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The Corran Herald

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Issue No 49 2016/2017

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

27th Ballymote Heritage Weekend

Thurs. 28th July to Mon. 1st August 2016

Organised by
Ballymote Heritage Group, Ballymote, County Sligo
www.ballymoteheritage.com

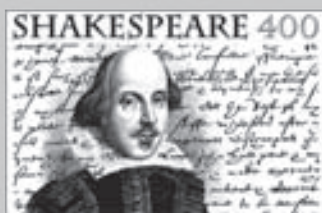
Lectures at The Teagasc Centre: €10. Coach for Outings departs from the Catholic Church. Further Information 087 4169557

Thursday 28th

5 p.m. *The Battle of the Somme*
Documentary Screening
at The Documentary Club,
Ballymote Community Library
(Free Admission)



8 p.m. **Hamlet**
Feature Film of Shakespear's play
Director: Kenneth Branagh at
The Art Deco Theatre & Cinema
(Admission €6)



Friday 29th

1.30 p.m. *Mise Éire*
Historic Film with music
by Sean Ó Riada, (1959) at
The Art Deco Theatre & Cinema
(Free Admission)



8.30 p.m. **Official Opening and Lecture:**
Anne Haverty, Novelist,
Poet and Biographer
of Constance Markievicz
Lecture: 'Being Miss Gore-Booth'



Saturday 30th

9 a.m. **Outing: Cong Abbey,**
village & Harry Clarke
windows, Ballinrobe
Guides: Micheál Murphy &
Noel O'Neill Local Historians.
(Tickets €35 (including Lunch)
must be purchased in advance
from Casey's Pharmacy. Any
remaining tickets available at the
opening lecture)



8.30 p.m. **Lecture: The Knights Templar**
in Ireland and Temple House:
from Templar Castle to New
English Mansion
Dr. Paul Naessens, Archaeologist



Spanish Armada
cannon on the sea bed

Sunday 31st

11.30 a.m. **Ballymote Parish Choir**
sings settings by
Sean Ó Riada
at mass in the Catholic
Church

3 p.m. **Tour of ruins of Old castle**
at Temple House with
Dr. Paul Naessens,
Archaeologist followed
by refreshments in Temple
House (Tickets €15 must
be purchased in advance
from Casey's Pharmacy. Any
remaining tickets will
be available at the opening
lecture)

8.30 p.m. **Lecture: 'The History**
of the World in the Book
of Ballymote'
Dr Elizabeth Boyle, Head
of the Department of
Early Irish, NUI Maynooth

Monday 1st August

9 a.m. **Outing: Aspects of**
Monaghan, including
lunch at Castle Leslie
Guide: Kevin Mulligan,
Architectural
Historian and author of
The Buildings of South Ulster
(Tickets €50 must be purchased in
advance from Casey's Pharmacy.
Any remaining tickets will be
available at the opening lecture)

8.30 p.m. **Lecture: Recent investigations**
of 'La Juliana', a Spanish
Armada ship wrecked off
Streedagh in 1588
Fionnbarr Moore, Connie Kelleher
& Karl Brady, National Monuments
Service



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Ballymote lights up with Community Radio

A contemporary account of the events in 1986

By Alfie Banks

Ballymote never saw anything like it before! A carnival atmosphere prevailed all last week in the town and the entire South Sligo area. Little did the organisers realise when RTE accepted the invitation to visit Ballymote that its advent would have such a momentous effect.

Almost a month ago, the small dedicated Committee began to meet each week to plan. Firstly it was in a casual way, but as the momentum grew it was meeting twice weekly, and during the week of transmission it met every night to review the work and prepare the following day's programme. Tremendous credit is due for the success of the event to this energetic Committee, headed by John Perry as chairman and Peter Brennan and Eamonn Scanlon as joint secretaries, who all worked so assiduously often past the midnight hour.

All work was voluntary, and as the comperes were chosen they got down to the task of draft programmes which were then referred to the Committee for checking and verification. There were many journeys into the hinterlands to seek out news topics, music, songs and likely interviewees, telephones humming continuously, drafts and redrafts scrapped, radio widows and widowers invented, albeit for only an acceptably brief period, and then D-day dawned.

Monday afternoon saw all systems go and Ballymote was on the air. Despite the nerves, missed meals and sleepless nights, the presentations by the comperes and the contributions made to the varied programmes provided a memorable occasion, and the recorded daily transmissions will be treasured as valued memoirs in years to come. Every spectrum of community activity in areas stretching from Coolavin to Coolaney and Bunninadden to Collooney was covered, with places for young and old, history, tradition, stories, music and song, farming and recreational activities, education and women's affairs all getting a place.

Despite the complete lack of experience of going before a



Back row (left to right): David Casey, the late Tom McGetterick, Dominic Murray, Eamon Scanlon, Petie Brennan, two RTE staff.

Front row (left to right): Mary Brennan, Brenda Duffy, John Perry, RTE presenter, Kathleen Duddy RIP, Alfie Banks, Martin McGetterick and his son Barry.

Photo courtesy of Martin McGetterick, who managed to get the group together for a photograph during the event and asked Gerry Gilhooley to take it.

microphone to broadcast publicly from an enclosed studio, the comperes mastered their task like professionals. The studio, centred on the famous Rock of Ballymote, became a focal point of attention as people came to Ballymote to see where their new radio station was coming from. Radios and transistors in every home, shop, car and even on tractors were tuned to 208 each day, and the accolades poured in from such faraway places as Frenchpark, Ballyshannon, Ballinamore and Tubbercurry, where reception was loud and clear. Even Limerick reported reception. TVs were abandoned as well as 1 and 2, work neglected, and business almost stopped as shoppers and pensioners rushed home each day to be on time to turn on. Indeed, there was no other topic for the week.

Contributions of music and community work excelled and it would be an injustice to single out any item or person, but the example of Monasteraden is surely an eye-opener. Among other topics and memorable occasions recounted were the horse racing at Stonepark (now Marren Park) and the Big Snow of 1947. The public particularly enjoyed the requests and

it is such a pity that the remaining boxfuls could not be reached, such was the demand from young and old to transmit felicitations for birthdays, engagements, marriages, births and anniversaries.

As the closure on Saturday at 1.30p.m. came around, it was only then the Committee members really relaxed for the first time. But the experience will be everlasting and the enjoyment and pleasure the programmes generated will be spoken of for many years. Tapes have been made in all homes and will be treasured as heirlooms. During the week too, the Committee built up a tremendous rapport with the staff in charge, headed by Paddy O'Neill as director and with Conor Rahilly, Kevin Howley, formerly from Dromahair, and Brian Mulvihill from Sligo as technicians. The Committee extends a sincere thanks to all who helped in any way, the musicians and singers, the contributors, groups and choir, and also to the directors of the Community Centre for placing the premises at our disposal for recorded transmissions, practices and other facilities. Will Ballymote ever see anything like it again!

Bringing the Church to a new era

By Keenan Johnson

Paul Tighe is my first cousin and was ordained as a bishop recently. His mother is my aunt Monica and she is the sister of my late father Patrick Keenan Johnson, who died in 2013.

Monica was born and reared in Ballymote and was the daughter of my late grandparents, Thomas and Margaret Johnson, who were married in 1914 after my grandfather Tom converted from the Church of Ireland to Catholicism.

Tom and Margaret had six children. Martha married Dick Molloy, Des ran the furniture shop, and Sheelagh managed Johnson's Medical Hall in Ballymote. Kevin, who was Sheelagh's twin, married Mary Fitzgerald, a pharmacist from Kerry, and went to live in Gurteen where they operated a pharmacy. Keenan, my Dad, qualified as a solicitor and practised in Ballymote until he was appointed a district judge in 1975. Monica, the youngest, became a pharmacist and married Macartan Tighe, and went to live in Navan where Paul was born in 1958.

Over the years Paul has been a regular visitor to Ballymote, visiting his aunts, uncles and cousins, and he has a great affection for the place. He is passionate about fishing and likes nothing better than spending time at the lakes and rivers of the locality. His first cousins Tom Johnson and Richard Molloy still live in the town.



Keenan Johnson and Bishop Paul Tighe, the day after Paul's ordination as bishop in the Irish college in Rome. This photo was taken outside the tomb which contains the heart of the Liberator, Daniel O'Connell

Paul was ordained a priest for the Dublin archdiocese in 1984. Following his ordination he ministered in Ballyfermot before spending nine years in Rome studying theology. Following his return from Rome he lectured in Mater Dei until he was appointed press spokesperson for the Dublin archdiocese. In 2007 he returned to Rome and was appointed deputy head of social communications at the Vatican. He was tasked with bringing the church into the digital age and was responsible for the rolling out of the Papal app and for the Pope joining Twitter.

In 2015 he was appointed deputy

director of the Vatican department of Faith and Culture. In February 2016 he was ordained a bishop in St Peter's, Rome, by the cardinal Secretary of State to the Vatican. This was a very impressive ceremony attended by over 120 senior clergy including Cardinal Sean Brady, Archbishop Diarmuid Martin and Bishop Kevin Doran from Ireland. Paul's immediate and extended family along with many friends including the Irish ambassadors to the Vatican and Italy also attended. Paul is now seen as the most senior Irish cleric in the Roman Curia.

Share your passion for history with *The Corran Herald*

Are you interested in local heritage and history, and would you like to share that passion with others? *The Corran Herald* is seeking new writers, and we'd love to hear from you. We're also interested in significant old photographs, or new photography on heritage topics. So if you've had a

story of historical interest niggling at the back of your mind waiting to be told, now is the time to tell it.

Next year marks the 50th issue of the publication, and in honour of the occasion we're going to offer prizes for best new contributor and best contribution overall for 2017.

Stories should be submitted by email to the editor: stephen.flanagan@gmail.com, by the end of April 2017 and should not exceed 2,000 words. We're looking forward to seeing your entry!

Sligo Labourers in the 1880s Land War

By Pdraig G Lane



A cottage typical of the time period. Image courtesy of the National Library of Ireland.

In her book *Dramatic Scenes from Real Life*, the 19th-century novelist Lady Morgan characterised the agrarian unrest of the county's mountainous districts as being born in the labourers' lack of access to potato ground¹. She was living with the Croftons in Sligo at the time. It was the impoverished labourers of the Dromore and Curry districts, noted by the Devon Commission in 1845, who were most impacted upon by the Famine, while recovery among them, in Rathibarren, had set in by 1853.

Violence², instanced in the destruction of mowing machines in the county in 1868 and by labourers' intimidating placards at Riverstown in 1872, continued to accompany poverty. It was marked by a lack of employment, poor wages and dreadful housing in the early 1870s, when Poor Law Inspectors reported³. Dr Roughan acknowledged daily wages of 10^d to 1^s from spring to October, but noted that lack of employment led to winter distress when small farmers used family labour, other farmers relied on boarded servants, landlords employed less often, and tillage gave way to pasture.

Clearance from the countryside

meant less access to potatoes and milk, and, even as food prices rose, a dependence on cash wages. Besides, labourers were forced into disease-ridden cottages, and that was for those who (according to Roughan) were not still housed in equally wretched cabins in the countryside by farmers who begrudged them time spent cultivating their small potato gardens. Resultant grievances led to the near 75% labour composition of the emigrant figures.

The labour element in constabulary outrage reports ties in to small farmer land hunger, and the uncertainty of migratory earnings ensured labourers' part in the Land War upheaval. It was marked by Sligo landlords' alarm at unpaid rents in 1879, by Davitt's speech at Gurteen in November of that year, and by the authorities' concern, in 1880, at unrest in the county. Land League speeches added to that unrest. In June at Mount Irvine, Matthew Harriss summoned forth the prospect of labourers being settled on broken-up estates. Thomas Brennan, at Keadue in Roscommon, saw the struggle for social justice as emanating from the cabins of the humblest labourer. And PJ Sheridan, in Sligo in November, saw employment for those farm

workers as only materialising when farmers had broken the landlords and had the security to till the land⁴.

Where 1880 Constabulary Reports told of secret societies and the administering of oaths to farmers within the county, similar reports in 1881 reflected tensions between farmers and labourers. The farmers were accused of not passing on the benefits of legislation, and in Munster labourer strikes and the formation of a Labour League reflected the tensions in Sligo. Whatever radicalism existed in those *Irish World* newspapers confiscated at the railway station was also represented in the intimidation of farmers in the countryside.

While Sexton at Boyle in April⁵ equated the labourers' right to wages with the small farmers' struggle to be free of rent, and while the constable's death at Monasteredan registered the Land War's tensions, it was not until August that Keash's Land League meeting heard Murty Corcoran cryptically speak of the right of the people who tilled the land to that same soil. It was chaired by Fr Scully, the parish priest, and attended by contingents from Ballymote, Killavil, Ballyrush and Maghenagh.

In September at Cloonloo, Cloonacool, Easky and Achonry, delegates were appointed to that month's Land League Convention. At that gathering they heard Parnell endorse the labourers' grievances and open up the prospect of their settlement on the land, sentiments supported by Sligo delegate Devine. Whatever of the absence of any meaningful mention of the labourers at Keash, at Cloonacool in early October the 'patriotic labourer' Pat McDermott was honourably enrolled in that branch's Land League.

The 1882 Constabulary Reports stressed the presence in the Boyle region of secret societies and general unrest, while labourers vented grievances openly. At Boyle in January for instance, the Sligo labourers presented the expectation of

greater employment from the farmers. Moreover with the hardships of the migratory labourers being noted in July, and with Davitt, from New York, emphasising the labourers' general poverty, it was scarcely surprising that in October Parnell launched the new National League. It absorbed the Labour League branches in existence in Riverstown and Tubbercurry, and promised them special legislation⁶.

It was on that occasion that Mr McDermott of Ballymote articulated effectively the labourers' grievances. He argued that while in the Ballymote area small farmers and labourers were scarcely distinguishable – the labourers often being the sons and brothers of these small tenants – the picture of their poverty was very real. He told of them being driven from the land into wretched cabins in the town, rented at 1s a week, and then forced to stand on the street in the cold waiting to be hired for three days' casual labour at 10^d to 1s a day during the farming season, while facing starvation at other times.

If Parnell had hoped to assuage their discontent, it became clear at Ballintrillick in October and at Riverstown in November that while the National League was seen as the best option for the labourers, an uneasy accommodation existed with the farmers. By year's end, indeed, magistrate reports made it clear that for all the labourers' distress the Riverstown Labour League – deemed in any case to be but the Land League in disguise – and its counterparts in Tubbercurry and towards the Drumahaire district beyond, were ceasing to exist. That demise came more from opportunism than from any *grá* for the farmers and the National League. Indeed, where elsewhere in the country magistrates reported farmers' alarm at labourers' insistent demand for wages and potato ground, in Sligo it was the prospect of the breakup of grasslands, given the weakness of migratory earnings, that drove this agitation⁷.

Such magistrate reports continued into 1883, and at Riverstown in January the labourers clamoured for the half-acre allotments and cabins promised under the 1881 Land Act. Sexton, the Irish Party MP, acknowledged

that there could be no satisfaction in the continued neglect of that class. Accepting that public employment was needed immediately to allay the prevailing distress, he envisaged them having rent-free cabins and conacre ground when landlordism was ended, and, returning to the issue in April, he urged Parliament's Crichton Committee to ease the terms on which farmers could borrow the labour-giving improvements.

Otherwise in 1883, constabulary reports focussed on *de rigueur* outrages, on migratory labourers, or in the demand for cottages. Labour activity within the county was referenced by the herds meeting at Gurteen, tied to a similar meeting at Four-Mile-Water in Roscommon, at which Sligo, Mayo and Roscommon herds held graziers to account for renegeing on an agreement on wages. At any rate the Labourer's Act of that summer, obliging Boards of Guardians to initiate cottage and allotment schemes where needed for the labourers, held the promise, as Davitt said, of radically improving the labourers' circumstances. But the door was open for farmers and landlords alike to object to the burden of the rates, to the siting of schemes, and to the risk of recreating a pauper cottier tenantry.

Certainly by October at Ballymote and at Keash, pressure came upon the Boards of Guardians to effect schemes. The pressure amounted to criticism of King-Harmann's ability to stymie progress, a criticism echoed at Keash in early December of the Boyle Guardians inactivity, reflective of Connaught's general lack of progress as evinced in the first returns of schemes by early December.

That pattern continued into 1884, as at Geevagh in January a resolution was passed regretting the general inactivity within the province. A resolution followed in February, at Clooneyquinn near Manorhamilton, with a motion urging the election of Poor Law Guardians that were more responsive to the people. By October at Riverstown, as the usual seasonal distress of the labourers prevailed, there came a plea for National League farmers to give employment, with labourer members of that League

to be given preference. The 1884 constabulary returns noted the insistent demands for the Labourers' Act to be implemented⁷.

The political issues of 1885 subdued social divisions, and the Plan of Campaign absorbed attention. Magistrates continued to refer to the lack of love between the farmers and labourers within the country, with the farmers alarmed at the labourers' demands and fearful of agitation, and the labourers feeling betrayed by their employers. In January 1886 the Irish Party's newspaper *United Ireland* drew attention once more to the distress that regularly prevailed in that month.

Sexton, in February, mindful of the complaint from Kilcoole in Co Roscommon of the Guardians trifling with the Labourers' Act, again stressed the farmworkers' needs.

While a fitful labour organisation – loosely linked to Davitt's Democratic Labour Federation – did exist in Sligo in 1891, it died away despite the distress among the labourers there due to a potato harvest failure. There was no evidence throughout the 1890s of links with the farm labourers' Land and Labour Association. Again in 1898 labourers there remained independent of both farmers and landlords in casting their votes during the local elections. In the new century, amid continuing evidence of unemployment, the evidence was of a regression in these congested districts to the atavistic land hunger of other days.

Whatever of Lady Morgan's forceful image of the labourers of her time, the retained images of the labourers, in the fiction of a later day, was of a lesser order. In WB Yeats' 1893 novella *John Sherman*, there is an image of a row of tumbledown thatched cottages, those of the labourers. It is akin to William Allingham's similar image of the north-west in *Lawrence Bloomfield in Ireland*, in 1869, and to the Tubbercurry writer DC Devine's images under the shadow of *Sliabh Gabh*, in *Before the Dawn in Erin*, and in tales in *Faithful Ever*. These are images of a pauperised small tenantry, falling into the landless labourer class, malcontents¹² that the magistrate Palmer saw as driven to outrages by

their grievances, the labouring poor, those in the *Countess Cathleen*, who were perhaps most affected by the land crisis of 1879.

References

¹Lady Morgan, 'Mount Sackville', *Dramatic Scenes from Real Life* (1833, New York, reprint 1979).
²*National Archives* Reg. Papers, 10150/1868; 15410, 19084/1869; 9980/1870; 21141, 21259/1871; 1101, 11871./1872; Misc. 1866/1761A/9; 1872/2128/3
³*Reports, Wages* – H.C. 1870 (c.35), xiv,

1, pp1-5: Dwellings- H.C. 1873 (C.764), xxii, 65, pp 75-6.

⁴NLI. Queen vs. Parnell, June 6, Aug. 8, Nov. 28, 1880.

⁵NA. Reg. Papers, 43960/1880; 3051, 44505, 46779/1881; *Flag of Ireland*, Apr. 30; *Irishman* April 16; *United Ireland*, Aug. 6, 17, 24, Sept.15, Oct. 15/1881

⁶NA. Reg. Papers, 563, 27213, 33909/1882; *United Ireland* 23 Jan, 21 Oct, 18 Nov. 1882

⁷NA. Misc. Reg Papers, Ctn. 2839. Nos 45442, 45447; Ctn. 284's, No. 44358, Ctn. 2842. Nos 40921, 46857, 47012. Progress of National League, Ctn, 6: *United Ireland*, 13, 24 Jan. 7 April, 1883

⁸NA. Reg. Papers. 17339, 18291 (Gurteen) and 26967, 27462/1883: *United Ireland*, 24 March 13, 20, 27 Oct, 3 Nov, 1, 8 Dec/1883.

⁹*United Ireland* 19 Jan, 9 feb. 1884, NA Reg. pp 14121, 15397, 17397/1884.

¹⁰*United Ireland*. 15, 31 Jan 1886: NA Progressing National League. Ctn 6 and 7.

¹¹NA. Dec 1, Midland Div. 1890-91. Dec 31 Midland Ctn 8, 9, 10, Inspector General's Reports 1894-1906.

¹²WB. Yeats, John Sherman (London 1893), p 88: D.C. Devine, *Before the Dawn in Erin* (Dublin 1913), pp 15-70, 114, 269-75; *Faithful Ever* (Dublin 1910)

Gaelic Football in 1916

By Tommy Kilcoyne

There was an upsurge in GAA activity in Co Sligo in 1916. Early in the year the annual county convention attracted the biggest attendance for some years, and a number of new clubs were represented. The junior football championship was revived after a lapse of five years. The final was played in Mullinabreena and Coolera won the title for the first time, defeating Tubbercurry by 1-3 to 1-2.

The 1916 senior football championship was a long-drawn-out affair arising from an unusual number of drawn games and a series of objections and appeals involving Derroon, Mullinabreena and Doocastle. The latter eventually qualified for the final against Enniscrone. The game played in Tubbercurry ended in a draw, 0-1 each. Due to some misunderstanding Doocastle failed to put in an appearance for the replay but the game eventually took place in Enniscrone with the home team winning 1-3 to 0-2. Thus Enniscrone regained the title they had also won in 1914.

In addition to championships and O'Grady Cup games, there were tournaments at Keash, Curry, Cloonacool, Doocastle and Dromore West. However, conditions generally

were far from normal. World War I was raging in all its fury and claiming the lives of many former GAA players. Amongst the casualties was Joseph O'Dowd, a former Killavil and county player, who was killed on active service with the Connaught Rangers in April 1916.

1916 was also a fairly active season for the county team. They lost narrowly to Roscommon in a tournament game in February and to Leitrim by a margin of five points in the championship. Sligo displayed much improved form later in the year when defeating Dublin 2-4 to 2-1 in a game in aid of the Irish National Volunteers Dependants' Fund at Sligo Show Grounds.

In 1916 Hugh O'Donnell of Gurteen was county chairman. Batt Henry NT, Emlanaughton, was county secretary and JJ Berreen, Mullinabreena, was county treasurer. All three had been elected to their positions in 1914 and they all rendered sterling service to the GAA in Co Sligo for many years. Early in 1917, Dr P O'Hart, Ballymote, was elected as the County Board's first patron.

The events at Easter 1916 had a major impact on that year's intercounty senior football championship. Both



Dublin and Kerry withdrew, having been weakened by the absence of so many players interned after the Rising.

Mayo won the Connacht Championship, beating Roscommon in the final. They went on to beat Cork in the All-Ireland semi-final after a replay in Athlone, and qualified to contest the All-Ireland final for the first time in their history. In the other semi-final Wexford defeated Monaghan. In the final, which was played in freezing temperatures in Croke Park just a week before Christmas, Mayo were defeated by the great Wexford team who were in the middle of their four in a row All-Irelands, 1915-1918.

Sources

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The Sligo Champion
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Constance Markievicz and the Easter Rising

By Joe Mc Gowan

On this 100th anniversary of the Easter Rising the feature below is dedicated to Sligo-woman Constance Markievicz and her comrades. It is drawn from Constance Markievicz: The People's Countess by Joe McGowan

The Blood of Martyrs

Early in 1916 Irish recruits to the British army were dying in their thousands on the Western Front. There was talk of introducing conscription to Ireland, a British colony at the time. Something had to be done! Among the militants, pressure to stage a rebellion was building. 'The country is sinking unto the sleep of death and nothing can awake it but the crack of the rifle,' Canon Sheehan wrote in his novel, *The Graves at Kilmorna*. 'As the blood of martyrs was the seed of saints so the patriot will be the sacred seed from which alone can spring new forces and fresh life to a nation that is drifting into the putrescence of decay.'

By the middle of April 1916, preparations had been made for a joint rising by the Volunteers and the Citizen Army. Secrecy was essential so only the militant IRB men on the executive of the Volunteers knew of the proposed action. Eoin McNeill, the head of the movement, was not fully trusted and so was not informed until April 21. The following day the Volunteers learned that Roger Casement had been captured after landing from a German submarine. More bad news came with the information that a German ship carrying arms essential for the rising had been intercepted by the British and scuttled by the crew.

Eoin McNeill, partly influenced by these developments, countermanded the order for 'manoeuvres' on Easter Sunday and had the order published in the *Sunday Independent*. The IRB men's suspicions of McNeill were confirmed. Constance Markievicz was appalled. Dressed in an 'uncompromisingly soldierly rig-out –

dark green woollen blouse with brass buttons, green tweed knee breeches, black stockings and heavy boots,' she was ready for the fight. A cartridge belt was slung around her waist, and armed with an automatic pistol and a Mauser rifle, she made a formidable soldier indeed.

Once, dressed in full uniform and getting ready to take her turn standing guard at Liberty Hall, a knock came to the door of Surrey House. The light in the hallway was poor so she chanced to open the door. Standing there were two detectives with orders prohibiting her from entering Kerry.

'What will happen if I refuse to obey the order and go to Kerry?' she enquired. 'Will I be shot?'

'Ah now Madame, who'd want to shoot you? You wouldn't want to shoot one of us. Now would you Madame?'

'But I would!' replied Constance. 'I'm quite prepared to shoot and be shot at.'

'Ah, now Madame, you don't mean that. None of us want to die yet. We all want to live a little longer.'

'If you want to live a little longer, you'd better not be coming here,' she retorted. 'None of us are fond of you and you make grand big targets...'

On the morning of Easter Sunday, Connolly and the IRB leaders, regardless of McNeill's order, decided to begin the Rising the next day. Constance was euphoric: 'Our heart's desire was granted to us,' she wrote later, 'and we counted ourselves lucky.'

On Monday 25 April, a hot spring morning, Dubliners out for a stroll watched in amazement as Volunteers and Citizen Army took up battle positions. War soon erupted in the streets of the capital. Pearse and Connolly charged forward and took possession of the GPO.

Constance, second in command to Micheal Mallin at Stephen's Green, took charge of trench digging. The



Constance as a young woman

blood sacrifice had begun, but they were only too well aware of the risks: 'We are going out to be slaughtered,' Connolly said matter of factly to a friend as he marched his men from Liberty Hall.

'It's madness but a glorious madness and I am with you,' the O'Rahilly had said to Constance, earlier in the day.

Heavy fire from snipers stationed in the Shelbourne Hotel was directed at the rebels in Stephen's Green. Constance, Commandant Mallin and their men returned fire from trenches they had dug. On two occasions repeated fire from Constance's weapons caused a cessation of fire from the enemy. Mallin, considering the position too vulnerable, ordered his force to withdraw to the College of Surgeons. Constance, unceremoniously shooting the lock off the door with her pistol, led her troops into the building.

By the following Friday, Dublin was devastated and Sackville Street reduced to rubble. On Saturday morning Pdraig Pearse, his HQ in the General Post Office bombed and burned out, handed his sword to the British General Lowe in an unconditional surrender. James Connolly countersigned on behalf of the Irish Citizen Army.

Although assaults on the College were heavy and continuous during the Rising, Mallin's band was still fully operational at the end of the week. When ordered to surrender they were unbelieving, being strongly positioned to continue the fight. They were completely unaware of the havoc wrought by artillery fire from the British gunboat *Helga*.

At one point a British soldier entered the College unaware that the garrison there had not yet surrendered. One of Con's men lifted his revolver to shoot him but Constance, preventing him said, 'Don't Joe. It would be a great shame now.'

Captain de Courcy Wheeler, Kings Royal Rifle Corps, who accepted Staff Lieutenant Markievicz's surrender, was a relation by marriage of the Gore-Booths. On surrendering her Mauser, Wheeler recalled later that Constance kissed it before handing it over and said: 'I am ready'. She and Commandant Mallin then marched off into captivity at the head of their men. There was only one question now on everyone's mind. Death was inevitable. But in what manner? Were they going to be hanged, or were they going to be shot?

The Prison Years

'Separation women' harangued and pilloried the prisoners as they were being marched away to Dublin Castle. These army wives had been openly hostile to the rebellion. One, who had physically attacked a Volunteer on the first day of the Rebellion, was shot dead.

Con was one of 70 women prisoners removed from the Castle to solitary confinement in Kilmainham jail. There she sat, alone in her prison cell, listening to the crack of rifle shots as each day bullets tore into the bodies of her comrades and dearest friends: Pearse, Mc Donagh, Clarke and Connolly. A single pistol shot rang out after every volley as the officer commanding the firing squad put a bullet in each head.

Esther Roper was to write later that: 'The executions at Kilmainham and Pentonville were the worst days' work



Constance and her sister, Eva

ever done by England to Ireland. Irish people who had taken no part in the revolt became permanently embittered and utterly alienated; before long the whole country was against English rule. The loss to Ireland of these rare spirits was tragic in the extreme.'

Although a pacifist, Eva Gore-Booth too was moved by the slaughter. In Easter Week she wrote:

*Grief for the noble dead
Of one who did not share their strife,
And mourned that any blood was shed,
Yet felt the broken glory of their state,
Their strange heroic questioning of Fate
Ribbon with gold the rags of this our life...*

*...Ah! Ye who slay the body, how
man's soul
Rises above your hatred and your
scorns—
All flowers fade as the years onward
roll,
Theirs is the deathless wreath — a
crown of thorns.*

The Easter Rising had very little popular support. In Another Man's Wound, Ernie O'Malley was later to write of the transformation, the 'strange rebirth' that took place throughout the countryside following the executions: 'It was manifest in flags, badges, songs, speech, all

seemingly superficial signs,' he wrote. 'It was as if the inarticulate attempted to express themselves in any way or by any method; later would come organisation and cool headed reasoning. Now was the lyrical stage, blood sang and pulsed, a strange love was born that was for some never to die till they lay stiff on the hillside or in quicklime near a barrack wall.'

The unselfishness displayed by the men and women of Easter Week was exceptional. It has rarely been seen since. Con Colbert was a member of Na Fianna Eireann and a close friend of Constance. When the surrender came he insisted on taking the place of his commander:

'You're a married man, I'm single' he said. 'You'll be shot. Resign!' 'Never!' came the reply. 'Then,' said Colbert, 'We'll depose you!'

They did so. Colbert gave the surrender, was tried and executed.

Many in the British system secretly admired the bravery of the men whom they fought and put to death. General Blackadar, President of the Courts-martial said afterwards that Pearse was one of the finest men he had ever come across: 'There must be something very wrong in the state of things that makes a man like that a rebel. I don't wonder his pupils adore him!' The English surgeon that treated James Connolly's wounds prior to his execution said he was one of the bravest men he had ever known.

On the day Willie Pearse and Joseph Plunkett were shot, Constance was tried and condemned to death by secret military tribunal. Undaunted, and contemptuous of the judge, she described him later as 'a fuzzy little officer with his teeth hanging out to dry.' Fuzzy or not, having the authority and the last word, he sentenced her to be shot.

When the realisation sunk in that the Rising was a failure Con was unflinching, saying: 'Well, Ireland was free for a week!'

The British, fearing the outcry the execution of a woman would set off, later commuted the sentence, solely on account of her gender. But Con

did not want to live, and would have rejoiced had she gone to death with her comrades. 'I do wish you lot had the decency to shoot me,' she said to the officer who brought the news of the commutation.

Writing these lines in the comfortable year of 2016, delving deeply into existence, probing shattered bodies, hopes and dreams, drawing blood and flesh from the one dimensional canvas of the past, it is difficult not to be deeply and profoundly moved.

To the citizens of this brash, modern Ireland the sentiments of these men and women of 1916 must seem old-fashioned, outmoded, incomprehensible. Their lives seem irrelevant almost, forgotten now by a people who built a new Ireland on their bones. Those of us who stop to reflect must never forget a glorious time long ago, and a blood sacrifice so willingly given. What an immeasurable debt we owe them!

Con was shortly transferred to Mountjoy and visited there by her sister Eva and Esther Roper. Tears ran down her cheeks when they told her of James Connolly's execution. 'You needn't tell me,' she said. 'I knew. Why don't they let me die with my friends!'

Connolly's death affected her more than any other. Following the women's visit she wrote:

*You died for your country my Hero-
love
In the first grey dawn of Spring;
On your lips was a prayer to God
above
That your death will have helped to
bring
Freedom and peace to the land you
love,
Love above everything.*

'Dearest old Darling,' she wrote to Eva after the visit, 'It was such a Heaven sent joy seeing you, it was a new life, a resurrection, though I knew all the time you'd try and see me, even though I'd been fighting and you hate it all so and think killing so wrong...'

The bond between the two sisters never wavered, even when conscience

led them in opposite directions. Both were fighters, one with words and non-violent protest, the other with revolutionary fervour, a gun, and a will to use it. It was Eva that penned the following lines entitled *The Land to a Landlord*. It reflects on the aristocratic landlord system they had both rejected:

*You hug to your soul a handful of dust,
And you think the round world your
sacred trust –
But the sun shines, and the wind
blows,
And nobody cares and nobody knows.
O the bracken waves and the foxgloves
flame,
And none of them ever has heard your
name –*

*Near and dear is the curlew's cry,
You are merely a stranger passing
by...
Down there in the bog where the
plovers call*

*You are but an outcast after all,
Over your head the sky gleams blue –
Not a cloud or a star belongs to you.*

Eva sought rights for the oppressed, reform of the system; Constance sought exposure of tyranny, overthrow of unjust government. Their tactics were different, their goals the same. Neither sister weighed the cost to herself in loss of privilege, esteem or health. Sacrificing ease and luxury, they championed the quest for human dignity.

Shortly after Eva and Esther Roper's visit, Con was transferred to Aylesbury Jail in England. Thieves and murderers now became her only company. A letter sent by a priest to the Home Secretary Sir Geoffrey Cave, and circulated to public bodies in Ireland, outlined her position. 'Of the nearly 150 Irish prisoners now in England there is one whose case calls for special attention, the Countess de Markievicz now in Aylsebury convict jail,' he wrote. The letter begged for special consideration for Constance:

'She is being treated with exceptional severity,' it read, 'as there

are no facilities for a woman there. She is not being given privileges that the men have, such as being able to work apart from ordinary criminals, speaking together and so on. All the Irish prisoners can have a visit from an outside friend once a month – except Madame Markievicz... She is punished because of her womanhood...

'Add to the isolation the fact of the terrible experiences she went through in days when she was shut up in Kilmainham waiting for her sentence. She lay awake all night, night after night till dawn when each morning some of her friends were shot under her window. It is perhaps hard for those who have not been through these things to understand but the fact that two volleys were often necessary to kill them seems to have added a crowning touch of agony to the situation. However strong a person's spirit may be it is surely impossible that such an experience should not tell terribly on their nerves, especially when followed by seven, now ten months' loneliness and separation not only from friends and sympathisers but from ordinary human companionship.'

The letter was sent to Eva for approval, to which she responded: 'I have read the statement about my sister written by a parish priest and friend of hers. I think it a very good and fair account of her position. Thanks so much for letting me see it.'

Constance found ways to make prison life bearable. Needing more physical work to discharge her pent-up energy, she asked to be relocated from the sewing room to the kitchen where the work was harder. During her time there the wardresses often taunted her by throwing dirt all over floors she had just scrubbed clean. Finding solace in art, she pulled coloured threads from the rags she was given for cleaning. Using these, she embroidered larger white pieces she had found.

Regardless of the degrading conditions her sense of humour remained intact. '...I saw myself, for the first time for over three months, the other day,' she wrote to Eva in



The Markievicz memorial at Rathcormack

August 1916, ‘and it is quite amusing to meet yourself as a stranger. We bowed and grinned and I thought my teeth very dirty and very much wanting a dentist, and I’d got very thin and very sunburnt. In six months I shall not recognise myself at all, my memory for faces being so bad! I remember a fairy tale of a princess, who banished mirrors when she began to grow old. I think it showed a great lack of interest in life. The less I see my face, the more curious I grow about it, and I don’t resent it getting old...’ (Roper, Esther, *Prison Letters of Countess Markievicz*, p149). Con was 48 at the time.

Just after Christmas, on 29 December, she reflected on the circumstances which had led her to a prison cell: ‘All my life, in a funny way’, she wrote, ‘seems to have led up to the past year, and it’s all been such a hurry-scurry of a life. Now I feel that I have done what I was born to do. The great wave has crashed up against the rock, and now all the bubbles and ripples and little me, slip back into a quiet pool of the sea.’

At home in Ireland she was not forgotten. Even though confined to jail she continued to inspire. During this term of imprisonment she was elected President of Cumann na mBan.

Con’s family were appalled and totally disapproving of the path she

had taken, as indeed were most of her socialite friends. The stink of the slums, or the reek of the dung-pits of the peasant farmer, were not allowed to reach their lofty pinnacles. ‘We can hear the music as we put last touches to our hair and frocks in one of the bedrooms upstairs,’ wrote Lady Fingall, describing the view from a bedroom window of Dublin Castle. ‘The windows of that room look out on an appalling slum, a fact characteristic of the life of those days. But the windows are curtained, and one need not lift the curtains.’

Eva continued to comfort Constance during her confinement. She was her lifeline and consolation in prison. Though a pacifist, Eva respected her sister’s integrity and purity of motivation in choosing armed struggle. Between them there was a vibrant chemistry, a bond of affection and mutual respect. Eva honoured her sister’s choice made with the same conviction and passion as her own non-violent, but tireless labour, on behalf of the oppressed. On Con’s first birthday in prison she wrote:

To C. M. on her prison birthday, February, 1917:

*What has time to do with thee,
Who hast found the victor’s way
To be rich in poverty
Without sunshine to be gay,*

*To be free in a prison cell?
Nay, on that undreamed judgement day,
When, on the old-world’s scrap-heap flung,
Powers and empires pass away,
Radiant and unconquerable
Thou shalt be young.*

On the 15 June 1917, Bonar Law, Leader of the House of Commons, made an announcement that an amnesty was to be given to all participants in the Rising. On the 17 June, Constance was released from prison. Her return to Dublin was greeted with huge crowds and wild enthusiasm. It was a spontaneous display of the love and devotion she had inspired in the hearts of the people. No longer the ‘eccentric Countess’, she was now their idol.

During her incarceration there had been a major change in the political atmosphere in Ireland. Redmond’s Irish Parliamentary Party was on the decline. The various nationalist groupings had sunk their differences and, keeping the name Sinn Fein, had become the party of popular choice. Eamonn de Valera and William Cosgrove, in two by-elections, shortly won their respective areas for Sinn Fein.

Surrey House, where Con had lived before the Rising, had been looted and wrecked by the British. Having no home now, she stayed with Dr Kathleen Lynn to recuperate. During this stay, a week after her return to Dublin, she was received into the Catholic Church

Later in July she travelled to Sligo to receive the Freedom of the City where she was given a rapturous welcome. The proceedings are reported in full in a reprint of a *Sligo Champion* article in *The People’s Countess*. During her stay in Sligo, Constance did not dare venture to Lissadell nor did the Gore-Booth family attend the conferring. She had moved on with a nation newly awake. Dreams and plans for a New Ireland were hers; her family wanted to stay with the old, comfortable colonial Ireland of British domination and privileged position.

Metamorphosis

By Bernie Gilbride

Crystal glasses sparkling,
White linen tablecloths,
Cutlery gleaming,
Soft candlelight.

Evening dinner at Montmartre
Elegance, muted tones

Through the mists of time
An orchard, five apple trees,
Blackcurrant, red current,
Gooseberry bushes

Plank on two high stones,
We play shop.

Dock seed, our tea leaves,
Dock leaves, slices of bread,
Mud cakes, our fruit pies

Large shells plates.
Buttercups, dandelions,
Flowers for sale.

Daisy chains – jewellery,
Bracelets, necklaces, rings,
Chainies our currency
To pay for all things.

Hour on hour, we serve, or buy,
Goods returned for future sales.

Tins, packets, boxes, jars
over winter saved,
Perfume bottles, water filled,
Tablet jars, containers of
tiny coloured shells.

Imagination runs riot,
Anything, everything possible

Long, hot summer days
Under old apple trees.
Childhood innocence playing,
In long forgotten ways.

A magical corner,
Beneath high garden walls.

Parents, siblings now at rest,
Old world orchard,
Where birds were all a twitter,
And bees once flitted.

An elegant French restaurant,
All glass and glitter.

Easter '16 and War

By Joan Gleeson

Artists have depicted them
and poets line for line
have written of the atrocities of such,
recounting the violent actions
of generations of mankind.

Injustice on the one hand
greed, might and arrogance on the other,
invading, occupying, plundering
their next door neighbour's brother.

We're steeped in blood-stained history
commemorating the slaughter of young
men,
we've had war to end all wars
only to regroup and start it all again.

We remember '14-18 and Easter '16 in-
between
and that struggling fight for freedom
which they had never seen
that ever-yearning cause
to get out from the oppressor's
constant crushing claws.

A prayer for all the brave men
who walked on troubled waters
to turn the tide for a better world
for our future sons and daughters.

Georgie

By John Hannon

Are you with yourself? Asked he
Deferentially rolling a cigarette
What did he mean? Mused I
Are you with yourself? Asked he again
Are you with the head of a nice man
She being the bar smirked savouring the
moment.

At noon that day he had come
Riding the road in gleeful abandonment
The lure of Paddy O'Flaherty magnetised
His every moment townwards.
Georgie, he said, a glass and a half one
Breaking into song with a burst of
Óró sé do bheatha abhaile
The drinkers smirking nodding approval
Georgie was in his heaven
And all was right with the world.

Putting the past back together

By Lynda Hart

As a guide at Carrowmore Neolithic Complex, one of the most frequent questions I get asked is: 'How did they move the stones and get the capstones onto the uprights?'

There is a standard theory answer for the construction of a dolmen. Firstly, the large stones were moved using rollers made from the trunks of trees. The bark would have been stripped, soaked and then plaited to make a strong rope. The Neolithic people would also have used thick branches as levers. The large upright or 'orthostat' stones would be placed into deep sockets, and stone packing placed around them. When the orthostats were stable, the whole of the monument would have been covered in earth and an earthen ramp built. The large capstone could then have been pushed and pulled into the desired position, and when in place correctly the earth was removed.

But how do you rebuild a Neolithic monument in the 21st century? Back in 2008, during a visit 'home' to Cornwall, I was staying at the hamlet of Knave-Go-By near Camborne



Fig 2 The curious 'pile of stones'

(Fig 1). On a beautiful sunny spring day I walked around the narrow and winding roads that lead to the small village of Troon. The fields were a blaze of colour from row upon row of daffodils in full bloom, grown not for the flower but for the bulbs. It is a beautiful sight to see. Then I passed a gateway with a field of grass and

scrub, and my eye was drawn to a 'pile of stones', so I decided to investigate (Fig 2). When I reached the stones I was convinced that they had at one time been a megalithic structure, and I resolved to research my discovery once I returned to Ireland (Fig 3).

Although I had lived for many years not three miles from the fallen structure, I had never seen it before or even heard about it, but with the help of the internet and a lucky coincidence, I was soon to uncover the story of my pile of stones.

I discovered that the stones were indeed a megalithic structure, and it had a name: Carwynnen Quoit. Quoits are a class of megalithic structure also known as cromlechs and dolmens, and they are amongst the oldest megalithic monuments found in the UK and Ireland. First built in the Neolithic (New Stone Age, 4,000-2,500BC), these monuments were erected by the first farming communities. They were also continually constructed throughout the Bronze Age and into the Iron Age. These early monuments were a fixed point in the landscape, the focus of meeting, ritual and burial for our early Neolithic ancestors.



Fig 1 A map of the Cornwall area



Fig 3 A megalithic structure

Carwynnen Quoit is situated on land known as Frying Pan field, which belonged to a large area of land known as the Pendarvas Estate. The estate and house no longer exist. It is only a few miles from Carn Brea, the largest hill in the area, and which had a Neolithic settlement on its summit. There was probably a link between the sites, either as a meeting or trading place.

The Collapse

William Borlase was a well-known Cornish antiquarian of the 18th century who travelled extensively in Britain and Ireland recording the megalithic monuments, and when he visited Carwynnen in 1769 the quoit was still standing. Borlase drew and surveyed the quoit. Somewhere around 1842 the quoit collapsed, but was re-erected by the workers of the Pendarvas Estate. It was reported that:

They levered up the top stone with some batons and blocked it up with blocks of wood until it was high enough to slide it in place. The tomb beneath the cromlech does not seem to have been excavated, perhaps due to the dangerous state of the capstone, which must weigh 10-15 tons.

In 1966 the monument began to collapse again due to an earthquake, which was recorded at five on the International Scale! During the next 40 years the monument completely collapsed. (Fig 3).

In 2009 the site was bought by the Sustainable Trust, a charitable organisation, and after much fundraising and under the guidance of Pip Richards (director), the restoration project began.

It was 2012 before the first test excavations were dug, under the supervision of Jacky Nowakowski and James Gossip from the Cornwall Archaeology Unit of Cornwall Council. These test pits were dug to establish the planning of further excavations, and one to provide a

guide to the reinstatement of the stones. During the next few months further, more detailed excavations were undertaken. The large stones were moved slightly as they had fallen across their own footprint and also to allow better access to the site. Later that autumn the three sockets for the upright stones were found. During the excavations a large variety of finds were discovered, many dating back to the early Neolithic. They included flint arrowheads and flint blades, and pottery shards made of gabbroic clay with added quartz. This type of clay comes from a region of Cornwall called the Lizard Peninsula, which is more than 30km away (Fig 1). This find of specific pottery shows that travel and trading or exchange must have been happening at this time. Stone axes, hammers and small smooth granite balls were also found.

Also during the dig a stone pavement was uncovered on the footprint of the original monument. Circular in shape, it was made up of small granite stones and quartz. Shards of pottery, greenstone hammers and a fragment of a saddle quern, along with a greenstone pestle, were found embedded in the pavement floor. Greenstone is found in the area so these objects were most



Fig 4 The restored monument



Fig 5 Another view of the restored monument

probably of local origin. More small smooth granite balls were also found.

Towards the rear of the monument a stone kerb was discovered. Again shards of pottery were found, but also some charcoal and bone. The bone couldn't be identified as human due to its degenerated condition. However, AMS carbon dating produced dates from the middle to late Neolithic, and showed that ritual deposits were being placed at the monument over a long period of time.

The first of the upright stones was ready to be reinstated in October 2013. The date chosen, was 31 October – Halloween, Samhain, Allentide or Kalen Gwav, as it is known in Cornwall.

The diamond-shaped stone was positioned in its socket and stabilised with packing stones in a bed of concrete. The stone was then given a druid's blessing with cider! The other two upright stones were restored to their former positions in the early spring of 2014. The interior height of the original monument was no more than five feet, so the archaeologists brought in some soil from another part of the same field to make a soil platform that recreated the original interior dimensions. A ceramic time-capsule was buried in this soil. One hundred local children were asked to give suggestions for ideas on what should be placed into the capsule, and it was agreed that artwork rather than

words would be more appropriate, as in future times the languages spoken could be very different. A series of cartoons were selected from a young local artist. Other items included were a small jar of local honey (selected with the hope that in the future the finders would be able to tell plant specimens from the pollen), a golf ball, a wooden owl and a small teddy bear, a crystal, a St Christopher's medal which showed images of a car, boat and aeroplane, a badge of the Cornish flag (a black background with a white cross), and a badge of Troon Cricket Club. Troon is the area in which the monument is situated, and whose badge crest incorporates the quoit and a cricket bail. Some locks of hair were also included so that their DNA could be studied in the future.

Interred by the first upright, a separate sealed jar was buried. This contains a memory stick with the plans and work carried out by the team, along with photographs. The jar also included a ten pence coin dated 2013.

At the end of 2014 an Education Week was provided for local children and adults. Events included rope making from tree bark. Searching for artefacts took place in a less sensitive excavation trench. Botany and geology were covered and some possible rock art examined.

On the last day, there was a workshop on how our ancestors

would have moved the large stones. The children and adults learned how wooden rollers and levers were used to move stones. The huge 9.8-ton capstone was lifted and moved using these techniques. However, for the final restoration of the capstone the ancient ways could not be used. To lever the uprights would have caused irreparable damage to the original sockets, and moving nearly ten tons of capstone would have had significant health and safety issues. So the workshop was a good way for young and old to experience what it was like to move the stones with the old methods, and what creating a monument actually entailed.

On 24 June 2014, over 600 people arrived to see the capstone restored onto the monument. A crane was used to gently lower the capstone. As soon as it was in its final position and the safety barriers removed, many of the crowd stepped forward to touch the restored monument (Fig 4). Sustrust chairman Andy Norfolk blessed the quoit with Cornish cider. Glastonbury water was sprinkled around the perimeter, and an earth chant performed. The party started at around 4pm and carried on until the Solstice sun set over the quoit. This was a wonderful climax to years of work.

Unfortunately due to work commitments I was unable to attend the culmination of this momentous project, but I was able to visit Carwynnen Quoit during December 2014. It was a wonderful sight to see the 'pile of stones' restored to its full glory in the December sunshine (Fig 5). There are many magnificent sites for the megalithic hunter to see in Cornwall, and now Carwynnen Quoit can be added to this long and impressive list.

Further information on Carwynnen Quoit can be found in a great little publication called *A Monument like no other – The restoration of Carwynnen Quoit*, ISBN 978-0-9930552-0-1. See also the website www.giantsquoit.org. The quoit is situated to the south of Camborne near Troon SW6501437213.

Carnage at Clontarf a Thousand Years Ago

By Jack Gilligan

The Battle of Clontarf (1014 AD) is probably one of the best-known and least-understood battles in Irish history. It has been shrouded in myths, half-truths and conflicting accounts of the event itself and of the main players involved. It is reasonable to conclude that the true story of Clontarf is more complex than the popular version of a Christian high king defeating the plundering Vikings and saving Ireland in the process. The battle was the inevitable result of on-going hostilities between Irish chieftains, and could best be described as a turf-war between two Irish power brokers, Brian Boru of Munster and Máel Mórda mac Murchada of Leinster, who rebelled against Brian's authority and sought Viking allies to oppose the high king. It is likely that there were Vikings on both sides but, in terms of the conflict, they played supporting roles.

Brian Bóruma mac Cennétig was born in Killaloe, Co Clare, in 941, one of 12 sons of Cennétig mac Lorcáin. The family had control over a small kingdom in what we now know as Co Clare. Despite our small population of about 500,000 at that time, Ireland had many kingdoms. There were regular hostilities between these local kings, and they often took up arms against one another. Brian's father was himself a victim of one such skirmish and was killed in 951, but not before he and his older son, Mathgamain, had considerably extended the family kingdom.

By 967 Mathgamain had become king of Munster and had been joined in the 'family business' by Brian, his very ambitious younger brother. When Mathgamain was assassinated in 976 by rival kings, Brian quickly asserted his claim to the kingship of



All is calm in Clontarf in 2016

Munster. His aspirations did not end at Munster, however, as his eye was firmly on the top job of High King of Ireland.

But Brian's plans for advancement were frustrated when the southern Uí Néill ruler, Máel Sechnaill mac Domhnaill, declared himself High-King in 980. This audacious move caused bitter conflict between the two rulers and fierce rivalry ensued, with Brian challenging his adversary's authority in Connacht and Leinster. Finally, in 997, they negotiated a truce, exchanged hostages and agreed to share the spoils by dividing the kingship of Ireland between them. Brian took the southern half, made up of the kingdoms of Leinster, including Dublin, and Munster. But the peace was to be short-lived as the ambitious Brian soon resumed his attacks on Máel Sechnaill, eventually forcing him to capitulate. He realised his ambition and became high king of Ireland in 1002, but Leinster and the Viking stronghold of Dublin remained

stubbornly opposed to Brian's claim over them and they continued to challenge him. It was his long struggle for dominance over his rival, Máel Mórda mac Murchada of Leinster that eventually led to the confrontation at Clontarf in 1014.

On Good Friday, 12 April 1014, Brian Boru led his army from their base-camp at Kilmainham to face Máel Mórda's army, which included a considerable and probably mercenary Viking contingent. Brian's son, Murchad, led the charge while his father, then 73 years old, stayed in his tent. The fiercely-fought bloody encounter is believed to have raged from sunrise to sunset, leaving a body count of up to 10,000 men. Towards evening, as victory swung to Brian's side, Máel Mórda's surviving soldiers began their retreat, with the Viking allies fleeing towards their longboats moored in Dublin Bay, near what is now Clontarf. Many were slaughtered as they retreated and others were drowned in the high tide as they tried

to reach their vessels.

Brian's men had won the battle, establishing him as the undisputed high king. But his triumph was cut short when Brodir, a fleeing Viking warrior, spied him in his tent, entered and slaughtered him. The assassin was quickly captured and immediately put to death. According to one graphic account, he had his belly cut open and his intestines fastened to a tree. Brian's son Murchad and his 15-year-old grandson also perished on the day. Monks came from Armagh to collect their bodies and take them back for 12 days of mourning before burial in the North.

Brian Boru, like all of us, was a complex character with a mix of good and bad. By some accounts he was a

brave fighter, striving to broker peace among the warring Irish kingdoms and to end Viking control. He was generous towards religious institutions and developed a reputation as a patron of churches. Other accounts suggest a fiercely-ambitious, power-hungry ruler determined to overcome his opponents and extend his control at any cost. He was a master strategist in battle, politics and even in marriage. Some of his own four marriages and those of his daughters were strategic moves in pursuit of his political ambitions.

It is fair to say that Brian did not free Ireland from Viking occupation since the country was never actually conquered by the Vikings. It is true that, towards the end of the

8th century, Norse invaders began viciously attacking targets in Ireland and plundering treasures. But long before Clontarf they had integrated into the Irish political scene, intermarried and established fortified camps that eventually grew into Irish cities of today.

The bloodshed and mayhem at Clontarf in 1014 is a far cry from the present-day peaceful, friendly, north Dublin suburb which I now call home. Brian Boru and the battle are still recalled through the names of streets and commercial establishments in the area. However, his place in the national psyche is likely to have shifted considerably over the years and he is, arguably, no longer regarded as a national hero.

Death of Jack Martin

The Heritage Group notes with regret the recent death of Jack Martin, long time member of the group and sponsor of Ballymote Heritage Weekend. Jack was for many years a stalwart of

Ballymote Church choir, and the solos performed in his rich tenor voice at Mass will not be forgotten by those who had the pleasure of hearing him on so many occasions. The Heritage

Group extends its sympathy to his wife Mary, long time member and joint treasurer, as well as their children, grandchildren and extended family. Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam dílis

The Lone Ranger in Ballymote

By Mary Yulo

I recently had the pleasure of visiting Ballymote and had the chance to stay at Ardconnell with the Flanagans. Anne lives on the farm where my grandmother, Margaret Flanagan, grew up before she moved to the United States. Anne was our hostess and Stephen, her son, was our tour guide.

Most of the structure of the original stone cottage still exists on the farm, and is a direct link to the origin of our family in the US. I was visiting from the US with my father, my sister and my nephew, and our party represented three generations of Margaret Flanagan's descendants.

Hard as it is to believe now, the small cottage was home to nine Flanagans in 1901: James and Kate and their

seven children. The census of that year detailed the household. Living there were James and Kate and the seven children: Mary Anne, Margaret, Catherine, Bridget Teresa, John, William and Martha.

I remember Grandma's stories about growing up in that house. She described the home's hearth, the sleeping loft, and her mother brushing young Margaret's long hair by the fire, long before Margaret left for America. Standing in that sacred, family place stirred my imagination. I could almost feel the warmth from the fire in the hearth.

Anne and her late husband, James Flanagan, who was the founding editor of *The Corran Herald*, raised three children in the house next to the

original crumbling, stone cottage. On the mantelpiece in the sitting room of that house is a tin toy: the Lone Ranger on his horse, Silver. That toy began its life in New York, where it was purchased by my father, Donald Carmody. He and his siblings listened to The Lone Ranger on their family's radio in the 1930s. Young Donald played with the toy, but when he grew older, his mother, Margaret, sent the toy to her nephew, James Flanagan, in Ballymote. 'Jimmy' played with the toy as well, and he saved it all these years.

Just as the stone cottage remains on the property, a ruin, the Lone Ranger remains in a place of honour on the mantel in the sitting room to this day, a direct link to our past.

A collection of historical treasures

By Maureen Murphy

The Irish Folklore Commission was established in 1935 for the collection, preservation and dissemination of Irish Folklore. Collectors were employed to gather information on the traditions, customs and history of the country. In 1937/38 the commission, with the cooperation of the INTO, encouraged the children in national schools to collect stories from family members and older people in their own communities.



Ballymote castle

Most schools embraced the project wholeheartedly. In the majority of cases, the children wrote the information into copybooks in school. The teacher assessed the material and got the children with the best handwriting to record selected material in special copybooks, which were then returned to the Folklore Commission and ultimately archived in University College Dublin. It forms part of one of the largest collections of folklore in the world.

Since 2012, this material has been gradually digitised on a county-by-county basis, with about half of the counties completed to date. The schools that participated in the scheme from Co Sligo have been published online since the end of 2014 at www.duchas.ie. It is a fascinating resource for the local historian, the folklorist or for family members of the children who were involved in the collection.

The topics covered include Irish place-names; graveyards and burial

places; churches, mass rocks and holy wells; customs at wakes, funerals and weddings; customs associated with Christmas and other feasts; superstitions; archaeological monuments in the area; food and clothes used; agricultural implements; riddles; songs and stories; children's pastimes, games and toys; common ailments and local cures; wild animals and birds; crops (especially potatoes), weeds and herbs; roads of the district; house types; forges; weather lore; proverbs. A considerable part of most of the school collections consists of stories, songs and poems.

In Ballymote, both the Boys' and the Girls' schools participated in the scheme, with a large volume of material submitted by each school. Sr M Patrick took charge of the collection in the convent school and the manuscript is in the children's handwriting, with their names and those of their informants included. The girls who wrote the record into the copybooks are Kathleen Barnes, Tessie Mullen, Margaret Coen, Maureen Ward, Kathleen Walshe, Kathleen Dyar, Nancy Carr, Teresa Kielty, Mary Carr, Teresa Maye, Mary Flanagan, Margaret Mary Quigley, Teresa Mullen, Maureen Rea, Patricia Cryan and May Scanlon.

Seán Beárnais was the teacher in charge in the Boys' School. The volume of material covered is not as extensive as that from the Girls' School and there are no names attached, but it has interesting articles nonetheless.

Kilmorgan National School has a very good entry under all headings. The teacher in charge at the time was Kathleen Doyle, and the children who wrote the accounts are given as Mary Brady, James Brady, Teresa Nealon, Vincent Nealon and Annie Shannon.

The collection from Knockminna National School is very comprehensive. The teacher in charge was Máire Ní Scannláin and she has



Convent of Mercy

included wonderful illustrations of some of the historic buildings and sites of Ballymote, probably her own work. As well as submissions under the above headings, the Knockminna collection has interesting details on the history of Ballymote, the castle, the Franciscan Monastery, Earlsfield and a song related to that estate and its subsequent use by the Sisters of Mercy, St Feichín's well and the King of Sunday's well. It also has a list of proverbs or *seanfhocail as Gaeilge*. Names of the informants are given but not those of the children.

The teacher in charge in Clooneen National School is named as Eoin MacAodha and the children who collected information are Gertie McDonagh, Rodger Thomas Davey, Evelyn Finn and Luke Duffy.

An examples of the information available in the collection is an account of local cures ascribed to Luke Duffy, aged 14, who got the information from Pat Duffy, aged 93, from Clooneen. Mary Murray who was in 7th standard has transcribed the account in beautiful handwriting. One cure relates to a condition where the 'spool of the breast' was 'down'. Pat Duffy says this was due to pleurisy. There are references to this condition in other accounts in the Schools' Collection, although pleurisy is not given as the cause, and the 'cure' is similar in all cases. The patient must

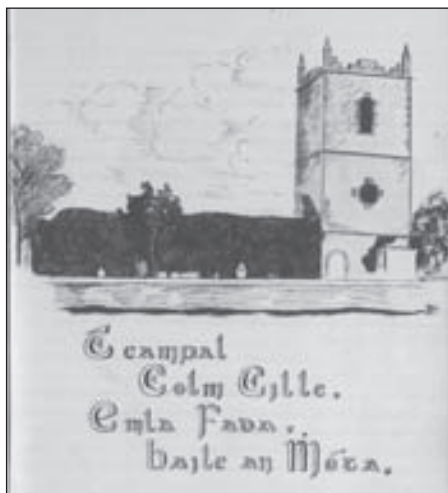
lie on his back and a circular piece of oatmeal cake or even a half a crown is placed on the 'spool'. A lighted candle or sometimes lighted matches or rush candles (which were made by soaking the pith of the rush in tallow) are placed or stuck on the cake or the coin. The candles are covered by an inverted glass tumbler. As the candle burns the vacuum created under the glass causes the 'spool' to lift. Sometimes it is necessary to return to the 'doctor' for successive treatments in order to affect a cure.

Holy Wells

Evelyn Finn, aged 13 years, writes about three Holy Wells in the parish of Bunninadden, one in Kilshalvey, one in Kilterra and one in Ballyfaghy. The one in Kilterra, she says, is the most important. 'It was situated beside a little mound with fourteen trees planted around it for stations and was then (in 1938) in a good state of preservation. It was beside a burial ground. Old women especially came in the past by donkey and cart or walking barefooted. They ritually washed their hands in the well and performed the stations. Another well in Achonry was visited between 15th August and 8th September. The well must be visited three times if praying for a personal intention and a relic must be left such as hair or hair pins, needles, money or stones. A mound of stones had built up over many years but it was then (in 1938) covered in moss because of disuse. In former times it was customary to throw a stone on the spot where a fatal accident had occurred but (by 1938) the custom had become obsolete.'

Castle of Moygara

In the Clooneen collection there is also an account of the ruins of Moygara Castle and Kilshalvey, probably written in the teacher's hand: 'The ruins of the castle of Moygara are situated three miles south of this district (Clooneen). It was built by the Fitzgeralds and owned by the O'Garas. Fergal O'Gara, Lord of Moygara and patron of the Franciscans, who wrote the Annals of Donegal, lived therein. This castle



Emlaghfad

was destroyed by an O'Gallagher of Donegal. Fergal O'Gara was killed by one O'Callaghan, some say in his garden near the castle. Others held that he was waylaid at Battlefield, three miles north of the castle. O'Gara was on horseback on his way from Ballymote. Local tradition holds that O'Gara, notwithstanding his great learning was a great tyrant in dealing with poor tenants in the area.'

Kilshalvey

'The ruins of the ancient church of Kilshalvey are situated one and a half miles due north from the present village of Gurteen, Co. Sligo. This church was destroyed about the year 1712. A certain Bryan McDonagh of Behy (Ballymote), being duly sworn upon the Holy Evangelists, in evidence said that 'he did hear Mass celebrated on Sunday last at Tawnagh in the parish of Kill McAllen by a Father Tadhg Davey, registered parish priest of Kilshalvey'. The ruins are enclosed by a stone wall and Catholics and Protestants are buried within the walls.

An ancient pass (*tóchar*) leads over a bog to this graveyard, according to accounts of turfcutters who dug up flags which formed the road.

A wooden vessel, about the size of an ordinary tray and hewn out of one piece of wood was discovered in this bog. A well convenient to the churchyard and on a much lower elevation dried up some twenty years ago (1918). Some say that desecration took place there but the aged are very

reluctant to speak concerning the well as they have some superstitious dread referring to anything which they regard as sacred.'

The above is just a tiny taste of the material to be found in the treasure trove that is *duchas.ie*. In addition to the Schools' Manuscripts, the National Folklore Collection houses a vast amount of material that was gathered by others, some working part-time, others full-time, during the 1930s and 1940s. It records a way of life that had remained unchanged



Franciscan Monastery Ballymote

in Ireland for centuries until the arrival of mechanisation and rural electrification in the 1950s. All of it, including the original copies presented by the children, may be examined in the National Folklore Collection in University College Dublin.

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Bridget King wrote about the Schools' Collection in *The Corran Herald* of 2005/2006. She notes for this year that not every fact in the collection can be taken at face value. For example, from essays on marriage customs we learn that a newly engaged couple would go to Sligo to buy an engagement ring costing £200 – equivalent today to about €14,500. And in Ballymote, those disgruntled at not being invited to the festivities at the bride's house after the ceremony would fill the house with smoke by blocking the chimney with a fox.

All images from drawings by Máire Ní Scannlain, taken from Knockminna School entry at www.duchas.ie. Published with permission of Dúchas National Folklore Collection, which was the source of all the information in this article.

Appeal for records of swifts from Ballymote

By Michael Bell



A swift (*Apus apus*) in flight

The Swift (*Apus apus*), one of our most charismatic bird species, is a summer visitor to Ireland. It usually arrives in May and departs the country by early September to spend the winter in tropical Africa. It is the most aerial of any bird species, spending almost its entire life on the wing, only coming to rest when nesting. As they do not generally nest until their second year, it is thought that once young swifts leave the nest they will remain airborne for almost the first two years of their lives. They are capable of feeding, drinking, mating and even sleeping while flying!

Swift numbers have been steadily declining across much of their range, and they are now on the Amber-list of Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland due to declines in the breeding population. The reasons for these declines are complex, but are at least partly due to declining insect populations. It is thought that loss of nesting sites is another contributing factor. Though swifts occasionally nest in holes in trees or cliff faces, most nests are located in cavities on man-made structures. Older buildings may be demolished or renovated, causing losses of traditional nesting sites, while modern building techniques and materials do not provide the necessary cavities for swifts to nest in.

Since first coming to live in Ballymote I have noticed steady declines in the numbers occurring around the town during summer. It was not uncommon to see twenty or more birds as recently as ten years ago, whereas last year the most I saw was five. I believe the species is in real danger of disappearing from our skies altogether in the near future. With that in mind I would like to start a swift nest box programme in the town similar to those that have proven successful elsewhere. Micheál Casey has initiated a very productive swift nest box programme in Tubbercurry, and as a licensed bird ringer has



A swift fitted with a geolocator before release

been carrying out research on the colony. Last year he was able to place geolocators on swifts that will greatly add to our knowledge of where Irish swifts spend the winter and their migration patterns.

As swifts prefer to nest where there are already birds nesting close by, it is best to place nest boxes at locations where swifts are presently known to nest. My daughter found a swift nest site at Ballymote National School last year. There was only one pair nesting here, though up to five birds were often present flying around the school. Some of these may have been non-breeding birds, as swifts don't usually

breed until their second or third year. The nest cavity at the school was located just below the gutter on a single-storey part of the building. This is at a lower elevation than is typical, as most nest sites are five metres or more above the ground, though they have been known to nest less than two metres high.

There is a higher two-storey wall on a new school addition and it is planned to place nest boxes here. As it is some distance from the known nest site, it is intended to play recordings of nesting swifts though a speaker placed close to the boxes. This is a well-proven method of encouraging swifts to nest at a new location.

There could be other locations in Ballymote where swifts are still nesting. It may also be possible to place nest boxes at these sites to help the species recover and ensure that the sound of screaming swifts will be heard by future generations in Ballymote. Please report any locations where swifts are known to nest to:

Michael Bell
21 Castlegrove,
Ballymote,
Co Sligo
085 1751000
nature.learn1@gmail.com



Swift nesting location at Ballymote National School

Drumfarnoughty – A Tragic Voyage

By John McDonagh



The 3rd Viscount Palmerston

On 28 April 1847 the *Carricks* of Whitehaven, a two-masted brig of 242 tons built in 1812, was driven aground in a storm off Cap-des-Rosiers in Gaspé, Quebec, Canada, with a total of 173 famine emigrants on board. Only 48 of the passengers survived. Commanded by Captain R Thompson from Sunderland, the passengers were mostly tenants from Lord Palmerston's estates in Sligo, who had accepted his offer of assisted passage to escape from famine torn Ireland.

Emigration to Canada was nothing new. Since the last days of the 18th century Irish people had been flocking there to avail of lower rents, bigger holdings and all the benefits and security of working Crown lands. As well as farming, Canada also had other great natural resources such as mining and huge timber exports. Work was plentiful and nobody went

hungry. Indeed, up to the early years of the 20th century this trend continued, albeit at a reduced pace. Sadly, the flight from the hunger, disease and despair of the famine-torn Ireland of the late 1840s was a different ballgame altogether. Poorly-clad, disease-ridden, half-starved wretches, with little or nothing more than the clothes on their backs, were forced to flee from the hopelessness of starvation and destitution, their passage paid for by the landlords.

At the best of times Atlantic crossings by sailing ship were an arduous and risky business, but such crossings in winter and early spring were especially treacherous. They must be viewed in the context of the terrible conditions that prevailed in Ireland at that time. 1847 was the third and worst of the famine years. Food stocks and most other resources had completely disappeared for most tenants and were greatly depleted for the majority of landlords also. It is worthy of note that many of the big landholders were forced to sell off their properties at the newly convened 'Encumbered Estate Courts' in the years succeeding the famine. It was from this desperate scenario that the *Carricks* set sail from Sligo Port in late March or early April.

Contemporary newspaper accounts declare that the *Carricks* had been 'properly surveyed by the government emigration agent, in accordance with the Passengers' Act and proven to be perfectly seaworthy for the expedition. The voyage up to the time of the ship's arrival in the river St. Laurence, appeared to be as desirable as could be wished, at that period of the season, excepting the sad condition of the emigrants, most of them suffering greatly from fever. Nine had died during the voyage.'

At this stage accounts of the tragedy

vary greatly but one fact remains clear: the *Carricks* was hit by a violent storm and driven onto a dangerous shoal where she broke up over the course of a few hours with the consequent terrible loss of life.

When I first read of the tragedy I assumed that the people involved were all from Henry John Temple's (Lord Palmerston) vast estate in North Sligo, but on reading the brilliant work done by the Mullaghmore Historical Society, I learned that some of the survivors came from South Sligo from the townland of Cross, in Drumrat parish and from Drumfarnoughty – my neighbouring townland in the parish of Cloonoghil.

Henry John Temple 3rd Viscount Palmerston

Henry John Temple (1784-1865), the well-known British Parliamentarian, was the landlord for Drumfarnoughty. Described by some historians as 'conservative at home and liberal abroad', he inherited his title and vast Sligo properties on the death of his father in 1802.

His life is well documented. He served as British Foreign secretary from 1846 to 1861 and as home secretary from 1852 to 1855. He also served two terms as British Prime Minister, from 1855 to 1858 and from 1859 to 1865 when he died in office—one of only two British Premiers ever to do so. Always a bit of an enigma, he vigorously supported Catholic emancipation and fiercely opposed Irish nationalism. He paid the legal defence fees of a man (Laurence Davis) who tried to assassinate him but refused to intervene when a poacher (Charles Smith) was hanged for poaching on his estate!

Palmerston first visited his Irish properties in 1808, after the rebellion of 1798 and its aftershocks had

abated. He visited Sligo many times over the next 40 years and undertook many improvements on his estate. Before the catastrophic events of the 1840s he was seen as an 'improving landlord' who tried to improve the lot of his tenants. According to research conducted by Desmond Norton for the department of economic research (UCD) he financed the building of the fine stone harbour in Mullaghmore in an attempt to develop the fishing industry there.

He tried to improve the viability of his tenants by squaring their holdings and he instructed his Dublin managers Stewart and Kincaid to abolish the 'Rundale system' of land leasing, which was very much in operation at that time. In the fall of 1845 he spoke to a large meeting in Ballymote to assure them that nobody would be forced off their holdings as a result of 'squaring'. His instructions were clear: "Thin the population in the townlands where the leases have expired and assist the emigration of those who are willing to go, but nobody is to be expelled against their will." This was the enigmatic landlord who chartered the *Carricks* (one of the nine ships he chartered) to ferry 173 of his starving tenants across the Atlantic.

Drumfarnoughty and its Tenants

Drumfarnoughty is a very small townland in the civil parish of Cloonoghil (now Bunninadden) in south Sligo. Once owned by Bryan McDonagh of Collooney, the Down Survey of 1641 lists its area as 'fifty five plantation acres in the ownership of O'Connor Sligo, Catholic.' By 1671 it was in the possession of 'the Earl of Strafford, Protestant'. Heavily mortgaged, in 1694 it was acquired by the Temple family as settlement of a debt. According to a parochial survey conducted by schoolmaster Ambrose Cunningham in 1844, just three years before the 1847 catastrophe, there were 11 tenants paying rent on holdings as outlined in the columns on the table.

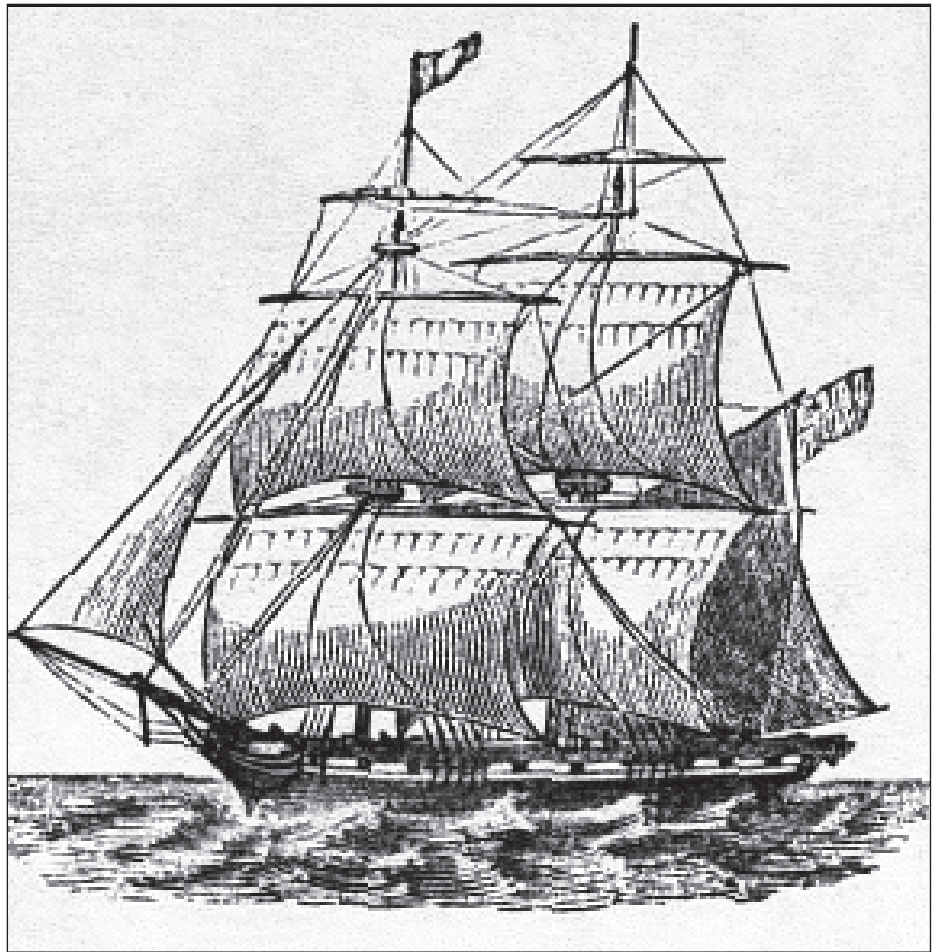
Map No	Tenant	Lot No	Acres	Roods	Perches	Rate per Acre	£ s d
1	Thomas Brennan	5	2	2	-----	8/3d	5 66
			4	2	-----	20/=	
			6	2	4		
			0	0	4	=	
2	John Kerins	1	4	1	26	20/=	75 4
			1	0	11	1/=	
			0	0	23	10/=	
			5	1	35=	10/=	
			0	0	4	==	
			11	0	19		
3	Owen Healy	1	4	1	26	20/=	75 4
			1	0	11	1/=	
			0	0	23	10/=	
			5	1	35=	10/=	
			0	0	4	==	
4	Ketty Kerins (Gurry)	1	4	1	26	20/=	75 4
			1	0	11	1/=	
			0	0	23	10/=	
			5	1	35=	10/=	
			0	0	4	==	
			0	0	4	==	
Map No	Tenant	Lot No	Acres	Roods	Perches	Rate per Acre	£ s d
5	Nancy Flynn	1	2	0	30	20/=	3 126
				2	7	1/=	
			2	2	38	10/=	
			0	0	11	10/=	
			0	0	4		
			5	2	10		
6	James Healy	2	5	2	0	1/=	1169
			2	0	0	15/=	
			6	0	0	20/=	
			13	2	20		
7	Bartley Healy	2	1	1	13	8/=	619 7
			6	1	29	20/=	
			7	3	6		
8	John Fury	1	0	2	27	8/3/d	3 9 9
			3	0	34	20/=	
			3	3	25		
Map No	Tenant	Lot No	Acres	Roods	Perches	Rate per Acre	£ s d
9	Mathew Brogan	1	1	2	0	8/3d	30 1d
			1	2	0	8/6d	
			2	0	20	20/=	
			5	0	24		
10	Sally Brennan	1	1	1	0	8/3d	
			1	1	0	3/6d	
			1	1	32	20/=	
			0	0	4	=	237d
			3	3	36		
11	Andrew Grier	3	40	0	33	16/=	37 155d
			12	0	0	8/9d	
			5	3	0	1/3d	
			0	0	30	=	
Total			138	0	9		£8904

The table is an excellent snapshot of the Rundale system at work. Its proponents claimed that it was designed to ensure that everybody got some good land and nobody was left with a holding that was all bad. The little plots were often some distance from each other and consequently difficult to work. From the landlord's point of view it also had the additional benefit of keeping the tenants at each other's throats. (When they were fighting each other they didn't have the same stomach for taking on the iniquitous landlord system.)

The Griffiths valuation of 1858, some 14 years later, show just four tenants there and one of them was a labourer with just a dwelling. Perhaps it's logical to assume that the other seven families had either evacuated, emigrated, or succumbed to famine.

Ship Survivors Identified

The 15 March 2016 edition of the *Sligo Champion* carried the story of the research by the Mullaghmore Historical Society in tracing the descendants of some of the 1847 survivors, members of the Healy and Kerins families who had emigrated from Drumfarnoughty. I was delighted to meet up with some of their researchers, exchange information



A Similar brig to the Carricks

and fill in some of the missing pieces of the jigsaw 169 years after the tragedy.

At this stage I understand that some of these descendants are being

reconnected in the US and Canada and may hopefully visit their old homesteads in 2017. The research is ongoing!

Christy

By John Hannon

Christy Foran, Cabra West, was a revered member of the Dublin deaf community until his untimely death in 1995.

*Born into a world of silence,
On first seeing the light of day,
Never to hear his mother's sweet voice,
Soothing and driving his fears away.
His childhood and teenage years*

*Behoved a struggle and a quest
Until his conquest of the
communication spiral
Became for him his personal Everest.
Espousing his deafness with singular
delight
He shared his talents in serviced
generosity
Unraveling the mysteries of a gift-
laden life.*

*On bonding with Marian in the
married state
God blessed their union with abundant
sibling joy
In paternal wonder he watched his
family grow
Sharing the deepest joy of fulfillment.
Precipitately, his Maker beckoned;
bewildered
Christ acquiesced in a faith filled fiat.*

A rare visitor to Bunninadden

By Michael Bell

In October last year I received a photograph of an impressive looking moth via my mobile phone. The sender was Emma Gormley, a teacher at Bunninadden National School. A couple of students had found the moth near the front door of the school and realising it was something unusual, they had the presence of mind to show it to the teacher. Emma knew of my interest in moths from nature events I had previously hosted on behalf of Coolaney Tidy Towns. I immediately recognized it as a Death's-head Hawk-moth (*Acherontia atropos*), a very distinctive moth with a wingspan of up to 13cm, making it the largest moth species to occur in Britain and Ireland. I called Emma to see if the moth was still present and she kindly took a quick look outside and it informed me it was, so I made the short trip to Bunninadden.

After arriving at the school I found the moth at rest on the ground and it appeared to be in excellent condition. After taking a few photographs I placed it in a Tupperware container for closer inspection and to show to others before it could be released later. Moths are often inactive by day and easy to handle when found. By now there was quite a bit of excitement in the school about the visitor, so I took the captive moth into each of the classrooms where the children lined up to take a close look at it. I was able to talk to the children about the natural history and some of the folklore associated with the moth.

The Death's-head Hawk-moth is a scarce immigrant to Ireland from the Mediterranean region, being unable to survive the winters here. It may surprise many people that some species of moths migrate great distances. A small number of Death's-head Hawk-moths are located in Ireland most years, usually between May and October, with most records being from the east and south coasts. There is one previous record from Co Sligo in the Moths Ireland database. That was of an individual found dead



Silkie being released

along a road near Calry in October, 2014. There is also an old historic record from 1915 mentioning Death's-head Hawk-moth as being present in Co Sligo, but no details are provided. Therefore the Bunninadden record is quite noteworthy.

As well as being the largest moth species in the country and an immigrant, the Death's-head Hawk-moth has a number of other interesting attributes. It has the ability to hover while feeding on nectar but can also fly at speeds approaching 50kph! It is able to raid the beehives of honeybees (*Apis mellifera*) and feed on honey undisturbed as it is able to mimic the scent of the bees which has a calming effect on them. When irritated they are also able to emit a squeaking noise by expelling air. The squeaking noise is often accompanied by flashing of the brightly coloured abdomen which together can be an effective deterrent to predators.

The Death's-head Hawk-moth has also featured in much folklore over the years. The squeaking ability has undoubtedly contributed to this but the most striking feature is the skull-like marking on the thorax. The scientific species name of the moth derives from the goddess of Greek mythology, Atropos, who decides the fate of humans and carries shears to cut the 'thread of life'. The genus name, *Acherontia*, is derived from Acheron, known as the 'River of Woe' and one of the five rivers of the Underworld in Greek mythology.

According to legend, the moth

was witnessed at the execution of King Charles I in 1649 and this was claimed as its first occurrence in Britain, though in reality it would almost certainly have been present there much earlier. Two Death's-head Hawk-moths were reportedly found in the bed chamber of King George III and were thought to have contributed to one of his notorious bouts of 'madness'. The moth has also featured in Edgar Allen Poe's short story *The Sphynx*, Bram Stoker's novel *Dracula*, John Keats poem *Ode to Melancholy*, Thomas Hardy's book *The Return of the Native*, and the film *The Silence of the Lambs*.

After leaving the school, I returned to Ballymote with the captive moth and visited Ballymote National School, Ballymote Community Library and several shops and businesses where many marvelled at the impressive looking insect. I took the moth back to Bunninadden National School where the whole school gathered to see the moth (now named Silkie by the children) being released.

Notoriety of the moth spread further afield as photographs reached thousands on my Nature Learn Facebook page and the sighting was also documented in the *Sligo Champion* and the *Sligo Weekender* as well as featuring in the RTÉ children's television programme *News2Day*. It is ironic to think that a creature long associated with death and the subject of morbid superstitions should do so much to promote a greater awareness and appreciation of the wonderful diversity of life.



Death's-head Hawk-moth at Bunninadden, Co Sligo

Commandant Deignan of Riverstown

By Cian Harte



Thomas Deignan at Markievicz Park in 1966, on the 50th anniversary of the 1916 Rising. Tom is pictured with a Sam Browne belt and War of Independence Active Service Medal. These invaluable items are now in the possession of his son Donal Deignan. Picture courtesy of Eileen White.

Tom Deignan lived an extraordinary life in which he experienced conflict with the United States military during the Great War in Europe, came home to fight for Irish Independence in the 1919-1921 Anglo-Irish War, and subsequently fought with the Anti-Treatyites in the ensuing Civil War of 1922-23. During this time, he engaged in ambushes and jailbreaks, was on the run for months on end and came close to death on numerous occasions. In peacetime, he served as a Fianna Fáil county councillor from 1952 until his death in 1976.

Tom was born on 11 June 1897. He left for the United States through the port of Liverpool and arrived in New York harbour on 22 October 1915, when he was only 18 years

Name: Thomas Deignan
Born: 11 June 1897, Doongelagh, Gleann, Co Sligo
Rank: Commandant
Unit: Riverstown 5th Battalion (2nd Battalion, 1922-23), Sligo Brigade, 3rd Western Division, IRA. Formerly 'Fighting Irish' 69th New York Regiment (WWI)
Theatre of conflict: Sligo, Leitrim and Roscommon. Formerly Western Front (WWI)
Death: 27 August 1976. Buried in Ballyrush cemetery
Additional information: Farmer, 'chauffeur', salesman and county councillor. Son of Thomas and Margaret Deignan of Doongelagh. Husband of Annie, née Brennan, of Doonsheheen

of age. Tom's permanent address in New York City was at 198 East 76th Street, NY. He worked for 12 months in the US as a lift servant in a hotel. He lived in New York with three other brothers by 1915 including Patrick, John and Hugh. When the US entered the European conflict, Tom entered the United States army voluntarily. He was formally inducted into the US Army from Armory, New York, on the 9th of July, 1917.

According to Tom's US passport application form, he was active on the Western Front from November 1917 until March 1919. He was a private in arguably the most famous Irish military unit to exist: the so-called 'Fighting Irish' 69th New York Regiment (re-designated the 165th Infantry Regiment during WWI). The unit was originally founded by Sligo-born Brigadier General Michael Corcoran.¹ The unit underwent intensive training in the US and was attached to the 42nd Rainbow Division of the AEF (American Expeditionary Force). The unit retained its Irish

spirit, character and symbolism. It may have been within this unit that Tom realised where his true fight was: in Ireland and for Ireland.

The New York regiment arrived on British soil in October and was in France the following month. Here the regiment fought in numerous engagements until the end of the war including at Rouge Bouquet, where the unit tasted its first experience of enemy combat (late February 1918). In July, Tom and his regiment were part of the successful stemming of the German offensive at the second battle of Marne. The regiment continued to live up to the reputation it had gained during the US Civil War. In late July at Chateau-Thierry it suffered almost 50% casualties to its 3,000 men (estimated 150 killed and 1,200 wounded) when they successfully pushed the German forces back across a river and into retreat. Douglas MacArthur (commander in the field) wanted to press the advantage. With all other field regiments reporting back that they were too fatigued, the 69th replied it would 'consider an order to advance as a compliment', leading MacArthur to exclaim: 'By God, it takes the Irish when you want a hard thing done!'² Tom had fought in and witnessed a bloodbath but he and his men – at least according to the commander of the regiment – were willing and able to push on further.

It was while the unit was entrenched after the battle of Chateau-Thierry that Tom was recorded to have been wounded in action as a result of being 'gassed Aug. 4'. However he was not severely wounded from it and he may have retired to a field hospital as a precaution. The document was retrospectively changed and it seems to have described, beneath the emboldened writing, that Tom suffered from certain 'degree' burns. This was not the only time Tom was wounded in action during WWI. He was 'wounded in action slightly Oct.

14/15', but again not to a degree that inhibited him from continuing to serve. The second incident occurred when he was entrenched in the wake of the St Mihiel salient battle. Despite both injuries his NY military service abstract document states he had '0' (zero) disabilities as a result of his war service.

The regiment would later excel at the battle around the St Mihiel salient, capturing thousands of German prisoners, and again briefly in early November at Meuse-Argonne, where it broke through the German lines.

When the war ended the regiment was used as part of the occupational forces before returning to the United States in early March of 1919. Tom was discharged on the 22nd of that month from the military. Having returned from the war to the United States, the veteran applied for a United States passport on 7 November 1919. Tom outlined on his application form that he was to visit his native homeland of Ireland for six months and intended to return for permanent residence in the USA. The reason for his visit in his own handwriting was: 'mother seriously ill'. Tom, however, was not to return to the land of the free and brave as he had planned. He left the North American continent sailing on board the Baltic ship on 15 November 1919. Tom took the oath of allegiance to the United States constitution at the end of the document. It was not the last oath he was to take to a republic. By the time Tom landed on Irish soil, the War of Independence was soon to commence.

Tom's war days were far from over at the end of the Great War. As his War of Independence witness statements reveal (recorded in the 1950s), he volunteered as an IRA soldier soon after his return to his native country. He initially joined Gleann Company of the Sligo IRA Brigade, later being promoted to battalion commandant (leader) of the Riverstown battalion of the organisation. According to Tom Deignan (namesake son) of Ardvarney, like many IRA leaders across Ireland his father Tom's WWI experiences helped a great deal in



The former Deignan home in Ardvarney. Thomas' son, his namesake, was the last of the name to live in the house. Thomas built the house after the Civil War. It has since undergone renovation including the addition of a porch and extensions to the rear of the property.

training, drilling and disciplining local IRA men and units from 1919 onwards.

Tom's own witness statements for the events of 1919-1921 provide a wealth of detail for what was occurring around Riverstown in this period, as well as his own actions during that time.³ Tom talked about numerous notable happenings as well as a brief account of the wider conflict in Co Sligo.

Tom described how he was 'on the run as the police were looking for me'. Tom's son, Thomas, could recall his father tell him as a young man of his deeds during the Troubles of 1919-1923. His father was constantly away from home.⁴ From 1919 on, training, drilling and marching were the principle activities of the battalion. Thomas explained how 'we also had to do the police work ourselves and this entailed a lot of duty for the Volunteers'.

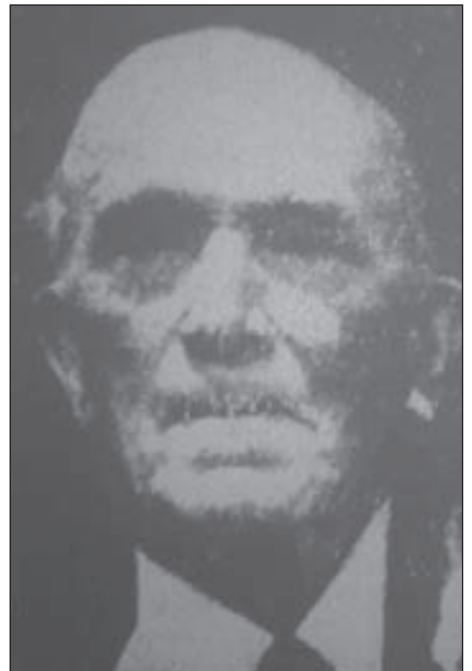
The next incident of note occurred on Easter Saturday night 1920, when 'by orders of the Brigade, Ballyfarnon Barracks, which had been evacuated earlier, was destroyed and burned by us and the Income Tax office at Rusheen and the office of the Clerk of the Petty Sessions Court was raided and all the documents were seized and burned'. This was the courthouse

which existed where the Bull Pillar now stands in Riverstown. A few weeks after these events, Riverstown barracks was evacuated and later destroyed with fire by local volunteers.

Raids for arms were also an important local source of weapons. Raids were launched against families of the RIC, former RIC households, and homes where British Army personnel lived. The chances of arms being procured there were greater than the thatched home of a poor rural tenant farmer. Despite this, there was barely a home in the district which was not visited by the IRA.

The first recorded successful ambush in the locality during the War of Independence was orchestrated by Commt Deignan. He described the actions in the following manner:

In the first week in July 1920, a cycling patrol of four police (RIC) were ambushed at Ballyrush. I was in charge of this operation and I had under me about eight men. We had a few revolvers and the rest were armed with shotguns. We took up a position behind the fence on the side of the road and in an old house. When the police arrived on the scene we opened fire on them.



Picture of Cllr Thomas Deignan in his older years. Image courtesy of the Sligo Champion, Sep 1976.

Two of the RIC were captured and their arms requisitioned. They were later released with some of the RIC opting to retire than return to the line of duty.

A suspected spy was also executed in the area during the War of Independence. Tom described the controversial incident in the following manner:

An intelligence section was organised within the battalion but this had purely a local value. It was, however, able to do some very useful work all the same. One local man was shot ... for acting as a spy for the enemy. A British Army soldier or officer who was posing as a deserter but was really on intelligence work for the British authorities' succeeded in making his escape before we could pick him up. One man of this nature was picked up by us. He admitted that he was engaged in such work. He was court-martialled by us, found guilty and shot. Before he was executed his sentence was verified by General Headquarters.

In late 1920, the war went up a notch when reinforcements in the form of the Black and Tans and Auxiliary forces were sent over to Ireland. According to Commt Deignan:

They immediately started a reign of terror by raids and burnings and so forth. They burned the following halls in the area: Riverstown, Highwood, Geevagh and Gleann. They looted peoples' property and often stole watches and money from people they held up. They burned my father's house and out-offices.

In the wake of the reprisals by Crown forces in retaliation for the Moneygold ambush near Cliffooney, where several RIC were killed, Tom and other members of the Sligo Brigade planned to assassinate some of the men responsible for the reign of terror unleashed on the people of the area after the ambush. When the RIC constables were arriving via train into Ballisadare, Tom described how:

We proceeded into the station via the main road, which was frequently patrolled by parties of enemy forces, and via Collooney which was strongly



Tom Deignan's final resting place in Ballyrush Cemetery. Tom is buried alongside his wife Annie and daughter-in-law Zita.

garrisoned. We believed that there was almost certain to be other parties of British troops or police on the train also. When the train pulled into the station we went straight to the carriage where the police were and got them. We then found three soldiers in the next carriage and in the next three officers, and this was repeated in the next compartments. We took the whole lot out of the train including the military and disarmed them. We only got two rifles on them. There were also five or six revolvers. Having disarmed the military, we let them proceed but kept the two policemen whom we took about one hundred yards away and shot them there and then. They were carrying large envelopes from the Castle which contained descriptions of some of our men who were wanted by the police. These descriptions were very accurate.

Tom was eventually caught by Crown forces on the 1 June 1921 while trying to escape a round-up in a bog in Culfadda, and was sent to Sligo jail a couple of days later. Tom was taken in a convoy with an armoured car to the jail. On the way an attempt was made to ambush the convoy and shots were fired, but no injuries were caused. A soldier reportedly told Tom 'I'll blow

your blooming head off' if he had tried to escape during the ambush. Tom was not to remain in custody, however, for he and a number of other prominent members of the local IRA escaped from the jail.

Tom's fighting days continued after the War of Independence when he sided with the anti-Treatyites in the Civil War of 1922-23. During these dark days in Irish history, there occurred a kind of 'siege' of Free State soldiers garrisoned in Tounagh national school with the Irregulars eventually succeeding in driving out the Free Staters. During this incident, Tom was wounded by fire and brought away to seek medical attention. It is common knowledge that Tom lost some of his fingers during the conflict. Although accounts vary as to how it happened, whether by gunfire or fire, it can be confidently asserted he lost some of his fingers during the fighting around Tounagh national school.

On his return journey from hospital, his car came under attack at Taylor's Cross at Coola, and one of the car's occupants, Tom Sheerin was shot, later succumbing to his injuries.

The incident was but one indication of the bitterness and divide at its most local level in Ireland, the clash of ideology, aims and objectives, perspectives and loyalties.

After the conclusion of the Civil War Tom had a family in the townland of Ardvarney, Riverstown. He married late in 1931 to a Ms Annie Brennan of Doonsheheen, whose brothers had also been heavily involved in the revolutionary period in the local area (Patrick and Roger). Annie Brennan had also been an active member of Cumann na mBan. Altogether, the couple had five children. Unfortunately, only three now survive, Thomas, Donal and Eileen. Annie died young, and their son Brendan died aged only seven.

For a time after the conflict Tom sold insurance on his bicycle. He was later involved in local politics, but never stood until he was successful in 1952. He had earned a pension from the United States government and for his time in the IRA during the War of



Thomas Deignan

Independence. Tom became a farmer by trade, where he held acreage in Ardvarney.

Tom was co-opted onto the Sligo County Council in 1952 when he first entered politics as a local Fianna Fail councillor. In his first election before the people, Tom topped the poll out of 13 candidates in the Ballymote electoral area with 1,316 first preference votes (15.76% of the vote). He reached the quota and was elected on the first count. Tom stood for three more elections and was

successful in all of them. In 1960 he polled in second place and in 1966 he again polled second. In the 1974 local elections he was elected on the eleventh count. The Fianna Fail cumann based in Riverstown is named after Tom Deignan.

Tom died in August 1976 while still a sitting councillor. He is buried in Ballyrush cemetery. Upon his internment Tom received a twenty-one-gun salute over his grave. Fr Sharkey orchestrated the service. A guard of honour was performed

by Deignan's surviving former IRA comrades and an oration over the graveside was given by Mr B Brennan. Many locals who the author interviewed can remember the burial of Thomas Deignan, because for many, it was the first time they had ever heard or saw a gun being fired.

The Deignan name is still prevalent in the Riverstown area, with direct relations of Tom Deignan still living in the Ardvarney townland, including sons, grandsons and great grandchildren.

¹See *Soldiers of Sligo* by Cían Harte for more details on the life of Brigadier-General Michael Corcoran, pp. 151-158.

²Harris, S.L. *Duffy's War: Fr. Francis Duffy, Wild Bill Donovan, and the Irish Fighting 69th in World War I* (Potomac Books, USA, 2006). ³Tom Deignan's witness statements. Information sourced from the Bureau of Military Archives, Dublin.

⁴Vincent Tighe of Doongelagh informed the author of one such story of Tom's near escape with British authorities. While at his home, Crown forces came looking. Undeterred by the conditions he had to go through, Tom made for deep drains around his home and there crawled his way through them towards Gleann, where he successfully made his escape. A veteran of the trenches of WWI, the drainage ditches of rural Ireland were no comparison.

-- This article is from Cían Harte's forthcoming book (due out this year): *The Lost Tales: Riverstown's Troubles, 1919-1923*.

The study hall – St Nathy's

By John Hannon

*Morning musings,
Amid serried rows of bowed heads,
Mining the mystic lode of wisdom's wiles.
Silence shattered.
Shuffling sneakered feet, drawn desks, book-laden bags,
Conspire to assail the mind's muted meanderings.
Eureka eyes
Mirroring mastery of Academe's arcane trove,
Tolling bell
The scattering, moving on, then
Eeried emptiness.*

A happy day in 1887

Submitted by Padraig Duddy

Marriage, 8 August 1887

At the Parish Church Kill, Co Kildare by the Reverend J Murry CC. Charles, fifth son of Richard Taylor, Clooncunny House, Ballymote, to Jeanette, youngest daughter of the late JR Kirk Captain of the 2nd Dragoon Guards.

--

Taken from The Irish Times archive

Easkey church and graveyard

Survey report by Sam Moore, Archaeologist Programme Chair, Applied Archaeology, Institute of Technology – Sligo, for the LEAP Project, Easkey, Co Sligo, Article for The Corran Herald by Kate Denison Bell

Located in the townland of Curraghmagap, overlooking the river, Easkey village's late 13th-century/early 14th-century church and graveyard may appear as forgotten and unassuming ivy-choked ruins. However, in the midst of thick vegetation, masonry decay and dearly departed souls lie iconic symbols and monuments of religious and folkloric significance, representing a dramatic past which is deserving of conservation and appreciation.

A full survey of Easkey church and graveyard, including its site location and description, has been completed by archaeologist Sam Moore. With a view to the future, Sligo IT lecturer Moore also provided mitigation advice, grave memorial transcriptions and accompanying photographs, and ground plans. Funded by the Sligo County Heritage office, these findings were detailed by Moore in a March 2016 report for Easkey's LEAP (Livin' in Easkey and Proud) Project, a voluntary community initiative to preserve heritage sites and promote community and tourism.

As part of his comprehensive survey, Moore discussed such intriguing features as a window lintel handily created from whale bone, a hopeful sunburst for Mary Burns who died in 1846 aged only 23, several winged cherub (angel) heads in the 18th century French Rococo style, and represented tools of the trade commemorating the grave of a cherished blacksmith, Randel McDonnell (Easkey 43, date 1803).

Rescued from the site and now in the safety of Easkey Heritage Centre is a mitre-topped bishop, broken off from a doorway and viewing the modern world through weather-worn eyes – perhaps missing his two other fragmented head friends from the church doorway hood moulding.



A cherub on the Hart box tomb

Easkey church

The church is located on the east side of the graveyard, on the steeply-sloping west bank of the River Easkey. It was listed in the Ecclesiastical Taxation of Ireland of 1306 as Imelackiskel. The O'Muldoon clan first ruled the area, referred to as Imleach Isealin, meaning 'the low land verging on water.' Later in the rental records of the O'Dowds (1633-1636), the church and castle were most likely referred to as 'Castlan', referring to the neighbouring townland of Castletown, according to Moore's research.

Although earlier churches may have existed near this site, this particular parish may have originated with the

Cistercians of Abbeyknockmoy (Co Galway) and Boyle, who owned landed estates in 'the great and little granges of Templeboy' of Alternan and Easkey, according to H T Knox in 1904. However, there is no evidence it was an abbey, with only a few monks probably manning the estates and perhaps living in a single compound.

The church is also referred in a 1656 Down Survey map and by Rev Terence O'Rorke in 1889 in his definitive history of County Sligo. There may have been some rebuilding to the church in the 15th century through to 1747, the now obscured date of which was inscribed on the church building after a possible fire, according to Greer (1924, 83; see also Timoney, 2005, 78).

Moore noted that the lintel of the narrow east gable lancet-shaped window, depicted in one of Wakeman's drawings, was created from a whale bone. Ivy growth now partially or completely hides the window from view.

Within the church is a projection from the south wall, which might



The Wakeman drawing of Easky Abbey in 1879



The water font at the ‘Priest’s house’

indicate the possible remnants of a built-in Sedillia, or seat for priest or officiant.

Artist WF Wakeman, commissioned by Col Edward Coopoe of Markree Castle, captured the church in delicate watercolours in 1879 before it had endured more damage. (Wakeman’s images for this article courtesy of Sligo County Library). Wakeman’s drawing indicates hood moulding above the doorway comprising of three heads, including the aforementioned bishop. The decorative elements shown of the doorway by Wakeman are mainly no longer in situ but preserved segmented arch fragments of dressed stone are still present, one either side of the doorway.

During the survey several fragments of the hood moulding and segmented arch fragments were uncovered and reported to the National Museum of Ireland and the National Monuments Service. Moore learned that the style of the bishop’s ear is similar to one on the doorway of the 15th century Augustinian friary at Dunmore, Co Galway.

Wood-Martin in 1882 (p 115) recorded ‘a remarkable cross on the gable of the old Easky’ of the west gable, which was depicted by Wakeman. Remains were found at the base and although they fit together, they only make up two-thirds of the original cross, which was decorated with a rope pattern ring. The cross seems unfinished and may have been erected after the 1747 renovations (Mary Timoney, 2005, 78).

The ‘Priest’s House’

A ‘Priest’s House’ is mentioned

in 1752 by travel diarist Richard Pococke: ‘Here is the shell of a good church and the priest’s house adjoining it.’ Situated in the southwest corner of the graveyard is this roofless rectangular building, which may have been a chapel but is often referred to as the ‘Priest’s House.’ It contains a small, built-in holy water font and two pedestals, which may have supported an altar. There are also two ledgers inscribed in Latin and dedicated to priests, Fathers Burke and Bolan. Edmund Bourke/Burke’s ledger, dated April 1791 (Easkey 2), is memorialised with the universal communion symbol of a pair of hands holding a chalice.

As part of his all-encompassing survey, Moore discusses a cross base, located a short distance away on the west bank of the river. This empty base is possibly associated with the church and graveyard and built into the parapet of a modern mortared stone wall of Easkey’s main street.

Graveyard

Within the graveyard, and now recorded in the survey, are 350 unmarked stones, ledgers, headstones, box tombs, table tombs, as well as two wall tablets. Some stones have been re-used, such as a table tomb leg. Stones were fashioned from limestone, sandstone, and in least one case, quartz, according to Moore.

Most of the memorials date to the 19th century although there are many of the previous century, with the earliest being 1722. Some of the inscriptions can be difficult or impossible to read but with the use of photogrammetric technology, ones such as headstone for John Duffey (Easkey 23, date 1738) can now be deciphered.

Several monuments are in dire danger of collapse, according to Moore. Notable memorials include the Hart box tomb (decorated with high relief cherub) and Burns box tomb (collapsed). Moore found that the most numerous memorials were 85 flat stone ledgers, or ‘recumbent’



Detail of Grave 38, Burns



Further detail of Grave 38

slabs, with 30 of these showing visible inscriptions.

Several tomb memorials were created by the Diamond family of Skreen, funeral monument masons still in business. Broken pieces of memorials may have been rearranged and recycled, such a possible ringed cross used a roughly-hewn ‘spud-stone.’ This interesting stone object with socket might have been designed to hold the lower hinge of a doorway.

Many of the memorials are poetically decorative. As one example, a mythological flying griffin and dolphin grace a family coat of arms, the only such shield in the graveyard, representing a part-French ancestor of the Griffith family. Also on this memorial are ‘double date’ inscriptions in accordance to both Julian and Gregorian calendars: ‘17212’ (1721/1722).

The Heal ledger (Easkey 35) depicts both a bell and an evergreen holly motif, which symbolise church/religion and protection/good luck, respectively.

A sandstone slab, dedicated to Bridgett Cavanaugh (Easkey 31) and

A map of the tombs at Easkey graveyard



- Box tomb
- Headstone
- Table tomb
- Inscribed Ledger
- Uninscribed Ledger
- Unmarked stone
- Loose stone

Numbers refer to inscribed stones and their location

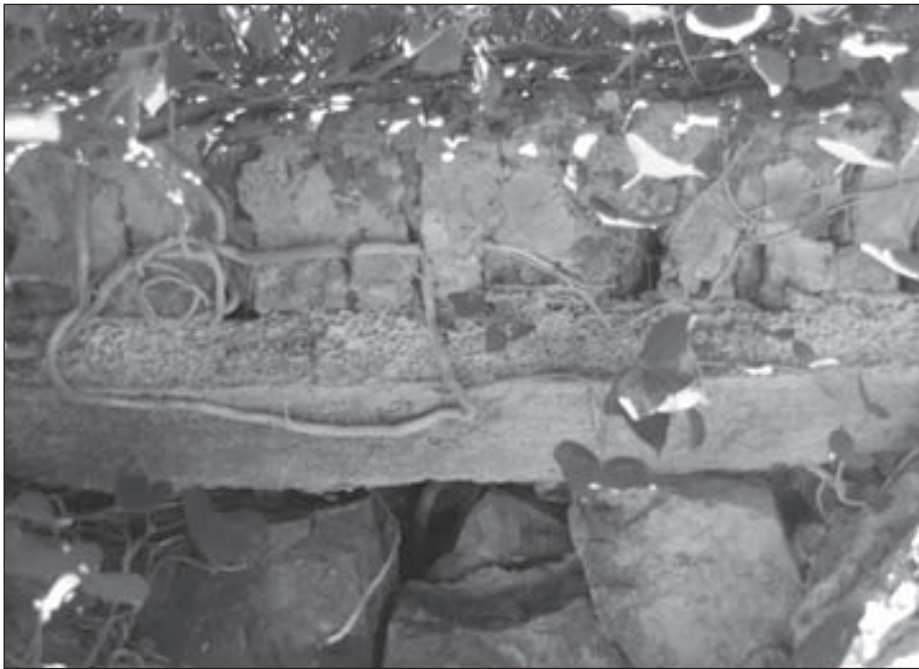


EASKY CHURCH AND GRAVEYARD
Curraghmagap Id
Easkey
Co. Sligo

RMP no. SL011-021
ITM Grid 537467,837890
Surveyed by Sam Moore and Claran Davis
Plan by Sam Moore
February 2016

THE CORRAN HERALD • 2016/2017

NAME	TYPE OF MEMORIAL	NAME(S)	DATE(S)	NAME	TYPE OF MEMORIAL	NAME(S)	DATE(S)
Easky 1	Ledger [in Latin]	Unrecorded	177_	Easky 26	Ledger	John Hart	__ Feb 1758
Easky 2	Ledger [in Latin]	Edmund Bourke	April 1791			Patrick Hart	[erected monument]
Easky 3	Ledger	Luke Doyle	20 Feb 1837	Easky 27	Ledger	James Hart	1_ Apr ____
		Bridget Doyle (McDonagh)	6 Nov 1809	Easky 28	Ledger	John Watt [Wall?]	4 Dec 1799 [?]
		Susan Doyle	6 Sept 1798			Hannah Watt [Wall?]	[erected monument]
		James Doyle	10 Apr 18_9	Easky 29	Box Tomb	Patrick Hart	[erected monument]
		Patrick Doyle	1840 [erected monument]			Roger Hart	8 Apr 1804
Easky 4	Ledger	James Feeney	22 Apr 1861			Bridget Hart (Brannen)	24 Apr 1804
		Ellen Feeney				Catherine Hart (McNamara)	10 Oct 1826
Easky 5	Headstone	_oy Taylo	30 Aug 1741	Easky 30	Ledger	Roger Hart	8 Apr 1804
Easky 6	Ledger	Patrick Dunighan	16 July 1750			Bridget Hart (Branen)	24 Apr 1804
		EalsDunighan (Feeny)	__ May 1770			Elizabeth Feighny (Hart)	30 June 1810
Easky 7	Headstone	Mark Feeny	8 Oct 1868	Easky 31	Headstone	Bridgett Cavanaugh	18 Apr 1739
Easky 8	Headstone	Bridget Keveney	17 ____	Easky 32	Ledger	____ Connly [?]	__ Sept 1798 [?]
	[fallen]	Sister Mary St Peter Claver	31 Aug 1889			Bridget Connly [?]	____
		Philip Keveney	27 Oct 1901	Easky 33	Ledger	Andrew Connolly	7 May 1819
		Philip Keveney	[erected monument]			Ann Connolly (McGannan [?])	31 Dec 1797
Easky 9	Ledger	Giles Kinny (Forbis)	12 Aug 1803			Andrew Connolly	[erected monument]
		Bryan Kinny	21 Dec 1811[?]	Easky 34	Ledger	James Connolly	29 May 1815
Easky 10	Ledger	Mickey More Keveney	1 July 1880			Thomas and Mathew Connolly	[erected monument]
		Peter Keveney	16 Feb 1879	Easky 35	Ledger	Thomas Heal	3 Apr 1818
Easky 11	Ledger	Charles Kevany	3 Mar 1879			Anthony Heal	19 Nov 1807
		Owen Kevany	[erected monument]			Sarah Heal	_5 June 1814
Easky 12	Ledger	Mary Bairin [?] [Barill?] (Murray)	19 Apr 1769	Easky 36	Table Tomb	Michael Connolly	17 Oct 1865
Easky 13	Ledger	Bridget Keveney (Malloney)	17 Feb 1867			James Connolly	[erected monument]
		Owen Keveney	6 [?] May 1870			James Connolly	22 Mar 1882
		John Keveney	[erected monument]			Mary Connolly	14 Mar 1890
Easky 14	Ledger	Illegible inscription				Eleanor Scanlon	12 Feb 18__
Easky 15	Headstone	Rev T.P. Walsh PP	[erected monument]	Easky 37	Ledger	Thomas Steward	6 [?] June 1790
		Margaret Walsh	10 June 1851	Easky 38	Ledger	Mary Burns	1 Feb 1846
		Patrick Walsh	16 Apr 1865			Tom Burns	
		Michael Walsh	23 May 1881			Mary Burns	
Easky 16	Box Tomb	Peter Burns	1 Sept 1803	Easky 39	Headstone	William Scott	30 Aug 1850
		Philip Burns	15 Mar 1887			Ellen Scott	19 Mar 1891
Easky 17	Ledger	Elizabeth Bourns	16 May 1812			William Scott	2 Nov 1907
		James Bourns	____	Easky 40	Ledger	Peter Scott	20 June 1792
Easky 18	Headstone	Martin Golden	23 June 1848	Easky 41	Ledger	Elizabeth Donnelly	16 July 1769
		Anne Golden (Morrow)	1 Feb 1863			Randle McDonnell	20 ____ 1771
		Thomas Golden	29 Apr 1897	Easky 42	Box Tomb [in Latin]	FrancisciBeolan	1797
Easky 19	Table Tomb	James McNama	11 Sept 1869	Easky 43	Box Tomb	Randle McDonnell	23 June 1803
		John McNama	[erected monument]			Honour McDonnell (O'Connor)	[erected monument]
		John McNama	__ Mar 1878			Michael McDonnell	[erected monument]
Easky 20	Table Tomb	Eliza ____				Randle McDonnell	[erected monument]
		John McNama	19 Mar 1818 [?]	Easky 44	Ledger	Thomas Rea	__ Apr 1752 [?]
Easky 21	Table Tomb	James Mullen	20 Mar 1816 [?]			Lewis Rea	11 ____ 1753
		Bridget Mullen	20 Feb 18__	Easky 45	Box Tomb	Bridget Moffitt	1788
		Michael Mullen	20 Apr 186_			William Moffitt	23 Dec 1813
		John Mullen[?]	__ Oct ____	Easky 46	Ledger	Mary Griffith (French)	17 Feb 1721/1722
		Charles Mullen	[erected monument]	Easky 47	Ledger	William Ormsby	__ Feb 1767
Easky 22	Headstone	Thomas Colman	14 Aug 1884	Easky 48	Ledger	James Routledge	8 May 1803
		John Colman	1866	Easky 49	Wall Tablet	Hugh Kivlehan	5 Nov 1882
		Winifred Colman	1856			Winifred (his wife)	16 Apr 1897
		Thomas Colman	1854			Pat (his son)	30 Jan 1886
		Rose Colman	1836	Easky 50	Wall Tablet/plot	James Hale	1 Mar 1875
Easky 23	Headstone	John Duffey	1738			Edward Hale	1869
Easky 24	Ledger	Dudley Hart	7 Nov 1863 [?]	Easky 51	Headstone	Ao	
		John Hart	__ Oct 1866 [?]				
Easky 25	Ledger	Dudly [?] Hart	1 [?] Mar 1786				
		Patrick Hart	[erected monument]				



The whale bone lintel

Continued from page 31

dated 1739 includes a Jesuit-version of the Greek IHS monogram, recorded by archaeologist Mary Timoney. She also notated additional 19th century markers, including the Colman headstone (Easkey 22) which has deeply-carved depictions of the Lamb of God, the dove of the Holy Spirit, and flower and angel motifs. As a less uplifting symbol, the ledger of Easkey 14 shows an inverted skull and cross bones at the base.

As another example, sentiments of the Keveney Ledger (Easkey 10), including original misspellings and random punctuation, are transcribed as such:

IHS

Lord have Mercy on the soul of Mickey More Keveney, who Departed this Life, 1st July 1880 Aged 73 years: his hhart was large and his dispositions genoursis. May his soul rest in peace: Also his son peter keveney, who Departed this Life 16th feb 1879 A[g] ed 34 years: Erected by his sons

Eighteenth and nineteenth century inscriptions of surnames, many of which remain strong in the area, include Flannelly, Bourke/Burke, Doyle, McDonagh, Feeney, Malloney, Kaveny/Keveney, Forbis, Murray, Bairin/Bairill, Walsh, Bourns/Burns,

Golden, Morrow, Mullen, Colman, Duffey, Hart, Wall, McNama/McNamara, Brannen, Cavanaugh, Connolly, McGannan, Heal, Scanlon, Steward, Scott, Donnelly/McDonnell, Beolan/Bolan, Rea, Moffitt, Griffith, Ormsby, Rutledge, Kivlehan and Hale.

Local people, whose families trace back generations, might sense from

the graveyard grounds the presence of a vicar, unfortunate victim of a 1439 plague, and possibly 'ghosts' of unbaptised and unrecorded children, who may have been buried in the Cillín, or children's graveyard, after the cemetery officially closed in 1888 and the new Roslea cemetery opened.

Leap into the future using the past

As part of mitigation suggestions, Moore advised that conservation of the church and graveyard should be carried out as soon possible, as there is considerable damage and ongoing decay within both the church and graveyard. Although ivy strangles the ruins, it now conversely provides structural stability, so great care would be needed by experts to remove it in order to restore masonry, moulding, memorial stones, ironwork, and so on.

As emphasised in his report, Moore

said consultation would be required in conjunction with the Sligo County Heritage Officer and the National Monuments Service, as the site is historically important.

The organisers of Easkey's LEAP have recently successfully received some funding through a heritage grant, and hope that Easkey church can be reclaimed as part of a long-term plan to revitalise the area. The project will be of significant benefit to the West Sligo region, which has suffered economically during the last several years. Artisan craftspeople, such as stonemasons and ironworkers, and young apprentices, will hopefully work with expert engineering and architectural conservationists to stabilise and then restore the structures and cemetery.

There is also the possibility that the site could be developed as a heritage attraction as part of the Easkey Heritage Centre, employing local knowledgeable residents to interpret its fascinating history to visitors. The church and graveyard are in close proximity to the possibly connected Toberabidden holy well and cairn, in addition to the 17th century Castletown fortification and bawn, and towerhouse of Roslea Castle.

Acknowledgements

In his report Sam Moore credits the following people for their assistance: Carmel Gordon for all her knowledge and the enormous help she provided in compiling his report; Marie Weir and volunteers of the LEAP Project; Ciaran Davis (IT Sligo) for his surveying, inscription reading, photogrammetry and photography; Rachel Moss (Trinity College Dublin) for her medieval carving knowledge; and Shirley Markley (IT Sligo) on the mortar and aspects on architecture. Kate Denison Bell is appreciative to Sam Moore and Carmel Gordon for permitting the use of their remarkable findings and knowledge for this article.

Well done to Carmel and her fellow

LEAP Project volunteers for using their own personal funds to produce a limited edition commemorative booklet, Easkey Abbey and Graveyard A.D. 1306 – A.D.

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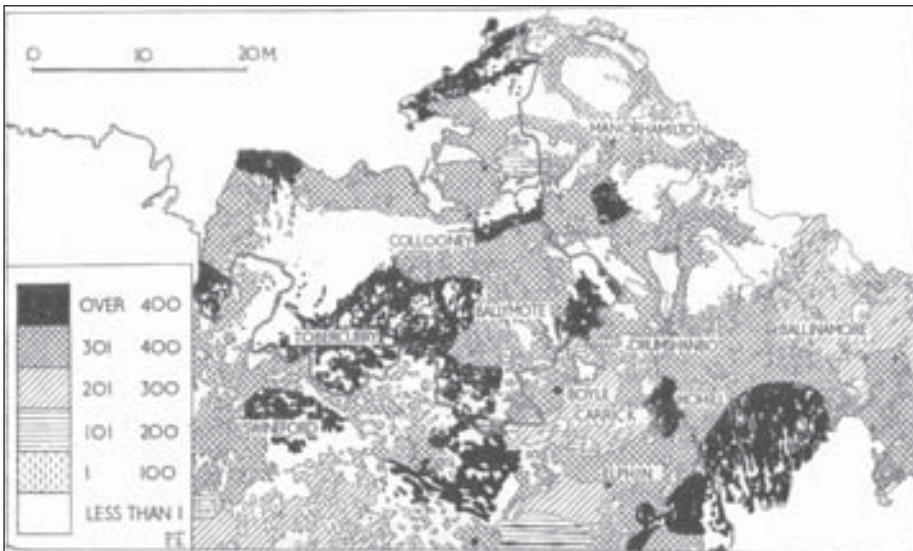
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The Pre-Famine Population of Sligo

By Pdraig Deignan



Sligo Leitrim population density, 1841. Source: TW Freeman, Pre-Famine Ireland, A Study in Historical Geography (Manchester, 1957), p 251

In less than 100 years the population of Ireland rose from 2.5 million in the early 1750s to 8.2 million in 1841, an increase most heavily concentrated among agricultural labourers, cottiers and small farmers.¹ In County Sligo the population rose from around 30,000 in the early 1750s to over 180,809 in 1841, and to over 185,000 at its highest in 1846 at the time of the Great Famine.²

In the first half of the nineteenth century Sligo was described as one of the most overcrowded and poverty-stricken counties in Ireland.³ Many commentators blamed the increase in the county on the subdivision of land amongst small holders. However, a look at table 1.1 suggests that in 1841 Sligo was not the most overcrowded in Connacht – while there were more acres per person in Galway and Mayo (3.4 per person in both) Sligo had marginally more land per head than either Leitrim or Roscommon. Roscommon had only 2.3 acres per person. The results do not take into account the varying quality of land.

Within the county of Sligo the situation as regards land acreage per

person was different as well. Some areas of the county such as Leyny had more land for each individual, with 3.3 acres per person, while other areas such as Carbury had only 1.7 acres per person. Large areas of Carbury possessed good land located on the coast and along river valleys.

Table 1.1: Acreage and population of the Connacht counties in 1841

County	Acreage	Population	Acres per person
Galway	1,498,593	440,198	3.4
Leitrim	376,212	155,297	2.4
Mayo	1,321,281	388,887	3.4
Roscommon	585,406	253,591	2.3
Sligo	451,085	180,809	2.5

Source: material analysed from *Census of Ireland 1851*, p. 244.

Table 1.1: Acreage and population of the Connacht counties in 1841

As table 1.3 shows, the population of Sligo increased by 15% in the period 1821 to 1831, with some baronies

Baronies	Acreage	Population	Acres per person
Carbury	76,592	46,520	1.7
Coolavin	25,473	10,206	2.5
Corran	45,376	18,489	2.5
Leyny	121,233	37,096	3.3
Tireragh	106,593	36,739	3
Tirerrill	75,812	31,739	2.4
Total	451,085	180,809	2.5

Table 1.2: Acreage and population of the Sligo Baronies in 1841

such as Coolavin increasing by a large 27% and Leyny by 23%, while the other baronies rose by anything between five and 17%.

Baronies	1821	1831	Number increase	Percentage increase
Carbury	40,514	48,887	8,373	17
Coolavin	6,294	8,596	2,302	27
Corran	15,548	17,431	1,883	11
Leyny	25,314	32,849	7,535	23
Tireragh	33,411	35,266	1,855	5
Tirerrill	25,148	28,736	3,588	12.5
Total	146,229	171,765	25,536	15

Table 1.3: Population change in the Sligo Baronies 1821 to 1831

The population continued to increase in the period 1831 to 1841 but not by as much as in the ten years previously. That was driven by the decline in the linen industry in the 1820s, which had contributed to the large rise in population in the decade 1821-31. Overall population in the county rose by 5% while the Baronies of Coolavin and Leyny continued to rise by the largest amounts followed closely by Tirerrill, Corran and Tireragh, which rose by single digits.

Baronies	1831	1841	Number increase/decrease	Percentage increase/decrease
Carbury	48,887	46,520	-2,367	-5
Coolavin	8,596	10,206	+1,610	+16
Corran	17,431	18,489	+1,058	+6
Leyny	32,849	37,096	+4,247	+11.5
Tireragh	35,266	36,739	+1,473	+4
Tirerrill	28,736	31,739	+3,003	+9.5
Total	171,765	180,809	+9,044	+5

Table 1.4: Population change in the Sligo Baronies 1831 to 1841

However, the population of Carbury in fact fell by over 2,300 between 1831 and 1841, a 5% drop. Sligo was located in the Barony of Carbury and the town was a regional capital in 1841. It was described by Inglis in the mid 1830s as ‘the chief mart of the northwest of Ireland’, and he went on to say that ‘without a due consideration of the geographical situation of Sligo, one might feel surprise at the very extensive warehouses of groceries,

cloths, cottons, cutlery ... [T]here is no town of any note westward, nearer than Ballina; eastward, nearer than Enniskillen; southward, nearer than Boyle; [and] the nearest of these towns is nearly thirty miles distant'.⁴ In 1836 its import trade was valued at £100,800 and its export trade at £338,900. Imports to Sligo included coal, iron, sugar, tobacco, wines and spirits, flax seed, fish, salt, glass and earthenware, while exports included corn, meal and flour, butter, pork, and bacon.⁵



Anderson's Brewery, c1870.
Sommerville Collection, Courtesy
Sligo County Library

Two years before, in 1834, the export trade of Sligo was easily the largest in the northwest of Ireland. It consisted chiefly of grain, and was steadily increasing. The export of oats from Sligo in 1831 was 136,000 quarters; in 1832, it was 134,000 quarters. However, by 1833 it had increased to 154,000 quarters. The export of wheat had trebled within the three-year period from 1831-3. The grain trade was assisted in the 1830s by improved roads and the beginning of commercial steam ships sailing between Sligo and Liverpool/Glasgow. The butter trade of Sligo too was increasing, and about 150,000 casks were exported from December 1832 to December 1833.⁶ The provision trade had trebled in the period 1831-33 and the pork trade doubled in the same period. Inglis described the town as having a 'good appearance' and half the houses came within the first and second classes. Less than one-sixth were one-room cabin types. Sligo town was doing well in this period and its prosperity



Knox St businesses - Sligo Wood & Iron and the Saw Mills

was based on the commercialisation of agriculture in the county. However it profited only a minority of Sligo farmers, those with plenty of land, resources and business sense. They were aided in this regard by the improved connections established in the boom time of 1750-1820 between Sligo town and other market towns in the county and beyond. In this way Sligo was strengthening and expanding its involvement in the national economy of the British Isles.



'A Court for King Cholera', Punch, 25 September 1852.

In Sligo town there was some manufacturing industry and four breweries, a distillery, several flour mills and small workshop industries including soap, candle, hat and rope making. Sligo had a corn and butter market and five annual fairs. It was an administration centre with a gaol, courthouse, hospitals and an increasing number of convents. Inglis noted that Sligo was 'a decidedly

improving town' and 'the look of a town of some consequence ... in streets, houses, bustle and shops, Sligo holds a respectable rank'.

However, despite all this industry and enterprise, the drop in the population of Carbury between the 1831 and 1841 censuses can be accounted for by the terrible cholera epidemic, which hit Sligo town in August 1832. The disease had been reported in Belfast, Dublin, Cork and Galway in May 1832 and in June 1832 'it was advancing towards the North-West'.⁷ On 15 June 1832 the Board of Health called a meeting in the courthouse to prepare the citizens of the town for the coming 'pestilence which is now so generally raging throughout the land'.⁸ On 11 August 1832 the disease was first noticed in the town.⁹



Sligo Fever Hospital, opened in 1822. Image courtesy of Sligo County Library

Over the following month or so an average of fifty people a day died from the disease.¹⁰ In all at least 1,500 people died in the outbreak, possibly more.¹¹ The *Ballyshannon Herald* began to report on the disease in the Sligo district as Alexander Bolton, proprietor of the *Sligo Journal* and his son both died in the epidemic. The paper maintained on 18 August 1832 that 'cholera is ravaging Sligo to a frightful extent ... the disease is more virulent here than elsewhere in the kingdom'.¹² On 24 August 1832 the *Herald* reported that 'the disease is still raging' in Sligo and 'many of the inhabitants have fled the town and taken shelter in the woods'. The inhabitants had few places to go.



Sligo Infirmary, built 1815, extended 1856. Image courtesy of Sligo County Library

The Fever Hospital, which had been built in 1822, was overwhelmed with cholera sufferers. However country people did not welcome those from the town, fearing infection, and were ‘so alarmed that they would hold no community with any person from Sligo, although the fear of death does not prevent their nightly patrols’.¹³

Baronies	1821	1841	Number increase	Percentage increase
Carbury	40,514	46,520	6,006	13
Coolavin	6,294	10,206	3,912	38
Corran	15,548	18,489	2,941	16
Leyny	25,314	37,096	11,782	32
Tireragh	33,411	36,739	3,328	9
Tirerrill	25,148	31,739	6,591	21
Total	146,229	180,809	34,580	19

Table 1.5: Population change in the Sligo Baronies 1821 to 1841

When Inglis visited the town in 1834 he noted that ‘nowhere in Ireland did cholera rage with such deadly violence as in Sligo’. This was largely due to the fact that the main wells in the town and along with the Garavogue River were consistently contaminated by sewerage and little effort had been made to invest in supplying Sligo with outside fresh water supplies or in facilitating the proper disposal of waste products. Following the epidemic Inglis commented that ‘the inhabitants of Sligo did not appear to me to be a healthy race’ and that ‘I never saw so many sickly, pale faced people’.¹⁴ The people had obviously been weakened by cholera and this

along with the drop in numbers affected the people’s ability and inclination for reproduction so leading to the decline in census numbers. In 1821 the population of Sligo town was 15,152 but by 1841 it had fallen to 14,318.¹⁵

County	1821	1841	Number increase	Percentage increase
Galway	337,374	440,198	102,824	23
Leitrim	124,785	155,297	30,512	20
Mayo	293,112	388,887	95,772	25
Roscommon	208,729	253,591	44,862	18
Sligo	146,229	180,809	34,580	19

Table 1.6: Population increase in the Connacht counties between 1821 and 1841

In the period 1821 to 1841 Leyny experienced the largest rise in population of all the six baronies, a whopping 11,782, which made for a 3.2% increase in population. Even though Coolavin, with the lowest population of any barony, had the greatest percentage increase of 38% between 1821 and 1841. Corran had the lowest number increase at 2,941 while Tireragh had the lowest percentage increase at 9%. However, when we look at the province overall, Sligo had the second-lowest population and had the second-lowest proportion increase of population in the period 1821 to 1841, indicating that subdivision of land was taking place at a greater rate in Mayo, Galway and Leitrim.

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About the author

Padraig Deignan is a PhD graduate of NUI Maynooth. He also has a BA, MA and a Higher Diploma in Education from NUI Galway and was awarded a fellowship of the National University of Ireland. In 2010 he published *The Protestant Community in Sligo, 1914-49*. To read more about issues affecting Sligo in the Pre-Famine years and in the second half of the nineteenth century consult his new book *Land and People in Nineteenth Century Sligo: from Union to Local Government*. The book investigates the interaction of land, economics and politics in the county in the period following the end of the Napoleonic Wars to the Local Government Act of 1898 and is available in local bookshops.

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² Padraig Deignan, *Land and People in Nineteenth Century Sligo: from Union to Local Government*, p. 215.

³ T. G. Simms, ‘County Sligo in the Eighteenth Century’, in *Royal society of Antiquarians of Ireland*, vol. 91 (Dublin 1961), p. 109.

⁴ Henry D. Inglis, *A Journey Throughout Ireland* (4th ed., London 1836), p. 269.

⁵ T.W. Freeman, *Pre-Famine Ireland, A Study in Historical Geography* (Manchester, 1957), p. 252.

⁶ Henry D. Inglis, *A Journey Throughout Ireland* (4th ed., London 1836), p. 269.

⁷ S.J., 15 Jun. 1831.

⁸ Ibid., 22 Jun. 1832.

⁹ Ibid., 29 Aug. 1832.

¹⁰ Sligo Board of Health: Cholera Papers 1832 [MS copy] PC/D/2/41, (S.C.L., Sligo Board of Health, Soc. 11), p. 23.

¹¹ S.J., 14.21 Sept. 1832 & Sligo Board of Health: Cholera Papers 1832 [MS copy] PC/D/2/41, (S.C.L., Sligo Board of Health, Soc 11), p. 32.

¹² Ballyshannon Herald [B.H.], 18 Aug. 1832.

¹³ William G. Wood-Martin, *History of Sligo*, vol. III (Sligo, 1892), p. 76.

¹⁴ Henry D. Inglis, *A Journey Throughout Ireland* (4th ed., London 1836), p. 275.

¹⁵ Census of the population of Ireland, comparative abstract as taken in 1821 and 1831, 1833, C23, p. 41; Census of Population of Ireland, a comparative view, 1841-51, 1852, C373, p. 38.

The Windings of the Moy with Skreen and Tireragh

A book by Rev James Greer Graduate of TCD; Ex rector, retired; 'The Moy Salmon'

Article by Pdraig McDermott

The Reverend James Greer was born in Scurmore in a small cottage in January 1845 near Enniscrone, Co Sligo. Despite being a famine child and the victim of an eviction he lived into his 80s. The Greers had a small holding of land from the landlord Colonel Wingfield. His father was a farmer on the small acre and a boat builder, but he died when the children were young and his widow was unable to keep up the rent payments. Like many other unfortunates at the time, poor Protestants and Catholics alike, they were evicted.

It seems that they moved into Enniscrone village with many others and helped to develop the seaside resort. Because of his talent and diligence, James secured a place in the school set up by Rev Edward Nangle at Skreen. (Rev Nangle founded the Achill Mission prior to his appointment as curate at Skreen in 1852.)

Having completed his education at Skreen, James won a scholarship to Kildare Place training school, eventually graduating with distinction from Trinity College.

He decided to go into the ministry and was ordained in February 1866. He was attached to St Macartens in Monaghan for some time before his appointment as Rector of Drum in the Diocese of Clogher. He took his beloved mother with him to live in the Drum rectory. In 1871 Mary Goodwin, his childhood sweetheart, was about to board the emigrant ship at Cobh, Co Cork, when he interceded, taking her to the rural parish church in Kilmeen in the Diocese of Ross. They married and returned to Drum where they raised a family of eight, five girls and three boys. Two of his sons pre-deceased him. His mother died in 1896, having lived to see her grandchildren grow up.

His style with its quaintly Victorian turn of phrase is as delightful as his book, but a great deal of it is a sad chronicle of bad health.

Acute insomnia forced him to seek retirement from active duties of the sacred ministry on a superannuated pension. Then at the turn of the 20th century he and his wife came back to live in Enniscrone in search of better health, 'to the place that gave us both birth'. They were both happy to be in the resort beside the waters of the Atlantic Ocean with fresh sea air abounding. James wrote:

I was encouraged by, and my grateful thanks to the most Rev Dr Naughton, Bishop of Killala and his clergy, to put my notes in book form by those people. Mrs Glenn of Skreen rectory who week after week forwarded large subscriptions in Skreen and neighbourhood of Dublin, mere words are empty thanks but deep real thanks are due. The present editor of The Western People has done all that is possible to have the book on sale in fit shape and form.

The delightful lands of the Moy and Tireragh passages here and there in them may touch the hearts of those in foreign climes and bring back far off memories of childhood and youth. If they do so, they won't be written in vain. I will now record my first and second visits to the source of the Moy, a well at Knocknashee close to the 'Hill of the Fairies' (in folklore). The lament of men and women now living in far-off lands helps to stir ennobling thoughts not any happier than if they lived around the 'Windings of the Moy'.

My first visit to these parts was in 1872, and 1918 my last. The stream Tubberlauna at Knocknashee forms the origin of the Moy. Mountain streams from the Ox mountains soon add to its dimensions, and on reaching Cloonacool it turns left to continue its course to Banada Abbey and onwards in Swinford direction. [It passes] Meelick round tower, mentioned in the Annals of the Four Masters as being the place where Hugh O'Connor and the English pursued the sons of Broderic O'Connor in 1225.

The author expected to see Swinford as a small poor town in the parish of Kilconduff as it was in 1872, but it had improved looks due to Sir John Brabason's efforts. The author James followed and conversed with the local community on all relevant matters. During the summer months long cars of Messrs Donegan and Campbell plied between Swinford and Enniscrone with 30 to 40 passengers per car and luggage for same.

Following the river to Foxford where woollen mills were producing woollen material by the method of Sisters of Charity's diligence, Rev James talked with the Reverend mother of the providence convent Foxford. The mill ran on gas when water levels were too high or too low.

He had visited Straide and saw the grave of the immortal Davitt as he had longed to see it and like himself trained to arms in stern misfortune's field. Davitt was not of the common class patriot, this was noblest Roman of them all.

The river continues to its exit at Killala Bay a distance of twenty miles from its source at Knocknashee. From the school at Skreen Rev James has a special place in his heart for Rev Edward Nangle. He was a courteous teacher in his days at Skreen College and did not receive the recognition he so richly deserved.

Rev James Greer died on 19 September 1929 aged 84 years, and was buried with his ancestors at Killanly churchyard a short distance from his birthplace at Scurmore. His funeral was well attended and the Catholics outnumbered the Protestants as proof of his popularity with everybody.

I'll finish with John Gilmore's lines:

*Now the mournful song of exile
Is all that is for me,
Farewell, farewell to Carramore
And the hill of Knocknashee*

A spirited letter from 1856

Submitted by Pdraig Doddy

This letter was written by Mr Andrew Walsh to his sister, Attracta Casey, nee Walsh, wife of Michael Casey, who was a farmer on a nine-acre holding at Lisballaley, Gurteen, Co Sligo.

My dear Atty,

I ought to have sat down immediately and answered your letter, but I had no tissue paper such as this I now write on. The distance from here to you is great and I mean to write you a long letter... It is a little over 40 years since I saw you last, you were then bursting into womanhood. I have travelled a great deal since and I confess I have never met one whose features were so regular and so beautiful, but John told me that these features have been disfigured by a cancer and the ignorance of quacks. I was sorry to hear it... Well you must bear it.

Forty years have passed and I hardly realised it, since I laughed at the old Bishop Flynn and the foolish ceremony of minor orders ... opening and shutting, locking and unlocking the door of the old chapel in Bunnanadan where Marcus O'Luachra was priest. I remember every circumstance of my early life as if [it were] yesterday, the sunny hill of Greenane, the winter pond of Fallanory, Loch na Leibe, Tuamuan etc.

I would prefer Ireland to any portion of the globe that I have seen or read of to live in, if physical comforts alone were to be considered, and indeed many and many other comforts. Its politics alone and their consequences are abominable.

And now a word or two on the subject you broached in your letter to me – it is truly important and I shall treat it as such. In the first place religion (if rightly translated) is not found in the Bible. It is a pagan word [and] implies a pagan meaning. To be sure the Protestant and Catholic Bibles translate it so, but that does not make it so. Faith is mentioned, and uprightness, charity, hope and indeed all the virtues that elevate and enoble man. Again, Protestants and Catholics hate each other. Now if this true, and I think I can prove it, neither of them can go to heaven, you know enough of Christianity yourself as to admit this at once.

Let me begin with the Protestants. Have they not robbed the Catholics of their property both in church and state? Have they not persecuted and murdered them by the hundred and the thousand and do they not persecute them this very day, and they do not deny that religion demands it?

Have we not a Methodist man now in Boston from Ireland of the name Scott, collecting money to convert the Irish? In one meeting house, in one forenoon he collected 5,000 dollars for that purpose. He says he wants them to have religion and under that pretence he collects the money. Well, with this money if he lays it out on religion he will afflict the Irish more and more. But I think he will do no such thing. I know what such chaps do with with the money collected, so it is needless to prove a thing that is self evident. I am sure that you and all will admit that Protestants hate Catholics as such, and if so that Protestants as Protestants and carrying out their hitherto projects can never enter heaven, if the Bible be true. Indeed Protestants denominations hate one another.

And how are Catholics affected towards the Protestants? There is no love lost as the proverb says, and if hatred could dwell in a regenerate breast, it would almost be excusable in the Catholics to hate the Protestants, their persecutors and slanderers. But no, it is not allowed, and in order to enter heaven they love the Protestants. But how are the facts?

I know as well as any living person, both in my own experience [and] that all of others. After I laughed at the holy orders, I set up school ... in Kilmactigue in John Mularkey's outhouse ... Filan persecuted me and tampered with my scholars and their parents by speaking threatening, slandering, cursing and so forth as to break up the school. Certainly this was not done from a spirit of love nor from a Christian principal, but from a party spirit and a reliance upon the religious habits of the people. But God or goodness had nothing to do with it. The poor man has since gone into the spirit world.

Nor was that the last of it all. All the clergy declared war upon me and made the place of my nativity (sweet

Ireland) too hot for me. So I thought it was time to take my leave and go to some country where I might think and speak according to the dictates of my conscience. I found out by their hatred of me that they thought more of the party than of God or the creatures made in God's image. I need not go back into history. All know what the spirit of party led Catholics to do in old times.

I have only said a little about my own experience and the consequences of one harmless vacant laugh, and were it to be repeated I could not help laughing again. No, to do good and to be good is my creed. The creed of Job, who was neither Jew or Catholic, and of course no Protestant ... He that is righteous and upright in any party or nation I believe to be accepted of God and there is no other way of going to heaven.

Will you believe when I tell you that were I to publish my life and print it I could make a hatful of money. Still I have not done it. The Irish are persecuted enough already without adding to their burdens. And yet the Catholics do not thank me for it. You see by this time that my views of eternal happiness differs much from yours. I do not dare to misinterpret the Bible, but translate it as it is.

I can then make no wrong impression. The Protestants and the Catholics are not so. They mistranslate and injure themselves and the world. Take one instance. They believe or they pretend to believe that Moses commanded to burn witches. The Bible has no such word as witch, it has sorceresses and prisoners, and yet many thousands of innocent persons have been put to death for witchcraft by Catholics and Protestants. But I suppose I am growing tiresome to you. This is not the thousandth part of what I could say respecting what men call religion. I beg of you to write often and let me know all the history of that interesting country.

Yrs affectionately,
Andrew Walsh.
T Lerits Hill
January 22nd 1856

Text courtesy of Sligo Genealogy Centre

Eva Gore-Booth, Wild Rebel

By Therese Ryan

*The light of evening, Lissadell,
Great windows open to the south,
Two girls in silk kimonos, both
Beautiful, one a gazelle.*

- WB Yeats

During this centenary year much has been written about Constance Markievicz and the role she played in the 1916 rising. Less is known about her younger sister Eva, the gazelle of Yeats's poem.

Eva Gore Booth was born in 1870 at Lissadell, the family home. Her sister Constance was two years older. Constance was vivacious and an extrovert while Eva was shy and thoughtful. The girls were close both as children and adults. Until 1896, Eva lived a typically aristocratic life.

Then, after an attack of consumption, she was advised to spend time in the Mediterranean climate. She was 26 years old. In Italy Eva first encountered the woman who would change her life. Esther Roper was the same age as Eva and the daughter of a clergyman. She was one of the first women to graduate from Victoria University, Manchester, in 1891. Since then she had been working for the rights of working-class women in Manchester. For both women the meeting was momentous. They were to spend the rest of their lives living and working together in England, involved in every significant humanitarian cause of their time.

On her return to Lissadell from Italy, Eva was full of enthusiasm for the cause of women's suffrage. With Constance she called the first meeting of the Sligo branch of the Irish Women's Suffrage and Local Government Association, held in the local schoolhouse.

Early in 1897 Eva gave up her aristocratic life and moved to Manchester to live with Esther. Manchester had been a centre of reform for decades. In 1867 the first organised suffrage society had been formed there. Esther became secretary



A portrait of the Gore-Booth sisters by Sarah Purser

of this society, which relied on the growing industrial strength of local working-class women.

Eva displayed a gift for public speaking. She could eloquently and passionately address both working-class audiences and senior politicians. She was also a prolific pamphleteer and propagandist. She edited the women's suffrage quarterly *The Women's Labour News* and was a regular contributor to other newspapers. She was the main propagandist for the Lancashire Suffrage Campaign. Eva was also part of a delegation which included Mrs Pankhurst, and which met the Prime Minister Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman in 1906. A committed socialist all her life, Eva viewed women's emancipation as part of a complete social emancipation. She believed that a transformation of the social order would bring about a change in the relationship between the sexes.

Eva was appointed co-secretary of the Manchester and Salford Trade Union Council in 1900. She helped unionise millworkers, shop girls,

tailoresses and circus performers amongst others, and won their support for the suffrage movement. In 1913 she worked for a brief spell as a 'pit brow lass' at one of the Lancashire Coalfield mines. Pit brow lasses sorted the stones from the coal that had been brought to the surface. They worked long hours for paltry wages. Eva also became involved in 'settlement' work in Manchester. A settlement was a home in a working class area in which a group of educated men and women lived and which became a centre for activities in the area. Eva formed a dramatic society and a poetry circle, encouraging young women to find an outlet from their daily toil.

Eva was considered a promising poet. Her first volume of verse, published shortly after she moved to Manchester, was praised by Yeats. However once she began to devote herself to her socialist dream, particularly the plight of working-class women, her writing became purposefully connected to her life's work. Her poetry, political writings and verse dramas gave expression to her dream of a free, loving and peaceful society. Her friendship with Yeats and AE (a pseudonym of George William Russell) as well as her Irish background and interest in Irish literature influenced her desire to be a part of the Irish literary revival. Her poems were included in anthologies of Irish poetry, but she is barely remembered for one poem *The Little Waves of Breffny*:

*The great waves of the Atlantic sweep
storming on their way,
Shining green and silver with the
hidden herring shoal,
But the Little Waves of Breffny have
drenched my heart in spray,
And the Little Waves of Breffny go
stumbling through my soul.*

She held a sentimental notion of an idyllic Ireland, similar to Yeats' view expressed in *The Lake Isle of*



Eva and Constance Gore-Booth

Innisfree. Eva was proud of her Irish identity, and for her Ireland was a haven, a spiritual place of refuge from the harsh material world. Despite her early renown as a writer, her works have been mostly forgotten. Her determination to address the unconventional themes of women's rights, pacifism and sexuality condemned her to obscurity.

Eva and Esther were both extreme pacifists. Their disgust at the carnage of the First World War led them to stubbornly support the anti-war effort. Through their anti-war activities they brought hatred and attack upon themselves and became pariahs in a feverishly pro-war society. In December 1914 Eva delivered a speech entitled 'Whence come wars?' at a meeting of the National Industrial and Professional Women's Suffrage Society in London. During 1915 and 1916 Esther and Eva travelled throughout England promoting peace as members of the Women's Peace Crusade. The 'peace women' sent a Christmas letter of goodwill to their German and Austrian sisters.

The Women's international Congress was held at The Hague in April 1915. It was the first international meeting to outline what the principles of any peace settlement should be. Eva and Esther were part of the British Organising Committee,

mockingly labelled by the media as 'cranquettes' or 'peacettes'. They were also members of the Non Conscriptio Fellowship, founded in 1916. They travelled to tribunals held to investigate individual cases of conscientious objectors, and spoke in their defence. As members of the Women's International League, they debated the possibility of a federated world.

In 1915 Esther and Eva visited Constance in Dublin. Constance revealed nothing to them of the plans for insurrection, and Esther later recalled their naivety, having watched the Citizens Army and Volunteers march. "I said with relief to Eva, 'Well, thank goodness, they simply can't be planning a rising now, not with such a tiny force'." There are however ambiguities in Eva's attitude to the 1916 rising. On one hand she abhorred the violence which caused so much



Eva Gore Booth wearing a ball gown

death. On the other, she empathised with the rebels, considering them independent thinkers who refused to be cowed into obedience by an autocratic establishment.

Eva supported Constance throughout her time in prison, visiting and writing her letters and poems. Their closeness is reflected in their arrangement to communicate with each other telepathically at a

certain time each day. Both were outcasts from their social class. While Constance was in jail, Eva was facing insult and recrimination for her anti-war activities in England. They were indeed 'Comrades':

*The peaceful night that round me flows,
Breaks through your iron prison doors,
Free through the world your spirit goes,
Forbidden hands are clasping yours.*

*The wind is our confederate,
The night has left her doors ajar,
We meet beyond earth's barred gate,
Where all the world's wild Rebels are.*
- Eva Gore-Booth

In her writings Eva vindicated the rising and blamed the English government for the horrific violence, predicting the martyrdom which was to follow. Eva in Manchester, and Constance and the other leaders of the rising in Dublin, had a common enemy – the political power and authority of the male British establishment.

Eva was persuaded by a cousin of Roger Casement's to attend his trial for treason in London, despite never having met him. The pair quickly developed a friendship and Eva lobbied her political connections on his behalf. She was part of a delegation which begged the King to use his prerogative of mercy. Eva wrote passionately about Casement after his hanging in August 1916, comparing him to Joan of Arc and Socrates.

In 1913 Eva and Esther left Lancashire and moved to London. They remained involved with the trade union and suffrage work continuing in Lancashire, and travelled there frequently. The pair predictably became involved in movements around London such as the anti-war campaign and the Hampstead Theosophical Society. Their most unorthodox connection was with the journal *Urania* which they helped found in 1916. Eva, who is frequently referred to in *Urania* as 'our leader', edited it until her death. Privately printed and unofficially

circulated, *Urania* advocated the abandonment of traditional male and female roles, and favoured a move towards neutral gender without learned characteristics. Eva coined the phrase ‘sex is an accident’ which was the corner stone of their ideology. These unorthodox ideas on sexuality isolated Eva and Esther from many of their fellow suffragettes, who felt that the pair endangered the respectability of the movement.

There is much speculation regarding the nature of the relationship between Eva and Esther. They lived together until Eva’s death on 30 June 1926. Eva has been labelled a lesbian poet, but we cannot be certain that she was gay. Pairings between women were quite common at that time, and not all were sexual relationships. Eva and Esther along with many other feminists believed that non-cooperation in sex was the only answer to the male sexuality they criticised. They made conscious decisions to lead asexual lives in an era when spinsters were mocked and feared as threats to a family-oriented society. The enjoyment Constance derived from dressing like a man indicates a disregard of traditional sexual roles, which was similar to Eva’s.

Along with many of the suffrage women, Eva became increasingly religious during the last seven or eight years of her life, yet her devotion to the feminist cause did not weaken. She developed bowel cancer, the symptoms of which became manifest



Eva painted by her sister Constance

at Christmas of 1924. Yeats saw her around this time, and apparently was not aware of her illness. His poem *In Memory of Eva Gore-Booth and Con Markievicz* is dismissive of the life’s work of each of the sisters:

*The older is condemned to death,
Pardoned, drags out lonely years
Conspiring among the ignorant.
I know not what the younger dreams –
Some vague Utopia – and she seems,
When withered old and skeleton-
gaunt,
An image of such politics.*

Eva’s socialism was the basis for her achievements as a writer, feminist, trade unionist, and pacifist. She worked not for the liberation of women exclusively, but for humanity. Her life was a reflection of the changing society in which she lived, and a response to its needs. An anomaly in the early twentieth century, her views on feminism, sexuality, pacifism, and politics would be much more acceptable today.

Eva and Esther are buried together in Hampstead. The epitaph on their grave quotes Sappho, ‘Life that is Love is God’.

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All images courtesy of Lissadell House.

Five Miles from Ballymote

By Clare Doohan

Bare feet slip sliding my way to the next row,
 Awkward rows, uneven ground,
 Enjoying the feel of the soft cool bog under my feet,
 Squeezing between my toes,
 And only five miles from Ballymote.

The freedom of it.
 You could be in a different world.

Hot sun, blue skies
 Planes crossing over
 And only five miles from Ballymote.

Each row of turf turned,
 Visually satisfying,
 Work clearly accomplished,
 Unlike the constantly untidy kitchen
 Constantly tidied,
 And only five miles from Ballymote.

No jacket, no cap
 In this year of 2016,
 The turf is turned in little more than a week,
 Despite thunder and big fat warm raindrops
 Thrown into the pile of sunny heat loving days,
 And only five miles from Ballymote.

Ballymote Heritage Weekend 2015



The outing at Enniscoe House last year. Susan Kellett of Enniscoe is eighth from the right in the photograph. Distinguished architect and regular visitor to Ballymote Heritage Weekend over the years Jeremy Williams, fifth from the left in the photograph, sadly died during the year.

The 26th Ballymote Heritage Weekend took place as is tradition over the August holiday weekend last year, from 30 July to 3 August, and was a great success.

As has now become a tradition, the weekend opened on Thursday with a film screening at the town's beautifully restored Art Deco Theatre and Cinema. To mark the 100th anniversary of events during World War I, the film screened was *Gallipoli* by Australian Director Peter Weir and with a cast including Mel Gibson. The film was very moving as it told the tragic story from the perspective of individuals involved – soldiers drawn from remote parts of Australia.

Military conflict was also the subject of two impressive documentaries shown in the Art Deco on the Friday afternoon on the role of the Irish Brigade in the American Civil War. Sean Rooney of the Art Deco kindly provided welcome refreshments between the screenings of the two documentaries, for which admission was free of charge.

A capacity audience filled the theatre in the Ballymote Teagasc Centre for the opening lecture on the Friday evening by Eamonn Kelly, former Keeper of Irish Antiquities at the National Museum. He told

the audience how evidence from examination of bodies preserved in bogs across the country since the Iron Age suggests they are the mummified remains of kings who were ritually murdered when they were seen to have failed in their leadership roles!

The lecture by Professor Rachael Moss of Trinity College Dublin on the Saturday struck a more positive note as she reminded the audience of

the national importance of Ballymote Castle and the Book of Ballymote – now in the Royal Irish Academy.

Kevin Mulligan's lecture on the Sunday impressed the audience with the remarkable range of interesting buildings revealed in the course of his work researching and writing *The Buildings of South Ulster – Armagh, Cavan, Monaghan*. It was a tantalising taster for the outing planned for the following day. Dr Padraig Deignan's lecture on the Monday evening drew attention to a very different time in Sligo history when major political roles were played by leading landowning families, including the Percevals and Folliots.

Outings on Saturday, Sunday and Monday were remarkably informative and enjoyable. All who went on the Saturday outing were enormously impressed by the extraordinary collection put together by Ballina Fishmonger and politician, the late Jackie Clarke. Equally impressive is work that has been done by Mayo County Council to house the collection in a beautifully restored and adapted bank building in the centre of the town, with a remarkable new contemporary-style garden. The group received a



The official opening of the Heritage Weekend. In the picture left to right are Eileen Tighe, President of Ballymote Heritage Group; John Perry; Eamonn Kelly; Ursula Gilhawley, Secretary, Ballymote Heritage Group; John Coleman, Chairman Ballymote Heritage Group and Nuala Rogers. Eamonn Kelly, former Keeper of Antiquities of the National Museum, performed the opening and delivered the opening lecture.



A group photograph in the Diamond, Clones, during Cavan / Monaghan tour on holiday Monday

warm welcome from Susan Kellett at Ennisceoe where lunch was followed by a walk in the beautiful garden and Susan's personal tour of the house. The group was given an equally warm welcome at Lissadell on Sunday by Eddie and Constance Walsh where a tour of the house was followed by a delicious lunch and completed with a wander in the beautifully restored Alpine Gardens in full bloom and the old walled kitchens which are a work in progress.

The weekend excursions ended on a high note with a remarkable tour of Cavan and Monaghan on the holiday Monday. Many had expressed particular interest in coming on the trip and numbers surpassed all expectations. When the bus was loaded up there were only two vacant seats. Evidently there was great curiosity to visit two counties on our doorstep which are not traditional tourist destinations.

And the day was certainly not a disappointment. The group was warmly greeted on arrival at the Creighton Hotel in Clones which group guide, architectural historian Kevin Mulligan, told us had been built as the hostelry for first class passengers when the town was on a railway route. The weather held up while Kevin led the group on an hour-and-a-half long walking tour

of the town. The town's origins as an important ancient monastic site were evident in the survival of an impressive Celtic cross in the Diamond at the town centre, as well as a round tower, the 'wee' abbey and the saint's tomb. The cemetery around the tower contained fascinating vernacular carved 18th-century grave stones peculiar to the area. Kevin's years of careful study meant that he was able to draw attention to the fascinating range of buildings from the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries. He pointed out detail like the origin stone used, and informing us of architects involved with particular buildings.

Going through an archway to look at the rear aspect of an unpromising building often reveals that it is a much older and more interesting structure, with intact historic features. In the past old buildings were often adapted or altered for new uses and this has resulted in interesting survivals, particularly in areas saved from the demolition and rebuilding characteristic of Celtic Tiger times.

Kevin pointed out how the county library had been unnecessarily moved to a newly-built warehouse-like building on the edge of the town while the beautiful and suitable old market house, the most prominent building in the town, now remains vacant. The walking tour was followed by

a delicious lunch at the Creighton Hotel. The highlights of the afternoon included a visit to Dartrey Mausoleum, which has been miraculously restored from a state of ruin after years of neglect and vandalism. The group was privileged in having as guide local man Noel Carney, chairman of the Dartrey Heritage Association, who steered the complex restoration project. It is a remarkable example of how a building in an apparently hopeless state of neglect and decay can be rescued.

A surprise bonus was an opportunity also facilitated by Noel to view Bellamont Forest, the house designed in 1731 by Edward Lovett Pearce who was also responsible for the design of the Parliament House in Dublin's College Green. The house, which is regarded by experts as Ireland's most perfect mansion in the Palladian style, has been empty for a number of years but has been bought recently by a wealthy American businessman who has already commenced work on carrying out necessary conservation and repairs.

All in all it was a most enjoyable and worthwhile weekend!

For details of this year's lectures and outings, see the Heritage Weekend brochure on page 2

A walk among old friends past

By Bernie Gilbride

Today is Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent 2016. After Mass, where I had the cross in ashes marked on my forehead, I decide to follow an old tradition in my family and visit our local cemetery where rest the souls of my people.

The cemetery stands at the upper end of Pearse Road. It overlooks the valley northward to Benbulbin and westward to the grave of ancient legendary Queen Maeve of Connaught, who is buried standing upright in command of her armies, in a cairn on top of Knocknarea with the Atlantic Ocean at its feet.

When I was young there was a gate lodge just inside the high gates to the right, the home of the caretaker and his family. It was a lovely old-world building with an ornate high-pitched roof, now demolished. Turning left along the path, I retrace the walk I took so often with my Granddad long ago, he to pray and me in the hope of dancing on the horizontal headstones. These stones were approximately 18 inches high, with support stones under either end the full length of the grave, giving me a lovely stage where I practiced my dancing steps to my heart's content. Granddad visited the graves of loved ones, remembering them in his prayers. At that time I was about five years old and my steps were neither elegant nor awe-inspiring, but he stood to watch and catch me as the need arose. Thinking back I know he did not approve, but granddads can be very understanding.

Along this wall are the graves of the once 'princes of industry' of our town according to my Granddad. These were some of the merchants that helped build our streets, with many of them named in honour of them – Knox's Street (now O'Connell Street), Radcliffe Street (now Grattan Street). Along those streets they built their many elegant, ornate shops with beautiful fronts, designed and crafted by local tradesmen. Some were marble faced, others tiled or of solid oak or other hardwoods then available.

These graves, once badly neglected,

are now being restored to a little of their former elegance, giving us an idea of their early glory. Some have beautiful Grecian urns (now a little rusty), others have wrought-iron railings or miniature pillars. These could even become a tourist attraction with their descriptive inscriptions. Many make tragic reference to the deaths of so many babies and young children. One can only imagine the sadness and grief behind such inscriptions in the days before penicillin, our miracle drug. A baby or child death is beyond heart-rending. Last year the sight of the body of a three-year-old boy washed up on an alien shore aroused the compassion of all Europe for the emigrants seeking safety and peace.

Having visited and this time only prayed – no dancing – for the souls of those resting there, I pass from the old cemetery into the centre one where most of my recent relatives lie.

Here I stand at the graves of my contemporaries, more recent captains of industry from the names once over the shops of my youth: DM Hanley, Meldrum, Castle Street, the Wood and Iron, Gallagher & Kells, Tighes bakery, Macarthur Bakery, Meehan Bros, Higgins & Keighron, and many more, now all gone, alas. Business trends change and our small town changes with them. Dare I mention the word 'internet', the latest way for shopping; so convenient but so destructive of small shops and 'boutiques'. Boutiques were often owned by the shopkeeper, with an individuality and character that added an interest and special quality to shopping in our town. They are sadly missed.

Standing under the stone archway as I enter the middle cemetery I am struck by the very scenic setting of our cemeteries. Off the beaten track, Cairns Hill looks down from the east, surrounded – as is our town – by the Benbulbin mountain range, with Knocknarea and its cairn to the west. Picturesque indeed. This morning, bathed in spring sun, it fills my heart with peace and tranquillity, tinged

with sadness as I approach my very own graves. Within a short radius of each other, on either side of the path, easily cared for, surrounded by neighbours almost as close to me as my own, I stand and in my mind's eye those I loved stand with me. I see them as clearly as I did before they died, and I wonder is this how we will look on the last day? Will I look as I now am – silver-haired and wrinkled, or young and beautiful with my auburn hair and once-elegant figure? Will my loved ones look as I remember them, or as old sepia photos depict them, tall, slender and young? In that case who will be master of ceremonies and introduce us to each other? I chide myself for such thoughts.

So I am come to where I too will be laid to rest and I know in my heart that if there is a hereafter, and God calls us to arise, as we are told He will, I will be happy to awaken and answer that call and join so many I have loved, for that last final journey. I hope Granddad, who is buried in the old cemetery, will be there too, ready to catch me should I stumble.

Remembering

*I walk along the paths and say a prayer,
I read names of neighbours, friends,
loved ones
Resting there.*

*Three graveyards wall enclosed,
Their peace, silence, serenity
Are balm to my soul*

*My heart is heavy for all now gone
For gentle smiles and loving arms I long
No more their counsel, wisdom mine shall be
I hear their answers from Eternity.*

*God give them peace, happiness and rest
Until once more I walk with them in Paradise.*

Évora University and the Irish Connection

By Frank Tivnan



Évora University

The beautiful and historic city of Évora is situated in the upper Alentejo region of Portugal, about 150 kilometres east of Lisbon. It was a Celtic foundation and 'Évora' means 'the place of the Yew trees', a name it shares with York in England and Newry and Terenure in Ireland. Alentejo comes from 'Alem Tejo' which means 'beyond the river Tagus'. The region is famous for wine, marble and carpets.

The university of Évora was founded in 1559 by Cardinal Infante Don Enrique, and dedicated to the Holy Spirit. It is the second-oldest university in Portugal after Coimbra. The Jesuits managed the Évora seat of learning until 1759, when the masonic Marquis of Pombal expelled them. Fortunately the university was reopened in 1979 and is now under state control, with a current student population of 11,000. As there was no

university in the city of Lisbon until 1911, some of the bright students of the St Patrick's Irish college Lisbon were sent to study philosophy and theology at the university of Évora. On a state visit to Portugal in 2002, President Mary McAleese visited the university to pay homage to the colony of Irish students who studied there during the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries.

Évora's cathedral of Our Lady of the Assumption is a splendid 13th-century transitional-style building. In the middle of the north side of the nave there is a fairly rare poly-chromed stone statue of Our Lady of the 'O', or the pregnant Madonna, which dates from the 15th century. The 'O' comes from the Seven Antiphons of Advent which is recited from December 17th to Christmas Eve, beginning with 'O Sapientia'. It was a tradition in Évora that at every birth in the city the cathedral bells were rung in thanksgiving to Our Lady of the 'O'.

On one of the choir stalls there is a carved scene showing three rabbits roasting the hunter. The 16th century oak organ is one of the oldest in Europe and is still playable. Near the cathedral stands the Roman temple dating from the first century and is one



Almendres Cromlech, Portugal

of the best-preserved Roman temples in the Iberian Peninsula. It is built of granite and marble from Esteremoz. Incidentally, the beautiful marble of the baptistery and the shrine of St Joseph in Galway cathedral comes from Estremoz in Évora province.

Close to Évora city one finds the Stonehenge of Portugal – the Dos Almendres megalithic compound. It is the biggest set of menhirs (95 in

all) found in the Iberian Peninsula. It dates from the 6th century BC. It had an influence on the establishment and style of the Beltany stone circle near Raphoe, Co Donegal. St John of God, founder of the Hospitaller Order of St John, was born in nearby Montemor-o-Novo and is buried in Granada in Spain.

The town of Arraiolos near Évora is justly famous for handmade carpets

and rugs. They are embroidered with wool over a cotton or jute cloth. The oblique cross-stitch is used. The carpet making in Arraiolos was introduced from Persia.

The wines of the Alentejo region are becoming very popular, especially with reds such as Monte Velho and Borba red.

Colaiste Mhuire Ballymote 1966

By Jim Higgins

A very happy reunion took place recently when some members of the 1966 Leaving Cert class of Coláiste Mhuire Ballymote met in Mullingar Park Hotel to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of their graduation.

For many of those attending it was the first time to meet their former classmates in the intervening 50 years. Following some brief and sometimes not-so-brief pauses to match names with faces, conversations and reminiscences took up where they had left off all those decades ago! People travelled from Wexford, Dublin, Edenderry, Boyle, Elphin and Ballymote, while one past pupil flew from London for the occasion.

The talking continued very late into the night and resumed over a late breakfast next morning. This light-hearted and most enjoyable get together concluded with unanimous determination to meet again in two

years in May 2018, and we are looking forward to meeting those unavoidably absent on this occasion. The venue in

2018 will be somewhere in County Sligo.



Reunion attendees Thomas McLaughlin, Eileen Scanlon Galligan, Jim Higgins, Patrick Chambers, Maura Cunnane O'Farrell, Noel McDermott, James Wynne, Mary Nerney Roddy and Fergus McArdle. Photograph courtesy of Noel Mc Dermott

Some Lines on the Latest Revelations Re Yeats' Bones

By John McDonagh

Believe not what the tombstone states, 'He lies beneath Benbulbin's head',
They're not the bones of Willie Yeats, But now we know that was a lie,
Since 'forty nine the wise ones said, So horse and man can both pass by!

The 50th school reunion

by Bernie Gilbride

Fifty years is a long time in anybody's life, and it was with great trepidation I had accepted the invitation to my school reunion. Who would be there? Would I recognise my old friends or would they recognise me? A quick glance in the mirror and I am not so sure. Even the nuns, how many of them would still be there?

It was over 30 years since I had been at a reunion, but with more time on my hands now, I had a longing to return. So here I am standing in the lovely old hallway with its wide mahogany table, antique chairs, hallstand for coats, and the usual multitude of potted plants on ornate antique tables every convent seems to specialise in. It even smells the same, fresh lavender, polish and greenery.

Suddenly, I am 12 years old in my brand-new navy uniform, long black stockings and new outdoor shoes, waving goodbye to Dad, frightened and weepy. Somewhere in this vast building there is a trunk, new too, with all the rest of my gear. A young smiling nun with a white veil takes hold of my hand. 'Come with me,' she says gently. I try to smile back, telling myself you must not cry, you are a big girl now. Along a long corridor, round a lovely garden in the centre of the building, the first I have ever seen surrounded by buildings, and I wonder if I will ever get to know my way around this huge building.

Back in the present, I had arrived at the reunion early and learned that ten of my year were already booked in, but had not yet arrived. One of the nuns recognised me and greeted me with a warm hug. She suggested taking a walk around to see the changes. 'Start by having a cup of tea in the new dining-room,' she said. 'It's where the tennis courts used to be, along the glass corridor.' So I make my way there. The glass corridor has

not changed. It was there the young nun, with a white veil, brought me that long-ago afternoon, all the time chatting away to me, trying to ease my loneliness and help me adjust. She found my trunk and told me to collect my bed linen and towels and follow her.

Back in the present again I sat in the new dining room and enjoyed a cup of tea. It was beginning to fill up when I spotted three old friends, with the others just behind them. It was lovely to see them and no one had trouble recognising each other. I saw two people I had not seen since that last year at school. Tall and elegant as ever, Helen gazed across the dining room as if she owned the place. She had not changed. I knew she had become a journalist and had travelled the world. On spotting us her smile of delight said more than words. With our other classmate she had travelled from Cork. Delighted with ourselves we set out on a tour of our old classrooms.

With much laughter we sat at our old desks, glad we could still fit. It was amazing the number of anecdotes that came to mind, the 'do you remembers'. We laughed and hugged, eventually standing to admire each other, critical and outspoken as ever, delighting in being together. Two had walking sticks, but we did not dwell on ailments.

On reaching 'Rang Muire Matair' our sixth and final classroom, we sat chatting and catching up on how life had treated us. We discussed those that had died and mourned their passing, sorry they could not be with us today, knowing how much they too would have loved to join us.

This classroom, one of the older classrooms in the original building, had always been special. We all felt again a touch of the nostalgia of that last magical year, yearning to get on

with our lives, uneasy about exams, but mostly knowing how much our lives were about to change. We knew we were leaving the security of convent life with its unchanging rhythms behind us forever.

The Dublin contingent – and quite a few came from Dublin to boarding school in those days – were able to fill us in on the members not there but who met regularly in the capital. There was always camaraderie between our class. The Dublin crowd, on our last day at the school, had offered help and accommodation to any of us in the future, should we need it when starting at university or new jobs in the capital. This offer was very much appreciated by the country members. Security like that was invaluable as the big city was a completely unknown quantity.

Now with lives well settled we all relaxed with each other, happy to be together even for a few hours. We caught up on all our current doings, pastimes and interests. With the sun beaming in, Rang Muire Matair was as comforting as it had always been.

It was soon time for mass in our old chapel, unchanged from our youth. The choir was as well-trained as we had once been, everyone singing the hymns and responses. More nostalgia, with many a nose blown. Then it was time for the meeting in the old hall, where we had spent so much of our recreation time long ago, reading, dancing, and playing games.

We were the first to be greeted by Reverend Mother, as the most senior group. Next was a more boisterous and bigger group of 30-year reunionists, and then finally the biggest group by far, the 20-year crowd. These were so young and modern we really felt we were showing our age. The meeting over, we all adjourned to the new dining hall where the nuns served a lovely party meal, with lots of time for

chatting. This time with the nuns was special, especially the older ones who had taught us and were so interested in all we had done with our lives and so delighted to see us again.

Then all back to the parlour, an elegant room with beautiful old china and glassware in antique cabinets (much of which had been brought to the convent with the young postulants as part of their dowry). The photographer did his best to show us in a good light, and the photos came out lovely and are much treasured. Then time to say goodbye to each

other, the nuns and the old friends. All promise to be back next year with real intentions of coming. Who knows how it will work out.

As I look back I wonder why I had felt such trepidation. It had been a truly wonderful day. There really are no friends like those we make in our youth. It had been lovely meeting so many of the nuns who had taught us, and with whom we eventually became such good friends. We had visited the cemetery and the graves of nuns who had died, some so young, but were remembered with great affection.

There were more nuns than pupils there, when I was a boarder. How times have changed; fewer boarding schools now, and practically no nuns. And all in one generation.

I feel sad for a way of life now gone. Boarding school was a great preparation for life – it gave us independence, taught us the value of orderliness, and most of all, gave us a sense of responsibility, not only for ourselves but towards the whole community.

A far cry from the internet and social media!

Image submitted by John Coleman



Staff at the old manual telephone exchange in Ballymote Post Office in August 1983, just before it was replaced by an automatic exchange. Up to then it was necessary to crank up a handle at the side of the telephone

after which a telephonist answered and connected you to your required number. In the caption in the *Sligo Champion* where the photograph appeared on 12 August 1983 everyone was given their title as was the norm

at the time. Standing: Mrs. Barbara Davey, and Mr D Smith, District Manager. Seated: Mrs Patricia Galvin and Mrs Kathleen Battle.

A forgotten Sligo-born Patriot

By John C McTernan

The prominent parts played by men and women of Sligo birth in the fight for Irish freedom was widely acknowledged in the recent 1916 anniversary celebrations. Missing from that select group however was one John T Nicholson, who laboured for the cause on foreign shores, and for a time was closely associated with Roger Casement in his efforts to raise an Irish Brigade in Germany.

John T Nicholson was born at Ballyara, Tubbercurry, and was the son of John Nicholson, a tenant farmer on the Knox estate. Young John worked for a time in the firm of Duff & Co, Ballaghderreen, and when he was 21 decided to study for the priesthood. He attended the Jesuit College in Limerick and afterwards concluded his studies in Cincinnati in the United States, where he was ordained in 1897 for the diocese of Galveston in Texas. His first mission was in Houston where he quickly gained a reputation as a courteous and diligent pastor.

A decade later he contracted malaria and his illness provided him with the opportunity of devoting himself unreservedly to his work for Irish freedom. From his earliest years, Father Nicholson was imbued with strong patriotic feelings and an exalted sense of nationality. Twelve years an exile from the shores of Erin robbed him of little of his intense love of his homeland. The cause of Irish freedom was still very close to his heart, and his sympathies were well-known to the Irish leaders both at home and abroad.

In the autumn of 1914 he met Roger Casement in Philadelphia and discussed with him possible ways of helping achieve national independence for Ireland. When the news of a proposed vacation became known, Clann na nGael - on the



Fr John T Nicholson. Image from irishbrigade.eu

recommendation of Pádraig Pearse and with the support of the German ambassador to the United States, Herr Von Bernstorff - suggested to Father Nicholson that he should go to Germany and lend his support to Casement in his efforts to raise an Irish brigade. The Sligo-born pastor agreed to the suggestion, and with the consent of his superiors prepared for his mission to Europe.

Casement's efforts to raise a brigade from among the ranks of Irishmen in the war camp at Limburg were meeting with little success. However, his hopes were raised by a message which arrived from Von Bernstorff to the Foreign Office in Berlin in December, 1914, informing him that Rev John T Nicholson was about to set out for Germany. 'He is in every way qualified,' cabled the German ambassador. 'Speaks Irish well and is in full sympathy with the work we

want done.' It was generally felt by the Irish leaders that an Irish Catholic priest would have more influence with the Irish prisoners than a layman, however great his personality or patriotic his ideals.

Father Nicholson - once described as 'the pro-Irish sagart, whose views were true to the spirit of Irish Fenianism' - arrived at Limburg in the second week of January, 1915, via Italy and Switzerland. His arrival engendered 'new hope and courage' into Casement's recruitment campaign. 'In assisting Casement and acting in the formation of an Irish brigade,' wrote a German acquaintance, '[Fr Nicholson] acted on the consciousness that it was quite lawful for Irishmen to repudiate allegiance to a foreign English King, and made no secret of his honest opinion amidst the Irish soldiers at Limburg. He could be observed daily pleading Erin's rights to independence and urging Irish soldiers to join Roger Casement in his enterprise...'

Fr John's 'American buoyancy and his undiminished enthusiasm' failed to enlist sufficient numbers for the proposed brigade. The majority of the prisoners not only remained indifferent to his pleadings, but some even protested when it became evident that he was 'deliberately utilising his position as a prisoner's chaplain to conduct recruiting propaganda among them.' In some instances the prisoners asked to be transferred away from Limburg as they were 'fed up with reading anti-British pamphlets.'

Despite Fr Nicholson's most diligent efforts, recruitment for the Irish brigade was making little headway, but he did not give up hope. In May 1915 an agent of the British General Staff reported from Limburg that Fr Nicholson 'makes open propaganda'.

Subsequently, the Irish priest paid a visit to Berlin, where - for the benefit of the Foreign Office - he listed various matters which in his opinion were hampering pro-German propaganda amongst the prisoners of war. The censorship in operation, according to Fr Nicholson, was not strict enough and news was leaking through the prisoners about the alleged success of the British recruiting campaign in Ireland, which had an unsettling effect on them. There were at that time a few thousand soliders in the camp at Limburg, most of whom - in Fr Nicholson's opinion - were 'Irishmen unworthy of the name.' Some of the soldiers were indifferent or even hostile to Fr Nicholson's nationalism, while others - apparently influenced by a number of non-Catholic English prisoners in the camp - became antagonistic in their denunciation of Casement's Sligo-born chaplain.

Fr Nicholson may have failed in his efforts to recruit a brigade, but his zeal and enthusiasm won the admiration of Casement. 'You have worked nobly and untiringly for the thing you came to do,' wrote Casement in a letter dated June 1915, 'and whatever success exists is due to you and your ... efforts.'

Towards the end of 1915 Fr Nicholson finally abandoned all hope of the brigade, and he bade farewell to Casement and to Germany. On his return journey to the United States his ship was delayed by the British blockade. Luckily, his identity was not



Roger Casement

revealed and he outwitted the British who had put a price on his head for his association with Casement. For some years afterwards, until Irish independence was secured, the 'pro-Irish sagart' was forbidden from visiting his native land.

When Fr Nicholson returned to the United States he was appointed pastor of Newcastle, Wyoming. He was later transferred to Laramie and appointed vicar-general of the diocese. His greatest undertaking was the building of the church of St Laurence O'Toole in Laramie, which was dedicated in June, 1926.

Despite his arduous missionary work and pastoral cares, Fr Nicholson never forgot his homeland and never lost faith in his destiny. It is said that he celebrated each St Patrick's Day with 'renewed enthusiasm' and flew

the Tricolour proudly, side by side with the Stars and Stripes outside his church. His association with Casement was one of his most cherished memories. In Devoy's Postbag, Vol 2, there is a reprint of a letter which the pastor of Laramie wrote to John Devoy - editor of the Gaelic American - in 1925, repudiating an attack made on Casement by Sir Basil Thompson. Neither did he forget his association with the Irish brigade, and in his last testament he willed a sum of money to each of the survivors of the ill-fated brigade. One the occasion of his visit to Ireland in 1928 he commented on various aspects of the Irish question in an interview published in the Catholic Bulletin in July of that year, and concluded with:

Ireland's political and economic future is largely before her, if guided by courageous, resourceful and prudent hands.

Fr Nicholson's last visit to his homeland was in 1931, when he became one of the first subscribers to the then newly-founded *Irish Press*. For the remainder of his life he took a special interest in the progress and development of that newspaper.

Very Reverend John T Nicholson, VG, died on 7 February, 1936, aged 66. His final resting place in the Catholic cemetery at Laramie looks out over the wind-swept plains of Wyoming, far away from his beloved Ireland and his birthplace in Co Sligo.

New book on Sligo Parliamentary Elections

A recent addition to the growing number of local history publications is John C McTernan's *The Way Things Were*, a detailed analysis of Sligo Parliamentary elections covering the period 1700 to 1918. It is divided into

two sections: Part 1 - County elections and Part 2 - Borough elections for the period 1700 to 1870, in which year it was disfranchised.

The returns for each election are presented in tabular form together

with biographical sketches for the successful MPs. This illustrated 300-page volume is a scholarly and thoroughly researched study on Sligo elections of a bygone era. It is currently on sale in Sligo bookshops.

A tale from a biscuit tin

By Michael J Meehan

Will the smart phone be the end of the era of family albums? I recently had cause to reflect on the transience of the past when I searched through an old biscuit tin full of photographs. Like the rusty tin, the contents had the patina of age. The search was at the behest of a parish wishing to record people from the area who had entered the religious life in the 20th century. In the biscuit tin was a mounted photo that had come from Corpus Christi, Texas, in 1930, showing eight young and beautiful girls on the day of their religious profession. Subsequent information from America revealed that in the 1920s and 30s there were 18 vocations to that convent from Co Sligo, and nine from the parish of Riverstown. The convent was a French order, named the Incarnate Word.

This surge in vocations was in part due to a woman named Winifred Meehan from Kinkillew, Ballynakill, Co Sligo. Winnie, as she was known, was the second eldest of my father's family and was born in 1883. She entered the Convent of the Incarnate Word at Corpus Christi, Texas, in June 1905, taking the name in religion of Sr Mary Bernard.

This journey of a young girl from a small farm in east Sligo to Texas in 1905 seems like a plot from a frontier adventure. Information from the convent and a diary of one James Morrison, Drumfin, helped trace that journey. Morrison records that Winnie went to work for her uncles, John and Bernard McDonagh (formerly of Kinkillew), at their drapery store, Castle St, Sligo on 2 May 1899. James Morrison worked at the store from 1895 to 1903, keeping a diary of events at that time. The entry for May 1899 reads: 'Miss Meehan started in Millinery to-day, the Boss is her uncle.' Winnie was still in Sligo in 1902, the diary entry for May 24 that year says: 'We were at a Concert and a Dance in Sooeey, neither much good, very rough crowd and we had to ride back in the morning, Winnie, Ruby and I, in the mud.'



Corpus Christi, Texas, USA. Photograph taken 10 May 1930.

Left to right, standing: Annie Bee McDonagh (Sister Mary Attracta), Tess McDonagh (Sister Anna Maria), Mary May (Sister Mary Benedict), Rita Anne McCormack (Sister Mary Philomena), Rosie Macmanus (Sister Mary Claude).

Seated: Katie Gunning (Sister Mary Jean de Matel), Nora Begley (Sister Mary Aquinas), Aggie Clerkin (Sister Mary Concepta).

It appears she was working at Gorevans, Camden St, Dublin in 1904; a significant literary year in the city! The Gorevans were from Ballintogher, Sligo, and when I worked there in the 1950s someone recalled that I had an aunt who had worked there many years earlier. Then, Winnie came in contact with a Mother Vincent Herlihy of the Incarnate Word, originally from Cork, on a visit to Ireland to seek vocations. How the news of her departure for America was received back home can be imagined; an elderly relative once told me that her leaving was sudden and determined. So Winnie sailed to the New World to embrace a new life as Sr Mary Bernard.

Corpus Christi is a seaport city in south Texas along the Gulf of Mexico. In 1839 a trading post was set up on the coast by a man named Kinney, which in 1850 had become a settlement and named Corpus Christi, a mere half century before the young postulant from the parish of Riverstown arrived there. The Incarnate Word nuns was a French teaching order in need of English-speaking vocations for its missionary work in North America. Ireland, the only English-speaking Catholic country in Europe, was a fertile place to search for vocations.

Sister Bernard made many trips to Ireland seeking vocations. Old photographs in the biscuit tin suggest these were in the 1920s and 30s. Two World Wars had, of course, disrupted much trans-Atlantic travel. Photographs are a moment in time and it's fascinating to look at the old yellow-tinted ones, a peep-hole into past lives and their time. Such is that group photo of the eight girls on the day of their Religious Profession in 1930. They exude joy and life and expectations for their futures, yet perhaps the hidden cameraman had to work hard to capture that mood for the absent families back in Ireland. Maybe a lot of 'cheese' was called that day! There is no sense of loneliness in that picture but loneliness there must have been on that day, when they shed their past life and took a new name and existence without parents or kin to share the occasion. Does that Novice life of discipline, prayer, obedience, silence and mortification squeeze out all feelings for the past?

That batch of young women professed in 1930 would have left Ireland around 1926/27 to become novices. They were born in the UK but grew up in the new Irish State. However nothing much seems to have

changed in this new Ireland – a lick of green paint here and there, but little else. Emigration continued apace, prospects for the majority were low, particularly for women. Did all of the girls entering the convent do so from a spiritual or missionary conviction, or were some going for a sense of adventure? What we do know is that they went on to become teachers and brought great benefit to Texas and Mexico.

Sr Bernard was the family celebrity. From childhood she was always a presence in our house, posing out of a large gilt-framed photographic portrait that hung in the front room, that was always locked and out of bounds. In fact that was our parlour, but as it was separated from our back living quarters, or for some vague egalitarian reason, it was known as the ‘front room’. The young nun was my father’s sister, who lived in Texas and was a teacher. Texas added to her mystique – that was in the Wild West, where cowboys were. Sr Bernard was never referred to as an auntie. That would be irreverent – nuns didn’t do ‘aunts’. My interest in the family nun ended abruptly when I was nine. I wrote her a letter, prompted by my parents, which brought a swift reply with a scathing opinion of my handwriting, and worse, an exercise tutor for lettering skills, that resulted in an extra half-hour’s homework every night.

In 1946 Sr Bernard arrived from America and lived at our house for a time. No longer the young nun in the picture she was now in her sixties. She looked old and frail. She came with a great entourage of baggage – the stay was not to be a short one! What must have alarmed mother and father was that she was alone. At that time nuns only went outside their convents in pairs, and coming on such a long journey without a travel companion was bound to raise eyebrows. The old photos from the 20s and 30s show two, sometimes three nuns might be on your door-step.

The objective of this journey to Ireland was to acquire a large house in a rural area, and there found a Noviciate to prepare young women for a religious life in America and Mexico. It was a sort of American

ecclesiastical business plan – recruit and initiate in Ireland, pass on to the States for education and profession, then export to the mission fields. But there was a hitch to the plan: it did not have the backing of the Incarnate Word Order in Texas.

However, she had the funds to back the plan, and in dollars. That was gold-dust in the Irish economy of the 1940s, and indicates a fund-raising network with clout back in the States. Imagine the family embarrassment as they pieced together the situation, and the fact there was a body of nuns back in Texas all from the local area, who must be filtering home news. And further, the ultra-conservative Irish Catholicism of the time was not the place for intrepid religious schemes.

Frank Meehan (a namesake) contacted the Corpus Christi Convent in 2015, when researching the parish project. A polite, helpful and cryptic reply did explain a lot: ‘For many years, Sister had a deep conviction that she was called to found a house of the Order in Ireland. Thus she spent many years visiting different places in the United States, Mexico, France and Ireland. Her efforts were unsuccessful and she returned to Corpus Christi in the early 1950s.’ A smooth but accurate view of one woman’s lifetime passion. But then great religious lives are full of people who had ‘calls’, and the Irish Christian tradition had their share. Didn’t St. Patrick himself hear the Irish calling him on a Welsh mountainside?

A personal addendum to this. In the mid 1970s two elderly nuns arrived to the house asking if any of the Meehan family still lived there. They were on holidays from Corpus Christi, and said they were brought out to America by my aunt in 1930s. They went on to tell, as if to reassure me, that Sister had become reconciled with her Order before her death in 1955, and was buried in the Convent graveyard at Corpus Christi. This was all new to me and of little interest. Father was then dead some years, and all that generation had passed on. Was it a casual call, or did the Order feel that they had some duty to keep in contact? Perhaps I should have given it more attention! But by that time nobody had spoken of Sr Bernard,

Corpus Christi or the Order for a long, long time; the gilt-framed picture was moulding with dust three floors up in the attic.

It is impossible to chart the travels of Sr Bernard around Ireland and France in the late 1940s, and her tenacity to reach her goal. Anecdotal evidence is that she plagued family and others to transport her around the country in the search for the house. The post Vatican II self-drive nuns were still 20 years off. But the house never materialised. The delay caused by the ‘Hitler’ war had left her an old woman, the years of opportunity gone.

At some point the crusade for a Convent Noviciate came to an end; people seemed to let it pass as if it never happened, just another human folly. Sister seem to slip away anonymously from Ireland, a journey back across the Atlantic by an old woman with a lost ambition, dramatic, humbling, courageous! Was there any emotional farewells, or an American Wake? Hard to imagine; a ‘tear-jerker’ would not be her style. Is it possible there was a secret reconciliation, a silent broker, and someone sent to fetch her back to Texas? In the end, what is all that prayer and faith about, if not that?

Then, in the autumn of 2015, I opened an old chocolate box in the attic and discovered a letter left for me by Sr Bernard. It was dated 24 Sept 1950, and left with father to pass on. I have no memory of ever reading or seeing it, but I must have, and at 15 years old you have a lot of other things on your mind. In the short letter you sense the time and place when all her hopes disappeared, at Kinlough, Co Leitrim.

Quote: ‘Last Thursday Cathal Devaney and I visited Kinlough to inspect the house that has been offered for a Convent. We found a ruin. What a disappointment!’

The heavy stroke under ‘ruin’ tells it all. The letter continues almost affectingly to say how much I am missed at home, how quiet the house is without me, how often they speak of me. You almost expect it will end ‘Love, Aunt Winnie’. But no, it finishes with the customary blessing, and ‘Lovingly yours in J.C.’ Sr Bernard. In truth, asceticism is a cold place to be.

Memories of Charlie Haughey

By John Coleman



Charlie's official photo issued on request to his supporters

As a civil servant I worked in the Department of the Taoiseach from 1983 to 2006, apart from a career break with the UK National Trust (1995-8) and secondments to the National Gallery of Ireland (1989) and Chester Beatty Library (1999-2000). I served under all office holders, from Garret Fitzgerald through Charles J Haughey, Albert Reynolds, John Bruton and finally Bertie Ahern. Haughey was of course the most colourful, and this article recounts a few of my memories associated with him.

In Mr Haughey's time the role of the Department continued a process of transformation begun by his predecessor Dr Fitzgerald, from providing a strictly limited secretariat to the Taoiseach and Government, occupying a few rooms in a corner of government buildings, to taking

a leading role in driving innovative government policy, such as the establishment of the International Financial Services Centre. At Mr Haughey's instigation, the department moved to the newly refurbished centre block of Government Buildings, following nine months' building work, and dubbed by an unkind wag as the 'Chasmahal'. The centre block had been occupied by the UCD Engineering Department and the engineers only moved to Belfield with some reluctance when the Department of Education found the money to provide a gleaming new building there! It took some persistence to prevent them from taking with them the statues of Irish scientists Robert Boyle and Rowan Hamilton sculpted to flank the entrance.

I recall walking through the gutted

old engineering laboratories and lecture theatres at the beginning of the reconstruction work planned by OPW architects Klaus Unger, Angela Rolf and the late David Byers as they set about creating an interior to match the magnificent Edwardian Baroque exterior of the building, designed to impress visiting heads of government. The late Noel De Chenu, recently retired OPW Principal Architect, was retained as a consultant and designed a perfect baroque fountain for the centre of the court yard in polished red granite. I remember seeing a very rough pencil sketch – the water jets were set low so TV cameras could film a group on the steps uninterrupted. I notice this now seems to have been forgotten and they have been tilted upwards, which also destroys the more pleasing effect of the way the water was intended to fall as well as the view of the building across the fountain.

The country was scoured for mature Irish oak timbers to construct the centrepiece of the interior, a new grand staircase costing IR£1.5 million. (The whole project cost IR£17m.) Grand staircases have for hundreds of years been used as demonstrations of power – the traditional method of ascending the famous Scala Regia in the Vatican was on your knees. Evie Hone's magnificent stained glass window *My Four Green Fields*, made for the Irish Pavilion at the 1939 New York World Fair, was given pride of place, having been preserved in the CIE O'Connell Street Offices awaiting a more glorious future. The effect was complete with a deep pile carpet, intended to make the climb more difficult and awe-inspiring for visiting dignitaries. The carpet was designed by Irish Aósdana member, painter Mary Fitzgerald, in vivid primary colours to harmonise with the Hone window. It was manufactured by Galway-based Polish/Irish carpet makers V'Soske Joyce. From the top of the stairs a long red-carpeted corridor led through a series of column-lined lobbies to the oak-lined inner



Image used for the official 1991 Christmas card of Taoiseach CJ Haughey showing Government Buildings in the snow

sanctum of the Taoiseach's office. The staircase was entirely reserved for rare visiting international dignitaries. Staff and other visitors used lifts or a side stairs. The architects had provided the Taoiseach with a separate entrance and a private lift.

Mr Haughey's interest in art is well known, and he took a particular interest in which paintings were borrowed from the National Gallery to hang in Government Buildings. He particularly liked the work of Nathaniel Hone the Younger, who painted the area around Malahide. Pictures made the short journey to and from the National Gallery to the Department several times in a tug-of-war every time he came in and out of office in the 1980s. This was also the fate of the painting by William Osborne (1823-1901) of a meeting of the Ward Union Hunt. The picture included an ancestor of the Gallery's director, but Mr Haughey was now Master of the Ward Union!

I witnessed a curious event during his last days in office. Two of Mr Haughey's personal staff, Catherine Butler and Eileen Foy traditionally organised a birthday tea party for him to which inner circle staff were invited. I was there as I was heading up his 'general' office.

The party was held in the Taoiseach's

dining room. This small square room had a large round dining table in the centre which took up most of the space with little more than standing room for a single row of people around the edges and a bit more room to gather in the four corners of the room. It was rarely used. We all huddled there and when the Taoiseach entered the room, preceded by someone carrying a birthday cake and lead by a piper who had been brought up from the Irish Naval base in Haulbowline in Cork for this express purpose. Mr Haughey was particularly fond of the sea and was the first Taoiseach to have a naval ADC. The group arched around the table on which the cake was finally placed. The climax of proceedings involved the ADC handing to the Taoiseach his ceremonial sword with which to cut the cake. Demonstrating his classical knowledge and self-depreciating wit, before cutting the cake, Mr Haughey held the sword towards himself and in his wonderful characteristic nasal tones announced 'useful to fall on!' – recalling the ancient practice where by failed Roman Generals were expected to fall on their own swords. He knew the end was nigh for his political career!

Many years later in 1999 when I returned from my career break in the UK and Mr Haughey had long

left office, I had cause to meet him again. As well as my career as an administrator I have long had an interest in history and the history of art, and I have published a good many articles. I decided to research a painter called Harry Robertson Craig and among the people I contacted was the late architect Arthur Gibney, a close friend of Mr Haughey's who told me the artist had painted the Haughey children. Having followed up with a letter I received an invitation to come out to Kinsealy. When I arrived I was greeted by Mr Haughey in his slippers and wearing an old cardigan. The day after my visit I wrote a few sketchy notes which I rediscovered some time ago and felt should be committed to print, supported by memories of the day.

Inside the front door there was a short flight of stairs up to the main hall, and the painting of the children by Craig hung on the right-hand wall along that stairs. Painted in 1965, the picture is large – about six feet wide by five feet high. The children, Eimear, Sean, Conor and Ciaran, are shown playing on the lawns of the large multi-gabled picturesque Victorian house Grangemore in Raheny, where I was told they had they lived for 10 years. Young Ciaran is depicted on a tricycle. Eimear wears a riding hat and jodhpurs. Conor feeds the Connemara pony. I noted that there is also a wolfhound (Sweeney), a spaniel, a child's toy wheelbarrow, a ball and a book. The spaniel (Rusty) had been a gift from Paddy Hillery (later president). It looked like the scene of an idyllic childhood. Mr Haughey was later to make a tidy sum when the house was sold for housing development.

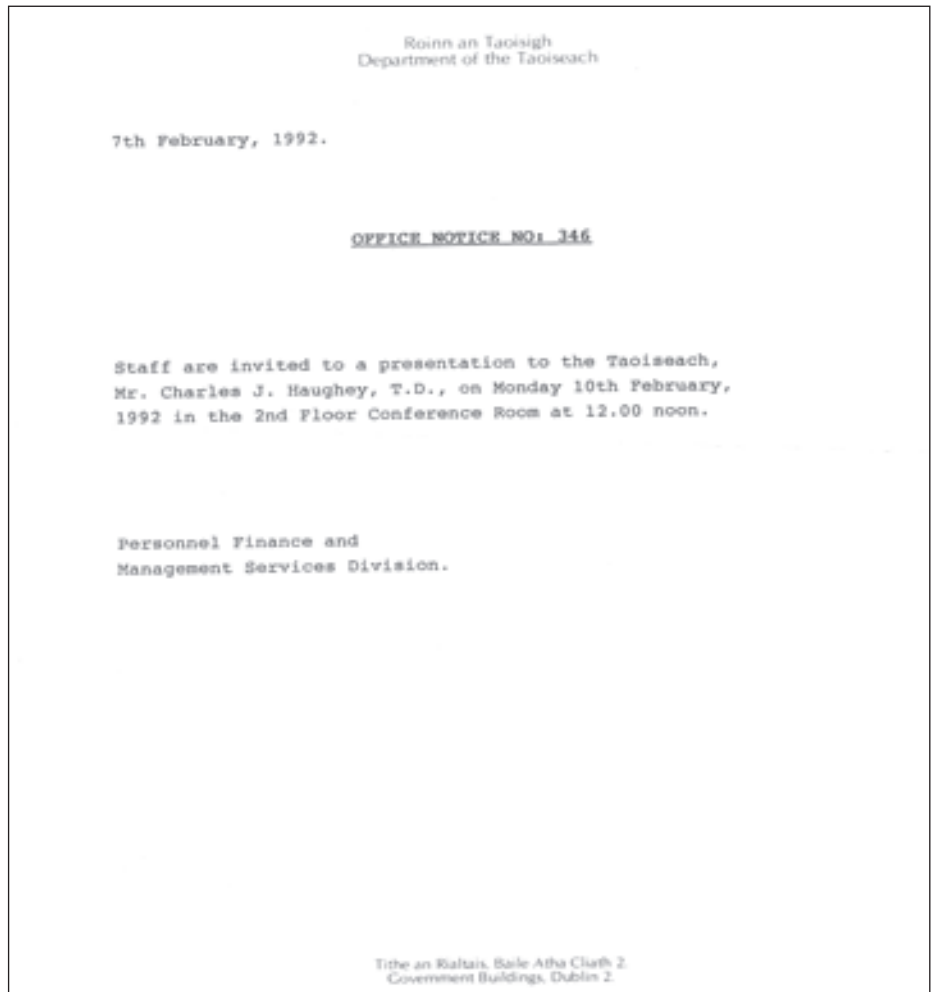
Mrs Maureen Haughey joined us looking at the picture. She remembered the day it was painted, particularly how good the painter was with the children in coaxing them to pose. Craig asked Mrs Haughey not to tidy the children up as he would like to paint them just as they were. He took photographs of the children on the lawn, which he could take away to work with. Mrs Haughey remembered that Conor had before broken his leg shortly before that day.

Later Mr Haughey took me on a

tour of the house and we finished up chatting in his small study off the hall. He showed me bronze and marble heads of his children by sculptor Garry Trimble ARHA (1928-79). He also showed me a typical painting of a horse by Patrick Hennesy RHA (1915-80), purchased in the David Hendrix Gallery in St Stephen's Green, and told me how the artist came to the house for the purpose of signing it but they polished off a bottle of whiskey and he left having forgotten to do what he came for.

Abbeyville was designed by 18th-century architect James Gandon for John Beresford, Head of Irish Revenue, who interestingly was permitted to use the balance in the revenue accounts for his own purposes! The beautiful oval dining room provided the setting for many portraits. There were four portraits of Mr Haughey by Edward Maguire and one of his friend the poet Anthony Cronin. Maguire, son of a senator who also owned Brown Thomas, was a reclusive alcoholic but a brilliant portraitist, who used a strictly formulated limited pallet of dull greens and browns against deep blue skies, often featuring stuffed birds alongside his sitters who had something of the same surreal quality as the birds themselves. Maguire's depiction of Seamus Heaney seated behind his desk is well known. Mr Haughey said that he left it to Maguire to decide how to depict him – in one portrait he is shown sitting on a hunter, dressed for the occasion, including a bowler hat.

Two portraits faced each other across the dining table: one of his father-in-law Sean Lemass addressing the Dáil and, facing it, Mr Haughey in the same pose. He told me an amusing story about when the Office of Public Works were arranging for the customary portrait of Mr Lemass to be painted for Leinster House. Mr Lemass asked if it could be done by Muiris (Maurice) MacGonigal PRHA (1900-1979), who had fought in the War of Independence, only to receive the astonished reply as to why this was not a possibility: 'But Taoiseach, he's a landscape painter!'



Charles J Haughey headstone

My great-uncle's mathematical conundrums

By Neal Farry

My mother, Margaret McDonough-Farry, a native of Tubberbride, Collooney, was a niece of my great-uncle, Laurence (Larry) McDonough.

Larry was born in 1867 in Tubberbride. He qualified as a national teacher and became principal teacher of Ballisodare Boys' National School from which he retired circa 1930. He and his family resided at Ivy Cottage, Ballisodare. Some members of my extended family possess copies of a booklet of approximately 700 mathematical conundrums that Larry devised for publication periodically in sets of six or seven in *The Irish Times* during the 1930s and 40s. Larry wrote under the pen-name 'Ishmael'. The copy that is in my possession was left to us by my mother.

I have selected twelve of these problems that he had published to challenge readers of similar outlook to himself. The chosen mathematical conundrums are as follows:

(1) The length, breadth and height of a room are all equal, and the length of a string stretched from one corner of the floor to the diagonally opposite corner of the ceiling is 20 feet. How many square feet of linoleum will be required to cover the floor of the room?

(2) Mr Painter, having to hang a picture, screwed two rings into the upper edge of the frame. Through these rings, which were 18 inches apart, he passes a piece of cord, knotting the ends together to form one continuous piece. This he passes over a nail, the picture hanging flat against the wall, and the top of the frame three and a half feet below the nail. This appears to Mrs Painter's aesthetic eye to be too low. She therefore took up the portion of the cord between the two rings, and loops it over the nail.



A group at the wedding of Laurence McDonough's daughter, May. Laurence is the gentleman wearing the bowler hat and carrying a walking stick, sixth person from the left in the picture

How much did this raise the picture? (One foot = twelve inches)

(3) A man intends to write a cheque for a certain amount in pounds and shillings. By mistake he interchanges the number of pounds and the number of shillings. He cashes the cheque, spends £1 – 7s – 0d of the amount, and then finds that he still has twice the amount of money he originally intended to draw. What was the amount of the cheque written? (20 shillings = £1)

(4) A giant weighs 3lbs for every inch of his height, and the square of his height in feet exceeds his weight in stones by 31st. Find his height and weight. (14lbs [i.e. 14 pounds weight] = 1st [i.e. stone weight])

(5) Of the colours of the horses entered for the Grand National, two out of every three were not brown, three out of every four were not black, and four out of every five were not grey. There were 13 horses of other colours. How many horses were

entered? (By arithmetic only)

(6) An orchard was robbed (not a meritorious act) three nights successively. The first night half the apples were stolen, and half an apple more. The second night half of the remainder were taken and half an apple more. The last night the 'mitchers' took half of those which were left and half an apple more, by which time the apples in the orchard were reduced to a score. How many apples were in the orchard at first?

(7) I set out the other day to ride in a motor car from Assaroe to Ballisodare, but by mistake I took the road going via Corrigeencor, which is nearer Assaroe than Ballisodare, and is 12 miles to the left of the direct road I should have travelled. After arriving at Ballisodare I found that I had gone 35 miles. What are the three distances between the three places mentioned, each being a whole number of miles? Consider the three roads straight.

(8) A certain division in an army was

composed of little over 20,000 men, made up of five brigades. It was known that one-third of the first brigade, two-sevenths of the second, seven-twelfths of the third, nine-tenths of the fourth and fifteen-twenty-seconds (i.e. 15 over 22) of the fifth brigade happened in every case to be the same number of men. Can you describe how many men were in each brigade?

(9) A gramophone record has a spiral line cut on it winding from the outer edge, which is a circle of 6 inches radius, to the inner edge, which is a circle of 2 inches radius. The record revolves 80 times a minute and takes 4 minutes to play. Assuming that the spiral path is equivalent to a number of equally spaced concentric circles, find the total length of the path in yards.

(1 yard = 36 inches; 1 foot = 12 inches.)

(10) A farmer spent three equal sums of money buying calves, pigs and sheep. Each calf cost £1 more than a pig and £2 more than a sheep. Altogether he bought 47 animals. The number of pigs exceeded that of the calves by as many sheep as he could have bought for £9. Find the number of animals of each kind.

(11) Four married couples came into the village of Ballisodare on a recent Saturday night to do a little shopping. They had to be very economical for among them they only possessed forty shillings. The fact is Ann spent one shilling, Mary spent 2s, Jane spent 3s and Kate spent 4s. The men were more extravagant than their wives. Ned spent as much as his wife, Tom spent twice as much as his wife, Bill spent three times as much as his wife and Jack spent four times as much as his darling spouse. On the way home the four couples divided what coins they had left equally, four ways among them. Can you pair off the four couples?

(12) I live twelve and a half miles from a railway station. I get there each morning by motorcar in half an hour and just in time to catch the train. One morning I had a breakdown and spent five minutes to affect a repair. I then

travelled to the station at three-fifths the former speed and I arrived at the station a quarter of an hour late. At what point in my journey did my car break down?



The plaque outlining the story of the Tower Cross.

The equivalence of pounds sterling and shillings, of pounds weight and stones, and of inches, feet and yards as above were not provided by Larry to his challenged mathematical readers. I have included them here in case some younger readers might need some clarification in these areas. The answers to the problems can be found on page 63 of this issue of *The Corran Herald*.

I am eternally grateful to Mr Christy Gallagher, retired maths teacher from Gurteen post-primary school and Corran College, Ballymote, who kindly provided the necessary solutions to this selection of Larry's conundrums.

Larry also published a brief historical account of Collooney in *The Sligo Champion* in 1949. John McTernan furnishes an extract from Larry's article in his *A Sligo Miscellany* (Avena Publications 2000 AD). I wish to present here Larry's brief but succinct account of the installation of the cross and pedestal on top of the newly-constructed spire of Collooney Catholic Church in September 1879, drawn from his *Recollections of Collooney*. Larry was twelve years of



The Tower Cross on the car park wall of the Church of the Assumption, Collooney

age at that time and his description of the event 70 years later is profoundly vivid, with a description of communal excitement, technical accuracy, fervent spirituality, extraordinary human bravery and noteworthy proficiency:

The nicely tapered spire of the Church of the Assumption was completed early in 1879, 160 feet above ground level, and in September of that year the cross and pedestal arrived from Dublin for erection. It was on a Saturday evening this feat was accomplished, under the guidance of Joe Clarence, with his able scaffolder, Johnny Woods of Aghamore and many willing helpers from Ballysadare, Collooney Mills and Markree. All Collooney was agog that red letter day, the women praying on their doorsteps, and Dr O'Rorke reading his Office in the chapel yard for its safe transit.

A large crane was erected on a platform 25ft square and 160ft above ground level, with Woods and Tom Curran on top guiding the tested steel rope, and six skilled labourers working the winch in front of the entrance door. These included Eddie McGuinness of Knockbeg, and Tommie Hall and Michael McDonnell of Ballysadare.

All went well and Woods had the pedestal of the cross in the socket of the capstone in less than two hours. Prayers of thanksgiving were then offered up by the Archdeacon for the assembled parishioners. I remember well the final words of Dr O'Rorke to M Clarence: "Just bring all your workmen into my brother John's shop, where they will be suitably nourished at my expense."

When Larry described the area of the scaffolding as being 25 ft square I interpret this that he meant the dimensions of the base and of the body

of the square structure at all levels to be 25ft wide by 25ft long, which yields a horizontal area of 625 square feet. The measurements could also be expressed as 8.33 yards wide and 8.33 yards long. In this case the horizontal scaffolding area would be 69.4 square yards at all levels. I venture to suggest that common sense health and safety requirements in 1879 would demand such a base area and ascending uniform width to sustain a scaffolding structure 160 feet high.

The plaque on the wall beside the remnant of the cross erected in

1879 can be seen in the car park of Collooney Church. This tells us that the cross was removed in 1960. We are also informed that the shaft of the cross had been twenty-four feet long and that nine feet of it had been inserted in the socket of the cap stone. To insert the cross in the socket was the task that faced Johnny Woods and Tom Curran on that September Saturday in 1879. Fifteen feet of the cross and shaft remained above the cap stone for eighty-one years until damaged by storm in 1960. Laurence died in 1952.

Vanished Shop Fronts - 4

Photographs collected for the Gathering photography exhibition (For Vanished Shop Fronts - 1,2 & 3, see The Corran Herald editions 46/47/48)



King's Newsagents and Fancy Confectionary (including Lillie and Sadie King)

Vanished Shop Fronts - 4

Photographs collected for the Gathering photography exhibition (For Vanished Shop Fronts - 1,2 & 3, see The Corran Herald editions 46/47/48)



Killoran's, O'Connell Street



Dockry's, O'Connell Street

Vanished Shop Fronts - 4

Photographs collected for the Gathering photography exhibition (For Vanished Shop Fronts - 1,2 & 3, see The Corran Herald editions 46/47/48)



Cawley's, Market Street



Keenan's,
Market Street

Vanished Shop Fronts - 4

Photographs collected for the Gathering photography exhibition (For Vanished Shop Fronts - 1,2 & 3, see The Corran Herald editions 46/47/48)



P Dawson's, Market Street

The solutions to Larry McDonough's twelve mathematical conundrums

No. 1: 133.333 square feet;

No. 2: 17.632;

No. 3: £8 -- 3 shillings;

No. 4: Height: 7 feet. Weight: 18 stone;

No. 5: 60 horses;

No. 6: 167;

No. 7: A to B: 25 miles; A to C: 20 miles; B to C: 15 miles ;

No. 8: 1st Brigade: 5670 troops;
2nd Brigade: 6615 troops;
3rd Brigade: 3240 troops;
4th Brigade: 2100 troops;
5th Brigade: 2772 troops;
Total number of troops:
20,397 troops ;

No. 9: 223.288 yards;

No. 10: 20 sheep, 15 pigs, 12 calves;

No. 11: The four couples were Ann & Bill, Jane & Ned, Mary & Jack, Kate & Tom;

No. 12: 6.25 miles.

Ballymote Heritage Group and *The Corran Herald*: Making Connections

By John Coleman

The internet has allowed information to be shared and connections to be made between people which would have been almost impossible in the past. The digitisation of historical records has opened up a vast world to us without leaving the comfort of our own armchairs. This has been particularly remarkable in the area of genealogy, which fascinates so many people today.

After I became chairman of the Ballymote Heritage Group in 2012 I had no difficulty in persuading members at one of our monthly meetings that we should have a website, and thanks to the efforts of Heritage Group Secretary Ursula Gilhawley and support of IT specialists OSD in Sligo we now have www.ballymoteheritage.com. As well as placing details of Heritage Weekends on the site we are in the process of uploading past issues of *The Corran Herald*. There is also an email address on the site and Ursula has been busy dealing with queries,

particularly from people in distant parts who are researching historic family connections with Ballymote. The internet has also transformed the process of compiling *The Corran Herald*, such that our editor Stephen Flanagan can do a wonderful job while based in Dublin.

The Craigs of Spurtown and Gormans of Ballymote

Even before we set up our site many of us have been sourcing information for articles via the web. In issue 43 2010/11 of *The Corran Herald* regular contributor John McDonagh made extensive use of the internet to research a very substantial five-page article with fascinating photographs on two related families, the Craigs of Spurtown and the Gormans of Ballymote. John described in his article the process of research that had allowed him to write the piece, which also included visits to libraries and archives.

John was initially interested in

discovering more about the Craig family who had occupied his family home before it was purchased from them at the end of the 19th century, and finding out what had become of



John R Gorman (Left) – Brother in-law of Robert Craig



Watch presented to Robert Craig by his neighbours in Spurtown



Members of Ballymote Heritage Group greet Craig/ Gorman descendants on their visit to Ballymote in May 2016 Photograph taken outside Perry's cafe which was formerly the location of the shop operated by Joseph Gorman and latterly his nephew Chris Smith
Left to right: John Coleman, Colette McDonagh, John McDonagh, Eileen Tighe, John Perry, John Scot, Sue Scot, Shannon Scot

their descendants. After very intricate research detailed in his article, John discovered that Robert Craig of Spurtown and his wife Jane (nee Gorman) were living in Ontario in 1901 along with their daughters Mary and Sarah. Having discovered that Sarah died in 1965 aged 83, John managed to contact her grandson Jim Scot. Jim was able to provide fascinating photographs which illustrated John's article, including Gorman's shop in Ballymote. Recently members of Ballymote Heritage Group were delighted to join John McDonagh and his wife Colette in welcoming John Scot and his wife and daughter to Ballymote, and to present them with a copy of issue 43 of *The Corran Herald*. John Perry, who now operates his business in premises formerly occupied by Gorman's, was delighted to show the visitors around and presented them with the original decorative Victorian letterbox from the house.



The original Gorman's shop

Bensons of Carrickbanagher

In issue 45 2012/13 of *The Corran Herald*, Eugene Benson, who lives in Canada, wrote a very moving article about his father, John Joseph Benson (1887-1971), and his uncle Francis (1877- 1921). Both were born in Carrickbanagher and both became members of the RIC. Francis, who was chief constable in Tralee, was tragically shot dead during the Troubles while walking in the town with his young son. John and Francis Benson were first cousins of my



Benson Family descendants at the family grave in Ballisodare. Shown are Margaret Benson Ryan, Christopher Duff, Nathy Wims, John Coleman, Marie Hosvath

grandfather, also John Joseph Benson, and likewise born in Carrickbanagher. As a child my mother had taken me to meet Eugene when he attended the Yeats Summer School in Sligo, and the internet had allowed me to reconnect with him so that after being in regular contact for some time I was delighted when he agreed to write the article in *The Corran Herald*.

Some past issues of *The Corran Herald* have been uploaded on www.ballymoteheritage.com and, while searching the internet for history of the family, the article was discovered by grandchildren of Francis Benson, who sent emails to Ballymote Heritage Group, and this has resulted in connecting family members.

Chief Constable Francis Benson had married twice. He had three children by his first wife Anne Teresa Byrne (1885-1914) of Ballymore Eustace – Evelyne (1909-23), Violet (1910-1952) and Cyril (1912-87). By his second wife Margaret Brophy (b. 1889) he had a son Charles (b. 1917) and daughter Margaret (b. 1920). Following his death she remarried to a John Kelly and they had a son Andrew. The couple and her three children set sail for Australia on board the *Balranald* on 9 July 1925, leaving her surviving step children Violet and

Cyril in the care of her brother-in-law John Benson, then living in Belfast.

Violet's son Christopher, who lives near Belfast, discovered the article on the internet as also did his mother's half-brother Charles's son Brian Benson in Melbourne, Australia. Since then two family gatherings have taken place, one in Sligo and one in Belfast. Brian travelled with his wife all the way from Australia and visited Christopher and his wife before coming to Sligo. Cyril's daughter Marie Hosvath, who lives in Norwich, travelled to Sligo with a cousin Margaret Benson Ryan of Newport, Co Tipperary to meet Christopher and his wife. Brian also visited Margaret and her family. Nathy Wims, who farms in Sligo, took each group to visit the Benson grave in Ballisodare. Nathy knew the location of the grave in Ballisodare as his grandmother was a sister of John and Francis Benson, and his family took care of another brother Patrick who was the last of that branch of the Bensons to live in Carrickbanagher. All are now in communication with Eugene Benson who is delighted that his article has had this effect, and very pleased to be in communication with his cousins. All family members are learning from each other about the different stories relating to family history that they have grown up with – as am I.



John Coleman with his cousin Brian Benson of Melbourne, grandson of RIC Chief Constable Francis Benson



Emlaghfad Church from Ordnance Survey Memoirs 1837.

I understand from conversations recently that many local people had relatives in the RIC and I would be interested in seeing information and photographs which could be put together for a piece in a future issue of *The Corran Herald*.

Old Emlaghfad Church

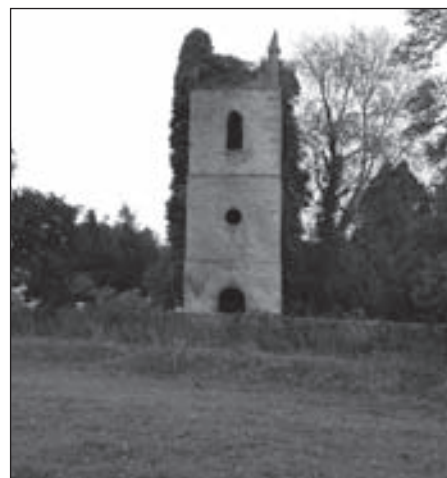
The tower of the old church at Emlaghfad can be seen on the hill to the left on the Gurteen road before it is joined by the Keenaghan road or from the train as you head out of town for Dublin. The official name of both the Church of Ireland and Roman Catholic parish of Ballymote still derives from what is an early Christian foundation.

Use of www.ballymoteheritage.com has also stimulated action in relation to the preservation of one of the most important historic sites and structures in County Sligo. On a visit to the area last year Mary Tansey, wife of Ballymote-born Kieran, was struck by the neglect and lack of access to the abandoned Emlaghfad church and graveyard, and was moved to send an email to Ballymote Heritage Group. Mary had been closely involved in a project for conservation of a church ruin near her home, which had received support from the Heritage Council. Mary's comments to the Heritage Group have prompted renewed interest in the site and its importance, and there is a prospect of some positive action to improve its care.

A monastery at Emlaghfad is said

to have been found in the 6th century by St Columba of Iona (c 521-597). As well as being an early Christian site, the foundations of a 17th-century star fort can be seen extending into surrounding fields. The walls and tower of the existing church structure are intact, though the church was abandoned by the Church of Ireland when a new, bigger, grander and more conveniently located Gothic Revival church was constructed in the centre of the growing town in 1818, when the Church of Ireland was the state church and flush with income from tithes.

Records for the Church of Ireland parish of Emlaghfad survive from 1762 in the Dublin Library of the Representative Church Body. A date for construction for the present



Emlaghfad Church 2016. Note the church yard wall and foundations of the star fort in front of the church tower. Photo by John Coleman

building after 1745 is suggested, as Ballymote had been purchased from the Taaffe family by the protestant John Fitzmaurice, Earl of Shelburne in that year, and he took a detailed interest in the place not evident since the Roman Catholic Taaffe Earls of Carlingford had become absentee after the Williamite victory at the Boyne. The earl died in 1761. The architecture of the church with its pre-'gothic revival' round headed door case and windows would fit with a date around this period.

The importance of the site has now been highlighted to Siobhan Ryan, County Heritage Officer, and, incredible as it may seem, it has been discovered that the building had not been included in the list of protected structures in the county. The Heritage Officer is now working on rectifying this. Through the good offices of Gladys Hannon some work has been done by workers on a Community Employment Scheme to tidy up the site, and local archaeologist, Mary Timoney, who is long familiar with the site, has carried out an initial review of its condition. It is to be hoped that the Council as owners of the site will help to establish a conservation project, probably involving the Ballymote CE Scheme. Close architectural and archaeological examination of the site and the present church might help to determine evidence of the early structures.

The churchyard is a treasure house of historical memory, as it was for centuries the burial place for the Church of Ireland community. There are inscriptions as early as 1708 and a few as late as the 1960s and 1970s. Names of families still living in the area are to be found as well as others which are no longer in the area. There are memorials to Fleming and Knott of long-demolished Abbeyville and Battlefield House, Duke, Garrett (successive rectors of the parish), Hawksbys, Baker, Beattie, Bell, Craig, Gethin, Gllimor of Ballinascarrow and Roscrib, Gorman, Henderson, Irwin, Lawson, Kane, Morrison, Phibbs and other familiar and less familiar family names.

Place to place on life's journey

By Mary Kelly-White

Not just from place to place – more like house to house, and each one a real home for a while.

February 15, 1937: Nurse Ellis of Temple Street, Sligo, delivered me in the home of Tom and Bea Kelly, Pound/Connolly Street, Sligo. There there was only one other child, my 15-month-old sister Catherine. I don't remember that day myself but I know that it was in the back room on the first floor of a very large town house. There was a great big open fire and a very big bed, a large blue American travel trunk, a wash-stand, a table, and a small box-like bed for me.

I couldn't see much from inside the box-bed, and I slept a lot. But then after only 18 months, before I was even steady on my feet, Nurse Ellis made another delivery – a sister, Brigid, for Catherine and me. By then Catherine and I were out of that nest, across the dark landing and into iron cots from where we could see everything but hear nothing except familiar steps on the bare wooden stairs and traffic from the street. We were in the front room of the house. When the sun shone and the curtains were slightly open, the pink paint from McCarrick's grocery shop across the street, and the green paint from Mullen's and Culhane's, reflected on the white walls of our room. It was pleasant.

In 1947 Nurse Ellis made her last delivery with our fourth brother, Michael. The family was complete: Catherine, Mary (me), Brigid, Hugh, Terence, Thomas, and Michael, all at the same address and the same back room. I was ten years old by then, not a lot smarter, but learning. We were all healthy. Our parents were entrepreneurs, farmers' children setting up home in Sligo because schools were good: the Mercy Convent for the girls and St John's Christian Brothers' for the boys.

Our parents, Tom and Bea, worked well together, doing everything they

could to make money. We were very happy. The house was big with a large yard and garden, three massive slated sheds, and an outside toilet. On the ground floor there was a big shop area with a counter and shelves, which worked well for our books when the seven of us were at school. The kitchen had a concrete floor and a solid fuel range, and there was a pantry with water on tap. The first floor had two large rooms, one to the front and one to the back, already mentioned. Fourteen stairs up the second floor had two similar rooms, and then 13 steps led to the attic, with its skylight window and the floor space of the total house area. Every bit of junk from the whole family finished up in the attic.

In 1949 my mother's 60-year-old bachelor brother Mick Dolan died suddenly and the farm fell to us. It was a blessing in disguise. Our father was finding it difficult to get work, he was too well-educated for some jobs and he had no documentation for others. He took to the farm like a duck to water, but it broke up the family. The thatched cottage had two small rooms and a kitchen, and was at the bottom of Glenkillamey valley in the Arigna mountains, 20 miles away, with no transport. Dad was effectively transported, gone. For the next ten years we struggled between the two homes. Our mother dug in her heels and kept the family in the town house for the schools and the future. Dad took on the farm alone. During the school holidays we got to and from the farm on the bus to Ballyfarnon and walked the four miles across the mountain to Glenkillamey, then four heathery fields from the road down to the house.

Life in the cottage could be hard, with the big open grate fire, big black pots, flag floor, one tiny window, no water, only two rooms with big iron beds, nice dressers and dishes but everything damp, dark and flaky.

There were no shops, no roads, and live cows and sheep everywhere. Yet it was exciting and there was a gramophone with lots of John McCormack records. I loved my father, I was sorry for him all alone, and I hated country life as we were seeing it. I was afraid of everything: soggy fields, no directions, I never knew where I was, sheep and lambs bleating and jumping all around the place, everything moving freely, horses, donkeys, cows, calves, even a bull. What townie wouldn't be afraid?

We did well in the schools, all three girls secured Leaving Certs in the Mercy Convent, and the four boys qualified as motor mechanics in Sligo Technical Institute and worked in garages in Sligo. Catherine became a Clerical Officer with Sligo County Council. Brigid got a scholarship to the Mater Hospital in Dublin and secured a nursing post on staff in Sligo General. I didn't get a call to teacher training college but I worked as a substitute teacher for a few years and then with the Health Board. In 1963, while we were still based at Pound/Connolly Street and Dad was still on the farm, I flew the coup and got married. I went to live in half a small house in Tubberbride, Collooney, on the main Dublin to Sligo road, with public transport passing by the door. There was a small kitchen with an open fire, no sewage or water connections, a tiny stairs leading up to half a storey bedroom, and a small back room extension. My husband was a carpenter and before long he had the house looking pretty. We had a motorbike and we were only a mile from the town. By 1970 we had three little girls and were expecting a fifth child. The first, a boy, lived only five days; so we also had a plot in the local cemetery, St Nathy's. We qualified for a town house in Collooney, a new estate which was named Kiernan Avenue by the first twelve residents,

and where our second son was born.

This was the fourth home in my áit go h-áit travels – three-bed, semi-detached, modern kitchen, bathroom and 12’ by 12’ sitting room, with a front lawn and a back shed, in the town, five minutes from church, school, and railway, everything. By 1981 the house was too small so we added a bedroom, a shower room and

a great big kitchen. Now in 2016, the four children are married and have homes and families of their own, giving us 17 delightful grandchildren and four great grandchildren. And here we are, just the two of us, his truly and me, in our big modern town house.

PS: Of the Pound/Connolly Street family, Tom and Bea Kelly and all

the deliveries that Nurse Ellis made, Catherine, Brigid, Hugh, Terence, Thomas, and Michael, only Catherine and I have survived, and three of the four homes, Pound/Connolly, Glenkillamey and Tubberbride are also gone.

Chancing a pint in 1887

Submitted by Padraig Doddy

Messers Hickson and Howe police inspectors sat in the day room of Ballymote police barracks to investigate two charges brought by Sgt McGuire, Bunninadden, against Constable Pat O’Neill, at present stationed in Ballymote and legally represented.

It is a well-known fact that no less than seven constables have been changed from Bunninadden station at the instigation of Sergt McGuire.

This looks curious, but the real cause is well known. Any constable under the valiant sergeant’s supervision who enters a certain public house in the village runs the risk of earning his displeasure, and if the offence be repeated a report to headquarters of disobedience ... would be certain consequence.

If they dare to cross the threshold of this proclaimed edifice, the wrath of McGuire ... falls upon the head of the refractory and the policeman. Constable O’Neill had the spirit to resist this tyranny and was reported.

Sgt McGuire said in evidence: *On*

the morning of May 23rd, Constable O’Neill came downstairs dressed in shirt and trousers at about 8am and said: ‘I want to know sergeant, am I to go to Keash on duty today’. I replied ‘Yes’. He said it was not his turn, as Constable Philbin was before him. I told him it did not matter. Constable Callan and Philbin were present. He then said he would report me in a very commanding voice.

Sergeant did not consider O’Neill a steady man fit to leave in charge of a station and had to caution him on a few occasions.

Sergeant said O’Neill was under his control from April 30th to Constable Hubert Murry, who was barrack orderly on May 23rd and recalled Sgt McGuire and Constable O’Neill returning to station at 4.45pm after four to four-and-a-half hours’ duty. Constable O’Neill left barrack at 5pm saying he was going to James Hunt’s house. He returned at 6.55pm. Sgt McGuire said at 5.40pm he went to James Hunt’s public house and found O’Neill in the tap room.

Sgt McGuire: O’Neill asked me if he was required on duty. I did not answer him.

Counsel: Why not?

Sgt McGuire: I never tell a policeman anything in the presence of civilians.

Counsel: Had he not completed his duty for the day or was there something special on that day?

Sgt McGuire: A policeman is never off duty. He may be disengaged and is always liable to be called out on duty.

Counsel: Then does a policeman not have the right to go into a tavern?

Sgt McGuire: Bunninadden is rather limited for public houses. There are a lot of poor little cabins.

The district inspector said O’Neill was of good character and performed good service in the past. Mrs Hunt said she invited Constable O’Neill to her house on business.

The first charge was struck out and a light fine was imposed on the second account.



A picture of the Doddy family, Ardconnell, in 1977. Left to right: John, Suzanne, Padraig, Martin and Patrick (Pake) Doddy.

Sligo Field Club Journal, Vol 1, 2015

By Martin A Timoney



In 1984 a small group of Ballymote people established Ballymote Heritage Group. The following year they started publishing *The Corran Herald* under the editorship of James Flanagan. Since 1945 a much larger similarly minded group of County Sligo people, Sligo Antiquarian Society, now known as Sligo Field Club (SFC), have on occasions talked about publishing a journal. Concentrating on lectures and outings, it was felt that devoting time to publishing would interfere with the extensive fieldwork that they were undertaking in their spare time. But with 1995 being the 50th anniversary of Sligo Field Club there were moves to publish a volume of essays. The resulting *Celebration of Sligo* was published in 2002.

Thoughts about a second volume of essays were floated over the following years and Sligo Field Club committed in 2010 or thereabouts to publishing another volume. I set about collecting, writing and editing articles, as I had done with *Celebration*. Some SFC people began raising concerns and the publication was handed over to the Timoneys who brought together a small group, Publishing Sligo's Past,

in 2012 to bring *Dedicated to Sligo* to print; this volume was published in June 2013.

While work was proceeding on the volume during 2012, Jim Foran, SFC committee member and librarian at the Institute of Technology, Sligo, suggested that the very advanced *Dedicated to Sligo* might be split into two and published as separate volumes of a journal. I considered this but rejected the idea as it would not be fair to delay publishing some author's important research even further. At SFC committee meetings following the publication of *Dedicated to Sligo* I repeatedly made the case for the publication of a *Sligo Field Club Journal*.

Jim Foran, with the encouragement of Leo Leydon, President SFC, agreed to edit the *Journal* in early 2015. For a time, though no longer on the Committee, having served for forty years, I was assisting the editor. Then I was Assistant to the Editor, who suggested I become Assistant Editor for the last few months. I gave Jim as much practical editing experience as possible. The *Journal* was prepared using QuarkXPress, a very powerful but daunting programme that printers use to prepare books, journals and newspaper for publishing. The format of the *Journal* is similar to that of *North Munster Antiquarian Journal*, published by the Thomond Archaeological and Historical Society in Limerick. The influence of *Antiquity*, which emanates from Cambridge, may be seen as well.

The range and flavour of the content lies between Ballymote Heritage Group's *The Corran Herald* on the one hand and *Celebration* and *Dedicated* on the other. The *Journal* includes serious, accurate and up-to-date content, but with a modicum of discussion, debate and challenge. It is hoped its status will be that of the journals produced by some of the

better organised longstanding local societies, such as those in Cork, Limerick, Galway, Louth and Kildare. The *Journal* was launched in January 2016 by Tommy Gorman of RTE in Liber Books in O'Connell St, Sligo.

Following a preface by Leo Leydon, President of Sligo Field Club, and Jim Foran's editorial, the lead article is about the logo of Sligo Field Club. It is based on the design of one of the Carrowntemple slabs, most easily seen incorporated by Brenda Friel in her cover design for *The Corran Herald* since Issue No 29 in 1996. The article explores connections between the slabs and the Moylough Belt-shrine and the Book of Durrow. The probability of St. Mobhí being part of the Moylough Belt-shrine story is addressed. Inishmurray and Drumcliffe are major international Early Christian monasteries; so too Carrowntemple, in border country with Roscommon and Mayo, was on the same level of importance though it lacks historical record. The article also tells the story of the taking in 1984 and the recovery two years later of five of the decorated slabs. The best place where you can conveniently look at all the sixteen known designs together is in the *Journal*.

Megalithic tombs, as befits a county with more megalithic tombs than elsewhere in the world, are dealt with in two articles. Eamon Cody writes on the Doonshaskin court tomb and I deal with the passage tomb at Farranyharpy, Skreen. The importance of Co Sligo's megalithic tombs is the mixing of the four main types, and it is this which adds to their mystery. Cody lectured to SFC recently on this.

Incidentally when you look at the front cover image and Cody's Pls. 1 and 2, you can see how overgrown with briar the Doonshaskin court tomb was; the Carrowntemple figure on the back cover was the suggestion of Aidan Mannion, past president.

Donna Gilligan writes on two carved stone heads from Ballydawley. Bridget Brennan sets the small Kilbarron Late Medieval Church just north of Ballyshannon in its local setting. Jim Higgins discusses the symbolism of griffins in Ireland, one in Sligo Abbey. Sam Moore gets us from Ballymote to Boyle via medieval roads. Marion Dowd has a note on Carns Cave, close to the Fox's Den waterworks.

Conchubhair Ó Crualaoich tackles the problem of why early records give Tobar Bhun Muaidhe near Knocknashee as the source of the Moy. Joe McGowan discusses the Spanish Armada on the Streedagh shore and where some of the victims may have been buried. Cian Harte treats of Sligo soldiers of the Jalandhar Mutiny, India, in 1920. John Mullaney traces the history of business in Sligo and looks optimistically to a bright future. Gerry Foley illustrates the story of Barium Consolidated Ltd, a mining concern on Ben Bulbin in the 1920s and 1930s

Don CF Cotton sets out the life of Robert Warren (1829-1915), a very prolific west Sligo naturalist, and Michael Bell illustrates the colourful butterflies and moths that float around our countryside.

Finally, there are two obituaries:



Jim Foran, editor, at the launch of SFCJ.

Noel and Briga Murphy, diligent workers for Sligo Field Club over many years, and Jack Flynn, twice president of SFC, a good friend of Ballymote Heritage Group and regular attendee of the Heritage Weekend lectures.

It has taken 70 years for Sligo Field Club to get to publishing a journal. Sligo needs a variety of vehicles for publishing the mass of material and research on our archaeology, local

history and environment. There is place for the *Journal* as well as for Ballymote Heritage Group's *The Corran Herald* and also another volume of essays from Publishing Sligo's Past. Sligo has now another vehicle to publicise and celebrate our heritage. The *Journal* takes its place with other more established publications. It has already been referred to in publications, copies are in copyright libraries and the comments are good.

With a place to publish articles of various styles, research that has been underway begins to get converted into articles. There is no shortage of material – SFC is now providing that service in a different style to Ballymote Heritage Group's *The Corran Herald*. Sligo people should buy *Sligo Field Club Journal*, and other Sligo publications, talk about them, tell tourists about them, and send them abroad, so don't buy just one copy, buy a few and send them out of the county to publicise what we have. *Sligo Field Club Journal*, with its distinctive burgundy cover, is very good value at €20 for 154 pages with colour illustrations.



Jim Foran, editor, and Larry Mullin and John McTernan, past presidents of Sligo Field Club, at the launch of SFCJ.

A Sligo casualty of 1916

By Michael Farry

James Gormley was born on 23 February 1891 in Ballintogher, County Sligo. His parents were Thomas and Ellen. In the 1901 census Thomas gave his occupation as herd. By 1911 Thomas was dead and his widow, Ellen, gave her occupation as farmer. This presumably means that the family had purchased their holding under the land acts.

Thomas and Ellen had nine children, all of whom were still living in 1911. It seems that James was seventh in the family. He joined the RIC in September 1912 when aged 21 and served in County Meath at Slane, Enfield and Longwood over the next three years.

On 10 April 1916 James wrote from Longwood to his sister Kate in response to a request from his mother that he return home to work the farm. He told her: It would not be worth giving up a good job to be in mud and dirt for the remainder of my life.' (Cian Harte articles in *The Sligo Rising, Sligo Champion* supplement, 8 March, 2016)

When the 1916 Rising broke out James was among those policemen sent to protect Slane Castle. On Friday 28 April a large number of the RIC, including James, were sent in motors to Ashbourne where rebels had attacked the RIC barracks. The convoy was ambushed at Rath Cross, just outside Ashbourne, and James was shot dead.

He was buried on 30 April in the RIC plot in Navan. His younger brother, also a member of the RIC, attended the requiem mass. Constable Jeremiah Mee was stationed in Ballintogher at the time and he noted that 'nearly all the people, including the local Volunteers, turned out to attend a requiem mass for the dead constable.'



James Gormley

Another of James Gormley's brothers was an active member of the Ballintogher Volunteers.

James Gormley

My poteen-making experience a in the mountains of east Sligo is useless in flat south Meath.

In Longwood unlicensed dogs, unlit bicycles and late drinking are the limits of lawlessness.

Though we have excitement too, like the knife attack in Reilly's pub after the cattle trespass row.

To use a knife was un-Irish, magistrate Montgomery said, better use fists in a fair fight.

And then the family I found in the March stable, wind blowing

through their tatters. The court found the parent's earnings were spent on drink, (not just Sligo!) sent the wife to Trim workhouse,

the children to industrial school. I sent the Chronicle report, Family in a Stable, to mother, proud.

Last weekend we marched each day to Father Rooney's chapel, spick and span, joined in ceremonies.

I cycled to Trim on Easter Monday, strolled around the castle. She agreed to meet me again next week-end. Back in barracks that evening news of the Dublin rumpus unsettled us. I was sent to Slane to guard the Castle.

All week wild rumours circulated, Germans in Cork, marching on Galway, Dublin in ruins, U-boats in the Liffey.

Then this morning the call came and we're on our way, a convoy of sixty in requisitioned motors

to Ashbourne where the barracks is under attack by rag-tag rebels, or invading Germans. I'm scared. Almost there now, at the Cross, shots. We halt, hear an order: Out! Out! Make for the ditch, the hedge! Shelter!

Relief, no Germans, just ourselves alone shooting at each other from behind hedges. I jump and run . . .

The rich history of Sicily

By Malcolm Billings

The Sicily exhibition at the British Museum, London runs from 21 April - 14 August 2016

The rural village of Corleone has a sleepy town square with a church and a fountain. The Mayor of Palermo, the capital of Sicily, recalled how he saw a stretched black limo which stopped outside the church to greet a local farmer. The man knelt as the window was lowered: a gloved hand protruded; something was exchanged; the window raised; and the limo cruised on. That was about 15 years ago when the Mafia was still in the ascendant and Brigid O'Hara and I were making a Heritage programme about the restoration of Palermo.

The Mayor was dealing with the aftermath of the successful purge of the Mafia not long after the Judge Giovanni Falcone was murdered by a bomb on his way home from the airport in 1992. That marked the moment when Sicilians declared that enough was enough and the law began to squeeze the Mafia, seize their property and give it away to worthy causes such as schools and libraries. At the same time the semi derelict capital began years of restoration that revealed architectural treasures behind high walls dating from the arrival of the Greeks to the high point of Sicily's Medieval Norman period in the eleventh and twelfth centuries AD. Sicily, to the surprise of many visitors to the exhibition, was once the centre of Mediterranean culture envied for its wealth and architecture. For a short time it was the capital of the Roman Empire at the crossroads of the Mediterranean world. The current exhibition tells this story: a rare glimpse of the Mediterranean's biggest island at the toe of Italy.

Palermo took a battering during WWII. Houses were locked up and abandoned until restoration began in the 1980s. Impossibly narrow winding streets slowed down the restoration



The Cattedrale di Palermo, Sicily

but behind high walls and boarded up buildings fine interiors began to emerge. The nobility began to drift back to their ancestral town houses. Brigid and I had arranged a rendezvous with a noble 'returnee' who met us on his motor bike. "Cars are useless here," he explained, as we loaded ourselves and recording equipment and hung on tight. "Go everywhere on my bike." A small fortune had been spent renovating the interior hidden by metal-studded double doors on to the street. Much of the original features had survived. Murals; tiles from Constantinople; chandeliers. The doors to the terrace opened up a breath-taking view of the city walls and the countryside beyond. Since then many other palaces and public buildings have been rescued and the old city is buzzing with tourists. The British Museum exhibition highlights the cultural phases of the island's history, the Greek temple of Concordia at Agrigento vying for prominence with the Medieval Norman period.

The mayor agreed to record an interview. We were led into the most secure room in the Norman palace – the circular Doom where the mayor held office. "I have a very restricted life," he explained. "I can't go out

from here to buy a paper or a coffee without my body guard." The Mafia, although apparently vanquished, are still a shadowy force which has switched many of its activities to legitimate enterprises. As we talked, a door on the other side of the room squeaked. Brigid and I froze. And waited while the footsteps got closer. The Mayor had silently summoned his secretary to mark the end of our interview... somewhat relieved we left the castle and booked our flight to Rome for the next day. We breathed sigh of relief as we settled down in our seats for the short flight. A commotion at the front door of the aircraft made by the crew was for the Mayor and his retinue who were also bound for Rome. "Ah, nice to see you again," he said, as we slid further into our seats. "I hope you enjoyed your visit yesterday."

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Editor's note: Brigid and Malcolm worked together on heritage features for over 30 years. Brigid was the producer for the BBC programme *Heritage* which Malcolm presented on the BBC World Service. She passed away four years ago.

Confirmation 2016



Knockminna

Back row, L – R: Fr James Mc Donagh PP, Mrs. Louise King – Principal, Erin Curran, Eimear Kerins, Joanna Jarmolowicz, Stephanie Kane, Bishop Brendan Kelly, Emily Richardson, Sonny Muldoon, Marie-Claire Kane, Paul Keenan, Ellen Langton.

Middle row, L – R: Evan Cunnane, Malachi Drew, Ciara Hunt, Fr Greg Hannan

Front row, L – R: Katelyn Beirne, Kieran Quinn, Rachel Callaghan, Darragh Brehony, Shaun Hough-O'Connor, Sarah Cassidy, Oisín Brennan, John Kerins

First Holy Communion 2016



Knockminna

Back row, L – R: Mrs Louise King – Principal, Fr James Mc Donagh – PP, Brian Henry – class teacher, Angela Tordoff SNA

Middle row, L – R: Clodagh Hannon, David Rethorn, Aimee Quinn, Evan Gallagher, Laura Porter.

Front row, L – R: Luke Ryan, Rachael Kerins, Paddy Muldoon, Abbi Callaghan, Aislinn Duignan, Darragh Beirne

Altar servers (L-R): Darragh Brehony, Shaun Hough-O'Connor

Confirmation 2016



Scoil Mhuire gan Smal, Ballymote, 6th Class Confirmation

Back row, L – R: Mrs Burns, Fr James McDonagh, Ronan Keenan, Danny Kerins, Kacper Bielecki, Bishop Brendan Kelly, Nicola Maguire, Naoise Kelly, Ms P Hunt

Middle row, L – R: Sean Woods, Grace McGlinchey, Jim Sweeney, Kian Reynolds, Cormac Finn, Jenny Waters, Patrick Sweeney.

Front row, L – R: David Hannon, Anthony Rawl, Anthony Mulligan, Christopher Downes, Gareth Scanlon, Elizabeth Tighe.



Scoil Mhuire gan Smal, Ballymote, 5th Class Confirmation

Back row, L – R : Ms S Gilhooly, Mark Scanlon, Emmanuel Nwapa, Jakub Kasperek, Chloe Fahey, Bishop Brendan Kelly, Ms D Taheny, Kacey Glavin, Felim Finn, Fr James McDonagh

Middle row, L – R: Chloe Hever, Diarmuid Keenan, Darragh Phillips, Mark Tighe, Shane Rafferty, Laura McGee, Michael Lavin, Niamh Ryan, Dylan Anderson, Danielle Martin

Front row, L – R: David McDonagh, Gerard O'Brien, Caoimhe Moffatt, Emily Loughlin, Julia Rychta, Rebecca Healy, Cian Cantwell Cunnane, Ashlee McLoughlin, Eoin Egan, Klaudia Klaman, Shellie Ward, Ellie Ward

First Holy Communion 2016



Scoil Mhuire gan Smal, Ballymote,

Back row, L – R, Standing: Breda O'Brien, Shauna Davey, Steven Wakile, Nikodem Dudziak, Sophie Phillips, Calvin Hogge, Aisling Lyons, Divine Udeagu, Ajay Davey Buurman, Makua Nwapa.

Middle row, L – R, Standing: Joshua McGill, Jake Healy, Chelsea Monahan, Cathal Moffatt, Matthew Cullen, Rihanna Warren, Marie Donohoe, James Lavin, Cody Muldoon Demesko.

Front row, L – R, Standing: Cormac McHale, Lesley Ann Sweeney, Tommy Lee Small, Aleksandra Gardiner Kovalenkova, Sean Sweeney, Luke Ryan, Matthew Rogers, Thomas Sexton

Front row, L – R, Seated: Colin Finn, Grace McGlone, Lisa Golden, Eva Maxwell, Oscar Ryan.

Also included in photo: Fr James McDonagh, Fr Gregory Hannan (retired PP), Mrs Helen McGetrick, Ms Dolores Taheny.

Altar servers: Grace McGlinchey and Naoise Kelly

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