASSOCIATED WITH DEATH IN RURAL IRELAND

by Micheál Murphy

BOUGHT OF JOHN ROONEY, GENERAL DRAPER, OUTFITTING and READYMADES
Agent for Balbriggan Hosiery, Battersby Hats, Eversmooth Rubber-lined Ties.
TERMS—CASH.

2 yds Black Silk	2/6	4 0
6 White Handkerchiefs	6d	3 0
6 " "	1d	6
3 Semi Reg. Collars	8	2 0
4 Knots of Tape		4
6 yds White Lace	1/6	6 0
1 1/2 " Cross curtain	1/6	1 6
5 yds Habit material	9/4	9 4
6 1/2 " Brown Ribbon	8	4 10 1/2
3 1/2 " White for shroud	8d	2 4
Thread (Creek)		6
Making Habit		4 0
Blouse		1 6
Total		£3 0 1 1/2
10% discount		3 11 1/2
		£3 7 0

Received of Mrs. M. J. Murphy
13th March 1939

TO A/C P. H. CAMPBELL, Motor Hearse & Saloon Cars for Hire.
Oak, Elm & Deal Coffins — All Funeral Requisites Supplied

on 1st oak coffin, Hearse	12 10 0
Motor to Chapel	12 10 0
next day to	
12 Runs to	1 10 0
Total	£14 0 0

13th March 1939
P. H. Campbell
(as requested) (with thanks)

BOUGHT OF John McDonagh, TEA WINE SPIRIT & PROVISION MERCHANT

9 Malt	£6 15 0
2 lbs of Tea	6 8
2 st sugar	7 0
6 2lb bottles of Jam	8 6
John Candles	1 4
Gross Pipes	10 0
2 lbs Tobacco	1 2 8
2 Bottles Wine	11 0
1 Bottle Whiskey	15 0
5 Half Rum	3 9
8 Bottles Stout	4 0
1 pint Whiskey	12 0
18 Bottles stout	9 0
2 whiskeys	1 8
2 Bottles stout	1 0
1 Half whiskey & 1/2 stout	2 8
1 bottle of Whiskey	4 0
1 Bottle stout	2 0
1/2 bottle of Whiskey	1 0
2 Bottles stout	
3 gallons stout	15 0
13 By Cash	£14 11 4

13th March 1939
Close stocked in Large Variety

Some of the expenses incurred at a funeral in Swinford in 1939.

According to statistics, 65% of deaths in 1949 occurred at home, where the dying person was cared for by family members. When it became obvious that death was approaching, a habit was purchased in the local drapers, who employed a dressmaker to make it, blue for a woman or brown for a man. The habit was then blessed by the priest. As the person lay dying, the habit was drawn up over their left arm and a lighted candle was placed in their right hand, to light the way on their final journey. A messenger was sent to summon the priest who administered the sacrament of Extreme Unction or the final anointing, now known as the Last Rites. Extreme Unction included Confession as well as the reception of Holy Communion known as *Viaticum* (food for the journey) if the person was physically able to receive those sacraments. It also included the anointing with Holy Oil.

Laying out

As soon as possible after death, the clock was stopped and any mirror in the house was covered or turned to face the wall. A local “handy” woman, who had experience in the laying out of a corpse, was called in. She was usually accompanied by an assistant who was not a family member. In some parts of the country three women performed the laying-out. If the deceased was male, then a man had to shave the corpse. The water used in washing the corpse was treated with great care and had to be discarded in a sheltered but sunny location, often under a hawthorn tree where it would not be trampled on. The origin or rationale for such customs has been lost with the passage of time but it was in some way a sign of respect for the spirit of the dead. Sometimes a “death-band” known as the *marbhfaisc* was tied over the head and under the chin to keep the mouth

closed until *rigor mortis* set in. Penny coins were placed on the eyes to keep them closed. The task of laying out a corpse was done with great care and attention to ensure that the remains were placed “overboard” to their best advantage, with no room for criticism by neighbours.

Sometimes the corpse was laid out in a bed, either in the “out-shot” in the kitchen or in the bedroom. The bed was dressed in white sheets and a white quilt, with the walls around it also draped in white and decorated with black bows. In the early 1900s, the coffin was made by a local carpenter. When the “ready-made” coffins became available, it was the norm for the corpse to be laid out in a coffin under the kitchen window. An image of Our Lady was displayed on the breast of a woman while the man usually had an image of the Sacred Heart. A table alongside was covered



Irish clay tobacco pipe (duidín)

in a white cloth on which stood a crucifix, a candle-stand with three or sometimes five candles, a bowl of holy water and a sprinkler made from plaited straw.

The Wake

While the laying out was in progress, two or three men from the family went to town for “the burial”. As well as the coffin, the burial list included essentials such as tea, sugar, loaves of bread, jam, whiskey and porter, together with a large supply of plug tobacco, clay-pipes (*duidíns*) and cigarettes and in the earlier years, snuff was included too. No payment was made until after the funeral. In most cases, the undertaker arranged for distant relatives to be notified by telegram and the arrival of a telegram was dreaded; it usually heralded bad news. Few houses in rural Ireland had a telephone before 1980.

As news of the death spread through the village, all work except what was essential such as milking and feeding cattle, ceased. Everybody came to the corpse house “to pay their respects”, even those who may not have been on good terms with the deceased. As each visitor entered, they knelt to say a prayer for the departed and blessed themselves and the corpse with holy water before sympathising with the mourners. Everyone was then invited to take a cigarette or a pipe of tobacco. On accepting, it was traditional to say, “Lord, have mercy on the dead” and from this custom, cigarettes or

pipes came to be known as “the Lord have mercies”. It was considered discourteous to refuse, even if you were a non-smoker. The plate of snuff was passed around frequently during the wake and the tobacco smoke and snuff acted as a deodoriser as well as a help to those trying to stay awake.

Customs at Wakes

The wake generally lasted two nights before the corpse was taken to the graveyard for burial. (Mass would be offered at a later date for the repose of the soul of the deceased). During the wake, the rosary and the litany were recited frequently. Men from the locality stayed up all night and women took turns to help with catering. Supplies of *poitín* or whiskey and porter were doled out as well as tea with plates of bread with butter and jam. Two men were engaged in cutting and “teasing” the plug tobacco and filling and distributing the clay pipes.

If the funeral was that of a young person, the wakes were solemn and sombre affairs but if the deceased was elderly, the wake became more of a social occasion, even a celebration. The night hours were spent in extolling the virtues of the deceased, in story-telling, singing and sometimes in playing games. The games were often physical in nature and folklore tells us that they frequently became over-boisterous, fuelled by alcohol which was freely distributed. When this happened, it was considered disrespectful to the dead and to the bereaved family and in time it earned the disapproval of the Church. By 1930 or so, the church authorities decreed that the remains of the deceased should be removed to the Church on the eve of the funeral. Some of the old customs continued however. When the coffin was taken from the house, it was left on two chairs outside the front door. Where possible, four men who shared the same surname as the deceased, carried the coffin. As soon as the coffin was placed in the cart or the hearse the chairs which had supported it were

upturned. In the early years of the last century, the keening women were still employed to “cry” (*caoin*) the dead and their loud, wailing cries could be heard for a considerable distance.

The following morning a solemn High Mass was offered for the repose of the soul of the dead person. As well as the main celebrant, there was a deacon and a subdeacon on the altar, all wearing black chasubles. Priests from neighbouring parishes were called in to help in the celebration of the *Requiem* and the choir sang the *Kyrie*, the *Sanctus*, the *Agnus Dei*, etc. in Latin. At that time the laity did not actively participate in the liturgy. Close relatives of the deceased were dressed fully in black and they continued to wear black for at least a month. A widow might wear black for a full year after the death of her spouse. Sometimes a diamond-shaped patch of black material was stitched onto her coat sleeve to indicate that the woman was in mourning. Bereaved men wore a black tie and those in mourning attended no social events for six months or even a year.

Burial

It was a tradition for the grave to be dug by two neighbouring men who were not relatives but it was considered unlucky to open a grave on a Monday. Refreshments, including whiskey, were supplied to the gravediggers. When the job was complete, the spade and shovel were placed over the grave in the form of a cross. The coffin was carried feet first into the graveyard and was always buried so that the corpse faced the rising sun to the east. In the days when the remains were taken directly from the house to the graveyard, a designated man brought a container of clay, which had been blessed by the priest, to the graveside as well as a bottle of holy water and he led the prayers. While the grave was being filled in, someone began to recite the rosary and the ending of that prayer was timed to coincide with the closing of the grave. Green scraws were placed on top but flowers were

not used. It was a tradition in some places that the clay pipes which had been used at the wake were broken and placed on the grave. Nobody left the graveside while the work was in progress. Afterwards people generally visited the graves of their own relatives before going home.

Some other traditions were observed until relatively recent times in relation to funerals. If you met a funeral, it was important to turn and walk three steps along with it (*trí coiscéim na marbh*). A pregnant woman did not enter a graveyard at the time of a burial lest her child be born with some impediment. If the deceased was the parent of a young family, each child was passed from one side of the grave to a relative on the other side. Reasons for such customs have been lost in antiquity but tradition dies hard.

Conclusion

The death of a family member was naturally a time of great sadness and anxiety but it was also a time when neighbours came together in great numbers to support the bereaved. Even after the funeral, the women who were involved in laying out the corpse returned to the house to wash all the linen and coverings which had been used. However, funerals were expensive and oftentimes debts were incurred which sometimes had to be paid off over many years. But family pride must be upheld and to be told, "She got a great send-off" or "Ye buried him dacent" was far more important than to be accused of penny-pinching.

As the number and size of hospitals and nursing homes increased, fewer people died at home and hospitals had

their own mortuaries where remains were laid out. Gradually, undertakers opened their own funeral homes which reduced the stress and discomfort on the bereaved and made it easier for those who wished to meet and offer sympathy to the family. More recently a custom has developed whereby the remains are returned to the family home for the night before the funeral Mass or interment, which echoes the wake of old and in a small way forms a link between the life spent on earth and the new life just beginning.

LOUGH TALT – A DEEP HISTORY

By Pat Mc Carrick

*As I stand here alone on the mountain
And gaze down on the valley below
My eyes gently fall on the shadows
As they dance round Lough Talt's
lovely shore. (By Alfie Deehan local songwriter)*

Lough Talt rests at a crossing point in the Ox Mountains, among the peaks on the main road between Tubbercurry and Bonnichonlon. If there was a contest for lakes, it would soon be on its way to represent Ireland at the Lakes of the World beauty pageant.

Legend has it that the lake is as deep as the mountain beside it is high. These days, disproving this old theory is not difficult. The mountain peak that overlooks the lake, Crummus, is 1,161 feet high while the waters below sink only 130 feet to lake bed. Despite spoiling that old legend, plenty remains about the lake that makes it a most interesting place. While once the location of ancient settlements, a holiday destination and

a bountiful trout lake, the lake now holds sway as a natural reservoir and a tranquil beauty spot.

Crannógs and Char

Eleven-year-old Maggie Ann Mullarkey of Masshill in County Sligo, contributed a piece about Lough Talt to the National Folklore Collection in 1938. The story was given to her by her grandfather, Pat Mullarkey, and in it they recount the legend of how the lake was formed.

In our neighbouring district in the parish of Kilmactiege is a lake called "Lough Talt" which the old stories tell us was formed by enchantment. It is supposed that Lough Easkey, Lough Talt and Lough Owen were three sisters and they were changed by a spell into three lakes. They will remain in that state until the end of time. (The Schools' Collection, Volume 0171, Page 213).

Lough Talt, is in fact, a glacial lake. It was carved out by the awesome power of retreating glaciers about 10,000 years ago, at the end of the last Ice Age. We still get reminders of that Ice Age each winter when making this, often-perilous mountain crossing on the borders of Sligo and Mayo.

The remains of crannógs, at either end of the square kilometre lake, are the next reminder of times past. Crannógs were artificially constructed sites for houses or settlements; made of timber, sometimes of stone, and usually constructed in the shallows of a lake. They were fortified and connected to the shore by a simple causeway. They existed as far back as 2,500 years ago and may have been in use until the early 1700s.

Today, the lake is principally a brown trout lake, although not the brown trout lake it once was. It is also reputed to contain some specimens of Arctic



Lough Talt

char. Arctic char is one of the rarest fish species in Britain and Ireland, found mainly in deep, cold, glacial lakes. The Arctic char is closely related to both salmon and lake trout.

Standing on the lake shore, it is easy enough to imagine the scene; without the hum of passing traffic or the ping of mobile phones, the crannóg dwellers of Lough Talt sitting out on their decking of a summer's evening, rod in hand, worm in water, hoping to attract an unsuspecting char that would offer itself as a sacrifice to be savoured for breakfast the following morning.

Holiday Destination

I was pleasantly surprised to discover from the writings of Rev. James Greer that the lake once had a thriving tourist economy. Greer visited Lough Talt when he was compiling his essays on the *Windings of the Moy* in about 1920. He gives a glowing account of the hustle, bustle and hospitality of the place at that time.

Lough Talt deserves a word of notice. It comes suddenly into view on the highest point of the road from Bonniconlon to the Gap, and nestles so calm and still between Knock-na-

Sliegie on one side and Mount Taff on the other side. The beach of pebbles snow white, the entourage of rugged mountains, the unruffled sheet of deep water over a mile in length and nearly a mile in breadth, the islets, and the several boats, sailing and fishing, the shadows of the mountains in the brightness of a summer day, the cosy hotel at an estuary of the lake, where boats are beached ready for hire.

My advice to those tired of our sea resorts and the melancholy ocean and suts and sounds of towns and cities is to turn their thoughts to Lough Talt, its boats, its fishing gear, its mountains, cliffs, and gorges, and its cosy hotel, and spend a week, or part of a week, there as a pleasing, profitable and healthful variety.

Miss Kilgannon, the lady at the hotel, is not the least prominent feature of this lovely lake. The accommodation is good, the prices moderate, the article genuine, and the gracious curiosity, as well as the lone lake and the sweet strand, is a thing to be remembered.

Recent Decades

The lake continues to be a dazzling centrepiece since Greer passed that way more than a hundred years ago.

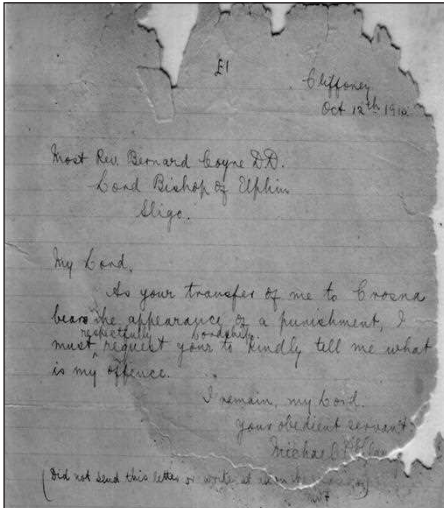
Since then, however, emigration took a severe toll on the local population - while the lake is a jewel, the land around it is poor and unsupportive. For some years in the 1960s and the 1970s, when travel became easier and fish were more plentiful, countless fishermen from Europe and beyond came to enjoy the thrill of whipping a lively trout from Talt's pristine depths. Around this time also, the lake presented itself as a ready-made reservoir, its height above sea level and the quality of its waters proving ideal for providing a constant fresh water supply to the growing population of south Sligo. The water treatment plant built at that time was recently replaced with a new, state-of-the-art facility. This upgrade was the subject of much debate and deliberation. One major sticking point centred around the presence of a local snail and his small family. The snail, Mr. Vertigo Geyeri, is a wetland snail that is high on the endangered list here in Ireland.

A walking trail, created in recent years, now surrounds the lake and provides a safe and worthwhile trek of several kilometres. The trail has since been extended to take in a portion of the mountain on the opposite side of the main road. It is well worth a visit on a Sunday afternoon at any time of year and I would recommend that the visitor allows enough time to enjoy a picnic by the lake shore.

Despite tough farming conditions and a history of emigration, the people of the Lough Talt region remain a resilient bunch, with a real passion for their place and its traditions. Walking by the lake on a still winter evening, it is easy to imagine the sounds of a house party of old emanating from a nearby cottage, complete with fiddles, flutes and accordion. Another echo often heard in the valley is the loud thump and resultant cheer as a card player slams the five of trumps on the table, preventing the 'twenty man' from going game.

THE LOST LETTERS OF FATHER MICHAEL O'FLANAGAN

Submitted by Martin Byrne



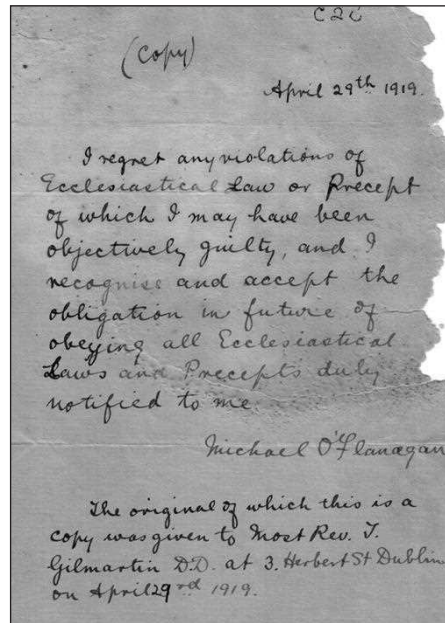
12 Oct 1915.

In 2016, while researching Father Michael O'Flanagan, a remarkable collection of recently discovered documents was drawn to my attention. When a niece of Father O'Flanagan passed away, a collection of letters, speeches, telegrams and photographs was found among her possessions. The set of papers mainly covers the period from late 1915, when O'Flanagan was removed from his position as a curate in Cliffoney, to November 1st 1920, the day Kevin Barry was executed.

The documents reveal the behind the scenes events during which O'Flanagan was suspended twice for his political activities and reveal many details of his struggle with sanctions and disciplinary measures taken against him by his Bishop, Dr. Bernard Coyne.

Removal from Cliffoney

A set of seventeen typed pages labelled autobiography, a document O'Flanagan was working on in 1920, recount his time in Cliffoney and subsequent transfer to the parish of Crossna. This essay explains many



29 April 1919.

of the events that took place during O'Flanagan's fifteen month residency in Cliffoney. He received the news of his transfer from Roscommon to Cliffoney while staying in Rome, having been invited to deliver a series of Lenten sermons in 1914, a few months before the outbreak of World War I.

"Towards the end of the Lent, however, I received a letter from the Bishop asking me to return to Ireland as soon as I had finished my course of sermons. This was the first hint I got that some unfriendly influence was being used against me with his lordship. However I did not attach much importance to it at the time."

O'Flanagan seems to have been transferred because of a dispute with his Roscommon superior Canon Cummins, himself a native of the parish of Ahamlish. Consequently, upon his transfer to Cliffoney, O'Flanagan refused to take a room in the Parochial house or local hotel

which was owned and operated by two of Cummins' brothers. He rented rooms privately in Mullaghmore, and enjoyed swimming in the harbour at night.

"Every night just before going to bed, I put on an overcoat and a pair of slippers, and marched down to the head of the Pier. When one goes out swimming at night, at least in Mullaghmore at that time of the year, every stroke starts thousands of little phosphorescent lights shining in the water, with the result that one feels surrounded by a halo like the picture of a saint. I kept up this practice of swimming at night until I left Mullaghmore about the middle of November."

Eventually he rented a cottage from Mrs Hannon, the sister of the Bishop of Tuam, Dr. John Healy, who had been one of O'Flanagan's teachers in Maynooth. O'Flanagan goes on to describe the events now referred to as the Clonerco Bog Fight, where he led a group of 200 villagers into Clonerco Bog to cut turf in defiance of the Congested Districts Board, the Ashley estate and the RIC.

"On the 29th of June, I collected the people after Mass and invited them to proceed with me to the bog on the following day in a body. Next day was a big day in Cliffoney. The bulk of the grown up men and women, and many of the younger people of the parish, marched in a body from the crossroads of Cliffoney to the bog. They were well supplied with spades, shovels and slanes. We marked out three long drains at equal distances apart across the sixty acres and cut a large amount of turf out of them, and spread them along the bog."



First Dail postcard.

He describes how the turf was successfully harvested and distributed, and the excess was taken and stacked outside the old boy's school opposite Cliffoney RIC barracks. O'Flanagan was abruptly transferred to the parish of Crossna after making a speech which was highly critical of the British war effort in Sligo Courthouse on October 11th 1915.

"If the government was really in earnest about the promotion of tillage, it would be necessary to expend some money on it. Let the young men and women who were flying out of Ireland be planted upon the lands that had been emptied of their population by the famine and evictions of the last seventy years"

An unsent note from Fr. O'Flanagan to the Bishop dated 12th October 1915 queried his sudden transfer:

"My Lord, As your transfer of me to Crosna bears the appearance of a punishment, I must respectfully request your Lordship to kindly tell me what is my offence. I remain, my Lord, your obedient servant, Michael O'Flanagan. (Did not send this letter or write at all on the decision.) M.O'F"

The autobiographical account goes on to describe the Cliffoney Rebellion, when the villagers seized the key

of Cliffoney church and locked and barred the doors, refusing to allow the replacement priest, Fr. Cornelius McHugh to enter.

"Before leaving Cliffoney I knew that some such extreme action as this had been proposed by some of the leaders in the fight against the Congested Districts Board. I had pleaded with them as strongly as I could against this course. But I believed then, and still believe that a great deal could be said in justification of the peoples action."

The Cliffoney lockout lasted for a total of ten weeks, during which the villagers of Cliffoney knelt outside the locked church and said the rosary for the return of Fr. O'Flanagan. A 150 strong group marched into Sligo to confront the bishop, who refused to meet them, fleeing to Dublin in his car instead. The irate villagers sat on the



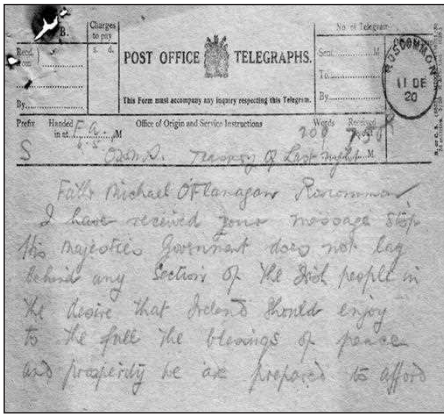
Fr. Michael with parents 1920.

lawn outside the Bishop's palace for a whole day, and raided the orchard before the long walk back to Cliffoney. O'Flanagan's memoir describes how he was sent out to convince the villagers to end their protest.

"They told me that they were determined to keep the church closed until I came back. They said that even if I succeeded in persuading them to open the church that they would be afraid of the general public. Many of them told me that their own wives and children told them not to dare come home if I succeeded in persuading them into opening the church. They told me that they were expecting me to come down on the errand on which I was engaged. They knew that I was not a free agent, and that I was compelled by the Bishop to do what I was doing."

In an interesting four page letter dated Dec 9th, 1915, O'Flanagan was asked to account for monies collected during his time in Cliffoney. Both O'Flanagan and Alex McCabe, a former student from his time teaching in Summerhill, had formed and organised the Cliffoney Volunteers. It seems from the letter that O'Flanagan was keeping the funds raised for the Volunteers in the Church account.

"My dear Canon Doorly, I had a letter from Dr. Coyne a few days ago telling me that you had informed him that I had some Cliffoney Parish Funds that I had not handed over to you. There is only one thing that I know that you can refer to..... Father Keane told me that this money was collected by Father O'Reilly for the purpose of building a ball court. Before the ball court could be erected Father O'Reilly was changed and so the matter has not been attended to ever since. At the time that I got this sum of money I had on hand a sum of £13 - 13 - 6 collected for the Volunteers. Not wishing to have too many separate deposits in the Bank, I put in this last named sum along with the other, and so the new



Lloyd George Reply 1920.

deposit receipt, dated Jan 9th 1915 was made out for the sum of £43 - 12 - 9. Afterwards the Volunteers called upon me for the £13 - 13 - 6 to pay for equipment which they had purchased. I knew that if I sent the receipt to Father Shannon for signature, that it would be in danger of being lost like the other one, and I was unable to get the money at the time. Now I hope to get the Bank to transfer the money without Father Shannon's signature, when I shall be happy to turn over the £29 - 19 - 3 and interest, to you and Mr. Clancy, and anyone else that you may name."

The standoff between Bishop Coyne was never really resolved. The lockout eventually ended on Christmas Eve in 1915, when, as a Christmas present to Fr. O'Flanagan, the villagers surrendered the key and allowed the church to reopen.

Crossna

In early January O'Flanagan wrote to his good friend John Hagan, who was then based in the Irish college in Rome, to explain the events which had occurred in Cliffoney the previous October. He noted that the Cliffoney villagers had collected signatures for a petition which they had sent to the Pope, demanding O'Flanagan's return to their parish. He asked Hagan to intercept this missive on his behalf.

Jan 3rd 1916

My dear Hagan,

"I dare say P. J. K. has kept you informed about the main incidents

connected with the Cliffoney trouble. It was simply a rebellion against Adrian's Bull up-to-date. I tried several times to reason the people into opening the church but to no avail. On Christmas Eve I appealed to them for the sake of Ireland, to make me a Christmas gift by opening the church. They yielded at last, and for the first time in 10 weeks the priest was allowed in. The people have sent a letter to the pope c/o President of the Irish College about it. I don't know what sort of a production it is, because I refused to mix myself up in it."

On January 12th, O'Flanagan attended an anti-conscription rally in City Hall, Cork, which was organised by Terence MacSwiney and Tomás MacCurtain. His speech was widely reported in the newspapers, which prompted Bishop Coyne to ban O'Flanagan from travelling outside the parish of Crossna or speaking in public without permission. About this time the RIC began to keep files and take notes of his speeches and sermons, copies of which are preserved in the archives at Kew Gardens

O'Flanagan received many offers to travel and lecture after his Cork speech. In a letter dated 20 January 1916, in reply to Sean MacEntee, who had invited him to address the Volunteers in Drogheda, he explained his position, noting that:

"The Bishops carry on a lot of bargaining with Government officials about grants to industrial schools and convents and colleges and so the Government has a hold on them and get them to squeeze the priests."

O'Flanagan obeyed the Bishop's instructions to remain in Cross throughout the remainder of 1916. He was not informed nor involved in the events of Easter 1916, though he was close friends with many of the leaders. O'Flanagan spent his time writing and publishing articles in magazines such as the Catholic Bulletin, Nationality and the Spark.

"I also succeeded in establishing a local Company of the Irish Volunteers. At the same time I only awaited an opportunity of challenging the Bishop openly on the question of his political command. His right to prohibit me from preaching I did not question. Whether he had sufficient cause or not, was for him to judge and not for me. But his right to interfere with me as an Irish citizen upon the public platform, I did not acknowledge. Invitations poured in upon me from all over Ireland. I was getting tired of trying to explain how the Bishop had forbidden me, and why I continued to act in obedience to his prohibition."

O'Flanagan finally found a cause which encouraged him to "break the muzzle" in early 1917.

The Election of the Snows

When the MP for North Roscommon J. J. O'Kelly passed away and his position became vacant, there was a scramble to fill his seat. J. J. Devine ran for the I.P.P., while Jasper Tully threw his name in as an independent candidate. O'Flanagan entered the contest, first proposing Michael Davitt junior, who refused after taking advice from his mother. O'Flanagan then proposed Count George Noble Plunkett, father of the executed leader from 1916. An essay in the box of papers described O'Flanagan's role in organising Plunkett's campaign in what was to become known as The Election of the Snows.

Initially Plunkett, who had no policies, ran as an independent. O'Flanagan and rebel IPP member Lawrence Ginell canvassed vigorously for Plunkett, addressing crowds and organising fund raising collections throughout North Roscommon. In a shock defeat for the I.P.P., Plunkett won by a large margin, and O'Flanagan's memoir describes their trip to Dublin that night:

"The road from Boyle to Carrick had been well cleared of snow and the fall in the country east of the Shannon

was not great. However, the night was intensely cold. I sat in the front seat of the car until we reached Mullingar. We stopped for a while in Carrick, Longford and Mullingar and with this advantage added to the protection of the windscreen, I had a tolerable time of it up to there. But in Mullingar, I took pity on Arthur Griffith. He was one of those in the back seat. He still wore the beard which he had grown during his time in prison. The valleys through which we passed were filled with a bitterly cold frozen fog and Arthur was covered with ice like a picture of some man on an Arctic expedition. As soon as we passed Maynooth we all got out and ran through the snow for over a mile in order to get our blood in circulation. When we reached Dublin it was five o'clock in the morning."

Plunkett, who saw himself as the leader of a new Nationalist movement resented Arthur Griffith and Sinn Féin, and attempted to set up a Liberty League, a body which would have replicated much of the work being done by Griffith. Plunkett was lauded and given the freedom of many towns and cities, and when he was awarded the Freedom of Sligo, awarded on Saint Patrick's Day, 1917, the crowd called for O'Flanagan to make a speech. However, as he was still "muzzled" by the restrictions of Bishop Coyne, he wrote to Coyne and asked for permission to speak. Part of the Bishop's reply, dated March 12th stated:

"I find it my painful duty now — in your own best interests as well as for the grave reasons mentioned above — to forbid you "sub poena suspensionis ipso facto incurrendae et deprivationis facultatum diocesae" to attend, take part in or be present at, any public meeting or demonstration outside the parish of Cootehall, without my permission in writing. This and the former restrictions of the 14th of January 1916, and of the 25th January 1917 are to continue in force until you receive from me, in writing, formal notification to the contrary."

O'Flanagan was elected to the Mansion House Committee which met a number of times over the summer of 1917 in an attempt to fuse the various Nationalist factions and groups into a coherent body.

"Dear Fr. O'Flanagan, Please let me know by return of post if it is a fact as reported in the Dublin Press of this date, that you attended a public meeting in Dublin yesterday without asking or receiving 'my permission in writing', as required in my very plain and definite instructions of the 12th. ult. I am, Yours faithfully, (signed) Bernard Coyne. Bishop of Elphin."

O'Flanagan's reply by return of post was probably seen as somewhat impudent by Bishop Coyne:

Crossna, Boyle. April 21, 1917.

"My Lord, I have received your letter of 20th. inst. asking me if it be a fact, as reported in the Dublin Press, that I attended a public meeting in Dublin on the previous day. If your Lordship will be so good as to have another look at the press reports, you will see that the assembly referred to was not a public meeting, and hence was not covered by your instructions of the 12th. ult. I am, My Lord, Your obedient servant, M. O'Flanagan."

As a result of these activities he was imposed with a suspension by Bishop Coyne which lasted for six months. O'Flanagan used this time productively, helping to reorganise the Sinn Féin party and organise the Ard Fheis which took place at the end of October. In preparation for the Ard Fheis, O'Flanagan sought to get his suspension lifted. The following message is written on notepaper from the Gresham Hotel in Dublin, dated Sept 29th 1917.

"My Lord, I called upon Father Forrestal S. J. at Milltown Park today, for the purpose of arranging to go on retreat there next week. After consultation with the Rector. He advised me to wait for the special retreat to begin the following week. I

have accordingly secured a ticket of admission to the retreat of October 13th. I remain my Lord, your humble servant, M O'F. My Lord, I have now completed my retreat at Milltown Park. I hope your Lordship will now kindly restore my faculties and recall me to work in the diocese. I remain my Lord, your obedient servant, M. O'Flanagan."

With his clerical status restored, O'Flanagan attended the Ard Fheis in Dublin. At this meeting De Valera was elected president while Griffith and O'Flanagan became joint vice-presidents. A newspaper article around this time commented that Sinn Féin was a machine designed by Arthur Griffith, assembled by Fr. O'Flanagan and driven by De Valera. (copy) April 29th. 1919.

"I regret any violation of Ecumenical Law or Precept of which I may have been objectively guilty, and I recognise and accept the obligation in future of obeying all Ecclesiastical Laws and Precepts duly notified to me. Michael O'Flanagan."

The original of which this is a copy was given to Most Rev. J. Gilmartin D. D. at 3. Herbert St. Dublin on April 29th 1919.

1918 General Election

O'Flanagan, as the only senior member of the Sinn Féin Standing Committee who was not imprisoned during the spurious German Plot, became acting head of Sinn Féin. Having refrained from participating in two by-elections in Longford and Kilkenny, he broke Bishop Coyne's "Muzzle" to campaign for his fellow vice-president of Sinn Féin, Arthur Griffith in East Cavan. For these activities, which helped win the contest for Sinn Féin, he was suspended by the Bishop.

The collection of papers contains a letter dated 29th April 1918, forbidding O'Flanagan from taking any part in the election, apart from casting his vote. The letter was

signed by Patrick Finegan, Bishop of Kilmore. The collection of papers also contains a typed copy of O'Flanagan's famous Suppressed Speech, which was given to a crowd of 10,000 in Ballyjamesduff on Sunday 18th May. The speech was censored by the authorities so Sinn Féin published it as a pamphlet which was sold to raise funds for the party. During his speech, O'Flanagan referred to Lloyd George as a conman and huckster: And this little Welsh thimble-rigger has got his supply of thimbles on his little table. On one you have printed Home Rule. On another of the thimbles you have printed Convention, and on another you have Devolution. And he is not content with these thimbles; they were not enough to hide his false plea of Self-Determination and National Liberty. He is taking up another thimble now, which he calls Federalism, and he imagines he will be able to persuade the world that under some of these thimbles will be found the solution to the Irish question.

In response to O'Flanagan's suspension, the people of Crossna, following the example of the people of Cliffoney, locked the church, though they continued to attend mass in nearby Cootehall. Shortly afterwards, on June 21st 1918 O'Flanagan was awarded the Freedom of Sligo for his contributions to the cause of Irish Nationalism. His suspension was to remain in force until late in 1919, which freed him to concentrate on leading Sinn Féin. He was the main organising force and platform speaker during the General Election of November 1918.

The Moneygold Ambush and Communications with Lloyd George

On Friday 22nd October 1920 Fr. O'Flanagan's rooms in the parochial house in Roscommon town were raided by Crown forces. O'Flanagan was away in Dublin on Sinn Féin business. His secretary Vera McDonnell was present at the time. Two Auxiliaries accompanied by two RIC members

were admitted to the building by Father Carney, who then retired to his rooms. O'Flanagan's letters were read, and a collection of Ordnance Survey maps which had pieces cut out of them seized. The raiders threatened Miss McDonnell, took her typewriter, broke open a suitcase and cut up the clerical vestments they found inside, and stole a £5 note from a jug on the mantelpiece before they left.

Three days later, on October 25th, the same day Lord Mayor of Cork Terence MacSwiney and his fellow Cork Volunteer Joe Murphy died after 74 days and 76 days on hunger strike, the North Sligo IRA attacked a nine man RIC patrol at Moneygold, just north of the village of Grange.

Four of the nine RIC officers were killed, including sergeant Patrick Perry. Reprisals swiftly followed, and North Sligo was visited by a detachment of Auxiliaries. RIC officer Thomas Kelly, who had spent time in Grange barracks accompanied the Crown forces and pointed out the houses of prominent members of Sinn Féin. Seven houses, Grange Temperance Hall, the Father O'Flanagan Hall in Cliffoney, and Ballintrillick creamery were burned during reprisals. In the ensuing spiral of violence, IRA leader Andy Conway, Seamus Devins, Eugene Gilbride and Linda Kearns were arrested, having been stopped at a checkpoint. Weapons and ammunition taken from the Moneygold ambush were discovered in the car, and all four were severely beaten.

O'Flanagan took a bundle of his private correspondence and documents and hid them in the convent in Loughglynn, with the following note written by hand on the back of a typed letter:

These papers were placed here Nov 1st 1920 by Rev. M. O'Flanagan & Sister Gerard (Carty) and Michael McDermot who was in charge of the electric engine of the Laundry,

in order to save them from the raids of Lloyd George's Auxiliaries & so-called police. M. O'Flannagáin.

O'Flanagan was the only senior member of the Standing Committee of Sinn Féin who was not in prison at the time. De Valera was in America and Griffith was locked up in Mountjoy. O'Flanagan was obviously troubled by the spiral of violence, and he worked out his thoughts in an essay on the state of the country:

"The situation is at present largely controlled by desperate men, men who are naturally desperate or by men who, by the pressure of circumstances have been rendered desperate. On the one side are the forces of England, the RIC, used as the instrument of oppression of their own people. While the people submitted tamely to oppression, the path of the RIC ran smooth. As soon as the people began to assert their natural right to conduct their own affairs, pressure from Dublin Castle made active the latent oppressive power of the RIC. By this oppression, some of the ardent young men of Ireland were made desperate. They began to hit back. Some of the police were killed. Other policemen (RIC) became conscience stricken and resigned. At first it was easy enough for a policeman to resign. However, it was desperately difficult for a middle aged man who had spent many long years in the force to resign particularly if he had a wife and children dependent on him."

When Lloyd George began making statements in the British Press about possible peace moves, O'Flanagan challenged him. This was the beginning of an exchange of correspondence between the two through the medium of newspapers and telegrams. Draft of a telegram from Fr. O'Flanagan, Vice-President of Sinn Féin to David Lloyd George, British Prime Minister from December 1920:

"I thank you for your reply: To a proposal for peace you offer only

discussion reserving the right to pursue the present policy of vengeance. Obviously such an offer could not be considered. Offer something definite. We ask for self determination; you say we must not have it. What then can we have, if something be offered, say Dominion Home Rule as defined by Asquith & Henderson we will discuss it with you."

O'Flanagan was neither experienced nor cynical enough to deal with the British Prime Minister, and his communications infuriated his

colleagues in Sinn Féin, and prompted the return of De Valera from his eighteen month tour of America. Michael Collins in particular was incensed by O'Flanagan's actions, which upset his own covert set of negotiations through the mediations of Bishop Clune. O'Flanagan's correspondences with Lloyd George damaged his relations with the other members of Sinn Féin, who accused him of raising the white flag. De Valera, however, was untroubled by the situation and refused to penalise O'Flanagan. Instead he used the

priest as an intermediary, and courier sending him over to London the following spring to carry messages back and forth to various British politicians.

The correspondence in O'Flanagan's box of papers comes to an end around this time. In late October of 1921 himself and Harry Boland were sent to America to raise funds. He was absent for the Treaty and subsequent Civil War, returning to Ireland in 1925.

AN OLD MAN'S MEMORIES: EXPRESSED IN POEM AND STORY

By Andrew Hegarty (a promotional feature). Submitted by Neal Farry

The introduction to Andrew's book of storied poems illustrates clearly for the reader the environment and emotive human experience that produced a creative soul expressed in memories, poem and story. I quote a number of Andy's recollections along these lines:

"I was conceived and born in the early nineteen thirties, on a wild but beautiful hillside situated on the south face of the Ox Mountain range in the village of Belclare. Here I grew from boy to teen. I knew each bend, I knew each run, I fished each stream. My hillside in harmony with nature so grand, where each season delivered colour and beauty of its own. I recall babbling, clear trout streams, hurriedly winding their way along heather verges to join the foaming waterfalls, where the salmon leapt.

A poor people struggled to eke out a meagre living, from impoverished soil, on the windswept hillside. Times were hard, life was hard. 'Employment' there was none, families were large, the only industry was the emigrant ship. The hand that rocked their cradle shook the last farewell, swamped in



Front Cover of *An Old Man's Memories*

tears of loneliness. They all promised to return, but few did. When the old folks passed away, and the oil lamp in the little window was extinguished for the last time, there was no more. Then came the long nose forestry plough, ripping the hillside apart. It tore the very heart out of the little gardens that once sustained the people's everyday living.

Now the once crystal-clear trout streams run musty and brown. The leaping silver salmon are gone from the falls. No more can be heard the skylark in song. Gone are the busy bumblebee, like the blooms from the heather. The red-feathered grouse are just a memory. The love of my hillside comes in visions to me. To stand amidst the tall pines and listen to the whispering palms, I get an eerie, ghostly feeling. My spirit cries, as I pray for silent voices. In poem and story, I have tried to capture for posterity, from a time and place, the characters who struggled to survive on the impoverished hillside. Their loves, hopes, dreams and anguish. They were truly the salt of the earth". It is surely worthwhile to specify the tributes that have been paid to Andy's creative endeavours. The late Ted Nealon, journalist and government minister remarked in the following terms: "I have worked with Andrew, making documentaries on emigration for television, and I can say he is a true master of the pen".

Liam Kennedy of Queen's University, Belfast once addressed our poet in this utterance of commendation:

“I must say, Andrew, you have a way not only with recollection but with descriptive writing, as well in short vignettes of life expressed in poetry of a generation or two ago”.

Miss Stella G. Mew, former CEO of the W.B. Yeats Society, emphasizes that Andrew Hegarty is a member of the Yeats Society and is an excellent metrifier. “His poems are a true emotion of time and place”.

Peter Henry’s citation is revealed in these words: “As editor of the Sligo Weekender, I have had the privilege of publishing many of Andrew’s poems, adding colour to the newspaper and generating many positive comments from readers. ‘Real poetry hits you in the heart and all great poetry comes from the heart’, Andrew says”.

In this slim volume, Andy has penned fifty poems that provide an extensive variety of topics. The fifty first contribution “O Maggie, Mo-Grá, I waited” is a poignant and dramatic design of poetry in prose. The other poems are a panoramic depiction of life as encountered by the poet. Among the topics that most caught my attention were Autumn and Threshing Time, The Banshee Cried, A Poacher

and his Thoughts, That Cutaway Bog and The Poteen Men. I consider it beneficial to quote two of Andy’s poems in their entirety.

Music of Nature

Be not anxious for tomorrow’s greedy grind, / come, come away to Belclare’s beauty brae. / Where the true music of nature brings exaltation to mind. / You shall hear bragging cuckoos calling all day, / inspired migrants returned to the warmth of the May hill. / You will hear carolling larks sing / and enjoy their antics, hovering at will / upon their fantastic fast-fluttering wing.

Soon summer sun returns nature’s ornate surprise, / as the plateau becomes a blaze of wild flowering



A Cottage in Belclare Village.

pride. / Now feast your eyes on beautiful butterflies, / ostentatiously basking upon the fragrant floral tide. / Set aside your desires to stir the heart to roam, / enjoy the splendour of nature’s wild scenery / where little creatures make their home, / beneath that cool cloak of fibre greenery.

Autumn days turn hedgerows a coloured hue / and fields of green corn into saffron yellow. / As berries, ripened red, become a juicy fruit anew / amidst this profusion of harvest-coloured glow, / you shall hear honking Brents winging their way / southward, bound before the Arctic winter cold. / Soon all this alluring beauty shall vanish in decay, / when Jack Frost’s frozen dewdrops take hold.

As winter solstice nights draw nigh, / and cold winds blow-drifts the winter snow. / You shall hear the vixen’s nightly cry, / echoing around ghost-like mounds sad and low, / perhaps lamenting a cub lost to a hunter’s keen eye. / All calls of the wild born out of time / by needy creatures who seek on sounds they rely. / The true music of nature sounds so sublime.

Benbulbin and Me

Come summer sun or blizzard blast, / it matters not to Benbulbin towering high. / With its prow-shaped face of physical character. / Pointing peerless into the northern sky.

I was there, on a July hazy day / beside that massive mountain of splendour. / And as I viewed sunlight through vapour clouds, / my train of thought, for reason, turned to wonder. I thought of the infinity of time / in this mountain of cold, cold stone. / And of foolish fellows, oblivious in mind, / that now is the only time they own. I thought of a sunset fading into twilight. / And of eager men, striving the opulent way. / I thought of the earth at rest in moonlight / and of the stillness of men in cold clay.

Copies of “An Old Man’s Memories expressed in poem and story” may be purchased in Liber and Eason’s Bookshops in Sligo and in bookshops in many towns in Connacht at €10 per copy. Andy donated one thousand copies of his book of poems to St. Vincent’s in Dublin where the proceeds of sales will be retained by the hospital as revenue.

RESTORATION OF BALLYMOTE CHURCH RAILINGS AND GATES

By Owen M. Duffly

Connaught.	SLIGO.	J. Slater's
NOBILITY, GENTRY AND CLERGY. Barrett Samuel, Esq. Cullinamore Blair Montgomery, Esq. Ballinode Booth Sir Robert Gore, Bart. J. P. Lissadell Brown Right Rev. George, J. P. (R. C. bishop of Elphin), Seaville Brown Thomas, Esq. 51 Mall Cage Rev. Robert, Ellenville Cage Capt. William, Ellenville Christian Robert, Esq. Faughts Coffey Rev. Martin, c.c. Correction st Connolly Rev. F. c.c. 12 Chapel lane Cooper Edward S. Esq. J. P. Markree Castle Culbertson Mrs. Anne, 11 Wine st Davidson James, Esq. Union st Day Rev. Edward (rector), the Glebe Duke Mrs. Sarah, 51 Mall Faussett Wm. Esq. J. P. Willsborough Fawcett Capt. Henry, J. P. Union pl Feeny Rev. Eugene, P. P. Seaville Furey Mrs. Elizabeth, 50 Mall Gillmor Rev. Andrew Todd, LL. D.	Kyle Francis, 1 Charles st NATIONAL SCHOOL (boys' & girls'), Chapel lane—John C. Hayes, master; Catherine Keegan and Sarah Quinn, mistresses Purcell Eleanor (ladies), 6 John st Quille John F. 26 John st Read the Misses, 11 Corkrans Mall AGENTS. <i>(See also Fire, &c. Office Agents.)</i> Carty John (emigration), 43 Knox st Egan Jas. (house, &c.), 44 Knox st Harper James (Liverpool & Glasgow Steam Packet), Quay st Homan Edmund (house), Stephen st Hudson Thos. (to Lloyd's), Old quay Leighton Hugh (ship & assurance), Old quay M'Culla John (house), Mall Middleton & Pollexfen (ship), Old quay O'Rorke & Co. (commission), Old quay Welsh Andrew (to the Bou Accord Marine Insurance Company of	PROVINCIAL BANK OF IRELAND, Stephen st—(draws on Spooner, Attwoods' and Co. London)—Mr. Malcolm Sinclair, manager SAVINGS' BANK, Stephen st—Mr. Vernon Davy, actuary BLACKSMITHS. Beattie Thomas, 6 Stephen st Drum Brien, Mail Coach road Early Brian, Brewery lane Flatley John, Quay st Hughey Robert, Mall James Michael, Quay st [road Lavin Bartholomew, Mail Coach M'Carty Chas. 64 Mail Coach road M'Donnell Edward, Mail Coach road M'Kiff John (& veterinary surgeon), Corkran's mall M'Loughlan Patrick, New Bridge st O'Flynn John, Mail Coach road Ryan John, Correction st Ryan Matthew, New Bridge st Ryan William, Mail Coach road BLOCK AND PUMP MAKERS AND TURNERS.

Slaters Commercial Directory of 1846 showing John Ryan, blacksmith on Correction Street.

Congratulations to Fr James McDonagh on the restoration of the church railings and gates that adorn the front area of the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Ballymote.

The railings were erected on a low cut-stone limestone wall following the building of the Church in 1864. Construction of the railings and gates was carried out by a master blacksmith

named John Ryan of Sligo. John was born in c 1818 and by 1846 had set up his forge and workshop on Correction Street, also known as Gaol Street. Both names had their origin in the fact that the local prison or house of correction was located on this street. The old RIC barracks was also located on this street where Louis Doherty now has his store. It was at this building that Charlotte Matilda Blake Thornley

(b 1818) (mother of author Bram Stoker) lived. Her father was a local RIC officer. Her experience in 1832 of the great cholera epidemic in Sligo provided the inspiration for Stoker's great novel "Dracula". According to Wood-Martin "a Prison House and the old courthouse or session house stood between the site of the present courthouse and the corner of Castle Street at the end of the 17th century".

This is the section where John Ryan's Forge and workshops were located. This was also known as the lower part of Old Market Street, which is one of the oldest streets in Sligo and continued uninterrupted onto the junction with Castle Street and what is now called Teeling Street.

John Ryan's son named James (born c 1847) also followed his father into the blacksmith trade and on 8th April 1878 married Sarah Frizzell in the Parish Church of Calry. John Ryan and his son moved their smithy workshop to John Street in 1889. By the year 1894 the John Street premises had ceased blacksmithing and James' wife Sarah and her daughter Kate and her aunt Margaret Ryan ran a boarding house at their John Street premises. James died on 20th December 1897 at 50 years of age. John Ryan senior, who was responsible for the construction of the church railings and gates, died on 9th May 1901 at 91 years of age.

The new church and its surrounds

The person responsible for preparing the plans of the church was the renowned London architect George Goldie of the well-known firm Hadfield and Goldie and the foundation stone of 17 cwt was laid on Wednesday 12th October 1859. Drawings of the proposed building were shown at the



Initials of J Ryan Sligo on the church gates.

Architectural Exhibition, London in 1861. By September 1864, the new Gothic style church was advanced significantly for its solemn dedication and official opening on Sunday 4th September. The cut stone piers and low-cut stone walls would have been prepared by the stone masons and left ready to receive the railings and gates.

Wrought iron was the material used in the construction of the gates and railings where malleability of the material was a distinct advantage. Molten lead was used to fix diagonal and horizontal bars in the ornamental

railings. Molten lead was also used to bed the railings into the bare stone wall. Lead was chosen because its low melting point (328 degrees) meant it was easy to melt on site. Due to the use of lead in construction of the rails and gates, galvanizing could not be carried out.

Restoration of railings and gates

Significant corrosion of the railings and gates had taken place over the past 150 years. The necessity for a thorough cleaning back to healthy wrought iron was necessary. All surfaces were shot blasted with a fine grit to remove all corrosion and immediately afterwards the surface was treated with 99.9% zinc for anti-corrosion by the thermal arc spraying process at Shotblast Engineering Ltd in Newtownforbes. Following this process, no cure time is necessary so that painting of the railings and gates could commence straight away. Hopefully the completed restoration will ensure that the railings and church gates will survive well into the next century.

References

Church of the Immaculate Conception Christmas 1983 by Fr Robert Flynn P.P.
The Streets of Sligo, by Dr Fiona Gallagher.
John Ryan, Blacksmith, Sligo. Information from Dr Fiona Gallagher.



Section of the restored railings.

A WOMAN PROUD OF HER ROOTS

By Diane Keevens



Sheila Kivlehan

Emlaghnaughton school was built in 1880 to replace Little Bridge School which had been built in 1832. Batt Henry was a teacher there for forty years until he retired in 1937. His daughter, Sheila Kivlehan was living in the old schoolhouse when I became acquainted with her in 1992. She had taken in a neighbour's cat after the neighbour, Cissy Mulligan, had died.

I had visited Cissy every Sunday after becoming fond of the glasses of Lilt that she used offer myself and my sisters and brother on our return journey home from a hard day's work on the bog. She had two cats, Lucky and Chilly. After Cissy passed away, one of her cats disappeared and the wiser one moved just over the road and into the schoolhouse with Sheila.

Sheila, being the kind person that she was, had no problem with this new addition to her household. I had grown very fond of this cat and began to visit Sheila and from that day onwards, Sheila welcomed me into her home. This was usually on Sundays, but occasionally it could be Fridays when I would attend the First Friday of the month Mass with her. She used to insist that I keep my blue woollen hat on my head for the duration of the Mass "as that was the respectful way to be turned out in God's house" Sheila informed me.

Sheila had a piano in her home and she tried to teach me how to play 'Silent Night' but I'm afraid it stayed silent as far as my attempts at playing it went! I do remember a particular St. Patrick's Day, Sheila bringing me to the Corran Restaurant after Mass and treating me to lunch. I felt very grown up that day!

Sheila was born on 8th July 1914. She was very proud of where she came from and of her family. Her father, Batt Henry, organised the building of a full-sized handball alley in Emlaghnaughton in 1926. Her brother, Val Henry was a very successful tournament handballer in Co. Sligo. Val was a brilliant handball coach who showed his three sons, Justin, Marcus and Ray how handball should be played. Justin was a Connacht Minor champion three times and a Connacht Senior champion once. Marcus won the All-Ireland Minor title once, the Connacht Junior title once and an All-Ireland Senior club title one time. Ray was a Connacht Minor champion. Now living on the same site of the late Val Henry's homeplace, though no relation, is another All-Ireland Minor Handball champion, Cormac Finn.

Sheila had an extreme fondness for nature and we would often go on a stroll to the corner of the road beyond her house where she would point out various plants, flowers, trees and birds to me. Rooky was the name she gave a rook who visited the schoolhouse regularly, always certain of a good feed courtesy of Sheila!

She used to make her own recipe soup, which consisted of barley and whatever vegetables were available. It always tasted delicious.

She loved to tell me ghost stories and tales of days gone by and her eyes would dance with merriment

when she knew she had grabbed my attention with her tales.

Sheila had a wonderful knowledge of the wide area and loved to inform young and old alike about the history of Emlaghnaughton. Just one hundred yards from where the first school "Little Bridge" had been, which was beside Sheila's homeplace, stood an old house, which was known long ago as a wayside stop.

There were four big roads from Dublin, going North, South, East and West which had many side roads adjoining them. One of these was situated near the Passionist Monastery, Cloonamahon which was where the coaches for the West then travelled onwards. Where the four crossroads is now, in the townland of Emlaghnaughton, a cave was discovered beside the old road by Tom McGettrick. This was possibly used by robbers or shepherds or both. Many people would travel this way in coaches. To facilitate the passengers and horses in Emlaghnaughton, there were many houses doing trade in many different areas such as a tailor, a blacksmith, a weaver, a carpenter, a blanket-maker, cooks, bakers - whatever the passengers required, it was available to them.

A couple named Roddy and Ann had a cart by the roadside which was used to display oranges, sticks of rock and biscuits to be sold to the travelling people. Such a busy place it must have been back then, nearly two-hundred years ago now, I would estimate.

Sheila loved telling me ghost stories and there was one in particular that she loved to tell me. It involved her father and a teacher friend of his who was very fond of Sheila's aunt at the time. Every evening after school, Batt Henry would walk to Ballymote over

two miles away to have a drink in the local pub with his friend. This night, whatever hour it was that they finished up in the pub, they walked back as usual to Emlaghnaughton. Batt's friend came in for the customary cup of tea which he hardly tasted as he only had eyes for Sheila's aunt! After the tea was drunk, the friend, who lived up the Clooncoose road, bade goodnight and headed off for home. However, he wasn't gone long when Sheila's father and aunt heard him back outside again! He was white as a sheet claiming to have seen a huge

ball of light tumble across the road in front of him at Keegan's lane gate (which although just a few minutes of a walk away on the same road, is in the townland of Cloonkeavy). Sheila's father took a big fit of laughing and said, "Come on, I'll walk with you up to your house". The pair set off walking and at the spot where Batt's friend had been startled, Batt called out "Come on out now til we get a look at ya!" As quick as the words left his mouth, the huge ball of light came out scaring the living life out of the two grown men and causing them to

turn around and rush back to Batt's house, where his teacher friend took up residence for the night too, not leaving until the following morning. Now can anyone explain that?

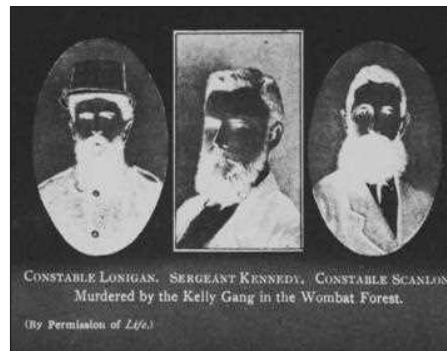
Sheila was a lady, proud of her roots. Her knowledge and interest in people and places were outstanding. She taught me such a lot and made, what might seem ordinary to some, magical to another. I will never forget her.

Source: Sligo GAA 125 History 1884-2009

FROM SLIGO TO STRINGYBARK

By Michael O'Connor

Few people in Ireland have heard of Stringybark Creek, a location in the Wombat Ranges, near Mansfield in the State of Victoria, Australia. Even fewer Irish people have heard the names Michael Kennedy, Thomas Lonigan and Michael Scanlan who were murdered there in 1878 or the name Thomas Newman McIntyre who escaped the slaughter on that infamous day. All four men were born and raised in Ireland. They all emigrated to Australia in order to make a better life for themselves and their families. All four were members of the Victoria Mounted Police in the then Colony of Victoria. Lonigan was based in Violet Town while the other three were based in Mansfield. The murdered policemen were involved in a search party that was looking for the notorious bushranger, Ned Kelly and his gang. The parties met at Stringybark Creek in the Wombat Ranges where three of the policemen were shot dead by Kelly and one escaped to tell the tale. While the murdered policemen have been largely forgotten and faded into obscurity since that incident in Stringybark Creek, Ned Kelly has become a glorified folk hero in not just Victoria, but all over Australia. He is portrayed as a defender of the rights of the perceived downtrodden and a fighter against the excesses of



Sergeant Michael Kennedy was born in Fore, Castlepollard, Co. Westmeath and Constable Michael Scanlan was born in Fossa, Killarney, Co. Kerry circa 1843. Constable Thomas Lonigan was born in Sligo circa 1841 (Full details to be verified).

the landholders in his native area. His image has been used at the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games held in Sydney in the year 2000 and he has become a tourist attraction in the Victoria and New South Wales areas where he plied his "trade". He has become a folk hero. I myself, when I went to Australia in 2004, made it my business to go and visit the locations associated with Ned Kelly as I was of the impression from all I had read up to that point relating to the "Kelly Outbreak" that Ned Kelly was a hero. It was only when I came across the graves of the three Irishmen lying in

a graveyard in Mansfield, far away from home, that I began to question the events of that period and the story of Ned Kelly. One of those graves was of Constable Thomas Lonigan who is recorded as being from Sligo, my own home county. I wondered how a Sligoman was here in Mansfield Cemetery with few to remember him. He was, as far as I knew, not remembered in Ireland, except by his Irish based relatives and descendants. Few remember Ned Kelly as a cold-blooded killer, thief, horse and cattle stealer, bank robber and last but not least, a tout for the police when the occasion arose and in order to save his own hide. He has been elevated to folk hero.



Constable Thomas Newman McIntyre who escaped during the shootings at Stringybark.

In a letter published in the Argus newspaper on July 2nd, 1880, relating to the Kelly Gang, a Geo. S. Griffiths stated *"We shall next hear of the erection of monuments inscribed with expressions of admiration for the careers, and sorrow for the fate of these outlaws. The stones will become shrines and be venerated by the neighbourhood, tainting its moral atmosphere by exalting these murderers into heroes, in the eyes of the young in particular"* (Geo S Griffiths, The Argus, Friday 2nd July 1880 p7 column 2). Prophetic words indeed.

So how did that fateful convergence of the police and the Kelly gang at Stringybark Creek come about. How did the son of an Irish convict shoot dead three men from his father's homeland. For that we need to look at the events that occurred at the Kelly homestead on the 15th of April 1878 involving another policeman, Constable Alexander Fitzpatrick. Fitzpatrick went to the Kelly homestead in order to execute a warrant against Dan Kelly. He had drink taken. There are different and conflicting accounts from Fitzpatrick and Kellys. The main incident happened when Ned returned and fired two shots at the policeman, one hitting him in the wrist and he also got hit with a shovel by Mrs. Kelly, the mother of the family. Eventually Fitzpatrick was released, and he reported the incident to his superiors. The following day the police called to the Kelly house to make arrests. They arrested Mrs. Kelly and two neighbours who were present during the Fitzpatrick incident. Ned and Dan went on the run. On the 16th of April 1878, Mrs. Kelly and the two neighbours were arrested and finally tried at Beechworth Court. On the 12th of October, Mrs. Kelly was found guilty of attempted murder and sentenced to 3 years hard labour. The two neighbours, Bill Skilling and Brickey Williamson, were also found guilty of the same charge and each sentenced to 6 years hard labour.

Following confidential information received that the Kellys were at the head of the King River, a search party left Mansfield on October 25th, 1878, to search for the brothers. The party consisted of Sergeant Michael Kennedy, Mounted Constable Michael Scanlan and Mounted Constable Thomas McIntyre from Mansfield and Mounted Constable Thomas Lonigan from Violet Town Station. The party travelled to the Wombat Ranges north of Mansfield and set up camp at a clearing at Stringybark Creek, little realising that the Kellys were camped less than a mile away in Bullock Creek.

At 6am on the morning of the 26th of October 1878, Sergeant Kennedy and Constable Scanlan left on patrol to search for the gang. Constable Lonigan and McIntyre were left to mind the camp. McIntyre was the designated cook. During the day Thomas Lonigan thought he heard a noise in the bush. McIntyre went to investigate, bringing his rifle with him. Nothing was found. On his way back to the camp McIntyre shot two parrots in order to supplement their meagre food. The Kellys at Bullock Creek decided to investigate but already suspected that the police were in the vicinity. At about 5 p.m., McIntyre was at the campfire making tea, with Lonigan nearby, when they were suddenly surprised with the cry, "Bail up; throw up your arms." They looked up and saw four armed men on foot. Three carried guns and Ned Kelly had two rifles. Two of the men they did not know, but the fourth was the younger Kelly. They had approached up through the rushes and long Spear grass that provided them with excellent cover until they got close.

McIntyre had left his revolver at the tent door and was unarmed. He therefore held up his hands as directed and faced them. Lonigan started for shelter behind a tree and at the same time put his hand upon his revolver. Before he had moved two paces, Edward Kelly shot him in the temple.

He fell at once and as he lay on the ground said, "Oh Christ, I am shot." He died in a few seconds. Kelly had McIntyre searched, and when they found he was unarmed, they let him drop his hands. They got possession of Lonigan and McIntyre's revolvers. Kelly remarked, "What a pity; what made the fool run?" The men helped themselves to articles from the tent. Kelly talked to McIntyre and expressed his wonder that the police should have been so foolhardy as to look for him in the ranges. He made inquiries about four men and said he would roast each of them alive if he caught them. Steele and Flood were two of the four. He asked McIntyre what he had fired at and said they must have been fools not to suppose he was ready for them. It was evident that he knew the exact state of the camp, the number of men, and the description of the horses. He asked where the other two were and said he would put a hole through McIntyre if he told a lie. McIntyre told him and hoped they would not be shot in cold blood. Kelly replied "No, I am not a coward. I'll shoot no man if he holds up his hands." One of the gang told McIntyre to take some tea and asked for tobacco. He gave them tobacco and had a smoke himself. Dan Kelly suggested that he should be handcuffed, but Ned pointed to his rifle and said, "I have got something better here. Don't you attempt to go; if you do I'll track you to Mansfield and shoot you at the police station." McIntyre asked whether he was to be shot. Kelly replied, "No, why should I want to shoot you? Could I not have done it half an hour ago if I had wanted?" He added, "At first I thought you were Constable Flood. If you had been, I would have roasted you in the fire." "I suppose you came out to shoot me?" "No," replied McIntyre, "we came to apprehend you." "What," asked Kelly, "brings you out here at all? It is a shame to see fine big strapping fellows like you in a lazy loafing billet like policemen." He told McIntyre if he was let go, he must leave the police and McIntyre said he would. The best thing McIntyre could do was to get

his comrades to surrender, for if they escaped, he would be shot. "If you attempt to let them know we are here, you will be shot at once" he was told. McIntyre asked what they would do if he induced his comrades to surrender. Kelly said he would detain them all night, as he wanted a sleep and let them go next morning without their arms or horses. McIntyre told Kelly that he would induce his comrades to surrender if he would keep his word, but he would rather be shot a thousand times than sell them. He added that one of the two was father of a large family. Kelly said, "You can depend on us." Kelly stated that Fitzpatrick, the man who tried to arrest his brother in April, was the cause of all this; that his (Kelly's) mother and the rest had been unjustly "lagged" at Beechworth. Kelly then caught sound of the approach of Kennedy and Scanlan and the four men concealed themselves, some behind logs and one in the tent. They made McIntyre sit on a log and Kelly said, "Mind, I have a rifle for you if you give any alarm."

Kennedy and Scanlan rode into the camp. McIntyre went forward, and said, "Sergeant, I think you had better dismount and surrender, as you are surrounded. Kelly at the same time called out, "Put up your hands." Kennedy appeared to think it was Lonigan who called out and that a jest was intended, for he smiled and put his hand on his revolver case. He was instantly fired at, but not hit; and Kennedy then realised the hopelessness of his position, jumped off his horse, and said, "It's all right, stop it, stop it." Scanlan, who carried the Spencer rifle, jumped down and tried to make for a tree, but before he could unsling his rifle, he was shot down. Several shots were fired.

McIntyre found that the men intended to shoot the whole of the party, so he jumped on Kennedy's horse, and dashed down the creek. As he rode off, he heard Daniel Kelly call out, "Shoot that *****". Several shots were fired but none reached him. Apparently, the rifles were empty

and only the revolvers available, or he would have been hit. He galloped through the scrub for two miles and then his horse became exhausted. It had evidently been wounded. He took off the saddle and bridle and wounded from a severe fall during his escape and with his clothes in tatters, he concealed himself in a wombat hole until dark. At dark, he started on foot and walked for an hour with his boots off to make no noise before collapsing from exhaustion at Bridge's Creek. After a rest and using a bright star and a small compass, he took a westerly course to strike the Benalla and Mansfield telegraph line and on Sunday afternoon at about 3pm after a journey of about 20 miles, he reached John McColl's place, about a mile from Mansfield. A neighbouring farmer's buggy took him to the police camp at the township, where he reported all he knew to Sub-Inspector Pewtress.

Two hours or so after McIntyre reported the murder of the troopers, Sub-Inspector Pewtress set out for the camp, accompanied by McIntyre and seven or eight townspeople. They had only one revolver and one gun. They reached the camp with the assistance of a guide, at half-past 2 in the morning. There they found the bodies of Scanlan and Lonigan. They searched at daylight for the Sergeant but found no trace of him. The tent had been burnt and everything taken away or destroyed. The post-mortem, by Dr. Reynolds, showed that Lonigan had received seven wounds, one through the eyeball. Scanlan's body had four shot-marks with the fatal wound caused by a rifle ball which went clean through the lungs. Scanlan was 33, and Lonigan 37 years of age. Three additional shots had been fired into Lonigan's dead body before the men left the camp. The extra shots were fired so that all of the gang might be equally implicated.

No trace had yet been discovered of Kennedy and the same day as Scanlan and Lonigan's funeral, another search party was started, which also failed. At four o'clock

on the following Wednesday another party started, headed by James Tomkins, President of the Mansfield shire, and Sub-Inspector Pewtress, accompanied by several residents and on the following morning the body of the unfortunate 36-year-old Sergeant was found by H. G. Sparrow. The exact place at German's Creek where this occurred was identified in 2006. On leaving the scene Ned stole Sergeant Kennedy's handwritten note to his wife and his gold fob watch. Asked later why he stole the watch, Ned replied, "What's the use of a watch to a dead man?" Kennedy's watch was returned to his descendants many years later.

In response to these killings, the reward was raised to £500, and the Victorian parliament passed the Felons' Apprehension Act which outlawed the gang and made it possible for anyone to shoot them. There was no need for the outlaws to be arrested or for there to be a trial upon apprehension. The Act was based on the 1865 Act passed in New South Wales which declared Ben Hall and his gang outlaws. Ned Kelly and his gang continued their criminal ways, robbing banks and taunting the authorities. They were eventually surrounded at Ann Jones Glenrowan Inn in June 1880 and following a siege the only gang member to survive was Ned. He was arrested after the shoot out and brought to Melbourne. He was tried at the Central Criminal Court in Melbourne where he was convicted of murder and sentenced to death. On the 11th November 1880 Ned was hanged at Melbourne Gaol. His last words were reported to have been "Such is life"

While the nation's attention was on Ned Kelly and the exploits of the Kelly Outbreak, the three policemen were laid to rest in Mansfield Cemetery. The good folk of Mansfield paid for a monument to the three men which stands today on the main intersection in the town. His evidence was crucial in the conviction of Ned Kelly. McIntyre struggled during the years after the killings with feelings of guilt

and resigned from the Victoria Police in 1881 due to ill health. Thomas McIntyre had married Elizabeth Ann Fowler in 1879 and they had 8 children. Thomas Newman McIntyre was born on the 24th of May 1846 in Downpatrick, Co. Down and died on the 13th of September 1918 at Ballarat, Victoria where he is buried in the local cemetery.

Before emigrating to Australia, Thomas McIntyre had joined the RIC on the 15th May 1863 and allocated the Registered Number 28658. Following training he was assigned to Antrim on the 16th of September 1863. Thomas resigned from the RIC on the 1st of February 1866 and arrived in Australia in July 1867.

(The above is a short extract from an upcoming book manuscript of “*From Sligo to Stringybark*” currently being written by local author Michael O’Connor. The book is due for publication late 2023).

From Sligo to Stringybark

It’s a long, long way
from Sligo town,
to a creek called Stringybark.
In Victoria, Australia,
to hear the singing lark.
I went there once, to see that place,
and many tears I shed.
For there in eighteen seventy eight,
three Policemen were shot dead.

They went there on an outlaw search,
they left from Mansfield Town.
But in that place called Stringybark,
were cruelly shot down.
The first to die was Lonigan,
from Sligo he had come,
The next to die was Scanlon
who felt the outlaw’s gun.
Then Kennedy, who made a stand,
and fought for his dear life.
He finally drew his last breath,
no more to see his wife.

Just one man would escape that
place, to live and tell the tale.
Of how a man named Kelly,
brought murder to that dale.

But Kelly he was captured,
he fought, but was brought down.
While wearing body armour,
at a place they call Glenrowan.

They hanged him in Old Melbourne
Gaol, where he gave up his fight.
His last words were reported,
to have been,
“Such is life”.

I stood in Mansfield Graveyard,
the sun shone down on me.
I prayed for Thomas Lonigan,
and Scanlon from Kerry
I prayed for Michael Kennedy
from the county of Westmeath.
I mourned once more the loss of life,
great sacrifice indeed.

No story’s ever simple,
excuses can be made.
But what excuse can justify,
putting three men in their grave.
Three men who hailed from Ireland,
now in those graves lie prone.
How sad that they are lying there,
far far away from home.

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SLIGO FIELD CLUB JOURNAL, VOL. 8, 2022

by Martin A. Timoney

Sligo Field Club Journal, Vol. 8, 2022, the biggest so far of Sligo Field Club’s annual *Journal*, was launched by Eamonn Gaughan on Thursday 27th April, 2023, in Liber Bookshop, O’Connell St., Sligo. The MC for the event was Jim Foran, President of Sligo Field Club, who introduced and thanked the speakers and several of the authors who were present.

The first speaker at the launch was Louise Keegan, who contributed a wonderful article to this volume about her grandfather Patrick Tohall. Patrick Tohall, 1887-1973, was the founding secretary of Sligo Antiquarian Society in 1945 and its successor, the Sligo Field Club. Louise said how thrilled

Patrick would be to see Sligo Field Club still in existence, organising lectures and outings and acting as a watchdog for the heritage of the county and now actually producing an extensive journal, which has reached volume eight. Patrick certainly was the main influence from 1945 until the family left Sligo in 1961. Patrick’s enthusiasm has come through as can be seen in Louise’s article on Patrick and in her words on the night. Dr. Patrick Heraughty, who knew Patrick well, told me that “when, not if, Patrick died he was to be buried at sea” – that was after an injury at Suvla Bay, Gallipoli, on 21st August, 1915. Fortunately, Patrick lived until the 25th June, 1973, aged 86, having

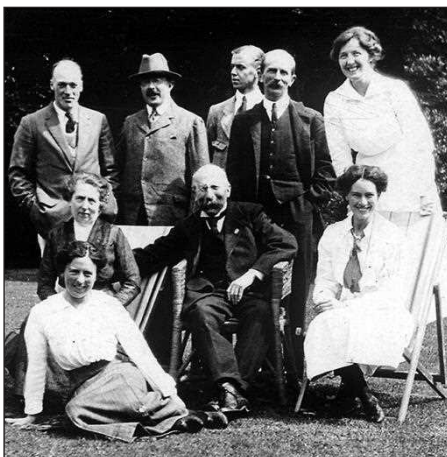
served as SFC Secretary and President over many years.

Most articles pass between an author, Fiona Doherty and myself at least six times. The record is probably fourteen, but those interactions involved very productive academic debates such as the status of the Knocknashammer burials on one occasion and Sligo Abbey features on another. The Knocknashammer Part 2 article includes an intense debate between Dr. Ken Dark, in Leicester, Navara and London, on the one hand, and Dr. Elizabeth (Betty) O’Brien, author of *Mapping Death*, in Dublin on the other, and the editor as well, about the use of one word, ‘royal’. Is

it correct that the Knocknashammer burials, excavated in 1977, dating to 400 to 610 AD, can be called 'royal' burials?

Fiona Doherty, Senior Assistant Editor, thoroughly reads almost all of the articles that come our way, and come they do, out of the most unexpected places. Our President, and Assistant Editor, Jim Foran, finds time towards the end of the production process to challenge both of us and he does that most important chore of checking layout in the days before the final PDFs are sent to Mick Gallagher of Knock Printing Services, and, if something is not right, then Mick Gallagher at KPS is on the phone within the hour.

This year, Jim Foran managed to guide almost half the cost of printing Volume 8 through Sligo County Council's financial system and that support is vital. The National Museum of Ireland and Atlantic Technological University Sligo also gave financial support for articles by members of their staff. By Don Cotton's own wishes, a substantial subvention was given by his wife Elaine, and this again by Don's wishes, financed the printing of extra copies for distributing to the education establishments in Co. Leitrim through Carrick-on-Shannon's Education Centre. SFC is most grateful for the outside financial



William Gregory Wood-Martin with members of his extended family at Cleaveragh in the early 1900s. (Wood-Martin family archive).

support. The balance came from reserves that have been built up from the sale of previous volumes, some by SFC members, some by Brian Ailbhe and the Ladies of Liber. Copies of this and earlier volumes can be purchased in Liber in Sligo and in Rogers and Caseys in Ballymote.

Ordinary people, people that you talk to in the street, buy copies. One former neighbour of mine surprised me by saying that she had to check what volumes she is missing. People dip into articles, and come back to them, again, and again. On the Ballymote Heritage Group outing to Emlaghfad in 2022, Andrea Martin asked me to lecture to the University of the Third Age and I thought what better than talk about topics in the eight volumes. I have since given U3A two lectures which produced very inquisitive questions. Those now-ready lectures could easily be given anywhere in the county; all that is needed is for the organisers to provide a hall with a big screen and plenty of local publicity, a token for expenses, and that will lead to greater publicity across the county for our heritage.

Looking at some Articles in Vol. 8

There was a total of sixteen articles in this year's volume plus several extra pieces. A geological and an archaeological-historical time chart are included at the back of the volume. The topics ranged from the prehistoric beginnings of settlement in Sligo to comments on why we should be enjoying our own Sligo landscape which has so much to offer. Geology, vegetation and landscape get good coverage and add to the diversity within the *Journal*. This volume is being called the Don Cotton tribute volume and I will come to those important sections below.

Dr. Jim Higgins has been publishing his research on Sligo Abbey in several volumes - his article this time is about the High Altar. Jim has covered many other aspects of Sligo Abbey in earlier volumes. Fixed to the wall



SFCJ 8 launch in Liber Bookshop on 27 April 2023 with Committee, Editors and Authors.

L-R: John Quinn (Treasurer), Sally Siggins (Vice-President), Padraig Meehan (Author), Eamon Gaughan (Official Launch), Jim Foran (President), Louise Keegan (Author), Martin A. Timoney (Author and Hon. Editor) and Fiona Doherty (Hon. Assistant Editor).

beside that altar is a flat stone which has been ignored for decades but Jim recognised it as being an altar frontal, but from where did it come? Con Manning, Senior Archaeologist, National Monuments Service, pointed out many years ago that the arcade part of the O'Crian monument of 1506 does not sit properly on the tomb part. Its top blocks off part of a window. Since then, it has become clear that the monument had been rebuilt after having been moved. Additionally, the top three slabs, which have distinctive front edges, are too wide for it. pushing the bottom of the canopy outwards. They had to have come from elsewhere. Putting the slabs and the frontal together, we are looking at a dismembered altar. Measurements confirm that it would have fitted in the east window space of the south aisle.

The *culprit*, directly or otherwise, was that most determined late 16th/early 17th century Eleanor Butler, Countess of Desmond who had a chantry chapel built for the family. In the guide books there is what is often called a *transept* – that is the structure jutting out from the east end of the south aisle. It is not a transept of the Dominican phase - it is a chantry chapel of Eleanor's desire and payment. For erection of the chantry chapel, the O'Crian



Mullaghmore Harbour - strengthened breakwater and pontoon viewed from an upstairs window in the Convent (May Burns).

monument had to be moved. Eleanor mentions this chapel in her will of 5th Sept., 1636 – she may have lived for another two years. She was born about 1545, dying at the age of 93, not 113 as some writers erroneously have it. due to a typographical error in Archdall's 1789 edition of Lodge's 1754 *Peerage of Ireland*. Incidentally, in resolving the O'Crian monument Jim Higgins has now recognised some parts of Eleanor's own memorial, which she mentions in her will, but that is for another volume.

We have so many authors who have spent time, maybe months, researching and writing. Articles can come out of nowhere, because there is a *Journal* in Sligo it gives authors a chance to publish on diverse heritage topics. If only there was a Museum of Sligo, it would encourage important historical donations. Our museum does not even rate a mention in Marie Bourke's book, *The Story of Irish Museums*, 2011.

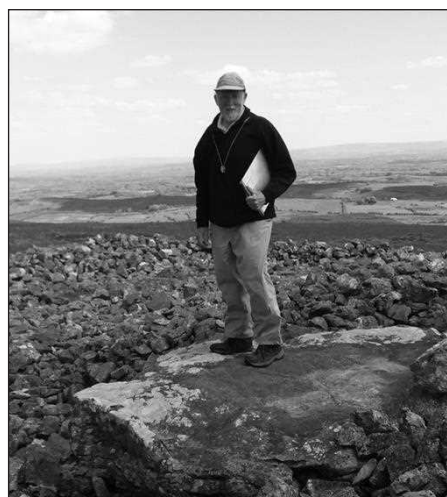
In 'An Early Medieval Burial', the dating of the Carrowgarry Inishcrone long cist grave gives comfort to those studying the late Pagan – Early Christian transition. Betty O'Brien, is particularly happy that another of her theories has come to be proven.

Cian Hogan, Marion Dowd and James Bonsall accidentally found some pieces of chert. Chert is a type of stone found in limestone that was used for making sharp tools in

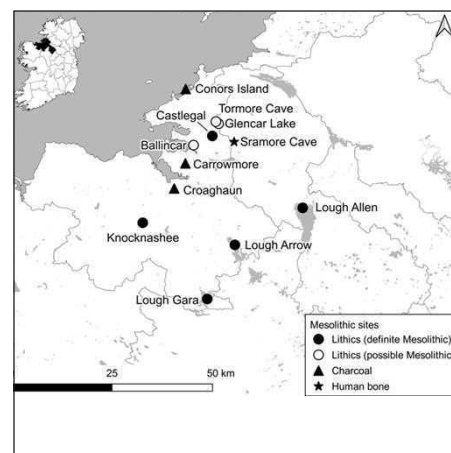
prehistoric times. Elaine Lynch's exquisite drawings for this article has made those found near the Glencar Valley come alive.

The Carrowmore and Carrowkeel passage tomb cemeteries of Neolithic date, get another outing, as is should be, being two of the four major passage tomb cemeteries of Ireland, and also major components of the bid for inclusion in the World Heritage Tentative List. It is too long since we have read anything on that attempt, and likewise the silence on the Museum for Sligo is deafening.

The fact that our great 19th century historian William Gregory Wood-Martin was never born may come as a surprise to many who have made use of his nine volumes, which are listed in the article with the telling title, "When Wood became Wood-Martin, All



Don Cotton on Cnoc na Sí, Co. Sligo in May 2017.



Locations of Mesolithic and possible Mesolithic activities in and around Sligo (Hogan, Dowd and Bonsall 2022, p.75, Fig.7, SFCJ 8).

Changed"; other articles about Wood-Martin get mentioned. By a quirk of family events, William Gregory Wood became William Gregory Wood-Martin on 28th August, 1874. He published nine copious volumes and several articles between then and 1905. It is surprising how many have written and lectured about him, not realising that the Wood-Martin name only goes back to 1874, and that all of that name are descendants of William Gregory. A Wood-Martin family tree is included.

John McKeon's article on the parish of Ahamlish is a *tour de force*. He has extracted masses of unpublished history from the Broadlands Palmerston Archives now curated in the University of Southampton. Even better will be his next article on the Tripartite division of Irish Sligo lands in the mid-17th century. Dr. Fiona Gallagher is a collaborator and they will have Part 2 in Volume 10.

With publication you hope for some reaction! As for the discourse on the kilometre diameter arrangement of fields just west of Ballinafad Castle – the many experts said, 'Let it fly', but it is there, and we are no wiser. That monument had an outing in the last *Corran Herald* but so far nobody has come up with a thorough explanation.

The elusive Robert William Walsh, who wrote in 1945 about the Walsh family of Carrickmines, Co. Dublin, and Breege, Co. Sligo, remains elusive 'Walsh of Breeogue'. He has to have had Breeoge ancestry – why did he call his house Knocknarea in Whiteleaf, Princes Risborough, Buckinghamshire. Perhaps some reader of *The Corran Herald* will ask someone to go and knock on a few doors.

The message in John Mullaney's memories piece has a message for all, particularly those in the tourism business of Sligo and those who administer this county. We have a wonderful county endowed with ten thousand monuments of all periods on a beautiful landscape. There have been over seven hundred illustrations in our eight volumes showing a taste of what we have here in Sligo – there is no need to be dashing up to Donegal!

Ian Sanders explains the Killery Mountain range, south of Lough Gill, and its significance in terms of world geological history. Sanders details in a clear way the very complicated geological history of that area with great illustrations and explanations.

Don Cotton's major article on Leitrim plant life, the tribute to him by his fourteen friends, and the three-page gallery of 'Don in His World' rightly take up forty pages that start this *SFCJ*, Volume 8.



Patrick Tohall with wife Elizabeth and family - Maeliosa, Martha and Eilis in the early 1930s (Tohall family archive).

Dr. Nigel Monaghan, former Keeper of Natural History, National Museum of Ireland, arranged for two members of the *Irish Naturalists Journal* team, Dr. Tom Curtis and Dr. Maria Long, to prepare Don Cotton's article for publication.

The Appreciation article by fourteen authors summarises Don's life of dedication to the natural world of this county, and he had an article on a different theme in all *SFCJ* volumes so far. His wife, Elaine, provided a host of photos used in the gallery of thirty-two, plants, landscapes, flowers, and a sperm whale, at home and in Spain. The caption to the final one, where Don is looking challenging, almost defyingly, at us all, says *I taught you well! Now it is your turn!* One is of the *Novice Master* in action. We will never be able to reach his achieved level of dedication, but we can try.

The most significant of all the illustrations in the eight volumes so far is Don's mapping of peat at twenty-two locations along the coast of Sligo from Bunduff to Pollacheeny north of Inishcrone on Killala Bay. Peat does not develop in salt water! Doggerland is that area between East Anglia, Denmark and Holland where there was settlement during the Mesolithic when sea levels were lower; the evidence is coming up with shellfish dredging and tidal movements. Greater Donegal Bay was not always a bay. Don's mapping of the peat is saying that there was land out there at one time. That has massive implications for the distribution and movement of early peoples in the North West. A few Carbon 14 dates from the peat would not go amiss.

The comments from authors and outsiders of standing and ordinary Sligo people with an interest in their county are all saying one thing. Keep this Journal going! You have to! Sligo deserves it!! The material keeps coming. If it is not suitable for *Sligo Field Club Journal* then perhaps it may be included in Ballymote Heritage



The high altar at Sligo Abbey (Jim Higgins).

Group's *Corran Herald*, these two publications serve the county well. There would be space for articles on topics such as Irish music from Sligo, folklife, architecture, Sligo postal history in future volumes. The Later Bronze Age and Early Iron Age seems to be lost up here as well as nationally, though the Later Bronze Age may get an outing in Volumes 9 and 10.

By the way, if you subtract 1945, the year of our foundation, from 2025 you get 80, and SFC has at least begun talking about celebrating our 80th, for which there will be need for further support, so purchase more than one copy of the journal and tell people about this and earlier volumes.

Returning to the evening of the launch there were two further speakers, Eamonn Gaughan, who officially launched this *SFCJ* Volume 8 talked of the wonderful work Dr. Don Cotton did for nature in Sligo and Leitrim. Eamonn, a retired chemistry teacher from Summerhill, is Don's successor as Vice-Recorder for Leitrim. Eamonn encouraged all to continue in the style of Don, keep looking, recording, preserving, publishing, all for the greater good of society.

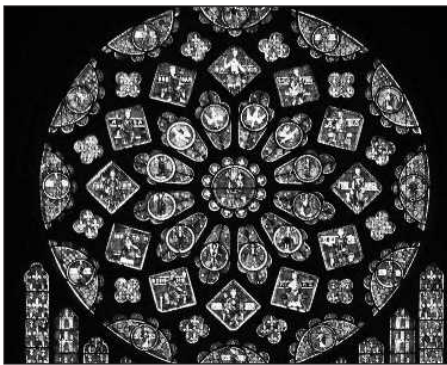
The final speaker on the evening of the launch was Elaine Cotton who thanked us all, Don's many friends and colleagues, for their kind words in the memories-appreciation article, and she encouraged all to keep writing, keep publishing and doing just as Don did for so many years.

This volume costs €25 for 224 pages with copious illustrations in full colour.

STAINED GLASS IN IRELAND

By Marian Foley

Wherever you are, either at home or abroad, do try and visit the local churches and admire their stained glass windows. They are usually a masterpiece of colours, depiction and technique and we are lucky to have them now following on from periods of persecution and wars which destroyed so many of them.



Southwest Transept Chartres Cathedral, France.

There are very few original stained glass windows of the medieval years left in Ireland but other examples can be seen in Europe, especially those of the cathedral in Chartres (opened 1252) which is one of the UNESCO world heritage sites.

Stained glass is a centuries old craft and one of a complicated format, but the end result is truly beautiful. As Elisabeth Kubler-Ross said in one of her articles when writing about the stages of grief she studied in the hospice care settings:

"People are like stained-glass windows. They sparkle and shine when the sun is out, but when the darkness sets in, their true beauty is revealed only if there is a light from within."

The same goes for the windows we can see at various times of the day and year. Stained glass is composed of coloured glass, lead and the stonework into which it will be fitted.

During the late medieval period, glass factories were set up where there was a ready supply of silica which is the essential material for glass manufacture. Silica requires a very high temperature to melt, something not all glass factories were able to achieve and this also curtailed their production. Glass is coloured by adding metallic oxide powders or finely divided metals while it is in a molten state. Copper oxides produce green or bluish green, cobalt makes deep blue, and gold produces wine red and violet glass. Much of modern red glass is produced using copper, which is less expensive than gold and gives a brighter, more vermilion shade of red. Glass coloured while in the clay pot in the furnace is known as pot metal glass, as opposed to flashed glass which is a double layered sheet of glass.

A great advantage to the double-layered glass is that it can be engraved or abraded to reveal the clear or tinted glass below. The method allows rich detailing and patterns to be achieved without needing to add more lead-lines, giving artists greater freedom in their designs. The artist designer draws the picture cartoon on a white sheet. Each piece of coloured glass is cut to fit the cartoon before it is then assembled and kept in place with thin lines of lead cames. All the joints are then soldered together and the glass pieces are prevented from rattling and made waterproof by forcing a soft oily cement or mastic between the glass and the cames. In modern windows, copper foil is now sometimes used instead of lead. Traditionally, when a window was inserted into the window space, iron rods were put across it at various points to support its weight. The window was tied to these rods with copper wire. Some very large early Gothic windows are divided into sections by heavy metal frames called *ferramenta*.

As Gothic architecture developed into a more ornate form, windows grew larger, affording greater illumination to the interiors. However, the size meant that they needed to be divided into sections by vertical shafts and tracery of stone. Windows can be of single lancet style, grouped into 3 or 5 lancets together or formed into intricate circular or rose windows and all these styles evolved up to the mid 1500s. Then came the Reformation and most of the stained glass was smashed and replaced with plain glass windows. Before the main revival in Ireland, a few artists started up again but often moved on to the larger manufacturers in England.

It was the revival of the Catholic faith in the early 19th century that inspired the building of Gothic style churches throughout England and Ireland and the need once again, for good stained glass window production. Amongst its most important exponents in England was Christopher Whall (1849-1924), (author of the classic craft manual *'Stained Glass Work'*) who followed in the footsteps of those in Europe and America.

In Ireland, a generation of young artists taught by Whall's pupil, Alfred Child, in the Dublin Metropolitan School of Art, created a distinctive national school of stained glass. Among its leading representatives were Michael Healy, Wilhelmina Geddes, Evie Hone and Harry Clarke.

The Foundation of An Túr Gloine

These artists were competing with the large foreign commercial firms to fill the many Roman Catholic churches built after Catholic Emancipation and standards were variable. The late Dr Michael Wynne estimated that there were over 100 glaziers working in Ireland in the 19th century. It was the emergence of the Celtic Revival and

the cultural search for national identity which called for native stained glass production of a high quality. They stipulated that this was to be produced by specially trained Irish artists using the best materials and a recognisably Irish iconography, rather than the ubiquitous pattern book designs for windows offered by most commercial trade houses.

So it was that in September 1901 Alfred Ernest Child, who had trained under Whall, arrived in Dublin to take up the post of Instructor in Stained Glass at the newly reorganised Dublin Metropolitan School of Art. His arrival followed negotiations between the eminent painter Sarah Purser, the poet WB Yeats, the art collector and writer Edward Martyn and Christopher Whall, the influential leader of the Arts and Crafts stained glass revival in England (the latter both Catholic converts). In January 1903, Sarah Purser launched the modest but romantically named premises, The Tower of Glass (in Gaelic *An Túr Gloine*), on the site of two former tennis courts in central Dublin, with Child as manager and two glaziers.

An Túr Gloine's initial commission was for what turned out to be a succession of windows over the next 40 or so years in St Brendan's Roman Catholic Cathedral in Loughrea, Co Galway under the skill of its first recruit, Michael Healy. Originally destined for the Dominican order, he found his lifelong vocation in stained glass. Some other examples of his work can be seen at St Catherine's and St James', Donore Avenue, Dublin (1923), or in full scale windows such as his final series of Dolours windows in Clongowes Wood Jesuit College Chapel, Co Kildare (1936-1941). There then followed a succession of gifted artists such as Evie Hone, Wilhelmina Geddes and Harry Clarke.

Evie had her own style but she was able to follow in the footsteps of Michael Healy after his death and finish many of his commissions. Evie also designed the Four Green Fields

window in the Dublin Government Building and another window for St Mary's church in Clonsilla. Wilhelmina, who was born in Leitrim but grew up in Belfast, was spotted by Sarah Purser at an early age and joined the studio in 1910. She designed many notable windows such as one in St Anne's church, Dawson Street, St Brendan's window on Achill Island and the highly acclaimed rose window of the Albert Memorial in Ypres, Belgium. Harry Clarke was born in Dublin after his father came from Leeds to set up an ecclesiastical decorating business with a stained glass section. Harry was educated at Belvedere College until his mother died when he was 14 years of age. He then joined his father's studio. He studied at the Dublin Metropolitan School of Art and won 3 gold medals at the London Board of Education for his stained glass panels. Harry also illustrated several books, one of which was *The Fairy Tales of Hans Christian Anderson* which further enhanced his growing reputation. On his father's death, Harry moved into the studios and set up his own stained glass section.

His wonderful windows can be seen throughout the island and in Australia and the USA. The Bewleys window, Cork University and The Geneva Window are renowned, but a visit to St Michael's church, Inchicore or

St Patrick's Church, Newport along with St Mary's Church, Ballinrobe can be a delightful surprise at the windows within. Unfortunately, Harry died aged 41 from TB and his wife, Margaret Crilley continued on from his cartoons and patterns finishing the many commissions still outstanding. The studio closed in 1973 having produced over 130 windows and other glass commissions such as *The Eve of St Agnes* in the Hugh Lane gallery.

An Túr Gloine was managed by Catherine O'Brien after Purser's death and she ran it until its eventual closure in January 1944 thereby ending a remarkable period in Irish glass production.

An example of some Harry Clarke windows in a single church:

The photograph below depicts the five lancet windows above the altar which you see in front of you on entering the Church of St Michael in Inchicore, Dublin (1845). This was the garrison Church of the Richmond barracks (Church of Ireland) and given over to the Catholic Church on the decommissioning of the barracks in 1926. Many of the leaders of the 1916 rising were court-martialled at these barracks before their executions at Kilmainham and subsequent burial at Arbour Hill.



Five lancet windows of Harry Clarke design above the altar of the Church of St Michael, Inchicore.



West Rose window in the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Ballymote.

Local Stained Glass Windows

It must be said that there is no need to travel too far to admire the lovely stained glass we have in our local churches. These are the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Ballymote (1864), St Joseph's, Doo (1880) and Emlaghfad Church of Ireland, Ballymote (1818). The churches were built in the 1800s to replace buildings which had either fallen down (Doo) or were in a state of disrepair. We know that the sum of £191 was allocated to "windows and arches" in the case of the catholic parish church, but no record of who manufactured them is available.

A new West Rose window in the parish church and a new East Rose window in Doo were installed in the 1920s and 1930s but again there is no record of the manufacturers. However, it is known that the Early family of Dublin, providers of stained glass and church decoration, did do business with Canon Quinn of Ballymote around this time. The Church of Ireland has

no pictorial windows but the windows are all inset with silver stained glass with a beautiful rippling effect and various tints of colour.

The West Rose window in the Church of the Immaculate Conception in Ballymote has an inscription in memory of PJ Canon Roughneen, PP, 1943. However, the admirable window of The Annunciation at the altar of Our Lady is dated 1901 in its dedication scroll which is a small piece of information to add to this article.

The three double lancet windows above the main altar in the parish church show a difference in style as the middle window was commissioned later and provided for by the Altar Society. One of the other lancets above the altar is dedicated to the memory of Miss Catherine Kerins and possibly dates from the same time as the window at Our Lady's altar. On walking around outside I found an inscription on a statue (which I had never read) dedicating it to Miss Catherine Kerins, died May 1887, who "for many years was a fond mother to the orphan children of her three sisters.....Margaret, Mary and Bridget". The statue and window are dedicated to her by her nephews John and James McDonagh.

St Joseph's Church, Doo (1880)

Much the same problem was had with finding any information on the church of St Joseph in Doo despite help from

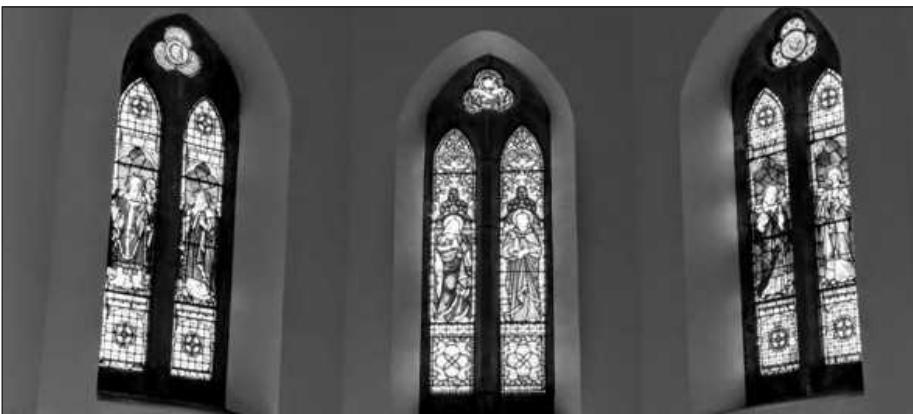


East window above the altar in the Church of St Joseph, Doo.

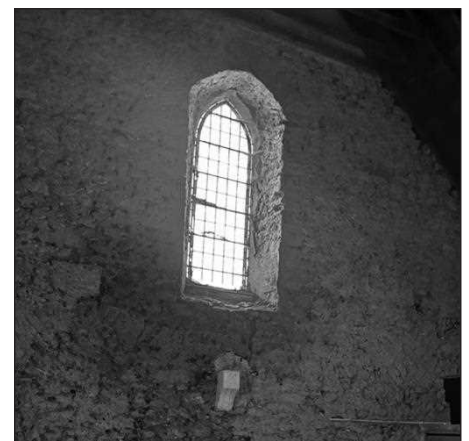
many quarters. The Rose Window is dedicated to the first Canon Quinn and is dated 1911-1920 and is a beautiful depiction of the Flight into Egypt. The East window is behind the partition to the back of the church and is one of the original windows in the old wall which could lead to the supposition that all the windows started off this way and were gradually replaced with stained glass as time went on.

Credits:

1. Fr James McDonagh for his books on Achonry and its Churches and the Christmas pamphlet 1983 on the Church of the Immaculate Conception.
2. Sister Pat Casey the Archivist for Achonry based in Ballaghaderreen.
3. Marie Brennan in the Sligo County Council Library Department.
4. The Sligo Champion microfilms.
5. Dark Beauty: Hidden detail in Harry Clarke's stained glass.
6. Ballymote Heritage Group and Doo church sacristan.



Three double lancet windows above the altar in the church of the Immaculate Conception, Ballymote.



Original West window in St Joseph's Church, Doo.

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