

**All the way from Louisburgh**

**To:** \_\_\_\_\_

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# An Coinneal

LOUISBURGH

1987



# An Coinneal

Front Cover Picture: In Camp (see p 84). Photo – Liam Lyons.

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Number Fifteen

Easter 1987

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*An Choinneal* is a periodical of Kilgeever parish (Louisburgh, County Mayo). The oldest parish magazine in Ireland. It has appeared in alternate years since 1959.

*Editor:* Father Leo Morahan

*Editorial Board:*

An tAthair Tadhg Ó Móráin  
Father Kieran Waldron  
Doctor Columb McHugh

*Secretary:* Mrs Clementine Lyons, N.T.  
*Assistant Secretary:* Miss Mairéad Staunton, N.T.  
*Treasurer:* Mr Séamus Durkan

*Committee:* Doctor Columb McHugh (Chairman), Mrs Evelyn Leamy, Mrs Evelyn Philbin, Miss Una O'Malley, Mr Richard Lyons, Mr Michael McKeown, N.T., Joseph Murphy, Mr Richard O'Toole, Mrs Margaret Gallagher.

*Subscription:* Three pounds (*Postage extra*)

The list of foundation members has been formally closed since 1982.

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*The Editor wishes to thank all the people whose voluntary efforts have helped to produce this fifteenth issue. In particular we express thanks to Liam Lyons, Damian Slater and Frank Dolan, professional photographers, who have supplied photographs free of charge; and the many shopkeepers in town who exhibit and sell the magazine without any commission.*

*Because of continuing postal uncertainties we request all our foundation members to acknowledge receipt of this number, even formally. Members' copies are posted on the day after publication. Please notify us of any change of address.*

## OVERSEAS COMMITTEES

*A novel and most welcome addition to the list of our officers and committees is the following list of new committee officers as set up during the Editor's visitors to North America in November 1986:*

### SAN FRANCISCO

#### SOUTH CITY

*Chairman:* Eddie O'Malley (Roonith)  
*Secretary:* Mike Needham (Feenone)  
*Treasurer:* Michael Garvey (Cahir)

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Telephone contact: 312-736-7938

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*Vice-Chairman:* Johnny Durkan (Bunowne)  
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*Treasurer:* Austin O'Malley (Doughmakeown)  
*Assistant Treasurer:* Thomas O'Grady (Thallabawn)  
Telephone contact: 049-4457

### NEW JERSEY

#### STEERING COMMITTEE

*Chairman:* Monsignor Michael J. Coyne (Aillemore)  
*Secretary:* Mrs Mary Richter (Bunaowen)  
Telephone contact: 609-764-1662

The parent committee in Louisburgh has discussed the feasibility of setting up similar subsidiary committees in Louisburgh centres in England. We would welcome invitations from such centres in the hope of visiting and organizing them before our next issue. In the meantime, our appreciation and gratitude go out to the continuing and loyal service given in the London area by representative there, Mr P. J. McNamara.

*London Agent:* Mr P. J. McNamara (Bridge Street)

## Letters to the Editor

It was a very hot day and I was looking for an excuse to get away from household chores, when who should arrive but my friend, the postman, bringing me the silver jubilee issue of *An Choinneal*. Boy, was I pleased! My wish was granted. "Tomorrow was another day", so I left the dust and cobwebs to settle for another while. I was delighted to see the picture of Tommie Gibbons of Leachta as he was a friend of my Dad's, God rest him. What a wonderful age to have reached! I hope you can make it to the hundred, Tommie! Also that dear lady on the cover, Mrs. Lyons: what a beautiful craft to pass on to your grandchildren. It puts me to shame. You are all doing a wonderful job, keep up the good work!

Mrs. Bridie (Jennings) Brush  
(Tasmania)

*Tommie has gone to join your Dad, Bridie, as the list of recent deaths will confirm. May theirs be a happy reunion. You must forgive me for passing by your door recently when I visited Adelaide and Sydney, but Tasmania was that bit farther out of reach than Kilgeever used to be in times of yore.*

A belated word of thanks. I had time only to glance at it before it was snapped from my hand, on loan. I will get it back. I have no doubt at all that it will answer up to the high standards of its predecessors.

James Fergus  
(retired Bishop of Achonry)

*It could happen to a pope! We will have to consider opening a lending library!*

Another year gone and I didn't write my piece on the local dance-hall of previous years. I just flicked through the pages so far and found the article on Pearl Barley very amusing. I wonder why?

*A matter of taste surely, Sarah. Do try again to get your thoughts together about the days (or nights) in the dance-hall and give us the benefit of your memories. We all hope that you have overcome your great recent sorrow and that it is being replaced by joy.*

Mrs. Sarah O'Connell (London)

Please forward a copy of your magazine which has a photo of some ships anchored in Killary Bay in the early part of the century. This was described by Michael Viney in an article in *The Irish Times* some days ago.

G. A. Johnson (Sligo)

*Thus do we by indirections find directions out! We hope that, having baited you like this, we can hope to have you, let's say, anchored henceforth in the Killaries!*

I get *The Mayo News* sent to me *de temps en temps* so I'm fairly well clued up in Louisburgh news, which I just love to hear. I think that the secretary should be getting a salary for all the work that her task entails.

Kathleen (McGreal) Golden  
(Banbury)

*Ou la-la! Don't press your point of view too strongly, Kathleen, or we'll have to go to the colonies again for renewed funds.*

## Dedication

*We warmly dedicate this enlarged Number Fifteen of An Choinneal to the emigrant of Kilgeever Parish -*

*- especially to the Louisburgh people in San Francisco, Chicago, Boston and New Jersey areas, to mark our sincere appreciation of their loyalty and generosity to this magazine displayed during the recent visit of our Editor to their communities.*

*Go maire siad a sláinte!*

## Letters . . . (CONTINUED)

I would like to become a member of the mailing list for our Louisburgh magazine. I was born in Gowllawn and came to this country in 1949. I love to get the home news.

James O'Malley (West Roxbury)

*Your letter came to life for me, James, when I had the pleasure of meeting you at our meeting in Needham, Mass. We hope to strengthen the lines of communication now and to ply you regularly with the news from home!*

My sister Mary wrote to tell me that she got home-sick when she read in the magazine about Cregganbán, as she used to work for the master, John Tiernan. She often drove cows up above Reilly's in the mountain. She also worked for Anthony O'Grady and for Pat Keane before she left for San Francisco. I gave away my copy to a friend on loan and I never got it back. Thanks again for all you do.

Brigid O'Malley (Huddersfield)

*We are very disappointed that you are without your copy of the Coinneal, Brigid, and we have one piece of advice for you and any other reader who is in such a predicament again. Instead of lending your own copy to anyone else, just give them the Secretary's address, or even send their address to our Secretary. For one thing, you will still have your own copy. And for another, we might collect another paying customer!*

I enjoyed . . . reading the names of the foundation members in past years as I was well acquainted with them. My daughter also enjoyed the magazine. I used to get it continually years ago when on holidays.

Ciss Salter (Blackpool)

*From a later letter (page 8), Ciss, you will experience the reward of a writer who has given satisfaction and delight to someone who knows the scene and the background. Thank you for having loyally taken on the cloak of your dear brother, Tommie, whose writings gave such pleasure to our readers for so many years. You will be pleased to know of the characteristic enthusiasm of his son, Ciarán, in our organizing committee in Boston, and his exceptional generosity in showing me around the city during my visit.*

Ba mhór an fháilte a bhí roimh *An Choinneal* bhreá sin. Nach dathúil atá an clúdach: nach deas an páipéar: nach soiléir – mar is gnáthach – an chlódóireacht: nar bríomhar is atá na h-altanna! Tá sé léite go maith, geallaim duit, agus rud nach ait chuir sé ar bhóthar na cuimhne agus na smaointe mé. Tá leath mo chroí ar a laghad sa dúiche sin agaibhse. Go raibh míle maith agat: ba chaoín é mar smaoinéadh.

Roy Rehu (Blackrock, Dublin)

*Ni duine thú, Roy, a bhaineann sult agus pléisiúr as ceannar gan do chion fhéin a dhéanamh mar aistoc. Tá mé buíoch díot faoin litir sin agus faoi na h-altanna a chuireann tú fhéin ar fáil dúinn ó am go chéile. Beidh fáilte roimh an leath eile de do chroí ach go gcuiri tú anoir chugainn é!*

## OUR SPONSORS

*Apart from the donations organized by our Coinneal committees in the U.S., the following readers have sent contributions to our publishing fund. Most of our contributors prefer not to have the actual size of their subscriptions published. We will, of course, be glad to publish such for anyone who request to do so. To one and all we return our sincerest thanks and appreciation for the encouragement given to the committee at home by all who display such practical loyalty and help. – Editor*

Sister Mary J. Walsh, Father Paddy McNally, Bea O'Malley, Thomas and Rita Feehan, Brendan O'Donnell, Dan Gibbons, Mrs M. Mahon, P. J. McNamara, May English, Mrs Alice Conaghan, Mrs Julia Donnelly, Martin Kneafsey, Mrs Alice Sammon, Frank O'Grady, Mrs Mary Richter, Padraic Seoighthe, Mercy Duane, Mrs Anne O'Malley, Father Al Morahan, Johnnie O'Malley, Dick O'Toole, Jim O'Malley, Rosie Hastings, Vera Scanlon, Johnny Mulvey, P. J. Keane, Mrs Betty Ryan, Mrs Máire Dervan, Mrs Gaelie McManamin, Pat Fergus, Seán Dunne, Nora Gibbons, Bill McDonough, San Francisco Committee (Dinner proceeds), Pádraic Grady, Bridie O'Malley, Patrick Kitterick, Father Vincent Kelly, Anthony Sweeney, Mrs Úna Shea, Mary O'Malley, Burke Cousins, Eileen Walsh (Mitchell), Michael and Bernie Sweeney, Mrs Máire Higgins, Mrs Mary Mitchell, Tom McGreal, John McConnell, Tommie McCormack, Mary Donnelly, Úna O'Malley, Vincent O'Reilly, Nora and Stanley Sek, and one anonymous donor.

*Go maire siad a bhféile!*



## OUR PRINTERS

Note this sign! This is known throughout Ireland as the Quality Mark – a guarantee of first-class quality by the few firms to which it has been accorded. Only *nine* firms in all have won this accolade in the past year! The very first printing firm to get the Quality Mark award are our printers for *An Choinneal*, Berry's Printing Works, Westport.

Readers, committee and editor join in a sincere and warm congratulations to our printers. The award afford us pride, but no surprise!

So, reader, (as if you did not know!) you have in your hands now a truly *quality* product!

## Letters . . . (CONTINUED)

In the summer of 1984 a distant relative of mine visited Mayo and obtained several copies of *An Choinneal* from you. When she returned home she had copies made of several articles in your magazine and sent them on to me. I was extremely interested in two articles in particular, "Round the House" and "Gowlawn Revisited". The former told of Michael Keane's dance-hall in Aillemore which was a popular spot during World War II. Michael was a first cousin to my mother. The second one told a bit of the history of Gowlawn. My grandfather, Austin Keane, would have attended Gowlawn as a young boy with his father, Roger, and mother, Brigid (Hynes) Keane. They lived in Aillemore near where Michael's dance-hall later was. My main reason for writing is to ask if there are any old records available for Kilgeever parish, and if so where they are located. The records in Dublin, which my relative saw also, had nothing prior to 1864.

George F. Wood (New York)

*Welcome to the parish, George. I hope that some day you can make a physical trip. Parish records would be in the care of the local parish priest, Father Tadhg Ó Móráin, but I doubt if there are records much older than 1864.*

Many thanks for the copy of that inspiring production from Louisburgh. Rath Dé ar an obair!

Michael Ó Ciaragáin (Ballinrobe)

*We return the greetings, Father Michael, and congratulate you on your recently produced book on the history of Began parish.*

What a surprise when I came home from work – there it was! I sure enjoyed reading it, especially the story of the Clare Island drownings, as I know most of those people's descendants who still live on Clare Island. I come from there myself. The story was written by Ciss Salter (*nee* Staunton). I remember as a lad we thought it was great to be let out to the Mayday fair in Louisburgh with sheep and lambs, and there buy a handball (which was then sixpence). A nice meal in Gaffney's was then a real treat. I wish you all good luck in the work you are doing, and keep it going.

Myles Ruddy (Coventry)

*Thank you, Myles, for that most interesting and well-written memory from the past. Many readers will appreciate and identify with it. Perhaps you could spend a longer time recalling such memories of your childhood and giving our readers the pleasure of enjoying them?*

We were very anxious to get the *Coinneal* because someone told us that Mother (Mary Joe) Lyons was on the cover . . . I hope it keeps alight and le cúnamh Dé we'll read a few more editions before we go "blind in the eyes" as Ned Myers used to say long ago.

Brendan O'Donnell (Kildare)

*Greeting from a school-colleague, Brendan. Our cover to which you refer has been admired on many continents as has the lady and her craftwork.*

## OUR WRITERS

*Apart from our roster of well-known writers we now introduce:*

*Brendan Ball*, son of Patrick (N.T.) and Mary (Mulvey). Having qualified he now works in Stillorgan, Dublin.

*Mrs Ellen Chappell* with her husband, Bob, and family have recently come to live in Askillaun.

*Seána Dunne* lives in San Francisco. Her parents: Seán (Bunowen) and Mary Hughes (Armagh).

*Sister Regina Durkan (Bunowen)* is present president of Carysfort College.

*Jimmy Egan (Derrygorrow)* teaches English at Sancta Maria.

*Pádraic Mac Citric (Leachta)* farms in that area and is chairman of Louisburgh Community Council.

*Father Gerard Marinan (Columban)* was a successor of Father Dan Conneely as Editor of *The Far East*.

*Clíona McHale* is a leaving Certificate Student at Sancta Maria. Her parents: Tommie (N.T.) and Mrs McHale.

*Bríd Morahan* lives in Narrabeen, Sydney. Her parents: Seán and Beryl (Leech).

*Pat Prendergast* son of Pat (Lannon) is a young go-ahead Accony farmer.

*Jimmy Scott* son Michael (Shraugh) is another young progressive farmer.

*Michelle Viney* is a Leaving Certificate Student at Sancta Maria. Her parents: Michael and Mrs Ethna Viney.

Letters . . . (CONTINUED)

I am writing to find out if it is possible to purchase back copies of your parish magazine. My mother is Margaret Mary Mahon (*nee* Prendergast, Accony) and I was there last August with her to visit my uncle, Michael Joe. I hope to return soon as the visit rekindled my interest in the customs and history of Louisburgh. Hence my request.  
Margaret Mahon (Bristol)

*You have by now had the required information, Margaret. Greetings to your mother. Our stock of past issues is fast running out.*

I just could not believe that it was twenty-five years since I received the first copy. I enjoy it so much, proud of the people who put this magazine together. As soon as it comes, I sit down and read it from cover to cover. I know so many of the people who are mentioned in it, many of them my own relatives. I come from the Killeen half of the parish, but alas! there is no one of my family there now. I see the secretary recently retired. I hope she enjoys many years doing some of the many things she wanted to do but had not time till now.

Alice (Pat Davy) Conaghan  
(New Jersey)

*Objection, Alice! While you can write like that, even if none of the family lives in Killeen, you can not really be said to have left home at all. Our committee in New Jersey will help to make the natural bond even stronger.*

I think this issue is well up to its usual standard . . . I was particularly impressed with the high standard of the young people's writings.  
Al Morahan (Perth)

*Music to our ears, Al! Mol an óige agus tiocfaidh sí. We are indeed happy, in the committee, that young Louisburgh is really making the magazine its own.*

I received my copy on Christmas Eve and got lost in it for a few hours . . . I watched a lovely programme on TV last night about the tradition of horses in Ireland. It showed the races in Galway and Dublin, and the buying of horses at the fair.  
Mary (Dunne) Richter (New Jersey)

*Memories no doubt, Mary, of Carramore Races as seen from across the river in Bunowen and of days free from school because of the "old fair days". My deep gratitude for your reception and help during my organizational tour for An Choinneal last November.*

Congratulations and best wishes to the *Coinneal* staff on the twenty-fifth anniversary. Thanks for the jubilee issue which we have received, and for all the issues all along the years. Keep them coming.  
Michael J. and Gertrude McDermott  
(Hartford)

*Yes, we hope, le cúnamh Dé. The future is bright.*

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## Letters . . . (CONTINUED)

I enjoyed last year's very much and look forward to the next issue.

Dan Gibbons (Holyhead)

*We all sympathize with you Dan, on the death of your life's partner, our own acquaintance and dear friend, Beattie. An eternal candle be hers! You will be interested to know that in Boston at our Coinneal meeting I met again your sister Norah, as vibrant and as positive as ever in her suggestions for activity.*

I had just enjoyed reading Geoffrey Prendergast's story about the football days in his youth when Richard came by, so of course I loaned it to him to read with a promise to have it returned!

Christine (Lyons) Mallowney  
(Chicago)

*Richard! Come back, Richard! We have got him on the Coinneal committee in Chicago now, Christine, so we'll take care of that. Both of you earn our deep gratitude for services rendered during our organizational tour before Christmas.*

We received it during Christmas week and as usual it is delightful. What better way to spend a free week-end than to read and enjoy the news about home!

Mrs. Ann (Joyce) Malley  
(Dorchester)

*Because of my American tour this issue will arrive for Easter Sunday rather than as usual at Christmas. But I hope you can manage another week-end!*

In the middle of the Christmas rush, through the letter-box comes the jubilee issue. Leaving aside the decorations, presents, shopping lists and all, I stop a while to gaze at the cover of the *Coinneal*; to admire the serenity of Mrs. Lyons, teaching her grand-children her great gift; so far removed from the commercial side of Christmas! As always Louisburgh has got it all! When God made Louisburgh and its people He must have thrown away the mould. I also admired Tommie Gibbons (Leachta) having reached the wonderful age of ninety-seven, God bless him. He used to sell us meat in Kilgeever in his horse and cart many moons ago. To all of you I say: well done again; and God bless you all in your great work.

Alice (Jennings) Sammon  
(Islandeady)

*Thank you, Alice. You – and many other readers, indeed – will be interested in the way your discerning observations correspond with those of an earlier letter which we received from Launceston, Tasmania (page 4). Briseann an dúchas . . . !*

It's beautiful. I pray that it will continue to grow. The postage to the States is, I notice, very high. Really the magazine should be priced higher here because of the postage.

Ann E. Carr (Framingham)

*Yes, Ann we agree; except that we could not really discriminate against our faithful readers across the Atlantic. As you know we hope to have financial support from our committees abroad to assist us in keeping in business. Thank you for your help in that project, too.*

## HERE WE COME?

### Editorial

During the present schoolyear the Leaving Certificate boys and girls of Sancta Maria College presented in public in their native Louisburgh Brian Friel's play, *Philadelphia, Here I Come!* Their presentation of this well-known play, their production, acting, characterization, movement and diction have won many well-deserved plaudits for producers, actors and entire stage-team. Because this play figures on their English curriculum for the upcoming final examination, many adults will applaud the decision to stage it publicly. Others will commend the decision for its own worth; apart, that is, from considerations of honours and points in an examination. All must agree that the experience of facing a public audience, especially in one's home town, is one which truly educates. And quite apart from the enjoyment derived by the audience, the venture was beneficial as an integrating influence between home and school. Well done, boys and girls! Congratulations, Sancta Maria!

Friel's play has already had wide acclaim on both sides of the Atlantic. In short, it deals with the conflicts in the life of a young man, Gareth O'Donnell, as he prepares to leave his home, his uncommunicative father, his friends "the boys", and the whole 'scene' in his native Ballybeg to emigrate to Philadelphia. Point, contrast and humour are added to the story by the introduction of standard small-town characters: a matronly house-keeper, a silently dominant shopkeeper-father, a boringly predictable Canon, an elusive girl-friend and her senator father, and a returned emigrant aunt who has (but *has* she?) "made it" abroad. One novel feature disconcerts in a refreshing way: a separate character plays the young man's conscience and gives us insights and reactions – and humour – otherwise inaccessible.

The whole point of the play will not have escaped the very boys and girls in Louisburgh as in many another Irish town who this year are, perforce, turning their minds to the possibility of having to emigrate. In that sense at the very least, this play is preparing them for reality. Thousands of Irish people have recently applied for the "Donnelly visas" to the U.S. and it is likely that there are Louisburgh names among them. The likelihood at the time of writing is that further concessions will be made to increase the quota for Irish citizens. So, emigration to the U.S., legal and illegal, is back with us again. Irish census returns (1986) indicate that 75,000 people emigrated during 1981-6. The estimated nett loss

in the year ending April 1986 was 31,000, which is more than the natural increase of population (28,000) in that same period. Clearly there are two possible reactions to the phenomenon of emigration. One attitude, the oft-repeated one, is that this is a haemorrhage of our most precious resource and that it is tragic that it should be lost to our country. Immense time and national resources and have been employed, at a great cost to an ailing economy, to give our young people what is widely regarded abroad as one of the highest standards of education in the world. There is also the continuing heartbreak of seeing families sundered, perhaps permanently. The other view is that emigration is itself an education; that it affords an unparalleled opportunity for experience for personal development and for self-fulfilment; that Irish communities abroad are in real need of an infusion of young blood and would welcome this new development. It may well be that both of these views are simultaneously true. But it will be good to address the reality which may face our young people in the near future if they find themselves in England, America or (a recently favoured outlet) Australia. Emigrant offices in London issue cautions which may be valid elsewhere too. These are in the main: that one should not travel without adequate information regarding employment and accommodation. Friends or relatives abroad should be contacted beforehand; adequate money for five or six weeks should be brought, identification and other relevant papers, and, if the person has a trade, the necessary tools.

With regard to the general attitude towards our emigrants, perhaps two points are worth making here. We have for decades become accustomed to paying servile gratitude to the host country for giving our people employment which in many cases they could not get at home. It is well to balance up the reality. Irish people who have gone abroad have in very great majority worked well for the country of their adoption. That was true of the famous Galway "Spikers" whose physical strength helped so notably in laying the Central and North Western railway across North America over a century ago. It was true of McAlpine's "Fusiliers" in rebuilding post-war Britain. It is still true of Irish doctors, nurses and technologists anywhere in the world today. We say this, not in any way to denigrate those host countries which they serve and love. The opportunity and boon those countries afforded our people is not in question. In war-time Louisburgh, when the turf-industry gave earnings to which we were wholly unaccustomed, one mother in the parish could find no better way of expressing satisfaction than: "It's England and America to us!" But side by side with such

acknowledgement must be placed the honest return made by our emigrants. It does their worth and dignity great injustice to consider their employment opportunity as, in the bad sense, a 'charity'. They can well hold their heads high in any company: they had returned good service for the secure employment and remuneration they have attained. There is no question of a unilateral benefit. That point should be firmly established.

A new trend is being remarked on in the context of young Irish emigrants arriving recently on the American scene. Because of their standard of education and proficiency they are far more independent than their Irish predecessors at their age. In truth they have a similar independence at home. They are also much more in tune with their own contemporaries in the new country, sharing with them as they do a world-wide pop-culture. As a result they are no longer dependant, as older emigrants were, on uncles or aunts in those colonies and are therefore less likely to fraternize with them. This trend can have the healthy influence of shedding any ghetto mentality. Besides, in view of their present educational experience, it may well help to phase out a too-simplistic understanding of Irishness, and establish what are the real, worthwhile values in the history and culture of our people. However, welcome though all this may be, we feel that our emigrating youth would lose out on a great richness of culture and of identity if they do not make one with the older Irish communities in their new world. They would do well also to temper expectations by a consideration of Friel's returned American, Aunt Lizzie, who – however affluent – is boring and rudderless. America is "just another place to live" an American character says, "Ireland – America – what's the difference?" National boundaries are being eroded by modern influences. A Louisburgh emigrant in the eastern states of America might well set about banking the price of an air-ticket to Ireland, and thereafter feel that he is only five-and-a-half hours from home. (Via Knock, that is!) A neat piece of dramatic irony arose in the Sancta Maria production in that the girl who played Aunt Lizzie might well have been chosen for her accent; she herself having been born in the U.S and is now living in Doughmakeon! Personal problems, like those of Gareth O'Donnell have to be resolved wherever one resides.

An increasing number of Irish school-leavers arrange for a working holiday abroad so as to test the temperature and social or economic climate before making the decision which Gareth faced. Is there a possibility that the cast of *Philadelphia, Here I Come!* (say twenty in all, including stage hands) could combine such a holiday

with an invitation (from the Irish-American Cultural Foundation?) to present this play to Louisburgh and other Irish people abroad? Such a project could have a telling influence on both sides by way of shared experience for practical living.

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## THANK YOU, BOSTON!

*We wish to send our sincere gratitude to the Boston Coinneal committee who in a very short period since their inception have raised a total of \$975.00 for the fund of the magazine. We express our thanks individually to our sponsors in the Boston area by publishing the following acknowledging list. All addresses are from Mass. unless otherwise noted.*

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## LANGUAGE

### Editorial

Item: *The Louisburgh bus squelches its way home from Westport on a wet, December night in the mid-forties. A man, somewhat intoxicated, arrests attention by berating a fellow-traveller for some verbal misdemeanour. (In our boyish way we memorize his text and will later repeat it often with relish.) "How dare you!" he declares. "Before the ladies! . . . Scum! . . . None of your barrack stuff here! . . . Scum of the earth! . . . Before the ladies!" . . .*

Item: *An American correspondent to The Irish Times in December, 1986 expresses disappointment and shock at the vulgarity of language he notices among young Irish people who have just arrived on the American scene from home. His sentiments are shared and supported by other letter-writers to that paper . . .*

Item: *In summer of 1985 a distinguished theatre company, Druid, of Galway city, present in Louisburgh a play called Conversations on a Homecoming. Many people among the audience are disturbed because of the continuing vulgarity of the dialogue throughout the production. Reactions vary. It is a general audience of young and old . . .*

Do we feel that there are proprieties to be observed in questions of deportment, including language, in the public sphere? Do we think that when these proprieties are flouted we should make known our disapproval? *An Choinneal* would reply to each of these questions with a simple *yes*. We think it proper, as the voice of our parishioners, to place some markers as a possible guide to our community members.

A lightweight reaction to the public use of vulgar language is to think it *funny*. We think that is an immature reaction; an adolescent one which may well be understandable in someone who is still in the formative years. It is hardly a mature response to regard *fun* as the sole criterion for behaviour. In *The Screwtape Letters*, C.S. Lewis notes the trick of getting people to lower standards by having them first regard the matter with *flippancy*. The incongruity of a vulgar phrase may well be comical or ludicrous on occasion; but we refer here to the continuing abuse.

A more responsible reaction to the question is to say that this is, in fact, the language of ordinary people nowadays and that to portray it on stage is merely an exercise in authenticity. This is the argument of what is being called realism: it says, in short: "this is

what is happening; why not show it? why pretend things are otherwise?" We would take issue with such a facile theory. We think that not everything that happens in private should therefore be suitable for performance in public. We think it a bit much that one who believes this should be called a hypocrite. We feel that there are areas of natural reserve, of required or natural secrecy, of due restraint, of innate sacredness, which are more than mere convention. There is surely a "realism" about these, too; and it would be a rather selective kind of realism which ignored or disdained it. The case of the *Druid* production referred to might warrant further attention in that context. The theatrical proficiency of *Druid* is not at all being called in question. This company has won well-merited applause and award on the national and international scene. What does seem a pity is that they added this particular play to their repertoire. *Conversations* . . . is mainly just what its title says, *conversation* – in this case in a public house. Its value as drama does not concern us here, but there must be many like those in the Louisburgh audience who will find the repeating profanities and verbal vulgarities not just offensive but tiring in their dreary crudity. That such a prestigious company as *Druid* presents the play, and that they were so well received of late in Sydney, Australia, would appear to give greater rather less concern. The question of an Irish image abroad may not be the prime concern, but it *is* a concern. A letter to the editor from a (non-Louisburgh) friend who attended the performance in Sydney says: "I get very annoyed when I see 'Irish culture' displayed as thick, vulgar, crude and drunk and with every second word 'Jaysus this . . .' and 'Jaysus that . . .' If this does go on in the pubs in Ireland, why promote that image throughout the world? Of course it went down very well with the *Australians!*"

An article by Irish short-story writer, Frank O'Connor, entitled "Love among the Irish" appeared in *Life* magazine about 1949. It is relevant in the present context. In précis, O'Connor's story is that a local drama group, rehearsing *The Shadow of a Gunman*, were prevailed upon by their priest to delete the line "Jesus, Mary and Joseph", which was said by a woman on stage when a gun was fired without warning. "No Catholic Irish woman would say such a thing", he had added. But on the night of the show when the gun was fired, a woman in the audience shouted out "Jesus, Mary and Joseph"! Without questioning the fun of the story or the silliness of the direction, perhaps it is worth noticing that O'Connor has missed, or avoided, one real point. A real point is that the "offending" line was being said on two different levels. That must

surely be a valid marker as to vulgarity in stage language still. (That was the one peccadillo in the *Philadelphia* production referred to in another editorial; and then only a minor one.) Lamentably, such language is in common use and becoming more common. But there is a difference, surely, between expletives in a pub and in a pub-on-stage. Local information is that *Druid* had the sensitivity to tone down (or, technically, to pace up) the offensive language on the Louisburgh night, having listened to earlier Clifden reaction – conveyed to them, of all places, in a local pub! Even O'Connor would like that!

At the risk of being termed prude (another power-weapon of the realist protagonists!) we state clearly that what we call "dirty language" is dirty mainly in the basic sense of that word: it is *out of place*. True, one can become accustomed and become immune to the rudeness. Besides, words will gradually change their meanings and this will "take the badness out of it". But if the purpose is, as appears, to *shock*, then clearly the next step is to shock by going a step downward and to lower the level again. In a quaint sense such a limiting vocabulary might be said to be the proper preserve of the illiterate. The sheer boring repetition of crudities makes an easy instrument for those who seek a short-cut to attention-seeking when they find it difficult to engage in intelligent *conversation*. And Irish people, who are generally attributed with the quality of "having a way with words", should have little need of such a lazy subterfuge.

At the obvious risk of being written off as squeamish we put it to our readers, old and young, that the man in the bus should be listened to. *In vino veritas!* We put it that we should make a unanimous stand against a practice which is anything but uplifting.

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## Where on Earth?

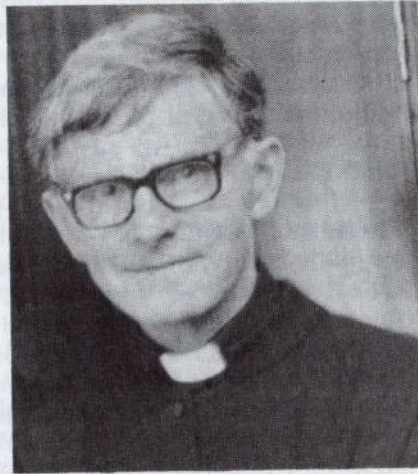
We plan a new feature for our next issue under the title "Where on Earth?" If you have lost contact with a school-friend, or a companion of times gone by, we invite you to write a short open letter (for publication) to that friend. It might just contain a memory from the past, a wish for the present and future, a news-item of interest (nothing private) and a request for an answer through a later Coinneal. The result would very much answer to the general purpose of this magazine.

Well, will you?

– Editor

## GENTLE CHRISTIAN

*He moved gently among us. Few were unaware of his sincere interest in the good of people. Very few knew his level of scholarship. There was nobody who did not admire him; admire him for his simple way of life, for the patent sincerity of his words, for the hidden spiritual reservoir behind such words, and for his genuine concern and humanity for people in their moment of sorrow or trial. He was genuinely missed and lamented when he retired from pastoral work in 1985 and left the parish to return to his Alma Mater in Navan. The people who knew him well give us their thoughts about Father Dan Conneely: his fellow Columban, Father Gerard Marinan; Father Kieran Waldron who shared a house with him for ten years on the Bunowen Road; Jimmy Egan who was Chairman of Killeen Community Council when Father Dan was active with that body; and Una O'Malley who expresses a view of the ordinary parishioner.*



*Father Marinan wrote for An Choinneal the following words of appreciation of his friend:*

Father Dan Conneely was one of three brothers who joined the Society of Saint Columban. The other two were Father Joe (older) and Father Paul (younger). Both have survived Father Dan.

Dan was born 14 January 1911 in Glenamaddy in the diocese of Tuam. His parents were Joseph, and Julia O'Brien. He attended Glenamaddy N.S. (1914-1924) and Saint Mary's College, Galway (1924-1928). He then studied philosophy and theology at Saint Columban's College, Dalgan Park, Shrulce, for seven years. He was ordained on 21 December 1934. He spent a year promoting the cause of the foreign missions before being appointed editor of *The Far East* (Columban magazine), a position he retained for twenty-nine years. He was spiritual director to the students of Saint Columban's College, Dalgan Park, Navan, Co. Meath for a few years and was then released for

special work which he pursued in that college until 1976, when he combined it with pastoral work in the parish of Louisburgh until 1985. When he retired from pastoral work, he returned to Dalgan Park, Navan, to continue his special work. This work was a study of the life of Saint Patrick with special reference to the influence of Saint Augustine on Saint Patrick, something that necessitated enormous research. It was incomplete at the time of his death.

His was a complex personality. He was a tireless worker who was always less than satisfied with his work, because he was a perfectionist. His life-style was methodical. Each day had its allotted time for prayer, work and recreation; only a major crisis could upset that order. He had an extraordinary interest in others, and was always on the look-out for opportunities to help people, whether he knew them or not. He would offer assistance to complete strangers even when it meant grave inconvenience. Frequently, the result was the formation of personal friendships.

He was never proficient at any sport, but took a great interest in sporting events and could discuss them at length. He had very definite, and frequently original ideas on most subjects and was not easily shaken in his opinions by argument. In fact, some would have said he was obstinate. Whether he was or not, he had a rare talent for stimulating conversation and was never boring. The liking that students and other young people had for him shows that he had no trouble in bridging the generation gap.

My own assessment of him, if I had to express it in a few words, would be: he was a good companion. R.I.P.

Navan

(Rev.) Gerard Marinan

*Father Kieran Waldron preached at the Month's Mind Mass for Father Dan in Louisburgh on 22 January 1987. He has kindly given us the text of his homily:*

*"The life and death of each of us has its influence on others; if we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord, so that alive or dead, we belong to the Lord."*

Those of us who knew Father Dan well cannot but have been influenced by him and as we meet to-day to offer this Mass for his soul one month after his unexpected death, we reflect on God's special gifts to him that he used so well to enrich us all. I pass over his thirty years of enormous influence on the Irish Missionary movement through his editorship of *The Far East* for his society, the Columban Fathers. I recall what I knew of him here in Louisburgh.

He was a man with an extraordinary strength of faith. I lived in the same house with him for ten years and therefore I might share with you an experience that taught me something of the strength of that faith. It was during the long telephone strike of 1979 and we received only emergency calls. One morning in June of that year the phone rang before eight o'clock. I went downstairs with some uneasiness to answer it and I received the news that my mother had died suddenly during the night. She had not been feeling well for a little while, but there was no expectation of this. Naturally I was shattered. Father Dan also came out of his bedroom and called down what was the matter. I told him. He said "Thank God". Naturally, I was taken aback but I knew him and what he meant. God and God's salvation was not something on the dim horizon for Father Dan. It was something real and he could therefore only rejoice when God brought another good soul to Himself.

I remembered he told me more than once of how he had felt too when his own mother died many years ago. Perhaps for the only time in his life, I felt his faith was really put to the test. Then one day he came across and understood the mighty meaning of a text of scripture which he had passed over ever before: "We belong to the Lord. This explains why Christ both died and came to life, it was so that he might be Lord both of the dead and the living". I thought it right to select this passage as one of the readings for to-day's Mass. Those words he subsequently chose for his own mother's tombstone.

I had told this experience to Father Dan's brother, Father Paul, before his funeral Mass in Navan and he commented that it was typical of Dan. He was moved to retell it himself at the end of Father Dan's funeral Mass because it resembled so much an incident recounted by Father Gerry Marinan at the homily of the Mass. He had told of a four-year old grand-niece of a priest-friend who had died. When she was told that her grand-uncle whom she always loved and called 'Uncle' had died, she said "Oh I'm so glad." Her mother was shocked and she gave out to her saying "That is a terrible thing to say. I thought you liked your uncle". "Oh, I did", she said "I loved him but I was thinking how nice it will be to meet his mother again." As the psalm says "out of the mouths of babes you have brought praise". The little child had the same wonderful awareness of God that we who knew Father Dan knew he had too. In fact in no conversation I ever heard him in did he omit some reference to God's presence and God's love. He delighted in asking children when he met them, did they know that God loved them. And this was not in words only because as those of us who knew him well would agree, his greatest characteristics was his own appreciation of the greatness of the challenge of Christian love and his willingness to go out of his way to help others, even if he hardly knew them at all.

So the longer he stayed in Killeen and in Louisburgh the more he was inclined to tire himself out in attending to the needs of the people, particularly the sick, the old and the housebound. He had a special feeling for the old people who were living alone and he seldom visited those without bringing some little thing like a magazine, a book or a bag of fruit. He did Communion calls even on Sundays though he would be exhausted, having put his whole being into celebrating two Masses in Killeen. That was his life. He was seventy-six but he never grew old.

With this labour of love which he so enjoyed during his ten years in this area he loved so much, went another labour of love which was known only to very few – because he spoke of it so little. For over twenty-five years he had been working on a study of the theological background to the written works of Saint Patrick. Nobody before had done this obscure and scholarly research and a new understanding of the importance of our National Apostle was emerging. When he died he had accumulated a vast amount of material on the subject, but so far as is known, nothing written in book form. When he visited us here a few months ago, I got at him again to put what he had completed in writing. Again he told me to trust the Lord – what he had done would not be lost. He was a great human and a great man of God. May he rest in peace.

*Jimmy Egan, Chairman of Killeen Community writes:*

*Remote from towns he ran his godly race,  
Nor e'er had changed, nor wished to change his place*

*– Goldsmith*

Many things have changed since Goldsmith wrote his memorable portrait in the "Deserted Village" but the qualities of manliness and godliness Goldsmith so admired in his ideal clergyman were very much alive in our much loved curate Father Dan Conneely, who died in Saint Columban's College, Navan on 20 December 1986. Father Dan arrived in Louisburgh in 1975 for what was intended as a temporary assignment. He was then approaching his mid-sixties, a tall lean and sprightly figure. He quickly involved himself in parish life and soon became a familiar and respected person all over the parish, especially in the Killeen area for which he had special responsibility. Undoubtedly Father Dan made a significant and lasting contribution to the life of the parish, both spiritually and socially. His achievement was due, I believe, to his ability to awaken in his people those qualities which were so evident in his own character: spirit of involvement, a sense of openness and trust, a respect for every person's opinion, a patience to explore any difficulty, an

optimism which said all things were possible, a sense of humour which put all matters in perspective and finally a deep, living faith in Christ who was the guiding star of all his actions.

Father Dan's ten years in Louisburgh co-incided with considerable liturgical change in the parish. The involvement of lay readers, the re-organization of the traditional "stations" into neighbourhood Masses and the introduction of lay ministers of the Eucharist were all actively promoted by Father Dan. It's a reflection of the spirit of involvement which he encouraged that Killeen has probably the highest number of Eucharistic ministers per capita in the diocese. As a missionary priest he was acutely aware of the need for religious vocations and he prayed and preached about it frequently. He made no secret of the joy he experienced in his own priesthood and the fulfillment he felt in "loving and serving all God's people".

This dedication brought him into many clubs and organizations. Probably his best remembered adventure was a fund-raising extravaganza in aid of "Westen Care". Derek Taylor and a local committee arranged to raffle a car to mark the "Year of the Handicapped" and Father Dan was called on to direct operations. Fund-raisers, young and old, went out with pauline zeal to all parts of the county and beyond. Father Dan made no apologies in tapping the sales skills or purses of all and sundry. Almost £20,000 for "Western Care", an intimate knowledge of the geography of Mayo, Galway and Roscommon, new bonds of friendship and a wealth of memories were the more obvious benefits of the project. Community development was Father Conneely's most abiding interest. He was a founder-member and an inspirational figure in Killeen Community Council from 1977. Looking at the parish with its inherent disadvantages and the haemorrhage of emigration he lived the idea that rather than "curse the darkness" we should draw on all our resources of energy, talent and imagination to build a better future. In this context the occasion of the turning of the sod for Louisburgh's first factory (now Nomadic Structures Ltd.) was a particularly proud day for him.

No tribute to Father Dan would be complete without reference to his care and devotion to the old, the sick and those living alone. A busy man, he was never a man in a hurry and as well as bringing them the sacraments of the Church he ensured that their physical requirements were catered for. He kept them in touch with local happenings and brought them to the hope, and the humour and the warmth of his own personality.

His departure from the parish, to return to his Society house in Navan was an occasion of widespread sorrow. The huge attendance at a farewell function in Killadoon Beach Hotel was testimony to the esteem in which he was held.

Like his good friend Canon John Fitzgerald (R.I.P.), he left this life without much fuss or ceremony – just as he would have wished. A severe pre-Christmas frost on wet roads conspired to prevent hundreds of his parishioners travelling to Navan to pay their last respects. I'm sure his greater wish would be that the spirit he fostered in his years among us would continue to grow.

May it be his lasting memorial.

Beatha Shíoraí dá anam dílis.

Jimmy Egan

*Una O'Malley (Kinnadoohey) remembers the preacher:*

The principal theme of the late Father Conneely's sermons was *the love of God*. He was always trying to impress on his flock the infinite, everlasting love of Our Saviour. My abiding memory of our dear, departed curate will be of seeing him standing at the lectern in Killeen with his left arm extended towards the Cross over the Altar saying: "If you want to know what each of us means to Jesus Christ, look at him hanging there, having given the last drop of his precious blood for us."

Úna O'Malley

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#### THE CLOCK OF LIFE

The clock of life is wound but once  
And no man has the power  
To know just where the hand will stop  
At late or early hour.  
To lose one's wealth is bad indeed:  
To lose one's health is more:  
To lose one's soul is worst of all  
For no man can restore.  
The present only is our own  
Live, love with a will;  
Place no faith in to-morrow  
For the clock may then be still.

(Contributed by Alice Sammon)

## A CLASS PRODUCTION

*Two Sancta Maria students give an inside report and critique of their classfellow's dramatic presentation:*

On the 26th and 28th of September the Leaving Certificate class of Sancta Maria College presented Brian Friel's *Philadelphia, Here I Come!* to the Louisburgh public. It was a tremendous success and was received very well, being the type of play to which Irish people can easily relate. It is the story of *Gar O'Donnell* who, faced with a routine life of drudgery with his uncommunicative father in the family grocery shop, and his frustrated love for *Kathy Doogan*, accepts his aunt's invitation to go to Philadelphia. The play, set on the eve of his departure, is about his torture of indecision as he encounters many of his Ballybeg acquaintances and awaits a word or gesture of affection which might hold him back. Despite his fantasies about his prospects in America he has qualms about leaving his familiar home life. It is a truly emotional play, providing wit and humour as well as heart-rending sadness.

Its being on the Leaving Certificate course, and its being a three-act play, didn't at first endear *Philadelphia, Here I Come!* to us. The play involved a complex double main role with two actors playing conflicting aspects of the principal character, Gar. There were flashbacks of memory from Gar's past, with a touch of romance and, in places, social satire. All this had to be incorporated into the production with great sensitivity, involving many sudden changes of mood. Soon, however, after the initial try-outs the various characters were chosen and the performers enthusiastically tackled their respective roles. Months of practice lay before the class, each practice bringing the group closer together, and a sense of good will and a spirit of co-operation was built up. At first, under the diligent guidance of Mr. Egan and Mr. Fetherston, various scenes were performed again and again in a piecemeal fashion; and gradually, with an incredible enthusiasm, the play began to take shape.

John Kelly (as *Public Gar*) and Tommie Morahan (*Private Gar*) developed an ease of combining the two perspectives of the central character and soon these scenes were going smoothly. Clodagh Keegan became that slow, shuffling housekeeper (*Madge*), the mother-figure in Gar's life, and was soon conveying the familiarity of her presence in the O'Donnell household. The romantic scenes between Gar and Kathy Doogan, the love of his life, were brought alive by Sarah Williams. John F. O'Malley played the role of the concerned father; Chris Maxwell became totally submerged in the role of the ever-predictable, irritatingly

indifferent *S.B. O'Donnell* (Gar's father); and David Morahan filled the role of Gar's pathetic old schoolmaster, who calls to say goodbye and stirs up some heart-rending, nostalgic memories. As the practices continued Kevin Kerr, Michael McConnell and Martin O'Malley took over the stage with their garrulous, loud-mouthed antics, as "The Boys" calling to say goodbye: Kevin as the aggressive, larger-than-life leader, Michael as his right-hand man ever agreeing on cue, and Martin as the innocent member of the group divided in loyalty between them and Gar. The American scene came along splendidly, with Helen O'Malley as the over-emotional and loud *Aunt Lizzy*; Joe Scanlon as her American husband; and Donal as *Ben Burton*, their friend.

The performers became so deeply involved in their roles that we found the class quoting lines and calling each other by their stage-names. Practice continued and the play was enacted over and over again with major and minor adjustments and the adding of extra little touches. Even though my job as prompter and stage-hand entailed a careful concentration on the script, with each rehearsal I found myself always laughing at the ridiculous antics of Gar and the exaggerated antics of the



*The Cast of Sancta Maria College Louisburgh production of Philadelphia Here I Come*  
Front row: Chris Maxwell, John Kelly, Clodagh Keegan, Helen O'Malley, Sarah Williams, Tommy Morahan.  
Back row: Martin O'Malley, Kevin Kerr, David Morahan, Edward Ball, Joe Scanlon, John F. O'Malley, Michael McConnell, Donal O'Malley.



“Boys”. I often was almost moved to tears by the sheer frustration and sorrow of Gar as Kate calls to say goodbye and he waits for his father to ask him to stay.

As well as practising for the actual play, we had to see to the organizing of the stage. Those in the woodwork class spent laborious hours constructing a set and painting it. Various people contributed to the stage props, and soon the atmosphere of a rural house in a small Donegal village was created. Background music was chosen by Donal O’Malley, and Father Waldron carefully planned the lighting, which enhanced many scenes. Throughout the practices the actors began to piece together suitable attire and thus the wardrobe was organized.

At last, opening night arrived. As part of the stage-crew, and together with Jane Eva McCormack, I shared all the nervous excitement and apprehension of opening night without having to brave the spotlight ourselves. I watched as all the performers scurried to and fro seeing to last-minute touches, boosting each other’s confidence, and casting furtive glances at the gathering audience through a chink in the curtains! Backstage, everyone watched smiling as Father Waldron transformed each character before our eyes with make-up. I saw my classmates age by many years, complete with grey hair and wrinkles! Months of working together under the guidance of Mr. Egan and Mr. Fetherston were finally drawing to an exciting climax and my colleague in stage-crew (Jane Eva) and I smiled proudly to each other as the curtain went up on the first act.

Carramore

Clíona McHale

The play *Philadelphia Here I Come!* by Brian Friel was part of the Leaving certificate curriculum for 1987. In April 1986, the Fifth Year students decided to produce the play on stage, and they went to Dublin to see it being staged in the Gaiety Theatre by professionals. Rosaleen Linehan (*Madge*) and Lorcan Cranitch (*Gar Public*) headed the cast which also contained actors familiar to us from the television screen:- Robert Carrickford (Stephen Brennan in *Glenroe*), John Cowley (who used to be Tom Riordan in *The Riordans*), and Barry Lynch (Matt Moran in *Glenroe*). The group were lucky to be allowed backstage to get a closer view of the set and to meet Rosaleen Linehan and Lorcan Cranitch.

### The Characters:

*Gar O’Donnell (Public)* – Son of the house who’s leaving for America in the morning because he’s fed up with life in Ireland. This play is very topical as so many of today’s youth are emigrating to America.

*Gar O’Donnell (Private)* – he is the man *within*, the conscience, and the secret thoughts of Gar O’Donnell.

*Madge* – Housekeeper of the O’Donnell household and confidant of Gar’s.

*S. B. O’Donnell* – Gar’s father and a County Councillor. A quiet and solitary man who feels he must hide his true feelings.

*Kate Doogan/Mrs. King* – Daughter of Senator Doogan and once sweetheart of Gar’s.

*Senator Doogan* – Kate’s father who thinks the world of his daughter.

*Master Boyle* – Local schoolmaster and amateur poet. Unfortunately he is also an alcoholic.

*Lizzy Sweeney* – Gar’s aunt, sister to Gar’s dead mother, Máire. Lizzy Sweeney is the effusive Irish-American.

*Con Sweeney* – Lizzy’s husband, a quiet man who has a great love for his wife.

*Ben Burton* – American friend of the Sweeney’s.

*Ned* – Leader of “The Boys”, Ned has a rough and vulgar character.

*Tom* – A follower of Ned’s, tries hard to be as Ned expects one of them. His loyalty is divided between “The Boys” and his sadness at Gar’s departure.

*Canon Mick O’Byrne* – Parish Priest of Ballybeg.

### First Showing

The first show, for the teachers and pupils of Sancta Maria College, was given at the end of May, 1986, just before the summer holidays. The actors were as nervous as if they were going before the unsuspecting public. Apart from one of the props falling down, it went without a hitch. The reaction, both from the other pupils and from the teachers, was favourable.

### Public Showing

There were two shows for the public in late September and the cast played to packed houses. A busload of students from the girls’ schools at Westport and Castlebar also came. The reaction from the audiences on both nights was enthusiastic, and there was a general feeling that the whole project was a success.

Each of the cast played well and brought to life the parts that they acted. Most notable was Tommie Morahan, who played *Private Gar*, who had long speeches which required a lot of work. The character of

*Gar Public* also required a lot of work. John Kelly had to contend with mood change and being on the stage all the time.

Two of the female parts were also exceptionally difficult because of their age. *Madge* and *Lizzie Sweeney* were both fifty-five to sixty years old, and the teenage actors, Clodagh Keegan and Helen O'Malley, managed very well to give the impression of being elderly. Clodagh, besides, had to bear the discomfort of a wig. Helen O'Malley did not have to try very hard to produce an American accent as she lived for part of her life in The United States!

*S. B. O'Donnell* was played excellently by Christopher Maxwell, especially in the scene which he played with Edward Ball as the Canon. Like a good trouper, Edward one night played the part after a visit to the dentist.

Sarah Williams played *Gar's* girlfriend, *Kate Doogan*, and although the age of the character was near her own, it still required much skill. The scene with "The Boys" generated a realistic amount of rowdiness, and presented no problem to Kevin Kerr, Michael McConnell and Martin O'Malley.

David Morahan was padded with pillows and extra clothing to achieve the correct appearance for the part of Master Boyle, and credit is due to Father Waldron's excellent make-up artistry in making him look as if he had a hard night's drinking.

Although none of the parts were easy, one of the less taxing ones was that played by Donal O'Malley. The American, *Ben Burton*, was only required by the playwright "to sit smiling into his glass most of the time".

The supporting roles of *Con Sweeney* and *Senator Doogan* were ably played by Joseph Scanlon and John F. O'Malley.

At the public showing Siobhán Harney acted as presenter.

Thallabawn

Michelle Viney

## Remembering Sion . . .

*I remember picking up this curious rhyme somewhere in my younger days and finding it entertaining and funny:*

*Where can a man find a cap for his knee or a key for the lock of his hair?*

*Should his eyes be called an academy because he has pupils there?*

*In the crown of his head what gems do you find?*

*Who crosses the bridge of his nose?*

*Can he, when mending the roof of his mouth*

*use the nails from the ends of his toes?*

*Can anyone remember where it comes from? and is there more?*

— Oliver P. Morahan

## OPPORTUNITIES

*Under this general title four young parishioners comment on aspects of parish life that are changing or developing and consequently deserve thought and attention. — Editor*

### Farming Changes

*How has the farming community in the parish had to adapt to the changes of modern living and the innovations imposed by our membership of the European Economic Community? Two contributors outline what is happening in the farms now.*

Until some time in the early sixties this parish was an area of mixed farming. Farming at that time entailed poultry-raising, vegetable-growing, and the raising of sheep, pigs and cattle. There were milch cows in practically every farmstead. This, however, soon changed because of the introduction of dairying and the consequent decision by farmers to specialize or intensify their operation in that line. One visible change today in all livestock enterprises is the black polythene mounds of silage which have for the most part replaced the little ricks of hay. It must be agreed that this change has aided productivity in the industry of farming.

### Dairying

Dairying as a serious farming option was introduced into the parish in the early sixties through the efforts and commitment of Mr. Patrick McMyler and Father Joe Moran, who then taught at Sancta Maria. Milk collections were organized through the parish and the milk was sold to the Castlebar creamery. From then onwards the quality of herds improved through the introduction of the Friesian breed and selective breeding aided by the opening of the Artificial Insemination office in Westport. The net result was that the sales of milk from the parish were continually on the increase into the nineteen-eighties. Sadly however, the dairy industry had reached its peak by 1986, because of the infamous "milk super-levy". This levy means that farmers will be penalized for any gallons they supply over the amount which they sent in in the year 1983-84, which was being used as a base from which to assess. To make the situation worse, it is even envisaged now that a further linear cut of 5½% will be imposed on all quotas by April 1988. Compensation will,

fortunately, be paid at the rate of 38p per gallon. But the EEC powers inform us that even these measures are not enough, so that a Milk Cessation Scheme is now being introduced, to entitle farmers to 23p per gallon on their quota for a period of seven years if they voluntarily give up their right to sell milk!

The events of the last two years mean that many farmers are restricted from any further development. This leaves a number of farmers midway through their long-term farm-plan in which they had made considerable investment; and they cannot be sure as to which direction is the better for them to turn. On the bright side, however, *North Connacht Farmer*, (a western co-operative enterprise) is currently paying good prices for milk and is one of the top ten co-ops as regards top price per gallon.

### **Beef-raising**

Any Louisburgh person over the age of sixteen will surely remember the "fair days". So the beef industry must have existed for quite a long time in the parish. The fair days are now, of course, a thing of the past almost; today marts are the main sales areas. The average herd in recent times is on the increase, due largely again to our entry into the EEC. This entry helped development by opening markets and allowing grants for farm improvements. The increase is also due in some measure to the supply of calves from the specialized dairy-farmer who is now concentrating on dairy livestock. As distinct from dairy-farming, beef-farming has the option of two different methods, suckling or feeding. In the case of sucklings, there is the further possible option of single or double rearing, and some more intensive farmers have been rearing up to four calves per cow. In general, the future at the moment looks good. There is an evident swing away from the traditional breeds of Aberdeen-Angus, Hereford and Shorthorn to the continental breeds such as Charolais, Simmental and Limousine which result in improved carcass grades. Provided the ruling powers in Europe do not introduce restrictions, beef should remain a thriving sector of modern farming.

### **Alternative farming**

The pig-industry in the parish is now confined to three highly successful, intensive farmers. It must be difficult for Louisburgh people away from home to believe this in view of the fact that in bygone times every farmer reared at least one pig per year. Another real alternative is the private planting of trees. Afforestation has already begun on this private level in the parish and is set to increase, with five people stating that they will plant trees within the next five years. (*AnCo Louisburgh Survey, 1986*). Mr. Justin Sammin, who is Project Officer at Louisburgh Resource Centre, has commissioned a Macra na Feirme report on forestry which shows that the area is highly suitable for afforestation.

Since the Department of Forestry is giving an 80% grant towards private afforestation, farmers with marginal land will be encouraged to engage in what might well be a lucrative investment. Mr. Seán Horkin A.C.O.T. (Limerick) is a consultant in Alternative Farming. He is aiding developments in such diverse and unusual projects as: goats, rabbits, deer, and even snails! If anyone has an idea and wants help in any agricultural project, A.C.O.T. are willing to help with advice. These are sectors of modern farming which are not to be laughed at, as in other regions they have already been tried and are in fact giving employment. Farm guest-houses are also a real means of supplementing the farm income; but for the guest-house to be more attractive and marketable it must have other facilities (such as, for instance, pony-rides) available.

### **Education**

As farming is becoming more intensive the Department recognizes that, to be able to manage more effectively, farmers need to be further educated. Hence the Department now requires that to qualify for grants under the farm improvement programme young farmers (of seventeen and younger) must at least have the Green Certificate education. This certificate is got by following a three-year course (part-time), run by the local A.C.O.T. offices and which includes three months farm placement. In Mayo we have an agricultural college at Ballinacorney near Balla; and this, as well as Mountbellew college, has trained and continues to train young Louisburgh farmers. A.C.O.T. also run many successful seminars and farm-walks during the year and these are well attended. Miss Teresa Nyland (Louisburgh development officer) in winter 1986 organized a farmer course over six weeks and covering all aspects of agriculture.

It is difficult to predict what direction agriculture will take in the coming years. It does seem certain that the acreage of afforestation will increase. This in turn will, we hope, create employment; and so many of our young people will not have to leave the area.

Accony Thiar

Pat Prendergast

### **Sheep-farming**

Within the last twenty years sheep-farming has changed considerably. Prior to 1960 or thereabouts, each farmer kept a few sheep, mainly for their wool. The wool was used for making people's own clothes. Large flocks of sheep were owned by landlords and were kept on the hills. The tradition then was that a farmer sold no lambs: he let them "run on" for three or four years and then sold them, fat, to the

local butchers. The main disadvantage of this method was the high mortality rate of lambs. They were left on the hill along with their mothers and as a result, during the first winter, a high percentage of those lambs died and their mothers were very weak. Out of every hundred lambs born, people were lucky if they eventually sold twenty-five wethers at four years old. Of course in those days a farmer never thought of, and maybe never heard of, dosing or feeding the lambs and their mothers. The only real gain therefore was the large collection of wool off the sheep for the four years before they were sold.

Now, with more modern methods and with EEC grants, sheep-farming has inevitably changed. Most hill farmers have some good land beside the hill land. The method now is to save this land for the winter months and to manure it early in spring. For these months the ewes are kept on the mountain and are fed meals. They are then brought on to the green land for lambing in early spring; and there they remain until the first day of June, when they are returned to the mountain with a strong lamb at foot. The green land is then manured again and a crop of silage is cut off it by the middle of July. On 1 August the lambs are weaned off the ewes and brought in on the after-grass to be fattened and sold.

By practising this method of sheep-farming, a farmer is keeping less sheep over the winter months and those that he does keep are better managed and better fed. Furthermore, besides qualifying for the EEC headage grant and ewe premium, he has now a more saleable product at the end of the year.

Shraugh

Jimmy Scott

## Traditions

One of our oldest traditional skills, practised especially by older ladies, was that of tracing relations. It was unusual that the family memory went back six or seven generations, and occasionally it might extend to ten or even twelve. An expert tracer could recite all the network of marriage affinity as far as sixth or seventh cousins! Such recitings formed a regular part of the family tradition which was discussed around a winter fire, so that the knowledge continued to be handed on to some of the young people listening. That tradition is not alive today. Our ancestors were also excellent weather-prophets, and their glance at the sky was all-important. In one look they took in the meaning of half-a-dozen different signs, e.g. a halo around the moon

meant rain, and the farther out from the moon the sooner the rain would come. Some forecasters used long, hung-up strips of seaweed to foretell the coming of rain or dry weather, as dampness made the seaweed soft and limp. To this day observations like "it's soft" or "it's a hardy day", are still made among the older generation. But the traditional skill of reading the weather seems to have long since died.

Spinning was done by the women and girls, who gathered into each other's houses and chatted or sang while they spun. So much was this a normal part of a woman's work that it has given us the term *spinster*. Spinning was followed by weaving and bleaching until the cloth was ready to be dyed in a choice of natural colours. The long and complicated series of processes from spinning the wool to the finished garment occupied an important place in the work of our ancestors. Its gradual yielding to newer methods and materials in the making of clothing is an example of the change from old self-sufficiency to modern life.

Traditional games for children have also been replaced by modern pastimes. "Hopscotch" was an intricate game which involved hopping through chalk-drawn numbered squares on one foot. "Donkey" was a ball-game in which the ball was thrown from hand to hand and the child who dropped it became *D*. If he dropped it a second time he became *DO*, and so until he became *DONKEY*. There was "Tig", "Red Lights", "Blind Man's Buff", "Fishes", "Ring-A-Rosy", "High Gates" and many more. A detailed description of these games would reveal their value in fostering the creative and imaginative resources in children. As most of the games were played in groups children learned how to listen, how to take criticism and defeat, and how to be fair. In this way, the games were both enjoyable and educational while also providing children with a structured form of socialization.

Proverbs played a leading role in traditional everyday conversation. There were proverbs to suit every occasion and topic; proverbs about religious beliefs, health, love and marriage, wealth and poverty, green hills far away, and one's own home being the best of all. Some proverbs even contradicted each other, which shows how all sides of the experience were taken into account. There was a time when we heard these gems of wisdom spoken frequently, but the times are changing and "you never miss the water till the well runs dry"!

Some of the more-recently fading customs include the "Brídeogs", who once heralded the advent of spring, by celebrating Saint Brigid's feast day publicly. It was also customary to make crosses from rushes at that time of year and call them 'Saint Brigid's Crosses'. The delicate skill entailed in making these is in danger of being lost. The traditional fair-day and the pattern have had their day! Christmas traditions like family

visits to the crib and the lighted candles on the window are definitely waning. The traditional shop, complete with labelled drawers, weighing-scales, brown paper-bags and hearty conversation does not exist anymore. The year nineteen-eighty-six witnessed the death of two more traditions, the bonfire on the feast of Saint John and the traditional church-bells at midnight on New Year's Eve. Neither an echo nor a spark remained.

Most of our traditions are slowly becoming memories. However, this was not the intention of our ancestors when they handed us on these customs and practices which they valued most. For them, traditions were as much a part of the future as the past; and they entrusted them to us to be revitalized within our own experience. It is up to our generation then to make some provision within our own life-style for the transmission of past customs, skills and values to future generations. We are in effect a mediatory generation as we understand both the language of traditionalism and modernism. It is our onus, then, to translate past traditions into a tangible and meaningful reality for those who follow.

Dublin

Alexandra Lyons

## *Tourism*

As a country we can offer any visitor to our shores the finest of everything, barring the weather. But there's the rub! We can *offer*, but at what price. A group of Americans came on holiday to Ireland in 1986 and spent a few days in the thatched cottages here in Louisburgh. On their arrival in Shannon, they hired a minibus at the hefty price of seventy pounds *a day!* What with the cottage rental and money for food, a week's stay must have cost them a small fortune. Their main gripe, however, was not about the weather or the cost of living, but about the car-hire. Considering the price of petrol on top of all that, they found driving around Ireland a costly experience. The local tourist organization must make representations to relevant authorities about the cost of car-hire to tourists in this country, for it is places like Louisburgh that will ultimately lose out, because of our remoteness and distance from airports, and points of entry.

## **Keeping Louisburgh Tidy**

Speaking as one who had the dubious pleasure of sweeping the streets of Louisburgh the day before Corpus Christi last year, I was ashamed. I was ashamed, not because of the job I had to do, but of the fact that people could be so careless about the few feet of pathway outside their houses or shops. The moss allowed to grow in the crevices between the kerbing and along the foot of the wall belies some of the best-kept residences in the country and proves unsightly to any visitor. A few minutes twice a year, spent by each resident on the particular piece of pavement outside his, or her, residence would stop the moss and dirt from gathering. As our day came to an end, a shop-owner decided to clean his eave-gutters on one of the streets we had just cleaned! Ironically enough, his shop depends entirely on the tourist trade! When this was coupled with the unleashing of the students (who really should know better) in the evening, our day's work faded in a blizzard of sweet-papers. I have nothing but sympathy for the regular streetcleaner.

The town itself will never be allowed to show its true elegance until all the old sheds and buildings are demolished or renovated. Some are becoming a threat to safety, as well as taking away from the presentation of the town. The dumping of dead animals into the sea, and rubbish along the banks of the river, and the indiscriminate dumping of old cars, has become a persistent feature of life in the parish in recent years. It is a feature of life of which we cannot be proud.

## **Amenities**

The Pitch-and-Putt Course has certainly been a welcome addition to Louisburgh's list of amenities. This is a game for young and old, for tourist and native alike. With proper maintenance and advertising, it will prove to be a real moneyspinner, and worthwhile attraction. As everyone knows, children can be pests, even more so when on holiday; and parents are always looking for something to distract them for a while.

When I worked at the Pitch-and-Putt Course, I received numerous enquiries about the children's playground. I would urge the community council to speed up its completion.

## **Activities**

Practically every town or city has its own festival or celebrations these days, e.g. Tralee has its Roses, Galway has its races. Everyone seems to remember the festivals in Louisburgh in the late sixties and early seventies with the singing pubs etc. A festival nowadays should consist of something like that with lighthearted events and a special emphasis on nighttime activities e.g. folk sessions, or barbeques.

Louisburgh has lots of musical families so why not a talent competition? or an amateur music festival?

Surely the seas around us could provide us with an angling competition or two during the day; or boat-races, or water-skiing competitions. A capable mountain guide could arrange an exploratory trip up the beautiful mountains that surround the parish.

The local authority should be made aware of the state of the by-roads and beach access roads in the area and the further development of Horan Airport, near Knock, should be demanded and assisted by every one of us.

Not having seen the promotional video of Louisburgh, I can only imagine that it will be of benefit to the area. We must now ensure that we live up to the image created by the video. There really is no reason why we cannot do this. We are surrounded by sand, sea, mountains, and "lovely people", (all the clichés, we possess them all!) But somehow, in the past we have only been a stop-over on the way to Leenane and elsewhere. We must change this. We must work harder at selling it, and be careful not to over-price it.

Askelane

Patrick Conway

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## Remembering Sion . . .

*It was a beautiful Sunday afternoon in August 1939; five girls of us had arranged to climb Muilrea to conquer its 2614 feet that day. We took with us a few sandwiches in case of the féar gortach that was supposed to be in the hills and mountains. Passing by a shop we bought cigarettes to smoke on top in celebration of getting there.*

*We took the ascent at a steady pace, keeping along a stream for guidance. After some rests and much laughter we reached the top, the very peak on the south-west end. It was great to sit there and see the view of Connemara and all the surrounding countryside. We ate our lunch and then (imprudent girls!) smoked our first cigarettes there on that unforgettable mountain-top.*

## WATER MUSIC

*Whatever romantic associations might linger in our imaginations as to the pleasure of "going to the well", and whatever social opportunities the village well offered as a rival for the local forge, nobody can seriously question the benefit to a rural people of a piped water supply. It has been well said that running water in a home is as good as a household servant. For that reason few community schemes can be as significant, in image and in reality, as a community water scheme. Small wonder that Louisburgh Community Council at its inception in 1982 set before itself as a priority the provision of running water in every home in the parish. It was an ambitious aim, but on 15 November 1986 this ideal was realized when the Laughta Group water scheme was officially opened. The sub-committee delegated by the Council to take charge of this project consisted of: Patrick Ketterick (Chairman), Mary O'Malley (Secretary) and other trustees, Séamus Maxwell, Michael O'Reilly and John McConnell. Mr. Patrick Ketterick, happily recovered from a recent illness, gives his own impressions of the work involved in this achievement:*



*At the opening of the Leachta Water Scheme  
Foreground L. to R.: Martin J. O'Toole, Enda Kenny, Patrick Durcan, Denis Gallagher, Gabriel Joyce (Contractor), Michael Reilly, Denis Waldron, Séamus Maxwell, Johnnie MacConnell, Patrick Kitterick, Rev. Tadhg Ó Móráin, Mary O'Malley, Denis McCarthy (Bank of Ireland).*

The recent promotional video which underlines the tourist and economic potential of Louisburgh area has been highly acclaimed, and

those involved in its production deserve all our congratulations. The vista of mountain range, waterfalls and unspoiled beaches as portrayed on a television screen can only prompt us to repeat what has been often said already, that this is God's own country and that the people who have built a church on top of a mountain must be God's own people. There are many scenic areas in our locality which, because of their location, are not well known. One such area is Log a' Locháin, the source of the Bunowen River. Here we have a large lake, several hundred feet above sea-level and, as it were, tucked into the brow of the hill. It has a setting and seclusion which truly make it unique; and its pure, spring water spills over the edge of the precipice and down through the rocky gorges in miniature niagaras. This, too, is the source of the Laughta Group water scheme which was opened officially in November.

The details of the scheme may well be of interest to readers. The actual work meant the laying of ten thousand metres of four-inch main pipes to service fifty-five houses. Because of the sparse population this was spread over a nine-square-mile area through the villages of Laughta, Shranacloy, Tully, Shraigh, Ballyhip, Dereen and Mullagh.

The contractors were Joyce Brothers, Ayle, Westport, and the total contract price was £125,000. A total grant of £55,400 was allocated by the Department of the Environment, and Mayo County Council made a special subvention of £31,000. Because of the contours of the area being served, the scheme is gravity-fed and the pure water which it now supplies is a God-given gift which every member of the whole community should cherish as a precious resource. Because of the proportions of the undertaking, and in such a remote and widespread area, there were doubts about the possibility of finishing the task. A special public meeting was called in the Parochial Hall and was attended by all the public representatives. A deputation was sent from that meeting to the Department of Environment and they put up a strong case for support. Compliments were paid later to the Minister of State, Mr. Fergus O'Brien, who had received the deputation, listened attentively, was impressed and gave a commitment to assist, and then honoured his commitment.

On the day of the actual opening of the scheme our parish priest, Father Tadhg Ó Móráin, gave a special blessing to the scheme and in a sermon some time later he mentioned the contribution which voluntary groups are making in our society. A reception was held on the day of the opening and this was attended by public representatives, the trustees, the local priests, the contractors and others who were directly connected

with the project. It was noticeable during the after-dinner speeches that politicians of different political parties were very united and even complimentary of each other, but this was indicative of the spirit which obtained all through the cooperative work involved with the scheme. A very well-earned tribute was paid to our secretary, Mary O'Malley. Her personal contribution to the success of the scheme was enormous, especially through her great efficiency and persistence in constant communication with the Department and other officials as was needed. Among the other people who were thanked for their help in the work of the scheme were: Gabriel and Tommie Joyce, (contractors); Mr. Michael O'Malley, (County Manager); Messrs Jerry O'Loughlin and Denis Waldron, (engineers); Messrs Enda Kenny, Martin Joe O'Toole, Pádraic Flynn, Denis Gallagher and Patrick Durkan (politicians) and Mrs. Bríd O'Toole. Many of these were present at the reception.

It was indeed an honour for me to have been chairman of our community council for this year and I heartily agree with the expressions of gratitude to all who were involved.

Leachta

Pádraic S. Mac Citric

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## ÓRÓ SÉ DO BHEATHA ABHAILE!

*Despite the incidence of emigration from the home parish, we are continually heartened to note the return to their native heath of people who have spent some years abroad. An Choinneal now welcomes back to the parish community the following people who have returned in the past few years:*

*Mr and Mrs Keegan to Collacoon*

*Sally Gavin to Main Street*

*Tommie Hunt to Church Street*

*Mr and Mrs Kilcoyne to Cregganacoppul*

*Mr and Mrs Patrick O'Grady to Althore*

*Mr and Mrs Edward O'Malley to Westport Road*

*Mr and Mrs Michael O'Grady to Old head, and*

*Mr and Mrs Martin Staunton and family to Aillemore*

## SANCTA MARIA COLLEGE

Nothing has changed and much has changed. Many who read this article remember Sancta Maria College (or "the Convent") as a small, struggling centre of education in the Louisburgh of the 'forties and 'fifties. Indeed one may fairly state that our school of those days formed the mind, the spirit and the character of many a fine boy and girl. Nothing has changed, in the sense that the Christian vision which inspired its foundation remains the basic philosophy of the school. And much has changed, in that Sancta Maria College has progressed to an adulthood of almost two hundred students in most modern surroundings.

So, what is Sancta Maria all about? In 1920 it was founded by the Sisters of Mercy as Ireland's first Catholic co-educational school. There were about thirty students then. The *new* school buildings were opened and blessed on 7 April 1986. This new school is a monument to the teachers of the years gone by and will always stand as a tribute to the Sisters of Mercy and to their work in Louisburgh.

The school has all the facilities needed for a modern post-primary education. It is furnished with those aids and extras which should be taken for granted nowadays. The rooms are spacious, bright and well designed; comfortable, but not a hindrance to the student's learning process. There are the usual standard class rooms, a Geography room, Science laboratory, Domestic Science Kitchen, Computer room and Gymnasium. Each student has a personal individual locker; and there is a tasteful indoor circulation area for those wet days. The spacious library has yet to reach its full potential. Courses provided include: Computer Science, Physics/Chemistry, Woodwork and Building Construction, Physical Education, Home Economics, Irish, English, History, Geography, Mathematics, Office Procedure, Religion and Commerce. The college has a Community Care programme and a Project for the Integrated Provision of Education (P.I.P.E.) programme. This programme is an official Department of Education innovation; and for the juniors subjects include: Agriculture, Food Technology, Computers, Communications, Domestic Appliances, Car Maintenance and Electricity. A new programme of vocational preparation and training is being designed and may be on stream by next year. Students can avail themselves at present, too, of a well-stocked book-store; they can enjoy the facilities of their own shop, and exercise themselves on the many courts and playing fields.



*At the opening of Sancta Maria  
Father Kieran Waldron, Denis Gallagher, Tom Carr (Architect), Martin Joe O'Toole,  
Archbishop Joseph Cunnane, Enda Kenny, Patrick Kitterick, Sister Ann Feighney, Rev.  
Tadhg Ó Móráin, Pádraic Flynn, Patrick Durcan.*

One of the most interesting changes that have come about recently concerns the management of the school and the invitation to parents to engage in the education process. A very hard-working Parents' Association is a wonderful source of inspiration to Sancta Maria College, while school management itself now includes representatives of teachers, parents and trustees. Mother M. Gertrude and Sister Columba Waldron arrived in Louisburgh on 7 October 1919: I am sure that they would be impressed now! And parents nowadays, too, can be happy in their children's education at Sancta Maria College. I quote from the Statement of School Policy and Objectives:

"Moral education in accordance with Catholic principles shall form a part of the religious education programme. Care shall be taken in the imparting of knowledge in allied courses that the moral principles, value and beliefs of the home and the Church shall be scrupulously and implicitly respected."



## LOUISBURGH'S GREATEST NEED

*The following article was presented for a symposium in Coinneal Number Fourteen but was mislaid in our files. Our apologies to Brendan, whose article should now be read in the context of December 1984. – Editor*

My initial thoughts on this subject made me realize just how unqualified I am to make any diagnosis that such a title demands. I say this because I am now in my seventh year living away from Louisburgh. Consequently I see the parish only at holiday-time, and the impressions I get then might be a slight distortion of reality. In other words, my suggestions are those of a part-time inhabitant. Assuming a fair knowledge of the locality and its people, my task is to define their greatest "need". The word "need" has several dimensions – psychological, spiritual, social, economic etc. – too numerous to treat here. I focus my attentions on the economic needs for two reasons: firstly it is my opinion that it is less controversial than the other areas, and secondly it is less of a delve into the darkness for me. With that then I will proceed to outline what I consider Louisburgh's greatest *economic* need.

Ever since time began man's greatest economic need has been *energy*. In prehistoric times this need was satisfied by the discovery of fire. As man interacted more and more with his environment his demand for energy increased. Indeed his demand for energy has never been greater than at present; so much so that there is a danger of the demands exceeding the supply. In Louisburgh we meet our energy needs by importing many of the conventional sources i.e. oil, coal, electricity etc. We also harness a few of the bogs in the area to supplement these imports. But turf is not the only form of energy Louisburgh has to offer. The last few years we have been blessed with plenty of golden sunshine, which after all is the ultimate source of all energy. Linking this with our ideal geographical location we have in our hands a potential goldmine. We boast of having the finest beaches in the world, which is undoubtedly true. One has only to drive back along the winding road as far as the White Strand to sample some of this breathtaking scenery. The ingredients for a successful tourism industry are at hand. The obvious question then is: why isn't Louisburgh a boom town?

The following are a list of proposals which may help in some way to answer that question. I think that we fall into the same trap as a lot of other industries in our inability to market our resources properly. This is possibly a reflection on the people of the locality and especially the sub-culture that exists, whereby people appear to have no other ambition in

life than to drain the coffers of the nation dry. It is almost like a contagious disease that is now reaching epidemic proportions. The 'Tuesday morning syndrome' seems to be the only answer Louisburgh has to the recession which we are experiencing. Probably the most disturbing aspect of this is the influence it has on the younger generation. The community has a big responsibility here to ensure the transmission of proper values. As it stands, the whole question of morality is becoming distorted. The disease becomes manifest in its most dangerous form when people lie in order to qualify for State hand-outs.

The present recession is only a minor reason why Louisburgh has not tapped its greatest resource. The primary solution is a change in the attitude of its people. A positive, cooperative effort to make something out of Louisburgh is our greatest need. If we made such effort, perhaps then we could concentrate on an infrastructure of home-based industries to support tourism, and an effective marketing plan to go with it. Who knows — we might then be able to build an airport!

Stillorgan

Brendan Ball



*At the Holiday Fair (R.D.S. Dublin – John J. Kilcoyne, John Lydon and John Durkan.*

## CRASH AT EMLAGH

On Wednesday morning, September 30th 1942, a plane approached Accony from the Achill direction, flying low. It came across Sickeen towards Emlagh and went up to Cross before turning north. It came back down over Emlagh Dooagh and turned eastwards out over Emlagh Point. Then it turned again and flew very low over the beach towards Furfmoyle, turned once more back towards Emlagh, and landed with its undercarriage drawn up. It bellied in, digging a groove forty to fifty yards long through the piles of stones. The plane tipped over. Nobody was hurt. It was 09.36 hours.

The crew had flown this RAF *Ventura* bomber, No. A.J. 460, from Gander in Newfoundland having left at 21.00 hours on Tuesday, 29th September, on a delivery flight to England. The plane was unarmed and was not carrying any bombs or guns. The crew had been in Canada for twelve months before they had been trained and passed out in their respective ranks. They were reporting back for duty to England and would be paid £100 when they reached their *correct* destination, which was Ayrshire, Scotland. The journey should have taken ten-and-a-quarter hours. During the flight their radio became unplugged and they lost radio contact. As they had no radio communication they could not pick up signals. (It seems rather strange that the crew could not detect an unplugged radio). They flew blind during the night and when they saw land they were convinced that they were over Italy! Due to the fact that the weather was very bad, with a cloud ceiling of five hundred feet, the plane was two hours overdue. They feared a petrol shortage and they force-landed. This was the official reason given for the landing initially, but on inspection the Irish army discovered that there were five hundred gallons of fuel still left in the aircraft.

The *Ventura*'s crew was as follows:

656543 Pilot Officer R. N. Powell from Shropshire, 1st Pilot;  
1294917 Pilot Officer T. Donaldson from Kent, 2nd Pilot;  
1231674 Pilot Officer G. F. Drake from Worcester, Navigator;  
and  
412330 Sgt. E. L. Doyle from New South Wales, Australia,  
Radio Operator.

The first local on the scene was Joe Lyons of Emlagh. He had been going back on his bicycle to milk a couple of cows, when he spotted the plane approaching. He watched it circle and finally land. He then made his way to the Dooagh to the plane. As he was approaching, the crew came out of the plane and were congratulating the pilot, Donaldson, on

his great achievement of landing the plane safely with the undercarriage retracted. When Joe addressed them with a "good morning, gentlemen" they were taken aback somewhat as they genuinely expected a "Buon giorno". Donaldson then asked Joe where they were; and, taking out a large map asked to be shown exactly where they had landed. Joe told them that they were in Ireland – the south of Ireland – the Free State. This pleased them greatly, Joe thought; and of course so well it should, as Italy was an ally of Germany and landing there would certainly have meant a P.O.W. camp for the remainder of the war at the very least. Looking at the plane, one of the crew said: "She's finished!". Another said he was going back inside to finish his coffee! (I wonder when did he get time to *start* it!)

### Reported

On Coast-guard duty that day in Roonagh were Patrick Pat Paddy (O'Toole), Jimmy Sammin and John Joe Philbin. Patrick Pat Paddy phoned Louisburgh Garda Station where Garda Tom Hannon was B.O. Patrick informed Garda Hannon that a British Medium bomber had landed at Emlagh on Pat Joe McHale's Dooagh. When asked how he knew it was a British Medium bomber, Patrick replied that he knew it from drawings supplied to the Coast-guards. He was also able to see the uniforms of the crew, who were now walking outside the plane. He was then told to phone the army as soon as the Superintendent's office in Westport had been notified.

By now a large crowd was gathering and, as people were popping up like rabbits, Joe Lyons was asked where all the people were coming from and why. He replied that it was the first plane any of them had seen at close quarters and therefore it was a huge attraction. The local children had been on their way to Accony school and they didn't need any prompting to drop everything and head away from the academy to the 'airport'. Richie Tommy Lannon, who had been watching the aeroplane's descent from his backdoor, set off like the rest to see the phenomen. He said later that the roadside back to Emlagh was littered with abandoned schoolbags!

The plane was laden with presents from Canada for the crew's friends in England. There was a leg of smoked ham; and twelve pounds of frozen beef; at least twenty-eight pounds of tea (no tea was available in Ireland at that time); a fur coat worth about one hundred pounds (at 1942 prices) and some of the most beautiful suits one could imagine. The crew took out eight boxes of chocolates, and eight cartons of cigaretees with fifty in each carton, and they distributed the chocolates and cigarettes as everything was going to be confiscated anyway. None of the crew had a match as matches were not allowed on board.

Sergeant Deeley arrived at Emlagh, driven by Jackie Bowe, and asked Pilot Officer Powell why they had landed. Powell did not reply. Sergeant Deeley added: "was it the weather conditions?" "It was the weather conditions", said Powell, who had seemed lost for an answer. "Maybe you ran short of fuel?" said Sergeant Deeley. "Yes, we ran short of fuel also", said Powell. Certainly the weather had been very bad that autumn and particularly bad over the Atlantic during the early morning of that 30th September. The crew was then removed to Louisburgh Garda station. Later on, the Irish army arrived on the scene. Well, what the RAF could do to an aeroplane, the Irish army could do to a lorry! At Accony crossroads the driver of the lorry drove into the dike and turned it over. It was the Gaelic-speaking unit of the army that arrived, under a Lieutenant Teague from Donegal. They spent a long time there at the plane. Engineers came and tried to let the under-carriage down so that they could fly the plane away; but they were unable to do so. RAF engineers came to tell the army how to dismantle it if necessary. Eventually they had to dismantle it before they took it away. When they took off the propeller (which had been bent on impact) and the outer covering, they found excellent drawings of Hitler, in the nude, with very uncomplimentary remarks written alongside! The army found that there were five hundred gallons of fuel left in one of the tanks; so there was no need for the plane to have landed in Emlagh if the crew had been able to do their flight calculations properly. (There were two tanks of five-hundred-gallons capacity each, and a reserve tank with a capacity of two hundred and fifty gallons in the plane. A gallon of petrol was worth ten shillings on the black market then and some members of the army were rather surprised at the honesty of the local people who had not siphoned off some, or all, of the petrol.)

When the aircraft was dismantled a huge lorry came to pick it up. Six RAF technicians and five RAF vehicles travelled via Middleton, County Armagh to collect it on Thursday 22nd October. The crew were probably taken to the Curragh and it is said that they were handed over to the British authorities in exchange for three planes for our airforce. Because of the Official Secrets Act the army will neither confirm nor deny this.

Portmanock, County Dublin

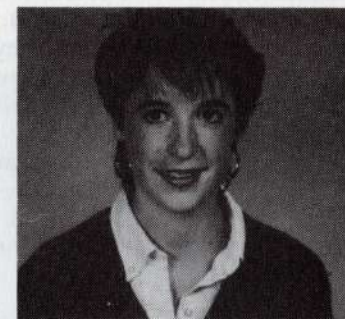
John Gibbons

*The writer wishes to record his indebtedness to Mr. Joe Lyons and Mr. Tom Hannon, both of whom he interviewed; and the Irish army authorities, who provided all the information that the Official Secrets Acts allowed. – Editor*

## IMAGES

*The Editor has invited two first-generation Louisburgh people to give their impressions of their parents' home parish.*

1. *Seána Dunne  
(San Francisco)*



When I first went to Louisburgh I was looking forward to visiting all the places my father had spoken in his yarns. Fortunately I was able to see these places and experience the charm and beauty at the same time. Among the spots I most remembered were Black Hill, where I walked on summer evenings; and Fairy Hill, where my Nana told me the stories of the fairies to be found there. I particularly enjoyed my days at Nicholsons' beach where I saw far more shells than I've ever seen on any beach here in California.

One day during my visit, Nana went to see the graves of my greatgrandfather and my grandfather at Kilgeever. On our way home Nana went to make a quick visit to Mrs. O'Grady. This was when I learned that a quick visit for Nana could take hours! This helped me to establish the fact that time has no relevance in Louisburgh. "What's not done today will be done tomorrow"! I took delight in this relaxed atmosphere throughout my visit.

The town was small and quaint. Its fame must have spread far and wide, however, for we have a Louisburgh Street right here in San Francisco! I remember one day in Louisburgh my brother, cousin and I were walking down the main street and I noticed a white van parked in the middle of the street. My curiosity got the best of me and I wanted to know why. It turned out that this van was the town's mobile bank! I found this quite humorous and will never forget it. Although the town was small I did enjoy the feeling of *belonging*. The countryside around Louisburgh was beautiful. Of all the places I visited in Ireland, I found it to be one of the most scenic. It had the hills, the mountains, the ocean, and the picturesque gardens. My favourite garden was, of course, Nana Dunne's, complete as it was with Alcatraz geraniums and a Californian redwood which, I believe, has since died. (Couldn't stand the weather, I suppose!) Of course, beautiful gardens run in the family, and my Aunt Eileen saw to it that we all helped out in keeping hers looking great.

For the size of Louisburgh I found great abundance of talent there. Almost every young person could either sing, dance, or play an

instrument. But although Louisburgh did a great job in providing musical education, I found it lacking in its emphasis on athletics. This was especially true for girls. In talking to the different people in Louisburgh I realized that they had a false impression of the American lifestyle. (Too much of *Hawii 5-0* and *Dynasty*?) By the way, we Americans don't like being called "yanks". In reality we live an average life somewhat like that of the people of Ireland.

I am looking forward to my next trip to Louisburgh and hope to be able to experience more of the social life. Of course I will also return to all my favourite spots; and I hope to gain greater appreciation of them since I will be somewhat older.

## 2. *Brid Morahan (Sydney)*

Why would I, a true-blue *fair-dinkum* Aussie, want to visit a tiny village on the west coast of Ireland? I can't speak for the rest of the Aussie *sheilas* out there, but this one would love to go, and for many varied reasons. For, although I consider myself an all-out Australian, I can't deny the interest I have in the land and heritage that gave me my name, Bríd Morahan.

I have built up an image of the village of Louisburgh, County Mayo in my mind and it has been fed by my father's tales of his early years there; by my brother Seán's relation of the story of his visit there several years ago, and the recent accounts heard from my dear aunt and uncle on their long-awaited trip "down-under". There have been intermittent photographs of scenes in the area and they have added also to the image I have built. So, a large part of my desire to visit the village of Louisburgh is to clarify the image I have formed from the stories I've heard. That image has often become jumbled, due perhaps to the excitement in the telling, or my own excitement in the absorbing of the details. The end result is somewhat confused.

My image of Louisburgh is of a small village; a main road strewn either side with larger stone houses and smaller thatched, whitewashed cottages. The weather in my image is a permanent Sydney winter morning; moist, misty, but fresh; and biting chilly. The streets are bare of traffic except for the occasional donkey-drawn cart, or hurrying pedestrian with glowing cheeks, ears and noses . . . Perhaps I am not as *dinke-di* as I first made out, because I much prefer the cold to Sydney's sweltering, humid summer heat!

The other reasons I have for wishing to see Louisburgh vary from the hope I have of meeting and getting to know my Irish cousins, aunts and uncles, to that of finding out what the image of Australia is to the Irish people. It's my hope to be visiting Louisburgh in the not-too-distant future. So to my future friends I'll say: till then (or rather, precisely *then*) *see-ya!*

## THE NEW LINE

*Progress is seldom an unmixed blessing. As a result nostalgia thrives, so that our young people often feel frustrated, or annoyed, or cynical about our vaunted memories of what was. Even the children of Louisburgh in 1986, however, have seen and heard the passing of an institution. On 16 December 1986 nostalgia may well have begun for them, for on that day the time-honoured manual telephone system was replaced by the more modern automatic exchange. The lady at the centre of this change, Miss Rose Donnellan, has served in Louisburgh as Post Office assistant for many years. She sums up the practical results of the change and her reactions to them: - Editor.*



The introduction of an automatic telephone system, which of course was long in common use all over the world, is a very great benefit to the community insofar as it is direct and therefore fast. The transmission, too, is good and clear. One can now contact even the most distant part of the world in a matter of sixty seconds or less. You just have to dial the relevant code for the country in question, the area code, and then the individual telephone number. It is, of course, a twenty-four hour service. The new area code for Louisburgh is 098/66---; and for the Killadoon area 098/68---. The number of telephones now installed in the parish is 463. So perhaps it was time to have an automatic system introduced!

For the people of the area this was the end of an old era. Louisburgh people who have gone to live in the cities of the world may have forgotten that with the older system you twisted a handle manually

and waited for the operator to answer. You then gave the operator the details of the number you needed, and you waited again for your call to come through. If you did not have the number, you gave the name and address of the people you wished to call. There was, of course, no "999" service as such: if you were in any sort of trouble you simply told the operator that you needed a priest, doctor or vet.; or the E.S.B. office, the hospital, the fire brigade or the water authorities. All such calls were through the operator. The new system, naturally, speeds up these emergency calls because one gets through directly now without any intermediary. But ever since things were changed, I have often thought that somehow the 'personal touch' is gone. So that for all its undoubted efficiency, the automatic system has certain disadvantages.

I have been in Louisburgh as operator for twenty years now, and I have enjoyed every minute of my time here. One cannot deny that the new system brings real benefits to someone in my job. It is quite seldom now that I am called for help – just for information, perhaps, or for the routine checks on the lines. Besides, no one now has to get out of bed to deal with night-calls which were increasing in number as the number of phones in the area increased. And yet, though it may sound peculiar, there are times when I miss the experience of talking and listening to people who called me to help them in some need. Usually people in this area did not use their telephones casually: there was usually a serious reason, business or family, for making a call. In that sense I was at the centre of many of the important occasions in the life of the parish. Often I was among the first to share some happy news – the birth of a baby, an examination passed, or a successful operation. Similarly, people often confided in me in their times of stress or sorrow. Because of these I felt very near to people and felt privileged to be able to help them in my work. At times, of course, I had their complaints; at other times I had their laughs; but all in all the experience was terrific and it was one that I would not want to have missed. The people I feel sorry for now are the old people and the elderly. They were great with the old system and they made great use of it; so I hope that they are able to manage the new one as well.

Finally, I would like to thank the people of Louisburgh for putting up with me for so long. Twenty years is a mighty long span! And because the *Coinneal* will be going out to many of those very people to

whom I was just a voice in the night, I want to thank them for their patience with the old system, and to hope that I have served them well.

The Post Office

Rose Donnellan (Louisburgh Operator)

*Readers at home and abroad will join in our community gratitude to Rose and to Mrs. Mary Cox, the present Postmistress. We couple with them in our thanks Mrs. Cox's father, Walter Joe Heneghan (R.I.P.), who preceded her; and those who served as assistants in the Post Office since 1930.*

The women who served in Louisburgh Post office since 1930 are:

Julia Walshe .....	1920-1931	Carmel Munnelly ..	1948-1951
Alice Boylan .....	1931-1933	Mary McDonnell ..	1952-1955
Alice Nealon .....	1933-1935	Chris O'Connell ...	1955-1957
Julia Roche .....	1936-1937	Mary Naughton ....	1958-1962
Babe Merrick .....	1937-1944	Joan Healy .....	1963-1966
Patricia McGreal ..	1944-1946		



*On the occasion of his silver jubilee of ordination Father Kieran Waldron is made a presentation, on behalf of the parishioners, by Mrs Bernie Sweeney (left) and Mrs Eileen Kerr.*

## UNIFORM MEMORY

When I think of home, which is mostly all the time, I remember fondly my time in the F.C.A. The memories are good, from the day I took the oath, which said: *I do hereby solemnly swear that I will be faithful to Ireland and loyal to the constitution and while I am a soldier in the army of the republic I will obey all orders issued to me by my superior officers according to law and I will not join or be a member of, or subscribe to, any secret society. So help me God.*

Till the day I resigned my commission in March of 1957 the experiences were many and varied and made my young life a worthwhile experience. When I was a small boy there was a book in the house with pictures of soldiers, I can't be sure if they were Greek or Roman soldiers because I couldn't read at that time. But I was fascinated with those pictures and promised myself when I got old enough I would wear a uniform and a sword. Well, the years went by and one beautiful morning in September 1939 someone came by with the news that the German army had invaded Poland. Two days later England declared war on Germany and the big one was on, which would change the face of the world and mark the end of the British Empire even though they won. I



was only ten but I was pretty excited about the whole situation. There were only two radios in our village. One in Pat Maille's (Pat the Board) and one in Jack Dunne's. My father always assigned me to get all the news of the battles and air raids and casualties and stuff like that. That was always a pleasant duty for me although some of those Polish towns and cities were a bit tough to remember and relay. (Even the B.B.C. announcers had a tough time; so I didn't feel too bad!) About that time the Irish work force began to pour into England to work in the armaments and ammunition factories as the English men had to put on uniforms and go into the military services. There was a general mobilization at home, too. I remember Tommy Geoghegan finishing out the bottom spit in Joe Heneghan's bog in Collacoan, coming up on the bank and breaking the *sléan* across a granite rock that was convenient, saying: "That will be the last time I'll ever handle a *sléan*." He joined the army the following day and served out the full six years; with distinction, I might add.

### Action!

Nearby all the local able-bodied men, women, boys, and girls joined some branch of the auxiliary services. There was the L.D.F., (Local defence force) L.S.F. (Local security force) the M.I.S. (Maritime Inscription Service) and of course the Red Cross. It was an exciting time. There were all kinds of songs composed and there was blackout imposed which we observed religiously even though we hadn't enough paraffin oil to do a week out of every month for the smoky old lamps. And we learned how to make rush candles. The L.D.F., used to march to Bunowen occasionally to fire range practices out into the ocean and those of us who were too young to belong used to go along to watch. The leaders were Tom and Andy Harney, John Joe Philbin, John T. Morahan, Jimmy Mannion and others, but I well remember Tom Harney instructing a class on the Molotov cocktail and giving a demonstration by throwing one against the walls of the old building we used to call "Lundy's Lodge". Some of the leaders had previous military experience from the War of Independence (1918-1921) and the subsequent Civil War (1921-1922). As a result of all this we all were determined to put on uniforms as soon as we got old enough. We were already very proficient in the drill because our school-master taught us all that each day after the L.D.F. drills of the night before. The war came to an end in the fall of 1945; the L.D.F. was disbanded, and the army of the war years demobilized. All the able-bodied men and boys again flocked to England. There was loads of work, the wages and benefits were good. The cities of England had to be rebuilt after the devastation of the German bombing campaign. There was practically no

Irish army left except a couple of thousand officers and N.C.O.'s hanging on to their nice cushy jobs. So that's when they organized the F.C.A. to fill the empty ranks. A lot of us signed up but most of the older crowd who had served in the L.D.F. got out. They had done their bit so the only ones we had left were Bill MacNamara of Collacoona (who should have been given the rank of sergeant major as he was a very fine drill instructor) and Martin Kneafsey (who was given leadership but had no rank.) The general rule was you had to go on short courses of instruction to the regular military barracks and prove your worth before they would give any stripes.

So one cold day in February of 1946 William Durkan of Main Street, Matt Scanlon of Bridge Street (long since dead in a tragic accident north of New York city), and myself found ourselves walking the railroad tracks up by Loch a' tSáile to Renmore barracks on the hill outside Galway. There were practically no private soldiers left in the first battalion, or as it was known "An Chéad Chath Gaelach", being recruited mainly from Connemara, the Aran Islands and Dingle in Kerry. The instructors were all bi-lingual but were more comfortable speaking or instructing in Irish. We were very well taken care of. As I said all the regulars were officers and N.C.O.'s and as far as instructors went we had the cream of the crop. We had a crash course in the basic infantry weapons, manual of arms, first aid and elementary map-reading. We were required to stand before a class and instruct on one subject, which was the most difficult assignment as we were all a bit shy. But we had the best coaches in what remained of the army and we mastered it. A person is never quite the same again once he is able to stand in front of a class and teach in an intelligent and articulate manner. You are then an educator and will always stand a little bit taller than you did before. The other requirement was to take a platoon on the barracks square and put them through all the formations which required a good knowledge of foot drill (which we all had before we left school) and a powerful delivery of the cautionary and executive words of command which we had developed from Bill MacNamara (who was without a doubt the best in that field of instruction.)

### Confidence

When we came home that time we were corporals and as a result of our very good experiences in the Irish-speaking battalion in Renmore a lot of the lads started to go on courses. I never had anyone complain that he didn't enjoy himself and, or gain a rewarding experience. For most it was their first experience of sleeping away from home. I think at that time we were brought up with an inferiority complex thinking the farther you went from home the smarter and more educated people were. I used to think that the people in Westport were smarter than we

were and in Castlebar they were even more advanced! It was a very revealing and I might add a rewarding experience to find that the reverse was true though it took me a while to truly appreciate it, and I might mention that it was very satisfying in later years to find somewhat the same situation in the country of my adoption; for example I found that among the Irish in the town of Clinton, Massachusetts which is 98% Louisburgh parish extraction. There was an unusually large number in the state house in Boston, and Albany, capital of New York State and in all branches of the military and civil service, names like O'Malley, Gibbons, Kerrigan, Kilcoyne, Philbin and O'Toole were as plentiful as if you were reading a voter registration list in Louisburgh parish. To get back to the F.C.A. we had a couple of good years where we used to win all the competitions though sometimes it was difficult to get a platoon together because the lads that were good with rifles and grenades were usually the good footballers too and a decision had sometimes to be made to put on the uniform or the togs! In summer we used to go to Renmore barracks in Galway for the big competitions and there was Salthill and Seapoint; or to Finner Camp between Bundoran and Ballyshannon in Donegal. Much as we loved Galway, Finner was still a bigger thrill. Most of the girls in the civil service in Stormont castle used to come to Bundoran on holidays and we never asked whether they were Catholic or Protestant; only if they would be coming back next year. In those times, that is during my years (1948 to 1957), there was no fighting; only all loving. I resigned in March of 1957 and in October of that year, I believe, Seán South and Fergus O'Hanlon were killed in a raid on a barracks in the north of Ireland. The killing never really stopped only got progressively worse from that time on. In my eleven years' service I never had any sense of the reality that I was trained, and that I trained others, in the arts of war and of killing other men. In another place in a different uniform under a different flag I would later climb down the sides of ships on landing-nets into landing craft: I would climb into, and jump out of, big troop-carrying helicopters and wonder why every one was so deadly serious and why wasn't I enjoying myself like I used to. I would wish I could look up and see Colum Heneghan or Paddy Durkan or Damien O'Leary or Seán Dunne scrambling down the net after me; or look across the helicopter and see Myles Gibbons or Eddie Daly or Joe "Mike" O'Malley or Kevin John T. O'Malley or Séamus Fergus having the "crack." The difference was that to me it was always a big game; but now in a different place the faces were different and mostly younger than I was. They all had uncles or brothers or fathers who had been in the "big one", World War II, or even more recently in Korea and I would yearn for the fun of Bundoran and my two famous corporals Paddy Durkan and Colum Heneghan who made a name for themselves singing in all the hotels in Bundoran. I would long,

too, for the famous field-days in Mulrany and Kilmeena trying to boil the big pot of Irish stew; and the prayers that used to be offered up trying to get that old turf to light! "Dan the Street Singer" will explain further to anyone who mentions field-days to him. Then in the fall of the year, when the potatoes were dug and old barns were all thatched, we used to go to Athlone which was Western Command headquarters and do a course, or occasionally two, before Christmas.

### Companionship

Things were always very quiet at home at that time of year and for those of us who went on it shortened the winter, because we'd get in a few good films and dances during the Advent when there were none at home. We would also see some good basketball and football-soccer games and have a couple of pounds for the Christmas. We used to like to go to the Railway bar run by Mrs. O'Brien formerly Ellie McEvilly from Accony. There was also the privilege of rubbing shoulders with quite a lot of the senior county footballers and hurlers and superstars of those days, and being on a first-name basis with men one would normally only read about in the newspaper or see occasionally in Croke Park or Lansdowne Road or Dalymount Park. I tend to get a bit nostalgic when I think of the lads who were in my unit, some of them dead and gone but never forgotten: Joe Scanlon of Bunowen, one of the



*Louisburgh F.C.A. Group of the Fifties*

*L. to R.: Tommy Burke, Martin O'Malley, Frank Scanlon, James Gibbons, Tommie Duffy, Martin Joyce, Liam Grealis, Séamus Fergus, Damien O'Leary, Johnnie Durkan, Eddie Daly, Myles Gibbons, Joe O'Malley, Kevin O'Malley (J.T.), Paddy Garavan, John Needham, Mike Hanley, Brendan Lyons, Louis Heneghan, Joe Philbin.*

best and neatest turned out soldiers in the outfit; and Seán Geoghegan also of Bunowen, dead and gone in the prime of his youth. Many, of course, are still full of life: Paddy O'Malley and Philip of the Bridge; Paddy O'Malley (Tom) of Chapel Street; and Paddy O'Malley (Brian) from Mooneen; Liam Grealis, who used love to go to Athlone because he had relatives there. And there was Tommy Duffy, who took command when I left and has still a couple of years to go before retirement. Other colleagues of mine from the F.C.A. days come to mind as I write. There were men like Charlie Gill and Michael Ball, both from Ballyhip, who never missed a drill; Mikie Burke and Josie of Carramore as well as Danny Hyland, who often seemed to be in a bad mood but still was the best marksman in the battalion. There was David Ray, who married Joan Scanlon of Bunowen. David never ceased to amaze me: not alone was he the second-best shot in the platoon, but he could also throw a hand-grenade farther and with more accuracy than many twice his size and weight. I would bet that David was never over seven stone at that time; even when he was soaking wet, or even after a heavy meal of Irish stew!

Then from the town there were Gerry Flynn, who was very patriotic, and Justin Morahan, who was less critical of armies than he is now. There were the lads from Willie Mike's, too. We always made a point of recruiting Willie's apprentices, such as Mike Hanley and Cólín Griffin to mention two.

### Pleasant Adventure

In later years we started a unit in Killeen and later still there was a unit in Sancta Maria School; but that will be another story. In fact I could tell a fairly good story about every NCO and every man I have already mentioned. I am not so sure that every story could be printed; but I loved all those lads who made my youth into one long, pleasant adventure. Sure there was hardship, and mud, and frustration, and uncertainty, and a fair ration of all the misery that goes with soldiering. But I would not want to change one hour of it even if I could. It's been close to thirty years since I served in the F.C.A., but I can still pick out those who served with me, when at a dance or social function here in Worcester or Boston the Irish National Anthem is played. I can pick them off by the way they stand to attention, and I think of those who used to sneer and say derogatory things like calling the F.C.A. the "free clothing association." I feel sorry for them for the great experiences they missed. One goes by only once, so one might as well stand tall and proud for a short time and have it to say: "I served my country proudly in my own small way."



## LOUISBURGH AND CARYSFORT

I was ten years old, I think, when I first heard of Carysfort. That was in 1947 the year my sister, Sarah, and Mary Durkan (Reidy) from Main Street, got "the call to training" as it was known. Like most Louisburgh girls I had been taught at school by Carysfort-trained Sisters and teachers; but the College acquired a real existence for me only when I addressed my first few letters to "Carysfort T.C., Blackrock". Sarah's first story of Carysfort reflected something of what I would discover myself when I went there in 1954. She and Mary Durkan were being helped with their cases along Avoca Avenue, a very polite suburb of Blackrock, by Mary's brother William and, I think, John Joe Love. The lads were in lively form, in fact a shade on the mellow side: in any event, they didn't approach Carysfort with the sober-sided decorum then expected of visitors to such a sedate institution for young ladies! I don't know whether Bill and John Joe got in, or whether they were thrown out; but for Sarah and Mary the occasion was memorable because the comments and the crack were lively, to say the least.

My own arrival in Carysfort in September 1954 was probably easier. I came from Coláiste Mhuire, Tourmakeady, with about twenty former classmates. We had been together in the Preparatory College for four years. After the homeliness of Tourmakeady, Carysfort seemed large, distant, and formal. The bright spot were the new friends we made, the week-end trips to Dublin and Dún Laoghaire, the easy access to Croke Park for big matches (Mayo were playing great football just then) and the visits to the Dublin cinemas. Our college timetable ruled out visits to the theatre, for the most part; but there were dances in the Crystal, Metropole, and Clery's ballrooms, occasional *céills* in the Mansion House, and very occasional trips to Maynooth to visit brothers and cousins, clerical students, of whom there were many in those days. I don't think that, at seventeen, I properly appreciated the most solid of all the benefits of being in Carysfort, the fact that, in the lean 1950's, it would lead to a good, dependable job.

In 1956 I decided to enter the Carysfort community. This decision puzzled many of my family and friends. It puzzled me a bit, too. Carysfort was austere; even rigid. But, with all that, it did inspire and sustain ideals – ideals that had to do with learning and teaching, national culture and language, religious ideals, ideals of a generous service to God and to our needier neighbours. I was ripe for such challenges at the age of nineteen, and so were many others of my generation in those post-war years. Eight former Carysfort students entered the Novitiate with me in 1956, some of them school-companions from Claremorris and Tourmakeady. Although that novitiate and much of what

immediately followed it, was no picnic, most of us are still on active service in Ireland or in Africa, and thriving on it, thirty years later. By 1964, with novitiate studies, the probationary teaching years, a five-year stint in Goldenbridge school, a B.A., H.Dip. and some further studies behind me, I returned to Carysfort as a junior lecturer in Education. I enjoyed the five years that followed. I remember with real pleasure the fine, bright students of those, and indeed of all my years in Carysfort. There were always a few from the Louisburgh-Westport area. They were a pleasure to teach, and they kept me in touch with life and youth and home.

In 1969 I was transferred from Carysfort to Rush in north County Dublin where we had opened a new secondary school in the early 1960's. Rush was very congenial ground for me – a small town and a farming community, beside the sea. Lambay even reminded me of Clare Island! I was relieved, too, to move on from Carysfort where life still retained many of the disciplinary features of an earlier era. For thirty-two years the College had been headed by the legendary Mother Teresita McCormack, a firm upholder of the Victorian principles and discipline on which the College had been founded. By the time I returned there as President in 1974, a sizeable modernization had to be tackled.

The decade between 1974 and 1984 was a time of great challenge and expansion for the College, bringing affiliation to the National University of Ireland; a new B.Ed. degree; a longer course of training; a wider range of subjects; new staff, a more relaxed and participative form of government and discipline; fine new buildings and sports facilities; more students than ever before; and the admission of male students to the College in 1975 which enabled Carysfort to win its first Higher Education League Cup for Gaelic football by the early 1980's. It was a time of good and fitting progress for an institution that had given the country its first trained teachers, without formal aid from Church or State, in the 1830's, a decade before the Great Famine.

Imagine, then, the shock with which Carysfort received the sudden announcement of the Minister for Education, Mrs. Gemma Hussey, on 4 February 1986, that the College was to be closed forthwith and its staff and student-body disbanded. Ironically, and thanklessly, Carysfort had been the first of the Colleges of Education to carry out a study of falling population and school-enrolment trends in the early 1980's; and in April 1984 it had applied to the Minister for Education for permission to offer new third-level courses in addition to teacher-training so that the College could continue to give the Irish people the best return, as always, for the public resources committed to it. For decades it had been the flagship of the fleet, so to speak, in the training college system.

Indeed, on the morning when news of its projected closure was announced it had, in hand, some four thousand requests for application-forms for the 1986 entry competition.

When the history of our present struggle for the retention of Carysfort College as a resource in the Irish education-system comes to be written, it will be interesting to note that the very first letter of solidarity and protest that the College received was a *litir*, as Gaeilge, handed in by the parish priest of Kilgeever, an tAthair Tadhg Ó Móráin, on 5 February 1986. Scores of Louisburgh people, including former Carysfort alumnae like Mrs. Brigid Hannon, Mrs. Clementine Lyons, Mrs. Marie Keane, the Louisburgh and Tuam Sisters of Mercy, and many others were among the thousands who wrote to us from the five continents to express their indignation at the threatened closure of this fine educational institution. I wish I could quote from some of those letters which came, full of indignation and incredulity, from cities across the world, from Tokyo, to Jerusalem, to San Francisco, and from Sydney to Johannesburg, to Santiago. This avalanche of support and appreciation was a revelation to us in the College, too. Carysfort, as I



Sister Regina

have said, was noted for many decades as an austere and a tough place to do your training, but there can be no doubt that its graduates have been held in the highest esteem as teachers, literally the world over.

This is the institution which is still under threat as I write these lines at the beginning of February 1987. The Sisters of Mercy and the College staff are willing and ready to adapt this beautiful and historic campus, and to develop it as an Institute of Education (teacher-training plus), Youth and Community Studies, *le béim, mar a bhí ann i gconaí, ar an nGaeilge, ar an gCreideamh, ar an gcultúr, agus ar cheol agus traidisiúin ár muintire. Go dtuga Dia bealach, agus uchtach, agus éifeacht dúinn chun é sin a dhéanamh.*

It would not, alas, be possible to list all the Louisburgh students who featured among the fifteen thousand graduates who completed their teacher-training at Carysfort. Suffice to say that there is evidence to show that they were many, and that they were in there among the liveliest, the brightest, and the best.

Carysfort

Sister Regina Durkan



An Easter Show  
at Doncaster, England  
Pat Duffy M.P.,  
"Dan the Street Singer",  
Father Gerard Harney  
(Louisburgh).

## KEEP YOUR WORD!

Regular readers will be familiar with this feature which strives to retain for our parishioners, at home and abroad, the saltiness and richness of the vocabulary which we have inherited. Four possible meanings of each of the words are given, with approximate pronunciations in parentheses. Test yourself to see if you can pick which is the correct meaning in each case.

1. *Béilín* (bale-yeen) – (a) a snack; (b) the bit of a bridle; (c) part of a knitted stocking; (d) a tied bundle of hay or straw
2. *Cámóg* (kaw-mohg) – (a) a young crow; (b) a bent stick; (c) a sod of turf used as a torch; (d) a smoking pipe with a twist
3. *Ceasacht* (kyass-acht) – (a) broad-leaved seaweed; (b) an ankle-length dress; (c) a circular-shaped bee-hive; (d) complaining
4. *Duilleasc* (jill-usk) – (a) an exclamation of wonder; (b) a second “helping”; (c) an edible seaweed; (d) upset or disappointed
5. *Folach* (foll-uch) – (a) an empty vessel; (b) a cover-up; (c) the foundation for a stack of oats; (d) a disciple
6. *Fuarnimh* (foo-er-nyiv) – (a) a pain of cold; (b) a big fire of turf; (c) lost property recently found; (d) a dose for yearling calves
7. *Gróigín* (grow-iggeen) – (a) a light shoe; (b) an oak churn; (c) a porcupine; (d) a “footing” of turf
8. *Gríscín* (gryeesh-keen) – (a) red-hot cinders; (b) part of a bird; (c) goose-grease; (d) a miserly old bachelor
9. *Líb* (lyeeb) – (a) a huge leap; (b) a slovenly person; (c) a sarcastic grin; (d) material for thatching a house
10. *Mórdháil* (more-ghawiyl) – (a) a big country house; (b) a mass-meeting; (c) boastfulness; (d) a large specimen
11. *Prioncam* (prink-um) – (a) a flower of wet boglands; (b) part of a horse’s harness; (c) an unruly mess; (d) an old-time milking vessel
12. *Rúisc* (roo-ishk) – (a) fast, unmethodical worker; (b) a high, undirected kick at football; (c) a wet, untilled grazing place; (d) “scram!”
13. *Sínte* (sheen-tche) – (a) long-legged; (b) the gloss on the skin of a young animal; (c) tired-out; (d) a single-ply homespun thread
14. *Sponc* (spunk) – (a) bankrupt or “dead-broke”; (b) a nauseating smell; (c) mettle or spirit; (d) useless or disappointing
15. *Toistiún* (thesh-tune) – (a) a wickerwork chair; (b) punishment for misbehaviour; (c) having no ear for music; (d) a leather strap worn on the wrist

Answers are on page 132.

## THE LAST FAMINE JANUARY-AUGUST 1880

Most Irish people, if asked when the last famine occurred in Ireland, would probably cite the notorious famine of 1846-48. Famines, however, were a recurring feature throughout the last century and the famine that took place in the three years 1878-1880, while not as severe in terms of mortality as that of 1847, was undoubtedly so severe in this parish of Louisburgh, that it should be recorded. The famine, which was largely confined to the West of Ireland was caused by the drop in agricultural prices, the failure of the potato crop for three successive years and the ever-rising rents levied on the smallholders of the congested districts in the West. By December of 1879 it was becoming clearer as each day dawned that starvation, if not death, faced every second family in the parish of Kilgeever. Memories of the famine of the previous two winters, when the potato supply had dwindled to nothing after Christmas, haunted the starving people. There was some talk of efforts being made to interest the Irish overseas in the disaster that faced the countryside but little was being done. The Government in London was taking no interest. The scale of the problem has not been appreciated by the authorities. After the October meeting of the Irish Bishops a delegation had gone to the Viceroy, to request a scheme of relief works to ward off the approaching famine; but no serious notice was taken of their representations. The Prime Minister, the Earl of Beaconsfield, had even refused to meet a delegation of seventy Irish members of Parliament about the problem.

A letter from the Duchess of Marlborough to *The London Times* on 16 December at last awakened the conscience of England to the enormity of the distress in Ireland. The Duchess set up a fund which did help to some extent but the main response to the cries of despair came by the foundation – a few weeks later, on Christmas Eve 1879 – of the “Mansion House Committee”, a wide-ranging committee which included all the Bishops of Ireland, Protestant and Catholic, under the chairmanship of the Lord Mayor of Dublin. Money began to pour in from all over the world. Adelaide in Australia was the first to respond with a draft for £2,109 and the fund eventually reached £181,665. But it took a lot of time and effort before any of these funds reached the people of Louisburgh parish and when the funds did come, they were hopelessly inadequate to fend off the worst effects of the disaster. The previous summer had seen the birth of the National Land League. The Parish Priest of Louisburgh, Father William Joyce, was known to be a

member of the Central Committee in Dublin and there was talk of his setting up a local branch to revive and improve the local Tenants League which he had set up in the parish shortly after his coming to Louisburgh in 1874.

#### Louisburgh land league

This was the climate when on the 6 January 1880, Father Joyce announced a meeting to be held in the Church Yard after Mass to set up a branch of the Tenants' Defence Association in connection with the National Land League. Father Joyce presided at the meeting and the following were appointed: Mr. James Scott, Accony, (President); Mr. Jeremiah McEvilly, (Secretary) and Mr. John Sweeney, (Treasurer). The executive committee was: Michael McHale, Furmoyle; Owen O'Donnell, Bunowen; Patrick Durkan, Askelane; John McHale, Pulgloss. Later the following were added to the committee: Patrick Joyce, Carramore; Thomas Prendergast, Roonith; Thomas Gibbons, Askelane; Thomas Kilcoyne, Woodfield; Pat Gallagher, Doughmakeon; John Nally, Furmoyle; and Patrick McDonnell, Louisburgh. The meeting demanded the institution immediately of remunerative public works. Otherwise "they would lay at the doors of government and landed proprietors a registry of deaths from starvation and of outrages committed". They passed a resolution disapproving of alms "as having a positive tendency to demoralise their people". They believed the present existing evils in Ireland were principally "the result of a bad system of land laws". The language of the resolutions was clearly the language of the National Land League rather than that of the Relief committees that were sprouting up everywhere; and the character of the Louisburgh Parish Priest, Father Joyce, is unmistakable in the tone of these resolutions which were published later in the *Connaught Telegraph*, the paper most favourable to the Land League. The local papers of the day also contain a collection of signed and anonymous correspondence from the Louisburgh area of an exceptional force and articulateness that indicate a place full of interest and activity. For example we read the following from a Louisburgh reader who calls himself "Veritas". "Who is J.T. Browne who travels so far as the *Standard* with his medley of falsehoods and some truth relative to Lord Sligo's estate and his benevolent agent to stab in the dark". The letter goes on to bemoan the fact that thirty years ago the tenants had valuable outlets - mountains, bogs and seaweed. Of these they were now deprived. The writer concludes that "the acts of the benevolent agent are such that all the water that flowed from Laughta to Bunowen for the last thirty years would not wash from their memory his 'benevolent' acts".

Throughout the country many landed gentry had become involved in relief committees, both as an exercise of charity and as an effort to stave off the impending growth of the Land League and an increasing sense of rebelliousness. In Louisburgh, on 19 January 1880, a committee under the chairmanship of Mr. Hugh Wilbraham of Old Head House (a brother-in-law of the Marquess of Sligo) had formed itself and requested affiliation as a sub-committee of the Mansion House Committee. The names as given in Mr. Wilbraham's handwriting in the files of this committee are: Rev. Mr. Forbes, Rector of Louisburgh; Rev. Wm. Joyce, P.P.; Rev. M. Lavelle, C.C.; Mr. T. McGirr, Poor Law Guardian, Mr. McHale P.L.G. and Doctor V. Griffin, Medical Officer of Louisburgh Dispensary District. The letter from the "Duchess of Marlborough Fund, Westport Union, Louisburgh Sub-committee" was apparently taken by the Dublin committee as an informal request for affiliation. The formal printed list of Louisburgh sub-committee, allocated the number 287, corresponds to the list of names forwarded by Mr. Wilbraham. However, another document in the files of the Mansion House Committee dated 22 January 1880 accompanied by an official application form for affiliation has, as signatories on this occasion, the names of Rev. William Joyce, (Chairman) and Jeremiah McEvilly listed as Hon. Secretary. It is noticeable that the name of the Relief Committee is given are not those of the Wilbraham committee but are those as chosen after the meeting in the Church Yard on 6 January. There were clearly two rival committees and the name of Father Joyce was surprisingly included in both. Whatever about the local dispute in the request for affiliation, the sad fact was that the number in need of relief was approximately 500 families - and according to Father Joyce, "was most certain to increase". In his submission he sums up the causes of the present destitution as: "excessive rent, a failure of the potato crop for the last three years, a depression in the value of stock and of agricultural produce and, at present, the want of employment". All that the parish of Louisburgh had received by way of relief up to this was £30 from the Archbishop to help the most needy; £45.14.6d from the Duchess of Marlborough Fund, and donations totalling £60 from the new National Land League.

A letter dated 21 January from Father Joyce indicated no feeling of any inconsistency in his position. He still lists himself as a member of the Wilbraham committee and speaks of the condition of those who could not be relieved from the meagre resources available on the previous Monday and who were moving about his house and the Church Yard. "Their moaning and wailing and importuning for relief are enough to drive a man mad", he says. Why he made the separate application is not

clear. Whether it was a belief that two local committees would be recognized or, perhaps, an innate distrust of the composition of the sub-committee already selected, is not clear. From later correspondence it would appear that Father Joyce felt that Mr. Wilbraham, was too content to receive donations through the Westport Committee of which his brother-in-law, Lord John Browne, was Chairman. But something drove him on the following day, 22 January 1880, to send in his own application under the name of the Land League for recognition as the official Louisburgh sub-committee of the Mansion House Committee. The response from Dublin to his request for affiliation was immediate and in the negative. No local committee, their Director, Mr. John Adge Curran said, could be recognized unless it comprised the clergymen of all denominations – and only the name of the place could be used in the title. The title “Land League”, in Father Joyce’s application form, was obviously not acceptable to the governing committee in Dublin. A series of protests from Father Joyce followed, all of which were published in the *Connaught Telegraph* and the *Freeman’s Journal*. In his defence, he said that he had invited both Rev. Mr. Forbes and the Dispensary doctor to attend, but they did not dare. He had requested Mr. Wilbraham to attend and fill up the query sheet but he, too, had declined for his own reasons. “I hope you are not going to allow my people to die of starvation”, he writes on 30 January, with public money at your disposal. “Unless you think fit to send aid, and enable us to keep our people from starving, this will be our last appeal to your committee”.

Another letter from Dublin explaining the difficulty he had posed for them made him ask: “what other conclusion can an impartial public come to except that the Mansion House Committee are determined to starve us for the mere accident of the members of our relief committee being also members of the National Land League and that it is only an engine to crush the present land agitation. But we will never haul down our flag. Come weal, come woe, we are determined to stick to our colours and for this I am sure our countrymen will not allow our people to starve”. The correspondence was followed by a meeting of the Land League in Louisburgh on 4 February 1880 in which they solemnly declared “that the Mansion House Committee was unworthy of the confidence reposed in them by the charitable public”. They called on their fellow-countrymen to send their contributions to either the Irish Bishops or to the National Land League. Father Joyce severed all connections with the Mansion House Committee forthwith. The Duchess of Marlborough Committee under the chairmanship of Mr. Wilbraham formally applied on 2 February to be recognized as the Louisburgh sub-committee of the Mansion House Committee.

From the reports being made to this Dublin committee from all over the West, it is clear that the famine was raging through the spring of 1880. In efforts to stave off the worst effects, the main item being purchased out of the grants that were coming was Indian meal. On one day in March the Louisburgh committee distributed 135 tickets for two-and-a-half tons of meal, valued £15. A pathetic letter from Mr. Thomas Hastings of Louisburgh to the *Connaught Telegraph* speaks of an appalling case in a village in the west of the parish, about a smallholder who had been “ruthlessly” evicted a few years previously. Mr. Hastings said he had referred to the case during his speech at the recent Land League meeting in Westport in the presence of Mr. Parnell. The whole family including the wife and ten children, some of them just recovered from fever, were “flung out on the roadside in the cold season to starve themselves, or fling themselves on the mercy of any sympathizing heart that would receive them”. Since then the poor man had been struggling with starvation, paying or trying to pay £4 rent for an acre of land, the only produce of which was about two barrels of potatoes. This was the only means he had to support twelve human beings all the year round. His crop for the past year had been very bad and would certainly not be enough to pay the rent of his land. The writer of the letter appeals to those with relief funds to do something for him, on the following Monday when he came to Louisburgh looking for relief. Four or five shillings or a few stones of meal would be quite adequate to meet this case. Though Mr. Hastings admits this was an exceptional case, it gives some idea of the scale of the poverty in Mayo at the time and may give us cause to contrast with it the free-spending society of today.

#### **Father James Heany**

On 23 March in a long letter to the Dublin Committee, Father James Heany, who had just arrived as curate in the parish, outlined the horror he felt as he travelled the district then referred to as the Gowlawn area (because of the old church in the west of the parish situated at Gowlawn). He brings to the notice of the committee that there were two areas, Gowlawn and Bundorragha, in which relief sub-committees were badly needed. The distance alone made it impossible for the Louisburgh committee to know of all the distress.

“Picture for yourselves,” he says, “the hardships and suffering of starved, half-naked men and women coming eight or ten miles through steep and rugged mountains and having to cross several large streams in the hope of getting a stone or two of Indian meal. The poor creatures come three or four times weekly seeking relief. The majority of the distressed receive relief only once in three weeks and several only once in five weeks as there are not sufficient funds. One poor woman told me that she had come fourteen times to look for something and had only got it twice. The funds are so

limited and the distress so general that only 70 families are getting relief weekly whereas upwards of 500 families require it weekly. I am only a late-comer to this parish, but since I came, I am shocked at the misery and destitution. I had seen much suffering, poverty and distress in the parish I was in, but it bears no more relation to what it is here than our sub-committee does to the Mansion House Fund. What I have seen and heard here unnerves me and I trust in God that I shall never see like sufferings again. The greater part of this parish consists of mountains and bogs and the other portions are wet and swampy lands, so wet that you could not possibly walk through tillage plots until a week ago although the previous fortnight was most beautiful weather. The islanders have a paradise compared to these poor people. In the island the people cultivate the little plots of land, and fish occasionally, but here they depend wholly on the produce of their few barren acres. They have lost the freedom of the mountains. Strange to say, although about half the population live along the shore, they have no more than two boats. There is another fact that speaks for the poverty. Most of the people have pawned their wearing apparel and bed-clothes although three months have not elapsed since the Parish Priest expended £50 in redeeming their dress and bed-clothes from the pawn-brokers. It surprises me beyond measure that many have not died of hunger long before this”.

Father Heany goes on to say that he knows of two other parishes that have been far more favourably treated than Louisburgh – some of them not one eighth as large in area. He therefore pleads again that consideration be given to the setting up of a special sub-committee for the Gowln area. He expresses the hope that as soon as the repairing of roads commences, the able-bodied men will not require so much aid. As an example of the problem that existed just then, he speaks of a poor fellow living ten miles away in the mountains who yesterday morning was “here asking for relief from the P.P. and the local committee and failing in getting any, he left saying that he should hand over his children to the Parson at Bundorragha and that God would not take it ill of him as he could not see them starve”. On Father Heany’s intercession, the local committee had allotted him six stones of Indian meal but the poor man had left for the mountains before he got it. “I dread much that he shall carry into execution his desperate resolve of saving himself and his children from starvation”. Father Heany was doubtless overcome by the horror of it all and may have been carried away to over-dramatize the plight of the people or to make it seem worse than it was. In a letter of the following day, however, he says that he had really underestimated the situation as there were truly 650 families and not 500 families in need of relief. In fact, relief had been given that very week to 600 families, the funds being supplied by His Grace, the Archbishop.

### **The Gowln problem**

In filling up the application form for recognition as an official sub-committee, Father Heany gives the area of Gowln district as 13,929 acres in which there was a population of 1440 persons or 240 families. About 120 people there were in the position that they could get meal on credit whereas the others could not. In accordance with the rules, the Protestant clergyman in Louisburgh had been invited to join the committee but he had declined. The names of the committee applying for affiliation are given as: Thomas McNamara, Devlin, (Chairman); Rev. James Heany, C.C. (Secretary); Rev. William Joyce, P.P.; Thomas Prendergast, (Roonith); John Needham, (Cross); John Morrison, (Kinnadoohey); Joseph Gibbons, (Cloonlara); and Dr. Griffin, (Louisburgh). The request to form a separate sub-committee in the Gowln area was, predictably, rejected by the Central committee in Dublin. They explained that they had to deal with 800 committees throughout the country and the work was overwhelming. It was impossible, except in very exceptional circumstances, they said, to allow more than one sub-committee in any parish. However, they were clearly touched by Father Heany’s letter of appeal as they authorized him to form a small sub-committee in the district of “three or four good names” who would be answerable to the Kilgeever relief committee. With that in view, they were now sending a cheque for £75 with the instruction that £30 of that amount would be applied to the Gowln district. The instruction did not go down very well with the Louisburgh committee and whereas the chairman, Mr. Wilbraham, felt well disposed towards the idea, the committee were not able to agree with Father Heany about the precise townlands that should be allocated to Gowln. Mr. Wilbraham proposed as a compromise that disbursements be made by the Kilgeever committee to the Gowln or Killeen area in accordance with the relative rateable valuation of the two districts. Even the payment of the £30 necessitated several letters before the matter was finalized. The result of the dispute was that the Gowln committee were finally recognized and grants began to arrive directly to them from Dublin.

The real reasons for the reluctance in the Louisburgh committee to lose control of the Gowln district might be found in two distinct sets of motives among the members. Firstly, Father Joyce, who had so bitterly condemned the Mansion House Committee earlier in the year, had been named as a member of the Gowln committee. Father Joyce had in fact resumed correspondence with the Mansion House Committee and he did write to the Mansion House Committee in early April to deny categorically that any of their funds had been used to buy clothes for children, for there was not even sufficient funds to purchase

food. "The destitution here is fearful" he says. "It is heart-rending to see a strong man, or rather a man who was once a strong man, after a few journeys into the town when he finds there is no relief ticket for himself and his children". In reply to their query desiring to know the reason he left the Louisburgh sub-committee, Father Joyce says he must respectfully decline to give his reasons because he feared if he did so, it might be the cause of the Mansion House Committee with-holding their grant for some time. "I dread the consequences", he said, "that would ensue if they with-held their grant even for one week".

### **The colony**

There was also the intriguing situation of the location of the "The Colony" at Bunlahinch, the townland with the Protestant church and group of Protestant families. It is clear from a private communication to a Canon Boyer, a member of the Central Committee, from the Incumbent of Louisburgh, the Rev. Mr. Forbes, that six Protestant families living in "The Colony", (an area that has been transferred to Gowlna though it adjoined the Louisburgh area) had expressed a wish that their village be left under the jurisdiction of the Louisburgh committee on which there were two Protestant members, Mr. Wilbraham and Rev. Mr. Forbes. Mr. Forbes says that up to this, distribution of funds had taken place amicably and fairly. He could not possibly act on the Gowlna committee and would indeed be a useless member if he were on the committee, as he did not know the area. In the new situation, no matter how impartially the distribution was made, there would be feelings of distrust and petty jealousies. To avoid all this, he would ask the Committee in Dublin to sanction that this village should remain with the Kilgeever district. These six families were receiving seventeen stone of Indian meal among them each week and he asks that this would be taken into consideration in finalizing future grants by adding a little to the Kilgeever grant.

The Gowlna committee were apparently very active and efficient from the outset. In the first few weeks, four tons of Indian meal were being distributed, reaching up to 195 families. Father Heany, writing on 11 April 1880, felt that the committee would have need of about £34 weekly for the next four months to enable the people to survive and to be able to sow their crops. There were, in all, 1268 families in the district. (By comparison, there are 185 families today). In the village of Cross alone there were 110 families, 156 in Feenone and 260 in Aillemore. Writing on 19 April, he says that the Gowlna or Killeen area was not able to support half its present population in the best of times and he predicted that by the middle of the summer half the population would have emigrated; that there were crowds leaving every week, many selling their little plots in order to raise the fare to America.

Had not the people been in such a deplorable state, he would not have given any annoyance or attempted to form a committee; and had not the Archbishop come to his assistance, he could not tell in what way the people would be by this. What has become of the *New York Herald Fund*, he asks. "Is it to be hoarding money and people starving?" With regard to the request to hand over the village of Bunlahinch, (or as the Archbishop named it, Bunlahiffreann), he was most happy to comply with theirs and Mr. Forbes's request to hand it over to the Kilgeever committee. In fact he had been anticipating this request. Mr. Forbes had no reason to fear: he would not "tamper with his so-called converts or soupers". Mr. Forbes's letter, he believed, had been written at the dictation of the Kilgeever committee to upset the Gowlna committee.

### **Bundorragha**

Taking their cue from the setting up of the Gowlna group, a request also was sent in from the Bundorragha area in late April for recognition of a separate committee for that area. (Bundorragha was officially part of the parish of Kilgeever until the end of the century.) The officers were: Rev. Mr. Timothy Clisham, Chairman; Thomas F. Joyce, Secretary; and Robert McKeown, Treasurer. Father Heany in another impassioned letter at the end of April protests that the Kilgeever committee have received two grants from Dublin in the past month whereas the Gowlna committee, trying to come to the relief of 214 families who require weekly relief, have been entirely ignored. His committee represented the poorest area in the West. Were they going to let the people starve because of the omission of an official number in their application? Fortunately for his people, the Archbishop had sent £30, or people would have starved. And he wants the committee to know that they had relieved the members of Mr. Forbes's flock who were on the weekly list, though he had gleaned from Mr. Forbes's letter to Father Heany that he had informed Dublin to the contrary. Within five days a welcome grant of £30 arrived to Father Heany from the Mansion House Committee. The entrance to his house was impassable, he said, on the previous Monday with people waiting to receive relief, but the grant had not arrived at the time. Many of the poor creatures wept bitterly on being told that there was no relief for the week. He acknowledged also a cheque of £20 for Bundorragha but he rejected the charge that the district had been neglected. In fact no district had been more favourably dealt with than Bundorragha: each of the eighteen families there who had applied for aid had got a hundred weight of meal in the past three weeks from his committee. He could not understand how Rev. Mr. Clisham and Mr. Joyce could be members of a Bundorragha committee as neither of them lived in the area and indeed

Mr. Clisham had only one family in the area belonging to his flock. However, Father Heany in acknowledging the cheques for £30 and £20, says the poor people would never forget the kindness of the Mansion House Committee and he describes the prayers and blessings that the poor people were constantly bestowing on them.

In the middle of May, Father Heany writes to say that he has been transferred from the parish to Kilmeena. Accordingly, he had to resign from the committee. Father Joyce, the Parish Priest, intended to take his place. Father James Heany, who had spent a mere three months in the parish and accomplished a great deal, was in fact a very young priest, for the only Father James Heany listed among the Maynooth ordinations for this period is for a man in the previous year of 1879.

Father Joyce now resumed his correspondence with the Mansion House. Though it was late in May, the people, in his opinion, had now used up every resource they had and the distress was never so severe. This opinion is also shared by the new curate, Father Michael Smyth, in his application in late May: "There are no public works open here yet. The condition of the people is just truly pitiable. For God's sake, gentlemen, send us one more grant to enable us to keep the poor suffering creatures alive until we get employment".

The interest in the relief funds and their distribution was not just the concern of the priests, the landlord and the Poor Law Guardians. In a few striking letters to the local papers of the day, other people have their say. A Mr. John Sweeny, a local teacher and shopkeeper and Treasurer of the local Land League Committee, wrote in March about the disproportionate amounts of funds being granted to "the snug little parish of Cong". "If a mountain in this parish were to fall on the parish of Cong", he says, "it would cover the whole extent of it". The resolution of the Cong committee praising the Mansion House Committee signed by Patrick Lavelle surprises him if it was signed by "the patriotic pastor of Cong". (Father Pat Lavelle, a native of Cortoor, Mullagh). But of course Cong is a special as it "is blessed with the golden presence of Sir Arthur Guinness."

In another letter from Louisburgh in May from an unknown scribe calling himself "Censor", a stinging attack is made on the whole philosophy of the relief committees. He reminds his readers of the words of "Mayo's bravest son, Michael Davitt" at the convention in Castlebar the previous August: "In vain shall we try to rouse the National spirit if the men who form the Nation are allowed to become paupers before our faces". Speaking for the Louisburgh locality, he can say that in attempting to avert pauperism, a good deal had been done to reduce the people still lower in the scale of beggars. It is true that the relief funds have saved lives but they have also caused men, not in

absolute want, to wander about the streets, hats in hand, craving relief and whining "sure we would try to do without relief, only as it is a thing going, we are all entitled to beg as our neighbours". "Bah", he says. "let all who wish to see Ireland demoralized continue to subscribe to relief funds and place their subscriptions in the hands of landlords, agents and bailiffs".

Whatever about these objections, the committees in both sides of the parish were making applications for funds until August of 1880 to tide them over until the new crops were available. "The demon of fever, attributable no doubt to scarcity and extreme destitution, has taken hold of the starving poor in this parish", writes Father Smyth on 30 June. So bad was the situation, that he had requested the setting up of a temporary hospital in this remote place but the Westport Board of Guardians would not entertain the idea. He pities the poor fever victims who were being removed in a type of ambulance over a bad and rugged road to the Westport Union. Even on 13 July he writes to say that they have still two weeks ahead of them and asks the Committee if they could possibly send them another grant, it would be the last time they would trouble them. By the end of July he could report that the great majority of the people in his district, with the exception of twenty or thirty cottiers, were able to support themselves now, having already a plentiful supply of potatoes. Fever, however, including typhus fever, was still raging and he sends some sad accounts of his visitations.

The worst famine for a whole generation and, we all hope, the last famine that this parish will see, was clearly nearing its end. On 4 August 1880, the Kilgeever sub-committee of the Mansion House fund met and passed a resolution winding up the affairs of the sub-committee, formally thanking its benefactors and thus bringing to an end a sad chapter in the history of Louisburgh parish.

*For much of the source material used in writing this article, I am indebted to Mr. Patrick Ball who brought my attention to the files of the old Mansion House Committee in Dublin relating to the year 1880.*

Sancta Maria

Kieran Waldron



## LETTER FROM AMERICA

*Dear Mother,*

I received your very welcome letter the other day and you made me feel guilty for my neglect in answering. These days and weeks go by and the things you ask about various people fade away from my mind so that when eventually I get pen and paper together I have forgotten a lot of the questions. It's deep winter in New England and the snow is piled high all around. My mind often of course goes back home where now it's almost the "Féile Bhríde" and I can't help thinking of beautiful spring days down at Cloch Mhaol, breaking sea-rods with the men from Bunowen like Pat Josie O'Donnell and Willie Heanue and Tom Glynn in his retirement days. I recall one glorious morning I was piling sea-rods on the wall down in Michael Keane's land by the river, and Molly McConville came by and she said to me: "Isn't it a glorious morning? Wouldn't it inspire one to write poetry?" And I thought always, didn't she express the loveliness of it beautifully in that lovely, musical voice she had. Which reminds me, you did ask about Josie Durkan of Bunowen who was in the same class with you at school.

She is indeed still alive and well, living south of Boston on Cape Cod Bay. I happened to meet her around Christmas and I mentioned your letter and we had a nice chat. She told me Mrs. Mulvey of Collacoon was in the same class as her and you; and Mary Ellen Durkan of the town was in a class ahead of ye. She also told me what I thought was very interesting: she left home in 1916 and was in Dublin during the trials of the Pearse brothers and the other leaders of the Insurrection of Easter week. Just fifteen years old and never to see home again; yet anyway. She said to tell you to give her love to "Julia" Mulvey and to tell you that Katie died three years ago. She was ninety-six years old; and Sara died two years ago this February at a good age too. I met Mary O'Malley of the Bridge at that visit; she'd be a niece of Josie's. She tells me she goes home every Christmas for a month and of course I said to her "Isn't it great to have the money!" She said they have direct dialling now at home. That will take a great load of work off Rose Donnellan's shoulders. It used amaze me how Rose could handle all that work with only one pair of hands and only one mouth!

I had a grand visit in November in Paddy O'Malley's house in Needham outside Boston. Father Leo was out and John O'Malley gave me a call, he was going down to see him, so I went along. Father Leo was on his way back from Australia from the big football games but you would know all about that already. His sister, Gaelie, was with him and

looked well. God rest her husband, Broddie, he was the first ganger I ever worked for. I remember well the first night that you went up to Pat Timmy Prendergast's to get me an overalls because I was still in short pants and I had to get the long ones in case Dempsey came! You remember Dempsey was the engineer. It seems like I'm getting back in the past a lot, but isn't that the way with us as we get old, though I have to say that Paddy O'Malley (Tom) hadn't aged much, and neither has his wife, Peggy Navin. Their family is reared and educated now and Peggy could pass for a sister of her own daughters. Father Leo looked well and I thought to myself where does he get the energy. There he was all the way back from the other side of the world, had a visit in San Francisco, another in Chicago, now a few days in Boston and then on to New York; and my goodness, the odd time that I make it home – just a five hours' plane ride from Boston to Shannon – I'm no good for a whole week. I notice the same thing about Father Waldron of Sancta Maria. I wonder is it something God gives to priests or is it just the persons themselves that have it in them.

Anyway, to mention a few of those that were there that night: Austie O'Malley of Doughmakeown, Tommie Grady of Derryheigh, Evelyn Fennessy (O'Malley, Roonith), Una Shea whom you would know better as Una Phil of the Bridge, and Mary Norton, that's one of the Thady Mike's. You always ask for that family and I know that you always had great regard for the mother, Sara Corbett from Cornamona side. I never really knew what the connection was but you always mentioned her as being a fine, thoroughgoing woman. And indeed the family are the same, all very nice people and doing very well. Mary Norton (the one I mentioned) has a lovely beach house in North Scituate on the South Shore. She has a great job with the American airlines, but they tell me that she took a year off, took her three children with her and went back to take care of her mother before she passed away. Didn't that take courage, leaving a fine job and not knowing if she would get it back again. Well, anyway, she did get it back and mustn't she be well liked or else a great worker. Even though there are loads of jobs there are not too many very good ones like she had. Oh and there was at that meeting too a very nice boy named Ciaran Staunton, a son of Tommy Andy's whom I often heard you speak of. He's very active in the Mayomens Association: I think he's Vice-president. He told me that his brother, Aiden, got a County Council scholarship from Thallabawn school years ago. There were brains in that family.

I'm still regretting that you couldn't make the trip with us to Innishturk last July. It was surely a great day even though the swells were lashing off Maolán and Caher Island. Like God would do it the sun

came out and we had our Mass and a great evening and night an a re-union of all the old friends. Of course you know that Martin Joe was there and Padraic Flynn and Patrick Durcan and Enda Kenny and Denis Gallagher and such speech-making, you never heard the beat of it. I never saw a prouder man than Tom Heanue. We were having a drink and he said to me: "I bet you never thought you'd see the day there would be a tarred road from one end of the Island to the other. And a big generator to supply electricity to every house. And a tractor outside every second door". Martin Joe was in his element, too, because about 60% of the people of the Island are O'Toole's. "Ah, but," Tom Heanue said, "my people have the power. The have the big boats!" His nephew, Kevin, that brought us up; and the cousin, Jack, that has the other big boat. That's the boy that's married to our cousin, Helen Murphy; I dropped in there for a while to see the new baby and you should see the mansion of a house he built for her with all super mod. conveniences; carpet and parquet flooring and all the rest. Well it did my heart good: it nearly made up for Mayo not making the Connacht final. I mean the whole thing in Innishturk; meeting all the Pat Mickie's and the Michael John's and the rest of them all the way home to celebrate the centenary of their school. Did I ever tell you there were nine of the Michael John's there all the way from Springfield and Chicopee and Holyoke?

Before I forget, you asked for Nora Grady from Furrigal. Of course I know Nora and meet her quite often in Breego (Quinlan) Hastings' house and I've met the nieces, Betty and Frances, who came out in the summer to visit. In fact I am very friendly with this Seán Boyce, whose sister is married at home to Paddy Grady in Furrigal; that would be Catherine, a very nice person I wonder if you know her. Well anyhow, this Seán has a friend who does a lot to get jobs for the lads who are coming out and staying here illegally. He is a union carpenter in Boston. It's too bad the Irish quota isn't increased to let them in legally instead of this backdoor stuff. It's nearly as bad as the way the lads had to live in England during the war; false names and false social security numbers so they wouldn't get conscripted. But on the other hand, they all get work anyhow. They don't pay taxes, but it is a precarious way to live. It would be great if we could pass legislation to give them legal status like before.

I have nice news for you and I know that you love to hear the good news. You remember Nora Fadden from Barnawawn. Well her daughter got married recently to the Assitant District Attorney for Worcester County, a very nice young chap called Maurice O'Brien. I know you mentioned Mary when she was in Ireland a couple of years ago in an international dancing competition. Well, there I go rambling on! On the way home that night John O'Malley was raving and ranting

about the money that was put into a pitch-and-putt course in Cahir "and they wouldn't throw a couple of inches of plaster on the walls of the handball alley in Carramore and put in a half-decent floor." I said that maybe they couldn't get permission but he said that was nonsense. He said: "I'm sure that Pat Cox would even help them. Didn't he come from one of the finest GAA families in West Mayo. Marty and Tommy and Frank and Jimmy, God rest the dead, were all great GAA men." I said I'd find out sometime; but I'm sure that the lads that play there every Sunday wouldn't mind supplying the labour and you and I could put up the money for the cement. He tells me that Johnny Redmond, John Friel, Pat Gallagher, John Dixie Lyons, Michael McDonagh, Frank Sammon, Patrick Durkan, John Durkan of the Town, Seán Jim O'Malley and Austie Maille from Doughmakeown all play; all the finest working men in the parish. I'm sure that they'd have the place done in a couple of weeks of evenings. Anyhow he was very keen on the subject, so try to find out for me whether it's lack of organization or laziness or what.

Willian Durkan of the Town sends his regards. He has been a life-long friend; also Anne and Julia Carr. Lucinda lost her husband, and he was a good man, God rest him. Now I think I have written all the news, so regards to all once again.

Write when you can.

Love

*Seán*

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### *Remembering Sion . . .*

*I remember whenever my mother killed a goose she always retained the blood to make a small black-pudding. I remember, too, the long "trimmin's" she added to the family rosary. One night, as we all knelt facing the Sacred Heart picture with our backs to the dresser, a brother of mine who had a 'sweet tooth' stole in behind us with a tablespoon, to raid a jam-jar in the dresser. I can still recall our frightened alarm when we heard his awful coughing, and turned to find him spitting out blood violently. Unfortunately for him my mother had put the goose's blood into an emptied strawberry-jam jar! But we finished the rosary.*

## THE LOSS OF *THE MAE*

This is a true story, it is still remembered in Kilgeever Parish by many of the older people whose parents witnessed yet another sad episode of sea-tragedy around the turn of the century. It also tells another chapter of hardship and misery that residents of the islands had to endure right up to the present day. It also reveals, as does many another tragedy at sea, a mystery that cannot now ever really be solved.

Before road transport became readily available most goods leaving Westport Quay was carried by small sailing boats to places like Achill, Cleggan, Leenane and, of course the Islands. These sailing-boats, known as *hookers*, could carry up to about thirty tons of provisions for shops around the coastland and on the island. In mid-June, 1910, a sailing-boat named *The Mae*, the property of John Kerrigan, a businessman for Boffin Island, lay anchored at Westport Quay. It was loaded with about seven tons of provisions destined for the island shop also owned by the Kerrigan's. *The Mae* hoisted her sails in mid-morning under beautiful sunshine and edged down along the quays. There was hardly enough draught to fill the mainsail as she moved slowly into Clew Bay. On board was John Kerrigan as skipper, his wife, and his brother-in-law, a boy in his teens named John Barrett. Their aim was to leave on the flowing tide so that they would arrive in Boffin at high tide. Thus the *Mae* could make a good berth which in turn would mean easier unloading. The *Mae* now under a full spread of sail made steady progress on a south-westerly course. As she passed between Roonagh and Clare Island a gale started to blow up: people at Mass in Killeen remembered that the storm got very strong and it started to rain. It was only when Mass was over that the congregation outside the church sighted a boat under great pressure as she swayed in the heavy seas and struggled towards the uninhabited island of Caher. People watching from Killadoon remember later, and having a good knowledge of the sea themselves knew, that the boat was fighting against all the odds to stay afloat. Nevertheless at this point the *Mae* was in direct line with Innishturk and still nosing her way into the storm. Then the rain came down much heavier and the view of the people watching was greatly reduced until eventually they lost sight of the boat altogether in the thick haze. It was then thought that the *Mae* would land in Innishturk, which was well within reach.

Some hours later, the boat was seen drifting ashore on Cross Strand, bearing a heavy list but with her cargo fully intact. The cargo had not been badly damaged by sea-water; in fact the hold was completely dry. Later, the body of Mrs. Kerrigan was found, closer to

the townland of Cross. About four days later, the body of John Barrett was washed ashore in Achill. Nobody can now remember whether the body of John Kerrigan was ever found. Some days later, the *Mae* was refloated on high tide and together with its cargo it was taken to Boffin Island on what was, no doubt, to be her last voyage. The tradition was that any boat that lost her crew was never put to sea again: such a boat could never be trusted and was usually broken up for firewood.

What might have gone wrong aboard the *Mae*, and caused the crew to be lost when victory was in sight, was never really known. The following verses were sung as a lament by many people in Kilgeever Parish. It is not now known who composed the lament; and indeed the exact words are not now available. Those that I have collected speak for themselves. Let us hope that the Lord will grant the victims eternal rest!

Devlin South

Joseph Murphy

You may speak of O'Halloran's boat, the good old Gráinneuaile,  
But the *Mae* was as fine hooker as ever sailed Clew Bay;  
Along Caher's isle she strayed awhile and later did good work:  
Through splash and spray she fought her way till she sighted Innishturk  
It was through a cloud that the wind went south, but yet she did prevail  
.....  
O God! what could those brave men do while through the sea they  
tossed  
Until they were a fatal wreck upon the strand at Cross.

(Any information about the missing lines and verses will be welcomed  
by the Editor)

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## Remembering Sion . . .

I remember the task of transporting cattle from the islands to the pier at Roonagh for sale at the fairs on the mainland. The boat was moored at the deepest end of the pier. A long rope was tied to the bows and the other end was tied to a hook at the dry end of the pier. Each animal, having already been haltered by the head, was dumped into the sea in about nine to twelve feet of water. The halter was then tied by way of a loop to the main rope. The animal was then made swim along the main rope to the shore. It involved a lot of time as only one animal could be dealt with at a time. If a halter became undone or a rope broke, it could be a great financial loss to the owners.

I wonder what the system now is and how it has been improved?

## AWARD-WINNING CLUBS

*As usual our Committee selected the three clubs in the parish which most merited acclaim for activity. They are this year (in no order of merit): The I.C.A., The local Scouts organization and the Pioneer Club. Their reports follow:*

### *Women at the Helm*

I think it appropriate to start my few words on the activities of Louisburgh I.C.A. Guild over the past two years, with the highlight – our participation in the ACWW, the Eighteenth Triennial Conference of the Association of The Country Women of the World, which was held in Killarney from May 20th-27th last year. Readers of *An Choinneal* will remember the reference to this conference in the 1984 edition, and the appointment of our esteemed former Vice-President, Mrs. Breda O'Malley, as Secretary to the Conference of the Co-ordinating Committee. For us it was a great honour and we, of course, travelled to Killarney for the week-end. It proved a huge success and our visit included Mass in Saint Mary's Cathedral, the 'Festival of Flowers' to celebrate Ireland's poets and writers, and a visit to Muckcross House for the Crafts Display.

For the Louisburgh Guild there were other minor highlights, and successes, over the past two years. But then it's not surprising that we had successes when we have a leader of the calibre of Clementine Lyons, our President. With Clem at the helm anything can be achieved and any heights reached. Being a member of Louisburgh I.C.A. Guild one is never far away from competitions. During 1985 we had a busy year in drama and in the 'Amazing Grace' competition. However, we just made the county stages of the competition, but this year . . . ! Swimming was a popular activity for members and the courses were well attended and enjoyed. Upholstery classes on Wednesday nights proved very successful, and proof of that is the number of refurbished chairs, etc. now adorning members' homes! Garden classes are always very popular and these were organized during late Spring.

The highlight of 1985 must certainly be our week-end trip to *An Grianán*, the ICA Headquarters in County Louth. All on that trip were fully catered for – from ballroom dancing, to floral arranging; and from an afternoon shopping-spree to demonstration on make-up and skin care, concluding with a sing-song and social. The week-end was so successful that all participants hope to make a return visit. And Mrs. Maria O'Malley, at least, did return: Maria, from Askilane, won a scholarship to *An Grianán* since then. The guild was well represented too at the Quarterly Federation meetings, which were held that year in Castlebar, Crossmolina, Clonbur and Newport. And one of our members, Mrs. Mary Fergus, was elected Federation Secretary, a post

she too, held with distinction. In November of that year we had our annual outing to Galway and of course, our annual cake sale, the proceeds of which we donated to our local parish hall. Both these events proved very successful.

The year 1986 started with a Social in The Derrylahan, and by February we had entered for the 'Eleanora Gibbon' competition once more, the theme then being "Pageant of Our Parish, Old and New". We succeeded in winning out at County level but were defeated by Donegal in the Regional Final. The Saint Patrick's Day Parade in Louisburgh saw the Guild enter a float, and take second prize. Later Mary Fergus entered for 'The Housewife of the Year' and distinguished herself very well by reaching the Regional Finals in Sligo. In Ballina, Sally O'Toole kept the Louisburgh flag flying when she won first prize for her entry of a patchwork cushion at their Crafts Competition. In Claremorris, Mrs. Eileen Kerr was runner-up in the machine knitting competition, while Mary Fergus (yes, the same Mary!) won third prize for crochet. At 'home' again members enjoyed a number of demonstrations during the year – from Anne Tobin, the beauty therapist from Castlebar; from Kay Downes of Oriflame, and a talk on savings and investment from Pádraic Murray of the Castlebar Branch of The First National Building Society.

Come September we had resumed activities after the Summer recess and at our first meeting we learned of the Gala Night being held in Ballina, as well as the Crafts Competition and Display and Drama. Though with very little time available we decided to enter the Drama section, and with our own play – 'A Sale of Work' – we started rehearsing. Two weeks later we were on stage at Ballina. Having seen some of the opposition in action we felt we needed more than a prayer. But at the end of the night's performances Louisburgh ICA Guild had taken, not one, but two awards – for the best overall performance and the best producer, who was none other than our President, Clem Lyons. Since then we had been asked for a repeat and in November we staged a Concert in Louisburgh, built around 'A Sale of Work'. Claremorris joined us to add to the variety and a great night was had by all. Who knows but we might stage it again in Summer for our visitors?

1986 ended for us with our Annual Cake Sale which had the support of other organizations in the town and those efforts realized a sum of £350 for our local community hall. But apart from the activities organized by the Guild, many of our members devote a great deal of their time to other bodies and organizations. These include, The Scout Association, Senior Citizens, Louisburgh Craft Co-Operative and the Community Council, to name but a few. All in all we ladies keep busy!

Louisburgh

Bernie Sweeney

## Out in the Open

Third Mayo Louisburgh Scout Group was set up by Regional Development Officer, Tom Curran, in February 1985 to mark the International Youth Year for the youth of the area.

Scout leaders were Gerilyn Hoban, Peggy Burns, Andrew Durkan, Tommy Duffy, and Sean McGuinness and the Cub Scout leaders were Michael Fetherston, Pádraic Fadden, Eileen Kerr, and Marie O'Malley. Beaver leaders were Mary O'Grady, Mamie McCormack, Rosarie Tiernan, Mary Hegarty and Nuala O'Loughlin.

A parents-and-friends committee was elected to raise funds for the group. These were, Chairperson: Bernadette Sweeney, Secretary: Ayleen O'Malley, Treasurer: Imelda O'Grady, P.R.O.: Sheila Tiernan.

The committee was Seán Heneghan, Imelda Burns, Mary Fergus, Frances Morahan, Kathleen O'Malley, and Nuala O'Loughlin as *ex officio* member. Patrick Corrigan, Ann Duffy, P. J. McGuinness, Tommie McCormack, Eileen Maxwell and Mary Philbin later joined as leaders. Enda McHale and Ann McNamara joined the parents-and-friends committee.



Louisburgh Cubs investiture 16 May, 1985

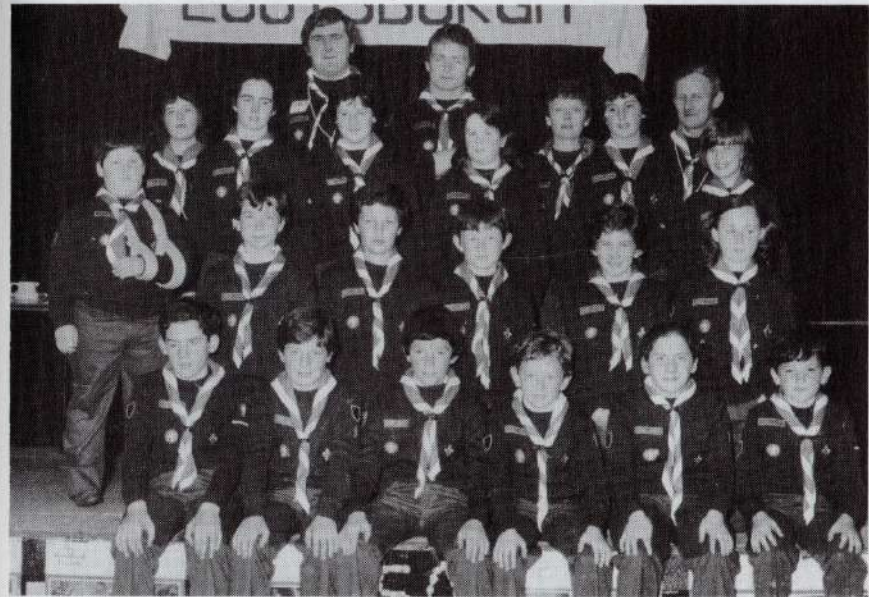
Front row L. to R.: Mark Sammon, John McHale, Reelen O'Grady, Aiden McEvilly, Eamonn Sammon.  
 Second row: Sinéad McGuinness, Con Duffy, Eric Heneghan, Éamonn O'Malley, Stephen O'Malley, John G. O'Malley.  
 Third row: Patricia Fergus, Gevan O'Malley, Majella Tiernan, Sorcha O'Grady, Mairéad O'Grady, Martina Hegarty.  
 Fourth row: Leaders Michael Fetherston, Pádraic Fadden, Marie O'Malley, Eileen Kerr.

The Group's first investiture took place on May 16, 1985 and eighteen scouts, eighteen cubs, sixteen beavers and thirteen leaders were invested in "Cumann Gasóga na hÉireann".

The first group-outing took place when the troop marched from the Parochial Hall to the Square for the unveiling of the tourist map. On Corpus Christi, they attended Mass in Saint Patrick's Church and later took part in the procession through the town receiving the *Paidrín* as they stepped it out.

In July 1985, the Second Galway (Tuam) cub scouts and leaders camped in Louisburgh for a week. Louisburgh group joined them in lively football matches, hikes and campfire. Both groups attended a special Mass celebrated by Father James O'Grady, the Tuam scout chaplain.

Boyle scouts camped at Old Head, and Louisburgh Scout troop joined with them in their activities there. Girl Guides from Brittany were the next group to visit Louisburgh and they extended a warm "Merci beaucoup" to Louisburgh for their hospitality.



Louisburgh Scouts 1985

Leaders L. to R.: Gerilyn Hoban, Andrew Durkan, Éamonn Keane, Peggy Burns, Tommie Duffy.  
 Front L. to R.: Gerard Burns, Séamus O'Malley, Brendan Heneghan, Kevin Burns, Fiona Burns, John Sammon.  
 Second row: James McHale, Tony O'Malley, Pádraic O'Grady, Mary Duffy, Bríd O'Grady.  
 Third row: Peter Sweeney, Genie O'Malley, Elaine Duffy, Marie Kerr, Helen O'Malley, Siobhán Duffy.

The scouts finished their International Youth Year activities with a lively "Scouts Fun Concert" and a most enjoyable evening was had by young and old alike. On Saint Patrick's Day 1986 the group took part in the parade and had very colourful float in which Eileen Kerr and Marie O'Malley were partaking in a "sausage sizzle".

In June, Louisburgh scouts travelled to Cliffoney in County Sligo for their summer camp, "North Point 86". Jeannie O'Malley, Catherine Morahan, Austin Duffy, Pádraic O'Grady and leader, Nuala O'Loughlin went to the camp and it certainly was a week to remember.

In October, the Tenth Sligo (Tubbercurry) came to Old Head for a weekend and the Third Mayo joined them in that camp. Both groups sincerely thank Donald Wallace for providing the excellent site for them, and also Father Waldron for his visit to them on Saturday to take pictures of their activities.



*Louisburgh Beavers 1985*

*Leaders: Nuala Ó Loughlin, Rosario Tiernan, Mary O'Grady, Maimie McCormac.  
Front row L. to R.: Beanán Ó Loughlín, Ethna Morahan, Sinéad MacDonagh, Maura O'Grady, A. G. McCormack, Jarlath O'Malley, John Maxwell, David Kenny.  
Back row L. to R.: Kieran McGuinness, John Hegarty, Arlene McGuinness, Dara O'Grady, Dermot Morahan, Aonghus O'Loughlin, Lisa McDonagh, Ian Kenny.*

On 15 November, twenty-two cub scouts and their leaders went to Tuam for a pack holiday. They stayed in the Scout den there and had a most successful and enjoyable stay. They visited the Archbishop, who extended his blessing to each one of them and praised the pack and their leaders for the good work they are doing.



*Scouts' visit to Tuam*

*Sonya Heneghan, Aonghus O'Loughlin, Robert Heneghan, Archbishop Cunnane.*

To mark the close of International Peace Year, scouts, cubs and beavers together with their leaders, attended a special Mass celebrated by Father Waldron in Saint Patrick's Church. The whole group attended that morning; ninety-five young people and fifteen leaders were present.

Now in 1987 with over one hundred people, girls and boys, involved in Louisburgh alone, Mayo has become an independent district. There are now six groups – Westport, Louisburgh, Newport, Swinford, Killeen and Foxford in the new "Mhuigheo" district.