

# The Corran Herald

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CELEBRATING 30 YEARS OF THE CORRAN HERALD, 1985 - 2015

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# The Corran Herald

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Issue No 48 2015/2016

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

# 26<sup>th</sup> Ballymote Heritage Weekend

30<sup>th</sup> July to 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2015

Lectures @ The Teagasc Centre €10

(Immediately on the right over railway bridge on Tubbercurry Road)

Film and Documentary Screenings @ **The Art Deco Theatre and Cinema**  
 Coach for Saturday and Monday outings from Catholic Church. Own transport for Lissadell  
 Organised by Ballymote Heritage Group

Thursday 30<sup>th</sup>

## GALLIPOLI

Feature Film with Mel Gibson  
 by Australian Director  
 Peter Weir (1984)  
 @ **The Art Deco Theatre & Cinema**  
 (Admission €6)



8 pm.

Friday 31<sup>st</sup>

**The Irish Brigade in  
 the American Civil War**  
 (Smithsonian Documentary)  
 @ **The Art Deco Theatre & Cinema**  
 (Admission Free)



2 pm.

8.30 pm. **Official Opening and  
 Lecture by  
 Dr Eamonn P Kelly,**  
 Former Keeper of Irish Antiquities,  
 National Museum of Ireland



**Lecture: Secrets of the  
 Bog Bodies**

Saturday 1<sup>st</sup>

9 am. **Outing: Jackie Clarke  
 Historical Collection,  
 Ballina & Enniscoe  
 Historic House & Garden**



9 am.

8.30 pm. **Lecture: The Art of Medieval  
 North-West Ireland**  
**Professor Rachel Moss,**  
 Department of the History of Art and Architecture,  
 Trinity College, Dublin and Editor of  
 Medieval Volume in Royal Irish Academy/ Yale UP  
 History of Irish Art



Enniscoe House



Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup>

11 a.m. **Lissadell House  
 and Gardens:  
 Private guided tour,  
 Lunch &  
 Viewing of Gardens.**



(Limited availability: Tickets  
 @ €26 must be purchased in  
 advance from Casey's Pharmacy.  
 Any remaining tickets will be  
 available on opening night)

8.30 p.m. **Lecture: Buildings  
 of South Ulster  
 - Armagh, Cavan and  
 Monaghan**



Kevin Mulligan, Architectural  
 Historian, author of South Ulster  
 volume in The Buildings of Ireland Series



Clonry

Monday 3<sup>rd</sup>

9 a.m. **Outing: A Tour of  
 Counties Cavan  
 and Monaghan,  
 led by Kevin Mulligan,**  
 Architectural Historian, author of  
 South Ulster volume in  
 The Buildings of Ireland Series

8.30 p.m. **Lecture: Sligo and  
 Home Rule, 1886-1912**

Dr. Pdraig Deignan, author  
 of Land and People in Nineteenth  
 Century Sligo - from Union to  
 Local Government



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# Elizabeth Gilhawley – An Appreciation

By Ursula Gilhawley

The death occurred on 21 May 2015 of Elizabeth Gilhawley at her residence in Wolfe Tone St Ballymote, Co Sligo. She was a long time supporter and patron of the Ballymote Heritage Group and one of the oldest residents in the town of Ballymote.

Elizabeth (nee White) was born in 1918 in Kingsbrook near Riverstown and married Eugene Gilhawley in 1939. Eugene, a native of Skreen, had been appointed Principal of Knockalassa National School, Riverstown in 1936. They lived in the residence attached to the school and six of their seven children were born here. Eugene entered local politics in 1955, winning a county council seat in the Ballymote electoral area. He was appointed Principal of Keash National School in 1958 and it was at this point that the family moved to Ballymote, initially to Laburnum Lodge and then to Wolfe Tone St. Eugene was elected to Dail Eireann in 1961 for the first time.

Elizabeth was first and foremost a wife, mother and homemaker. She was totally dedicated to the wellbeing and support of her immediate and extended family, neighbours and friends. However, being the wife of a politician she was also a secretary – unpaid in those days. She was an astute observer of the local political scene. Being a quiet, somewhat reserved person, Elizabeth would never put herself to the fore in the political arena, but her intelligence and strong practical and savvy approach to life's problems meant that she was a great asset to Eugene in his political life.

Away from the political world, Elizabeth liked nothing better than a game of 25 with relatives and friends. Later in life she took up bridge, which she enjoyed playing right up until her final years. Her playing companions



**Eugene and Elizabeth on their Wedding Day 27th December 1939**

and friends were also town residents, namely Mary O Dwyer, Maureen Egan, Ann Harrison and Mai O Donnell, all sadly now deceased, and Maree O Dowd. She was a daily mass goer for most of her life until her early 90s. She loved to walk through the town park, stopping for a little rest on one of the benches on the way. Mass, bridge, her garden, keeping her house ship shape, reading the daily paper, following current affairs and walking and spending time with her dear friend Maisie McGovern, were all a great comfort to Elizabeth when Eugene died in 1987. Her chats and 'little tipple' with Mrs Rita Kielty from Wolfe Tone St in more recent years were also an important part of her life.

Despite a serious illness in 1989 she fought her way back to full health with great determination and courage, and lived a happy, contented and full life thereafter. She followed the lives

of her children, 16 grandchildren and then 16 great-grandchildren with great interest until the last months of her life. Elizabeth's home was very dear to her and it was fitting therefore that she should die at home in the loving care of her family and supported by community and palliative care services, relatives and good neighbours on Wolfe Tone St. People from many facets of Elizabeth's life attended her funeral service to acknowledge the 96 years of her life – people from her early days in the Riverstown and Knockalassa areas, people from Eugene's homeland of Skreen and Dromard, the Ballymote community, as well as representatives of the political scene and a very wide circle of extended family and friends. She is survived by her sons, Des, Cyril, Shane and Tony and daughters Mary, Anna and Ursula, Ar dheis de go raibh a h-anam dilis.

# Heritage Weekend 2014



Author Mary Kenny, who performed the official opening, with Fr Hannan

An appreciative audience



Afternoon tea at Temple House. Music was provided by Rod Alston and members of Sligo Baroque Orchestra



Group on visit to Derek Hill House and Gallery, Churchill, Co Donegal

# Heritage Weekend 2014



A well-earned rest during the outing to Westport

Group on the visit to Westport House



John Coleman, Chairman of Ballymote Heritage Group with President Higgins at Russborough. Also including is John's cousin and fellow Ballymote man, Colonel Brendan McAndrew, ADC to the President.

# 30 years on: The front page of the first issue of *The Corran Herald* in 1985



Thanks to Phil Currid for providing a copy of the original issue



# Community Appreciation of Fiona Rogers of Ballymote

By Michael and Carmel Rogers (nee Davey)

It was with great sadness that we recently lost our dear beloved Fiona, whose death took place on March 9<sup>th</sup> last after a long illness. She was our only daughter and only sister of our sons Gearoid, Micheal and Padraic. She is also survived by her five nieces and two nephews.

Although the last three months of her life were spent on a ventilator in the Intensive Care Ward of Sligo General Hospital, she had almost 20 years of bad health. Much of her life story was written by journalist Alison Healy, who was a classmate of Fiona's, and printed in the *Irish Times* Health Supplement back in May 2010.

Fiona bore her illness with great dignity and she was an inspiration to everyone who knew her. She is well remembered for her cheerfulness and her lovely smile. Whenever she was asked by anyone how she was, her reply was usually 'not too bad'. This was a reply you wouldn't expect from someone who could not speak, eat or drink. Added to that, her mobility was extremely limited and her only way of getting around was with the aid of an electric wheelchair. In spite of these limitations Fiona loved life and was always kind and considerate of others and generous to a fault. She often sent Christmas cards and presents to people she hardly knew; this gave her



**Fiona Rogers, Ballymote**

a huge lift and even through the most difficult moments in her life she never lost the desire to be kind to others.

Fiona was a very enthusiastic shopper and was very often seen visiting the local shops of Ballymote. Her disability never stopped her from carrying out the weekly shopping and stocking up on her baking ingredients. She was a very keen baker and baked cakes for lots of people around Ballymote. She also had a huge love of gardening and was always sowing seeds and growing flowers for her back patio.

Fiona was an active member of the Irish Wheelchair Association, and until her health started to fail sharply last year she was often to be seen on outings with the local Sligo branch. A few years ago she even organised for a bus-load of her friends to visit with the then President Mary McAleese in Áras an Uachtaráin. They had a most memorable day and it was something Fiona was very proud of.

It's hardly surprising, given Fiona's generous and caring nature, that she held a deep commitment to improving the lot of other people with disabilities. She campaigned for two safe crossing points in Ballymote for people on wheelchairs. In her lifetime it was not delivered upon but hopefully at some point her wishes might be fulfilled.

We, her family, were very humbled by the huge numbers of people who came out to pay their respects both at our home in Ballymote and at the church during her funeral. We know how much Fiona was loved and admired and we are very grateful to those who came to offer their condolences to us.

Her funeral mass took place on Wednesday 11 March in the Church of the Immaculate Conception in Ballymote and afterwards she was buried in Carrownanty Graveyard. May Fiona rest in peace.

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## In memory of the Most Revered Thomas Flynn Patron of Ballymote Heritage Group and retired Bishop of Achonry

Members of Ballymote Heritage Group noted with regret the death at the age of 84 on 2 June 2015 of Bishop Thomas Flynn, who had for many years been a patron of Ballymote Heritage Group and supporter of Ballymote Heritage Weekends.

Bishop Flynn was born in 1931, grew up on a farm near Ballaghaderreen, Co Roscommon and was ordained a priest of the diocese of Achonry in 1956. He taught ancient Greek at St Nathy's College, Ballaghaderreen, and went on to serve as its president before serving as bishop of the diocese of Achonry

from 1977 to 2008. For a time he was spokesman for the Episcopal Conference and later spokesman on education. He was a younger brother of the long time parish priest of Ballymote, the late Canon Robert Flynn. Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam dílis.

# Memories of 95 years- Kathleen Coleman (née Benson)

By John Coleman



**Kathleen Coleman**  
27 July 1919 – 7 January 2015

My mother was born in Ballymote during the turbulent period leading up to the foundation of the Irish state, and she lived in the town for all of her 95 years. She was over many years a member of Ballymote Heritage Group and a regular attender at lectures and outings. I acquired my interest in and much of my knowledge of the town and its history over the last century from listening to her recollections.

She loved the songs of Percy French and Thomas Moore and before the advent of car radio we were treated to these on Sunday afternoon jaunts. She liked things to be 'dainty' and often recalled cycling trips with friends of her youth that included afternoon tea at Geeters Hotel in Dromahair or Hollybrook. As children we were to share in such treats in the form of lavish teas served on Sunday in Maghery House in Bundoran. Her mother had grown up in Deroon and she recalled to my mother seeing the house in Market Street where they lived under construction.

My mother told me of how the family had been warned of the impending plan to burn down the RIC barracks a few doors up the street during 'the Troubles' and how, having taken shelter with my grandmother's brother Tom Walsh at her home place in Deroon, they watched the flames rising over Ballymote. They wondered whether their hard-earned home and

business were being consumed in a conflagration that might spread through the terrace of houses along the street from the barracks. My recollection is that she credited the Black and Tans with burning the barracks.

I was constantly reminded of the role played by Ballymote people in national life. A neighbouring publican Miss Dawson had a sister married to Alex McCabe TD, a noted figure in local and national politics. John A Barnes NT, father of patron of the Ballymote Heritage Group Eamon Barnes, was a legendary figure who showed boundless dedication in preparing his brightest pupils for scholarship exams.

In the earlier days of the new state when divisive political views were sometimes strongly held, my mother was proud of the fact that she had customers of every political and religious hue – and they were friends as well. I remember one elderly customer Daisy Rowlett, who regularly bicycled from Riverstown to Ballymote to shop – assured of a sustaining 'dinner' in our kitchen. My mother always believed in putting extra in the pot to provide for unexpected guests. I remember 'Miss Rowlett' arriving on one occasion with a gift of a freshly killed chicken; while it had been plucked its innards were intact, and I was dismissed from the kitchen while waste elements of its entrails were disentangled from those to be boiled for making stock – liver, heart, neck and 'gizzard'.

She had inherited the drapery business established by her parents in 1913. Business and home were one. It was not unusual for customers to be facilitated after mass on Sunday before we settled down to the Sunday roast. If a customer rang the doorbell late in the evening with an urgent requirement the lights in the shop were turned on and they were served. She was a successful businesswoman which she attributed to knowing her trade (from apprenticeship to her parents), low profit margins, a good turnover of stock (no 'shelf warmers' – move along old stock as customers



**Kathleen's sister Maisie McGovern**

did not wish to see last season's fashions) and a comprehensive and attractive window display.

The window display was 'done' about four times a year and *no one* else was permitted to touch it! My mother knew her customers and their tastes well – they were mostly women for some of whom the shop was a social centre where they could get out of the house to meet and chat, sometimes expressing their frustrations about husbands who did not always appreciate the costs associated with household management. There was much laughter and I was a privileged witness to many such gatherings through which I got to know and be on friendly terms with so many local people who are still my neighbours today.

My mother was passionate about the drapery business and she loved clothes and dressing well. She hated having her photograph taken in old age but was very proud of the studio portrait of taken by Kilgallon of Sligo. She was also proud of having been invited to conduct a choir for the visit of President Douglas Hyde to Ballymote in the 1930s. She and my father were devoted to us as children and she remained a great support to me until roles were reversed in later years.

**Photographs By Kilgallon Studios, Sligo**

# Remembering Ted Nealon TD



**Left to Right: John and Joan Townsend, Brendan and Ruth Loughnane, Stephen Collins Editor of Nealon's Guide, Fergal and Sinead Nealon, John Perry TD**

It is appropriate that *The Corran Herald* should mark the passing in 2014 of Ted Nealon TD, who as Minister of State for Arts and Culture lent his support to the Ballymote Heritage Group by performing the official opening of the first Ballymote Heritage Weekend in 1984.

On the 26 November 2014 tribute was paid in the Dail to the distinguished journalist and former TD for Sligo Leitrim. A summary of the remarks from Taoiseach Enda Kenny follow.

--

It was with great sadness I learned earlier this year of the death of former Deputy and Minister of State, the late Ted Nealon. Today, on behalf of the Government and the Fine Gael Party, I convey my deepest sympathies to his wife, Jo, who is not with us in the House today, his son Fergal, his daughter Louise and extended family. Louise is watching this broadcast in Sydney, Australia.

Ted Nealon is sadly missed by all those who knew him in his personal and political life. Many of the younger and newer Members might not have known Ted Nealon as a person or a politician. Some who may not have been in politics at the time will have seen some of the programmes he conducted when he was a television broadcaster and political commentator.

It was a privilege and quite something to work with him and to be a beneficiary of what was a unique political brain of enormous capacity. It is something about which we know

very clearly in Leinster House and the Dáil, as do those who were privileged to work with him in what, by any standards, was an exceptional career in politics and journalism. In the political aspect of his career he served proudly under two former taoisigh, Liam Cosgrave and the late Dr. Garret FitzGerald, and he did so with distinction as Minister of State at the Department of Agriculture and later as Minister of State at the Department of An Taoiseach with responsibility for arts and culture. He was later appointed Minister of State at the Department of Posts and Telegraphs.

In every role he gave of his best, not alone as an exemplary public servant but as an exemplary compassionate and dignified human being. In every

interaction he recognised the other person's humanity and dignity, which explains why when Ted's passing was announced it was met with such personal sadness and fond affection in the former constituency of Sligo-Leitrim. He touched people's lives with his sincerity and the common sense and insight for which he was well noted and for which he is now so deeply and personally missed.

Ted Nealon loved his county and everything about it. He loved the stories and the engagement of the characters of the day. He followed on from the late Eugene Gilhewley and the late Joe MacLachlan, two different personalities who represented the Sligo-Leitrim constituency. He loved Ben Bulbin, Lissadell and Streedagh Strand where the lost Armada lies. He was intrigued by the science of politics and the enthusiasm created by so many people. He was always excited about the political challenge and the stories that had to be contended with. He wrote many of them down in the book he published on tales from Leinster House.

To Jo, Feargal, Louise and the extended family, I offer our heartfelt thanks for his contribution to Ireland and to politics. I express our deepest sympathy. It was an honour to serve with him in the House here and to enjoy his company, and to learn from his journalistic and broadcasting brain about the science of politics and what made it work for him. Go ndéanfaidh Dia trócaire ar a anam dílis.



**Fergal Nealon and his wife Sinead sign the distinguished visitors book in Leinster House**

# London ‘Shoemaker’ tops the poll in Sligo

By John C McTernan

Between the 1830s and 1850s politically County Sligo had been thoroughly Conservative, principally because Protestants were in a majority on the Register, and also arising from the relatively good relations that existed between landlords and their tenants. In July 1841 William Richard Ormsby-Gore was returned in place of Edward Joshua Cooper, who had resigned his seat, and two months later John Ffolliott of Hollybrook replaced Alexander Perceval who had been appointed a Sergeant-at-Arms to the House of Lords.

By 1852 the situation had changed somewhat, with Catholic electors numerically ahead on the Register, leading by 1169 to 632. That gave the Liberals a majority of 500 and was sufficient to ensure the return of at least one and possibly two Liberal members to Parliament.

In March 1852 the *Champion* carried an announcement of the formation of a County Club aimed at securing not only the revival but also the triumph of the Liberal Party in the county. The inaugural meeting was on 17 March, presided over by Bishop George Browne of Elphin, and the attendance consisted almost exclusively of clergymen representative of a majority of parishes within the county. Dean Patrick Durcan of Collooney, afterwards Bishop of Achonry, was appointed chairman and Peter Brennan, PP Kilfree, as secretary. The outcome of the meeting was the establishment of a Liberal club called the Sligo Independent Club, ‘whose object was to ensure the Independence of Sligo.’

At a subsequent general meeting of the club attended by both clergy and laymen, it was unanimously decided that Sheriff Richard Swift of London and John Ball would represent the Liberal Party at the ensuing election, and that the combined strength of the entire Party be brought to bear at

the hustings to ensure a satisfactory outcome. At the meeting much time was devoted to an analysis of the Registry which they found to be ‘most flattering.’

Coincidentally, both the selected candidates were non local. Ball, a man of extreme Liberal opinions, was the son of Judge Nicholas Ball of the Court of Common Pleas. He was already well known in Sligo, having unsuccessfully contested the Borough seat in 1848, and it was considered proper to offer him the support of the Catholic interest in the County. He claimed to be a thorough reformer entirely devoted to Tenant Right, an uncompromising advocate of civil and religious liberty and, if elected, promised to act as an independent member.

The second nominee, Richard Swift of London, also known as ‘Sheriff Swift’, was of Irish descent and was accepted as a candidate on the recommendation of John MacHale, Archbishop of Tuam, who wrote as follows:

*Mr Swift is the Catholic High Sheriff of London and is ready to advocate all Irish measures as if he were a native of Ireland. His warm attachment to his religion and his edifying discharge of his duties of domestic and social life afford the best pledge of his integrity and his ample fortune places him above the temptation to which indulgence has sometimes fallen a victim. Knowing that you will kindly excuse an obtrusion to which I have been prompted by those you revere.*

The local Conservative organs were highly critical of Swift’s participation in a local election, referring to him as a ‘foreigner’ and a ‘Saxon’ who had the backing of the Catholic clergy. The *Chronicle* unashamedly referred to him as ‘a London shoemaker.’

In response to the invitation from the Liberal Club, Richard Swift arrived in Sligo at end of May, 1852. On his

route from Boyle he was greeted by throngs of cheering crowds at every crossroads and village. Triumphal arches spanned the roadway here and there and his entrance to Collooney was heralded by a local band striking up the air *See the Conquering Hero Come*. From there to Sligo he was escorted by a row of carriages bearing prominent Liberal supporters. Cheering crowds accompanied him on his way to Doherty’s Guesthouse in Castle Street where, from an upstairs window, he delivered a brief address advocating the principles of civil and religious liberty and tenant-right, and in particular promoting the local interests of the County. In the words of the *Champion* ‘he came as a stranger and got a reception equal to any given to the great O’Connell’, and it expressed the view that if Catholics acted with the same fidelity displayed in the 1837 election a Liberal success was certain.

In his published address Swift outlined both his credentials and objectives as follows:

*In response to the call which has been made upon me by members of the Liberal Club of the County, I have the honour to declare myself a candidate for its representation in the ensuing Parliament. As the son of an Irishman I am highly gratified on the honour conferred on me, especially that the choice has been recommended by the Archbishop of Tuam and warmly approved by Bishop Browne. If elected, I will endeavour to promote civil and religious liberty, improve the condition of the Irish people and in particular forward all the local interests of your County.*

In the weeks following his arrival he undertook an extensive and successful canvass of the County, parish by parish, which entailed public meetings, invariably chaired by the local Parish Priest, after which he was entertained to dinner attended

by prominent Liberals of the locality. Swift's otherwise successful tour encountered a totally unexpected hiccup in Easkey as reported in the *Chronicle*:

*Sheriff Swift was arrested in the good town of Easkey and detained in the Parish Chapel by the effectual method of locking the gates until he paid the ransom, namely, £10, to the mob for drink. And here we must admit that the Tireragh 'boys' are vastly superior to the Sligo 'lads' in performing the interesting operation of 'bleeding a candidate', for while the latter only effected a haemorrhage to the extent of eighteen pence, the former proved themselves highly successful operators.*

In June 1852 the *Tablet* reported on Swift's eight-day campaign which highlighted the important part the Catholic clergy played in his eventual success at the polls.

	Swift	Gore-Booth	Ormsby Gore
<b>Ballymote</b>	336	287	251
<b>Easkey</b>	70	84	82
<b>Sligo</b>	333	274	208
<b>Gross poll</b>	<b>739</b>	<b>645</b>	<b>521</b>

Robert Gore-Booth and William Richard Ormsby-Gore were candidates in the Conservative interest. It was Gore-booth's first contested election, and despite his widely publicised benevolence during the Great Famine, there were rumblings by an organised opposition, politically motivated, and primarily based on the assumption that he was opposed to all legislation on the land question, more popularly known as Tenant Right.

In his published address to the electors of the county, the owner of Lissadell contradicted the falsehoods made against him by promising to support any measure, no matter from what Party emanating, which would ensure the tenant the full and fair value of the outlay of his capital on the improvement of the soil. He also emphasised that he was not opposed to all legislation on the land question. Ormsby-Gore, who was first returned six years earlier, recalled the 'awful

visitation with which the country had of late been afflicted', and among his priorities for the incoming Parliament was the improvement of relations between landlord and tenant and the promotion of such enterprises as were likely to develop the resources of the County. He also promised to uphold 'our Glorious Constitution.'

John Ball, the second Liberal nominee, withdrew ahead of nominations, leaving four candidates, namely, Robert Gore-Booth and William Ormsby-Gore (both Conservative); Richard Swift (Liberal) and John Taaffe (Non Party) to contest the two seats. Polling extended over three days and on day one the state of the poll was as per the table on this page:

At the close of the poll the voting was as follows: Swift 870; Gore-Booth 943; Ormsby 744 and Taaffe 30.

The outcome was a notable gain for the Liberals at the expense of the Conservatives. Although Gore-Booth's reputation had been dented somewhat in the course of the campaign, a majority of the electorate stood by him. He not only headed the poll but retained his seat at every election until his death 26 years later. Commenting on the outcome, Swift declared his victory was 'not of person but of principle.' The landlord influence had been exerted manfully, against which he had brought the sole influence of the Catholic clergy who called on their flocks to record their votes honestly and faithfully in his favour and 'agreeably to the dictates of their conscience.' He marvelled at the influence the Catholic priests had over their flocks, although it was subsequently admitted that few Catholics voted against the wishes of their landlords. A petition against the return of Richard Swift on the grounds

of non-qualification was lodged by the Conservatives in September 1852 but subsequently withdrawn.

Although scoring a notable success, the Liberals expressed dissatisfaction at what was termed an injudicious arrangement regarding 'split' votes. It appears that Catholic electorate were in many instances permitted to split with Gore-Booth instead of plumping for the Liberal candidate. While the *Sligo Champion* was loud in its praise of some Catholic clergy who had worked unceasingly to achieve the desired result, it claimed that there was 'a want of organisation' in so far as there was no settled arrangement regarding 'split' votes prior to the election, and had it been properly managed Richard Swift would have headed the poll at Gore-Booth's expense.

Swift's victory was notable in so far as it was the first time in almost a century that the County had returned a candidate whom the *Chronicle* described as 'a total stranger' as its representative, and went on to refer to him as 'a hard-handed and close-fisted tradesman' who imagined that the benedictions of the clergy should waft him into the House of Commons. Continuing, it remarked that he was totally unconnected with the constituency either by property or connection and who, in all probability, would soon forge the interests of the constituents with the advancement of his own affairs. In conclusion it consoled its readers by remarking that the County 'was the property of the Conservative gentry' and at the next election would be better prepared for their opponents.

The other Conservative organ, the *Journal*, also lamented the loss of a seat to the Liberals and blamed what it described as 'an inexcusable neglect' of not paying more attention to the updating of the Registry. Of the 663 Protestants on the County rolls all but 40 were staunch Conservatives. However, the finger was also pointed at the Tory landlords for their neglect of the Protestant tenantry and concluded that had these

matters been attended to both Gore-Booth and Ormsby-Gore would have been returned without a contest.

While obvious dissensions within the Conservative Party, especially a disunity between the candidates, were glossed over by the said journals, they were highlighted by Ormsby-Gore in his post-election address, in which he made serious charges against the local Conservative Party and blamed his defeat on the hostility of many of the electors towards him

personally. He also thanked his many personal friends who, 'regardless of false rumours circulated against him by a few pseudo-Conservatives', had given him their cordial support.

For the most part the election passed off without any major incident although there were reports of physical force being applied to Conservative electors either to vote for the Liberal candidate or else abstain from exercising their franchise. At the conclusion of the poll the

County Sheriff, John Irwin of Raheen complimented all concerned on what he termed 'the exemplary spirit in which the election was conducted.'

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This article is an extract from a forthcoming publication entitled *The Way Things Were: Sligo Parliamentary Elections 1700-1918*.

# Kaveney Family Famine Trail Commemoration Walk

By Adrian Regan



On 4 April 2015, Rose Marie Stanley along with her husband Terry led a Famine Trail Commemoration Walk from the townland of Cross near Keash in County Sligo to Sligo Port. Rose Marie is a fifth-generation descendent of Patrick and Sarah Kaveney, who with their six children did this same walk on 4 April 1847, when as famine victims they left Ireland in the hope of a better life in Canada.

They were joined on their 21-mile journey by Theresa Finnegan, Clare O'Connell and Teresa Eakins of Co Sligo Heritage and Genealogy Centre, members of the Mullaghmore and Cliffoney Historical Society, and descendants of different branches of the Kaveney family. They all

undertook the walk in memory of Patrick and Sarah and their six children, and all those who sailed with them to Canada on the ill-fated *Carricks* in April 1847.

Patrick and Sarah Kaveney were tenants of Lord Palmerston and became the first group of his 'assisted emigrants' to leave Sligo in 1847 for Quebec. They left Sligo port along with 28 other families from the area on the 5 April 1847.

Just over three weeks after leaving Sligo, these emigrants entered the Gulf of St Lawrence and were in sight of the Canadian coast when the ship was caught in a snowstorm and crashed into the notorious Cap des Rosiers. Only 48 passengers survived.

Patrick and Sarah along with their son Martin were among the survivors, but tragically their five daughters were drowned. The heartbroken couple set up home in Jersey Cove and had four more children with the family surname becoming known as Kavanagh in Canada.

The walk in their memory started at the old Kaveney homestead in Cross on Easter Saturday and proceeded through Ballymote, Collooney, Ballisodare and then on to Sligo Port. There was a short ceremony of remembrance at the quays, from where the *Carricks* would have set sail on its final journey. During the ceremony, Rose Marie laid five daffodils in the water to remember the five Kaveney daughters who were lost. Afterwards the walkers were received by the Mayor of Sligo, Cllr Tom MacSharry, at a reception at City Hall.

It is only in recent years, with the help of Co Sligo Heritage and Genealogy Centre and Mullaghmore and Cliffoney Historical Society that the family was able to trace their Sligo roots and reconnect with many long-lost relatives. In May of this year, members of another branch of the Kavanagh family will visit Sligo.

# Bartholomew Teeling

By Pdraig McDermott

Bartholomew Teeling was born in Lisburn Co Antrim in 1774, son of Luke Teeling. The family were well-to-do linen merchants until dispossessed because of their allegiance to the Society of United Irishmen, which was composed of Protestant, Presbyterian and Catholic membership. His mother was Taaffe of Smarmore Castle, Co Louth.

There is a monument at Collooney (Carricknatat) commemorating him, constructed on the centenary of his death in 1898. Plinth nine and half feet square, twenty feet high, statue nine feet six inches high, all placed in position by Mr Clarence, Ballisodare. Sculptor Mr Harrison, Dublin. Ballinasloe limestone. Site owner Mr Phibbs, Collooney. Officially opened by Rev PJ O'Grady, 29 July 1899.

## Saturday 6 October 1798

As I find there has been no accurate account of the action at Colooney so honourable to the Limerick City regiment come into your hands, I take this opportunity of communicating it to you.

On the 5<sup>th</sup> of September, Col Vereker, who commanded here, received information that part of the French and rebel army had advanced to Colooney and purposed attacking this town that night in two columns; considering that it would be advisable to dispossess them from that post. He ordered Captain Vincent and 100 men as an advanced guard to march and watch their motions, while he moved on with 20 men of the 24<sup>th</sup> dragoons, 30 yeoman cavalry, 250 Limerick City militia, 20 Essex Fencibles and 30 yeoman infantry.

On the advanced guard coming near the enemy, they sustained a smart fire, which checked them a little when Col Vereker ordered Captain Waller and the Limerick Light company to advance and support them. While he informed his line and arranged his plan of attack on the main body which duty Capt Waller executed with great steadiness. On his line being formed



he ordered Major Ormsby and one company to take post on a hill which covered his right and preventing the enemy from turning that flank, while the colonel advanced on the right of the line with two curriple guns. Col Gough was ordered to take charge of the left; in a few minutes the whole came into action and supported on sides on unremitting fire of musketry and grapeshot for nearly an hour and a half. Never was a more obstinate contest; at last superior numbers prevailed. Major Ormsby's detachment was obliged to retreat from the hill and that post given up, the enemy began to press round in numbers to the rear of the line.

A retreat then became absolutely necessary to save the gallant fellows who even then maintained their post, although their ammunition was nearly expended. Never did any man show greater coolness and gallantry than Col Vereker, at this trying moment he never quitted his post while a man could stand by him. And when his artillery horses were so severely wounded that they could not bring away his guns, he attempted to have them brought off by drag ropes, and not until nearly surrounded on all sides did he leave them. The gallant and steady manner the officers and soldiers resisted the attack of the

united French and rebel army of above 4,000 men strongly posted with nine field pieces, reflects the greatest honour on them and has saved this town from ruin.

The entire loss on the side of the King's troops: Ensign Romley and five men killed, two officers and 16 men wounded. The enemy had above 50 killed and wounded and many of them have since died in the hospital here.

The French fought with great bravery and acted with the greatest humanity to the wounded men and officers who fell into their hands. The French General said he never met a more gallant resistance of unreserved fire than from the Limerick Regiment.

## Court-martial of Bartholomew Teeling ADC to General Humbert, Killala to Ballinamuck, August – September 1798

Saturday 22 September 1798, 12 noon. Mr B Teeling was brought up to make his defence:

Mr President – I know that I have to address soldiers and men of honour. My case is short, and I shall confine myself briefly to such points only as furnish, in my opinion, matter for the consideration of the court fully persuaded that if they shall have any weight here, the favourable sentiments which they may excite will not be diminished in their transmission to a higher authority.

I am accused of high treason. Permit me then to suggest the peculiar advantage which would result to me from a trial according to the regular courts of civil law and standing before an ordinary tribunal.

I also beg leave to submit to the court with all possible respect whether in a case of life and death it be strictly constitutional to try any man by the military law when the civil courts can be resorted to. Sir I am accused of high treason in as much as being a subject of this Empire I was found in alliance with the enemies of His Majesty. I admit as I have already

done that. I was born in Ireland but circumstances occurred which forced me to relinquish my natural land and become a subject of France.

I embraced the life of a soldier in the service of that country which gave me protection and as a soldier and a man of honour, it became me to act in obedience to my superiors in a situation where refusal would have incurred infamy and death. Without knowing what was the destination of the expedition, I repaired to La Rochelle pursuant to an order to that effect and still in ignorance of that of which it was not my duty to enquire, I sailed for this country.

These facts will I trust convince the court that mine was not an act of deliberate treason and that I did nothing but what as a soldier I conceived to have been my duty. Neither did I act the part of a conscious traitor and fly from that punishment which a sense of criminality would have presented to my view.

One word more sir, the witness who supported the prosecution has evidence to my humanity in a manner and to an extent which seem to produce a strong influence on the Court. Perhaps it does not become me to claim any privilege or favour from conduct which had no selfish alliance with future consequences, and which at the time I had not expectation of addressing as an argument in the defence of my life. I was merciful for mercy's sake, and from that conviction that it should ever influence the conduct and decisions of power. As a Roman Catholic and a Christian I felt it my duty and inclination to love my fellow creatures. The indulgence and candour of which I have been treated by this Court has made a strong and grateful impression on my heart, and whether the final issue be life or death, I rest confident that any case will quit this Court accompanied by every advantage it can derive from a just and generous consideration.

The order which the prisoner received to proceed to La Rochelle and which was signed by Humbert was laid before the Court, together with the copy of the above defence for the purpose of being transmitted to his Excellency the Marquis Cornwallis

Lord Lieutenant along with the minutes of the trial.

**Execution of Mr Bartholomew Teeling**

Tuesday 25 September 1798, *Dublin Evening Post*

Yesterday at two o'clock this unfortunate and interesting young man suffered death on Arbour Hill, and conducting himself with a fortitude impossible to be surpassed and scarcely to be equalled. Neither the intimation of his fate, nor the near approach of it produced any diminution of courage. With firm step and unchanged countenance he walked from the 'Prevet to the place of execution, and there while the dreadful apparatus was preparing, he conversed with apparently unaffected ease with the persons immediately around him.

With the same strength of mind and body he ascended the eminence from which he was to be turned off and here we have to remark on the brutal bungling of the wretch employed as executioner and whom the present times should have better instructed him in his business.

The rope having at length adjusted, Mr Teeling requested to read a paper which he held in his hand. He was asked by the officer, whose immediate duty it was, whether it contained anything of a strong nature and he replied that it did; on which permission to read it was refused. Mr Teeling silently acquiesced in the restraint put on his last moments then after bowing gracefully to the surrounding people he was launched into eternity.

He was dressed in like manner as on his trial with the addition of the tri-coloured cockade in his hat. This melancholy consequence from the trial of the unfortunate Teeling was not expected by the public. The humanity which he so strongly and so effectually escorted in restraining the excesses of a vindictive warfare it was thought would have produced a mitigation expressive of humanity in his favour. The members of the court which with him seemed strongly influenced by the evidence appearing to that humanity. But theirs was the office of justice alone – to extend mercy was not in their power.

It is not for us in the present day

to hazard a conjecture whether strict justice be always and under all circumstances true policy, but we will suppose for so far as may suppose safely that Teeling's fate was rendered necessary by the peculiar state of the times.

**The paper Bart Teeling was prevented from reading from the scaffold**

The paper was recovered from the Library of London by Dr Richard Hayes and included in his book *The Last Invasion of Ireland*:

Fellow Citizens – I have been compelled by a military tribunal to suffer what they call an ignominious death but what appears from the number of its illustrious victims to be glorious in the highest degree. It is not in the power of men to abase virtue nor the man who dies for it. His death must be glorious in the field of battle or on the scaffold.

That same tribunal which has condemned me (citizens, I do not speak to you here of the constitutional rights of such a tribunal) has stamped me a traitor. If to have been active in endeavouring to put a stop to the bloodthirsty policy of an oppressive government has been treason, I am guilty. If to have endeavoured to give my native country a place among the nations of the earth was treason, then I am guilty indeed. If to have been active in endeavouring to remove the fangs of oppression from off the head of the devoted Irish Peasant was treason, I am guilty.

Finally if to have stricken to make my fellow men love each other was wrong, then I am guilty. You my countrymen may perhaps one day be able to tell whether these were the acts of a traitor, or deserved death. My own heart tells me they were not, and conscious of my innocence I would not change my present state for that of the highest of my enemies.

Fellow citizens, I leave you with the heartfelt satisfaction of having kept my oath as a United Irishman and also with the glorious prospect of the success of the cause in which we have been engaged. Persevere my beloved countrymen, your cause is the cause of truth. It must and will ultimately triumph.



# Willie Coleman's Jig

By Fiona Doherty

Joe Burke, the famous box player from Co Galway, played a set of jigs, *Father O'Flynn* and *Haste to the Wedding*, and is said to have remarked: 'Now if I was out for an early morning stroll by the Great Wall of China and met a native on a bicycle whistling either one of those tunes on the way to work... I wouldn't be the least surprised. They must be the two best-known and overplayed tunes of all time. They are truly great.'

A similar sentiment could be expressed about Willie Coleman's jig. One of the first recordings of this jig was made by Matt Molloy in 1976, and the tune has easily become a favourite among traditional Irish musicians throughout the world. The jig was composed by Willie Coleman, a well-known and respected fiddle player, born in Carnaree, Ballymote, on September 24, 1909.

It seems that many traditional musicians in Ireland know of Willie Coleman and many of them found their way to his home in Carnaree, including Seamus Ennis, Matt Molloy, Liam Óg O'Flynn and others too numerous to mention. Apart from the welcome and open house extended to all who loved and played Irish traditional music, Willie had a great store of tunes that he played and generously shared. He particularly loved to spend time teaching and instructing young musicians.

He himself first learned his music from a local man, a flute player by the name of Willie (Bill) Snee, and later married Bill's daughter, Katie. Katie played the accordion in her early days and could lilt many tunes. Her brother John Joe was a fiddle player and another brother, Jimmy, had the



local shop and played the banjo. Willie's talent was passed on to his own children. Liam, who was playing the Clarke C whistle at age five, is today a well-known banjo player in traditional Irish music circles in England. Philomena plays the guitar and sings, and Kathleen and Ann enjoy listening to the music. Francie, with his tin whistle, is a familiar face at the sessions around Ballymote and has also been known to sing one or two songs. One of Francie's favourite tunes is Martin Wynne's Number Three, and Willie was recorded playing a lovely version of this reel in the 1960s. A copy of this recording is available in the Comhaltas Archive in the Coleman Centre in Gurteen, Co Sligo.

Willie was very fond of Michael Coleman's tunes and music, and would borrow 78s from Dick O'Beirne, Lad's brother, in Killavil, as Lad would have sent the records over to him from the USA. In 1951 a committee of local musicians decided to perpetuate the memory of Michael

Coleman and started a memorial fund. The idea was to build a museum and library dedicated to Michael on a site next to this homestead. Each person paid in five pounds, and those with a job gave in ten pounds. Willie Coleman, along with Fred Flynn and Peter Horan, were some of the names listed as part of this committee.

These same men were also members of the Glenview Ceili Band, and performed frequently as a band in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Other members of this band included accordion players Dickie Sherlock and Joe Fallon.

Willie was known to down tools and leave the hay or whatever job he was doing to go and take up his fiddle in the house and play a tune that came to him. In addition to Willie Coleman's jig, he also composed three reels and wanted one of these to be known as Willie's Tribute to Bernadette Connolly. (Bernadette was abducted and murdered in 1970.) He played at local feisanna for years and he had often played for Bernadette when she danced. Unfortunately, not many people were adept at reading or writing music, and tape recorders were few and far between, so not all the tunes have survived. What has survived however are a wealth of local tunes and musical knowledge given freely and unselfishly by Willie. He passed away on 28 October 1981 aged 72 and a memorial plaque on the wall of his own house was unveiled in his memory – a fitting acknowledgement of a musical legacy. Don't be surprised if you hear someone whistling Willie Coleman's jig around Ballymote – or even further afield!

# Breaffy National School in the 50s and 60s

By Bernie Doyle

Breaffy National School in 1958 was located on a sharp bend on the busy Castlebar to Dublin road. It was then showing its age: a three-roomed school with its centre room empty. Infants and junior classes occupied the far room while the senior classes were in the room nearest to McTigue's pub. During the following few years Mayo County Council started work on the much-deliberated and controversial road-widening and improvement scheme. With the completion of the initial mile near Castlebar, known as 'the Golden Mile', funds were exhausted for the time being and we were still on the main road. The present road, which cuts through Breaffy woods, isolating the church, school, pub, post office and three houses, was not yet in existence.

To set the scene: Mrs Fahey presided over the Post Office, and she spoke of the people who proved they had reached pension age (70 years) by saying they were seven years old on the 'Night of the Big Wind'. Mrs Malone, who retired early from Breaffy NS, lived in a house nearby with her daughter, Margaret Mulcahy, and her family. Next to the school lived Polly Burke and her family, whose husband, Richard, worked for most of the year in England. When old Mrs McTigue retired from the pub she owned, her son and his wife and family came to live there and run it.

The church was used for Mass on Sunday and, perhaps, confessions on Saturday. We had First Communions and funerals there, and every four years there was a Mission of the 'hellfire and brimstone' variety. I have no recollection of a marriage there in my time, but then, Castlebar was so near. Dominic and Iris Browne still lived in Breaffy House but they sold it to the Land Commission in 1961. The Land Commission later sold the house

and forty acres to local businessmen who developed it as a hotel, and it is still operating as such today, though under different ownership. The picture would not be complete without mentioning Johnny Ruane, a sprightly septuagenarian postman who lived in Breaffy Wood with his wife. Johnny cycled on his trusty heavy Raleigh bike on his round of 20-odd miles every day in hail, rain or shine. He still managed to deliver the mail to everyone, even on Christmas Eve when every household had a 'spirited' welcome for him!

The late Andy McTigue was principal and had then served in the school for 36 years. In fact I think he actually served his full 45 years service there. He had been part of so many people's lives and was a wonderful storyteller. In the schoolroom there was a fireplace to the side of the room with a turf fire already burning when we arrived. Each child's family supplied an ass cart-load of turf in strict rotation so that there was never more than one load at a time. Although the quality of turf was generally good, there was the very occasional load of wet soggy turf, and we suffered with the wet smouldering turf if we happened to have a cold spell of weather. On the whole the doors and windows were ill-fitting and the place could be quite draughty in winter.

A turf fire in a large, high-ceilinged, draughty room could not hope to provide adequate heating. To combat this we had a set of children standing in a semi-circle near the fire for an oral lesson while the others sat in the desks doing written work. Then we reversed roles and in that way helped to thaw out the cold. Children who brought bottles of milk or tea had their bottles placed on the hearth to warm them for lunchtime.

The blackboard was the old three-legged stand type, with two wooden pegs on which the blackboard was balanced. There was an extra board too with a very rickety stand which was only used in emergencies, and needed a very delicate balancing act. I think the desks were twin desks rather than the old long desks (which we had in my first school in Ballytore, Co Kildare). We had electricity which provided light and boiled the kettle at lunch time. Our toilets, one for the girls and one for the boys, were the old dry closets at the back of the playground. There was a bucket of water, a tin basin and a towel in the hallway. When I look back it was like a different world; I just wonder how we escaped typhus and other diseases. We must have been pretty hardy types to withstand the breezes that blew up the Khyber Pass whenever we had to visit the closet. Once or twice a year a tall strapping travelling man appeared at the door and Andy struck a bargain with him to 'do the drains'. I'm not sure if he piled heaped earth into the closets or removed and buried the lot in a hole somewhere. The fee for this job was just about £2 or even less. But money had much more buying power back then than it has now.

In the old presses in the principal's room were stored the containers of acids and chemicals remaining from the early part of the century when not only science was taught as a subject but also Shakespeare and the major poets. Other relics from the past included old roll books and the famous Report Book – both later withdrawn from all schools. Even in the late 50s and early 60s an inspector wrote comments in this book on every visit he paid to the school. But, fortunately, at this time inspectors had changed their attitudes to teachers and pupils. But the Report Book told

a sorry tale, which Andy confirmed from his earlier years in the teaching profession. At one time an inspector could decide to demote a school's rating from 'Highly Satisfactory' to 'Satisfactory'. Teachers' meagre salaries were adjusted according to a school's rating. On the other hand, a school could be upgraded and even, by some miracle, be awarded the 'Carlisle and Blake Premium'. The Carlisle and Blake demanded a certain standard of excellence; there was a limited number of awards for the entire country. I have often wondered for whom the award was named – possibly some senior inspectors or benevolent Victorian anthropologists. It had lapsed before I arrived on the scene.

Some of the entries in the Report Book were funny, others pathetic and some downright malicious. One stands out in my memory, dated from November circa 1910. This unfortunate teacher had come into school and was still trying to light the fire – these were the days when the pupils brought a sod of turf apiece to school each day. Obviously it was poor-quality turf and he was still trying when the inspector arrived at 9.50 am. The report read: 'Mr T... still had his hat and coat on. No fire lighted. The children had their coats on.' The worst aspect of these books was that the remarks were there to be seen for generations afterwards. Eventually, someone had the sense to withdraw them. The late Mrs Malone used to tell of an inspector who came into the room, rubbed his finger along a ledge and held it up to show the dust on it. He then proceeded to vent his spleen and ended up by asking her whether she kept her drawing-room like this. To which she gave the perfect reply: 'This is not a drawing-room. It is a workshop, and a pretty poor one at that.'

In 1960 I got married and lived for a year in one of the gate lodges of Breaffy House, which we bought

from Dominic Browne during the sale of the estate. Then in 1962, just after the birth of our daughter, Anna, Breaffy school closed for the summer holidays and did not re-open for several months, during which it was completely renovated. Gone were the old dry closets; the middle room had been converted into a cloakroom and flush toilets and wash-basins had been installed. Floors, doors and windows had been replaced, and the rooms were painted and newly furnished with desks, cupboards and blackboards. Best of all, storage heaters replaced the turf fires. Now we had bright cheerful classrooms with proper heating and sanitation. We promptly decorated the rooms with pictures and teaching aids. It really was wonderful.

The Senior Infants and First Class girls loved to wash – hankies, ribbons, anything they could lay their hands on – during the lunch break. As soon as they heard Andy coming they dashed into the toilets and locked the doors so he could never catch them in the act. He had all the evidence but no culprits, and in spite of stern warnings to the closed doors, the practice continued until the novelty wore off. He used to come out to the yard to me and say: 'The little blighters are at it again and I can't catch them.'

The summer holiday period extended from the third Monday in July to the first Monday in September. Prior to that, schools closed for the month of August only. Christmas holidays were from December 22 until January 7, with a ten-day break for Easter. There used to be a week allowed in late October or early November to allow the children to pick the main-crop potatoes. The week varied from place to place according to the potato-digging period. I suppose it was necessary to allow the time off as so many children were kept home from school anyway to pick the potatoes. Children walked two or even three miles to school and back again in all kinds of weather, and there were

no proper facilities for drying their clothes. Children had quite a hard life in many ways.

I should say a few words about Andy McTigue, who spent his 45 years in Breaffy and watched pupils grow up and then taught their children again. Many people remember him as a calm, courteous, kindly man who had a great understanding of and tolerance for people. I now realise what a wonderful family man he was when I recall that he spent summers working in England with his son, who was then a student in UCG. This wasn't easy for a man in his late fifties. He would come back in September with tales of the people he had worked with in Haverford West and such places.

I have memories of pacing up and down in the sunshine at lunchtime, listening to stories of happenings in the past. There was the great time he and other young teachers had, camped for a week in the Phoenix Park as First Aid Orderlies during the Eucharistic Congress in 1932, or talks of the old man (nick-named 'Authority') coming into his mother's pub in Linenhall Street and quizzing himself and his sisters on their lessons. He would then hold forth and lay down the law on the affairs of the day. A great saying of his was: 'You will see the day when the rates will be a £1 in the £1' – a prophecy that was fulfilled 12 times over before rates on houses were abolished.

During the War, when Andy lived in Breaffy he used to teach Irish to Dominica and Fiona Browne. Fiona, being the youngest, and missing her father (away on active service for three or four years with the British Army), used to climb up on his knee for comfort and security, much to the horror of Dominica. But he, having young children himself, understood very well. It was only when I visited Norway a few years ago that I realised what a terrible war Dominic had lived through, though he only mentioned it once.

I cannot remember the reason for staging an outdoor extravagant pageant based on the life of St Patrick, or who took the decision to do it. It was staged in McHale Park, Castlebar, with, as they say, a cast of thousands. Andy was picked to play the part of St Patrick. He grew a luxuriant grey beard, which, coupled with his bald head, made him look a venerable patriarch of about 100 years of age. He spent so much of his spare time rehearsing with the members of the cast, and produced and successfully staged the pageant. I spent six happy years teaching with this very relaxed, urbane man with never a cross word between us. May he rest in peace.

I will not mention any of the pupils by name but I remember them as they were then, and their little foibles, and have to smile when I see their names in newspapers or reports, because of course I haven't seen them grow up. What strikes me now is that the children in Breaffy were well-mannered (some full of devilment, naturally), well clad and nourished – none of the real poverty that I saw in town schools. Budgets may have been finely balanced in some households but there was enough money to buy the essentials and people had their own potatoes, fresh vegetables, milk, poultry and eggs to ensure that the families remained strong and healthy.

So even if luxuries were scarce – the fifties and early sixties were times of depression when work was scarce – people in Breaffy were well able to manage.

Every now and then I used to ask the children what they would like to do when they grew up. One day I asked this little seven-year-old farmer's son: 'Would you like to be a farmer?' I will never forget his answer.

Oh, I would, I would, but sure Paddy will get the place,' he said. I always hoped that Paddy would decide to do something else and leave the 'place' for this little chap.

These memories were activated in 1999 when I was asked to a celebration for the centenary of the old school, the new church and the new school. What a change! Here was a lovely new church with one of my old pupils as the celebrant of the mass, and a state-of-the-art school with 16 teachers! Of course, there were more houses everywhere – down towards the post office, down the old bog road and along the main road into Castlebar.

Looking back made me realise how much things and people had changed in the last 30 years of the school's existence. Things taken for granted, like TV, did not come into most people's homes until 1964 or even later, and even then outside of Dublin it was just RTE. Andy used to tell of

the time when there were only one or two radios in the community and people gathered to listen to special items on the radio. People who emigrated to England went mainly by boat – air travel was reserved for a journey to America or far-flung places like Australia or Africa. Of course, things have changed even more since 1999. I haven't been to Breaffy for many years now and sadly, many people I knew have died and I could meet many of my pupils without recognising them, or they me, such have been the ravages of time

I was sad to see the closure of the old school which gave so much to the community. Who would have thought that one of its pupils would become managing director of the mighty building firm Wimpey, with his brother heading Lumley-Saville Plant Hire. Another became a scientist in Harwell Atomic Centre in the early days of atomic research. Another represented Irish Tourism in the US for many years and there were many priests and missionary nuns. But more importantly, it turned out hundreds of decent, hard-working people with good principles and codes of behaviour, who have lived happy and peaceful lives in the parish as well as in far-flung places. Who knows what the next hundred years will bring?

## Remembering P J Duffy

Members of Ballymote Heritage Group and all readers of *The Corran Herald* note with regret the passing on 10 June 2015 of PJ Duffy of Killavill who, over the 30 years of the existence of this journal, contributed no less than 52 articles to *The Corran Herald*.

PJ's contribution is particularly noteworthy in this 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary year as he published articles each year since the first publications in 1985

and in all issues since *The Corran Herald* became an annual publication in 1995, including 2014-2015.

PJ was passionate about recording passing features of rural life in an Ireland that had undergone remarkable change throughout his lifetime, providing a unique personal record of memorable events and people of County Sligo. Subjects included reflections on the once common roles of thatcher, blacksmith, matchmaker

and poteen maker, on significant events from the great famine to the year of the blizzard and on diverse aspects of a changing rural culture. Many readers took great pleasure each year in reflecting on a shared memory of which PJ has left a lasting record. We will miss his contributions to the magazine, and the Heritage Group extends its condolences to his family and friends. Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam dílis.

# A Smuggler's Song

By Lynda Hart

A classic television series from the 1970s called *Poldark* has been remade this year by the BBC. It is based on a series of books written by Winston Graham set in late 18th century Cornwall telling the story of Ross Poldark, who at the start of the story is an officer returning from the American revolutionary war to resume his life in Cornwall as a mine owner. But many people may not be familiar with the historical context of that time.

Cornwall in the late 1700s was famous for two achievements: tin mining and smuggling. We today here in Ireland are all too aware of the taxes imposed on our citizens to pay for the country's debt, but this is not a new phenomenon. In 18th century England, taxes levied on some goods were astronomical. High taxes had been introduced because of the massive financial crisis that was caused by the eight-year American War of Independence that Britain eventually lost. The national debt spiralled out of control. As there was no income tax, taxes on some goods were raised continually to finance the war.

One of these imposed taxes drove Cornish people to the brink of starvation. Many Cornishmen in the late 1700s were fishermen. The fortunes of these men relied on one main catch, the pilchard or Cornish sardine, which was caught between late summer and early autumn when huge shoals of these fish would converge around the Cornish coast. Most of the catch was exported to the Mediterranean, so therefore needed to be brined to preserve it. The salt used for preserving had to be of the best quality and came from France and Spain. The tax on the salt began to rise, and it got higher and higher until eventually it was 40 times more than the value of the salt!



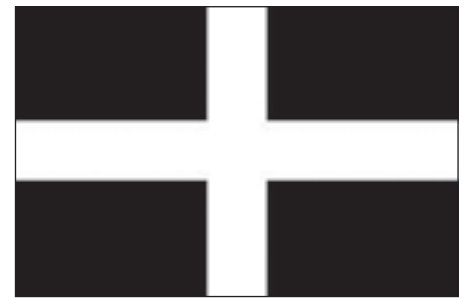
**Fig 1. Cornish Coastline**

Drastic measures were called for. So salt became one of the first items to be smuggled across from Europe. Other everyday items rocketed in price. Tea had a tax rate of 110% imposed on it. High taxes were also levied upon tobacco, cotton, silk and of course alcohol. There were 18 different taxes on brandy and gin, and the total tax on a bottle of brandy was 250%. In Europe, tea could be bought for one sixth of the price in Britain. French

brandy was one fifth of the price. Smuggling was about to become a major part of a Cornishman's life. Cornwall was the ideal place to smuggle goods into (see Fig 1) – it was not too far from the French coast and the south coast of Cornwall was virtually uninhabited. The many secluded coves and beaches made it an ideal landing place for contraband (Fig 2).

Boats would either bring the goods into the coast or small boats would rendezvous with larger boats anchored offshore. There was far too much coastline and far too few revenue men, so smuggling became rife. Everyone seemed to be involved – even the clergy. It was said that in the late 18th century one half of all the brandy drunk in Britain had been smuggled in through Cornwall.

The Cornish disassociated themselves from the rest of England – Cornwall was virtually an island and had its own flag (Fig 3), language and



**Fig 3. Cornish Flag**



**Fig 2. South Cornish Coast**



**Fig 4. A typical smuggler's cove**

culture, so they did not think of themselves as being villains or law-breakers. Rather, they were known as (or called themselves) Free Traders. Many place names in Cornwall are associated with smuggling. There are many 'smugglers coves' (Fig 4) that are hard-to-reach coves with steep cliffs and precarious rocks. Pepper Cove on the north Cornish coast near Porthcothan Bay was used to smuggle in the expensive spice. Mostly the north Cornish coast was used to

and was known himself by that moniker, and the cove named after him. You will still find public houses on the south coast called 'The King of Prussia'. Many public houses are named 'The Smuggler's Inn' and on Bodmin Moor, the pub made famous by Daphne Du Maurier, is the Jamaica Inn.

Smuggling grew to be big business. Many people relied on it as their main source of income, and greater risks were being taken. The penalties for

money to be made. Many, like 'The King of Prussia' and the brother and sister Fyns, were notorious smugglers and pirates and were greatly feared. Others were at the 'money' end.

Many families made fortunes through smuggling including the Killigrew family of Falmouth whose money, influence and social climbing made them some of the richest people in Cornwall. Another was Zachariah Job. Much of the contraband came from the Channel Islands and Zachariah traded with the Islands, bringing the goods straight into his home port of Polperro. Zachariah Job made so much money from smuggling that he was able to open his own bank and print his own banknotes. He re-invested his ill-gotten gains into newer and faster boats and made even more money.

For the ordinary Cornishman another way of making some money was wrecking. Wrecking was where boats sank on the razor sharp rocks and broke up. The cargo would then be collected by all. Some writers have suggested that the Cornish lured boats onto the rocks with lamps, but it is now generally thought that this was not the way of the Cornishman. The rocks around the coast are notorious, and ships were easily torn apart upon them. Once 'wrecked', the cargo of these boats would be quickly collected from the rocks, sea and beaches, and believed to be rightfully the property of those who collected it.

Even in modern times the collecting of flotsam and jetsam is not thought of as illegal, which indeed it is not, but the keeping of, and concealment of items is illegal under the Merchant Shipping Act of 1995. I can clearly remember a shipwreck in the 1990s where the cargo of good quality timber was washed up onto Perranporth beach. I had never seen such a collection of cars, vans and trailers on the beach as I saw that day. There were a great many good quality new sheds and much decking around that summer!

By 1799, Britain was once again



**Fig 5. Cornish Coastline**

trade with Ireland, with whiskey the main smuggled item (Fig 5). On the south coast Prussia Cove was named after a member of a notorious smuggler family, the Carters. John Carter admired the King of Prussia

being caught were severe. At the very least you would get transportation to a colony, or sometimes even the death penalty was imposed on those caught. Many people however realised that there was a great deal of

at war with France. Many saw the smugglers as traitors to their country because by dealing with the French they were putting money into the French economy. But the tide (so to speak) was about to turn. In 1805 Nelson defeated the French fleet, and the Channel Islands stopped supplying goods. By the beginning of the 19th century Cornwall was the largest exporter of tin and copper in the world. The county was becoming increasingly prosperous.

After the Battle of Waterloo in 1815 smuggling was to become far more difficult. More than 20,000 highly trained soldiers returned from battle and needed employment, and they were recruited by the Revenue and sent to Cornwall to fight the smugglers. No longer could the Cornish be so open about smuggling, and new and more devious methods of bringing in the contraband had to be found. Making a living became harder. In 1822 the Revenue were transformed into the Coastguard Service. These men were

now well trained, well equipped, and well paid. They patrolled the coastline and made it very difficult to land goods on shore.

Another factor which had an influence on the decline of smuggling in Cornwall was Methodism. John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, first visited Cornwall in 1743 and returned a further 32 times before his death in 1791. The Cornish believed in Methodism as it brought scattered communities together and a great moral good was felt. Methodism also allowed the Cornish to get an education and to better themselves. Morally, smuggling was wrong.

The Cornish took to Methodism like no other county in England. Huge crowds of up to 20,000 people would go to open air meetings in place such as Gwennap Pit, near Redruth, which is an open air amphitheatre. By 1840 Britain had entered a golden age in industry. She exported more than she imported, so huge import taxes were not in the British interest.

In 1842 Britain introduced a policy of Free Trade, slashing the import taxes. This meant that a legal bottle of brandy now cost the same as an illegal bottle. Overnight, smuggling became redundant.

Of course smuggling didn't die out completely. Today tobacco and drugs are big business, run by organised gangs of pretty ruthless people. But there are still a few people who smuggle a bit of drink or tobacco, just to make a few 'pound' and a blind eye is usually turned. There is a romanticism surrounding the Cornish smuggler. The harsh reality was one of a starving man trying to feed his family and risking his life in order to do so. Or of a swashbuckling pirate who in reality would use any amount of violence to make his money. And of the 'money' men who were never caught, and never prosecuted. In Rudyard Kipling's poem *A Smugglers Song*, that romanticism can be clearly seen. The text of it is reproduced below.

## A Smuggler's Song

*Rudyard Kipling*

If you wake at midnight, and hear a horse's feet,  
Don't go drawing back the blind, or looking in the street,  
Them that ask no questions isn't told a lie,  
Watch the wall my darling while the Gentlemen go by.

Five and twenty ponies,  
Trotting through the dark -  
Brandy for the Parson,  
'Baccy for the Clerk.  
Laces for a lady; letters for a spy,  
Watch the wall my darling while the Gentlemen go by!

Running round the woodlump if you chance to find,  
Little barrels, roped and tarred, all full of brandy-wine,  
Don't you shout to come and look,

nor use 'em for your play.  
Put the brushwood back again - and they'll be gone next day !

If you see the stable-door setting open wide;  
If you see a tired horse lying down inside;  
If your mother mends a coat cut about and tore;  
If the lining's wet and warm - don't you ask no more!

If you meet King George's men, dressed in blue and red,  
You be careful what you say, and mindful what is said.  
If they call you 'pretty maid', and chuck you 'neath the chin,  
Don't you tell where no one is, nor yet where no one's been!

Knocks and footsteps round the house - whistles after dark -  
You've no call for running out till the house-dogs bark.

Trusty's here, and Pincher's here, and see how dumb they lie  
They don't fret to follow when the Gentlemen go by!

If you do as you've been told, likely there's a chance,  
You'll be give a dainty doll, all the way from France,  
With a cap of Valenciennes, and a velvet hood -  
A present from the Gentlemen, along 'o being good!

Five and twenty ponies,  
Trotting through the dark -  
Brandy for the Parson,  
'Baccy for the Clerk.  
Them that asks no questions isn't told a lie  
Watch the wall my darling while the Gentlemen go by!

# An Arrow Through Time

By Martin A Timoney

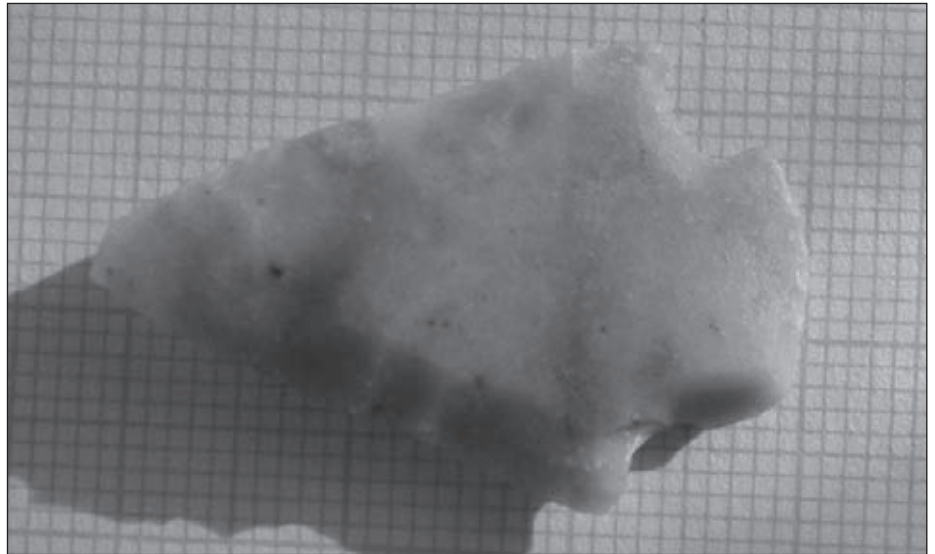
In June 1994 Josephine Mannion, a native of Castlerea, Co Roscommon, who now resides in Calry, Co Sligo, went on a fishing trip with several children to Lough Bo in east Sligo. Having caught nothing she brought the children a short distance to the south to see Lough Nasool, the disappearing lake.

Lough Nasool had recently performed its 'seven-yearly' disappearing trick. The lake, normally 480m by 310m, was now fully gone and it was possible to walk on the lake bed. Here, while walking along the east side of the dried-out lake something different caught her eye on the surface of the lakeshore muds. It was about 25 metres in from the edge, putting the findspot in Ballinphull townland. This Ballinphull townland, one of five of that name in Co Sligo, is that northeast of Lough Arrow and in the Parish of Killadoon, Barony of Tirerrill; it is on OS 6" Sligo Sheet 34.

Cleaning the piece she realised that it was a small white stone arrowhead and, being possibly very ancient, was worthy of minding. Taking it home she put it safely in a box of trinkets and only occasionally thought of it.

In mid-2014 she chanced to meet the author who happened to be a former teacher of hers in Castlerea Convent of Mercy Secondary School and who she knew from there to be interested in things from the past. She brought the arrowhead to me in January 2015 and I brought it to the National Museum of Ireland on 23rd January, 2015, where it is registered as 2015:8 with file number IA/10/2015. All credit is due to Josephine Mannion for first of all finding and keeping the arrowhead and secondly passing it on to the National Museum of Ireland where it will be safe for future study.

The white flint arrowhead measures



**The 31 mm long Lough Nasool barbed-and-tanged flint arrowhead, Ballinphull, Killadoon, Co Sligo. Photo: Martin A. Timoney.**

31mm long, 21mm wide by 5mm thick though it is generally only 3.5mm thick. The tang is 12mm wide and 7mm long. The barbs are just about sufficient for to classify it as a barbed-and-tanged arrowhead.

In an earlier issue of *The Corran Herald* (Timoney 2007-2008) the hollow-based arrowhead found on a mantelpiece in a house in Knockgrainne, Kilturra parish, west of Gurteen, Co Sligo, was described, as were types of prehistoric arrowheads in general.

Barbed-and-tanged arrowheads, of which this Ballinphull example is a fine specimen found by sheer chance, are an innovation by Beaker-using people in the Early Bronze Age (Waddell 2010, 129). They continued in use for some centuries (Flanagan 1970, 20; Waddell 2010, 129). For this barbed-and-tanged arrowhead one could cite many comparable examples but a few will suffice.

The Early Bronze Age cist grave found in 1975 at Culduthel, Inverness-shire, Scotland (Ritchie and Ritchie 1981, 63-64, Fig. 41) contained eight barbed-and-tanged arrowheads, an archer's wrist guard or bracer with

four gold-capped rivets, an amber bead, a flint strike-a-light, a bone toggle or ring and a fine Beaker vessel. The Ballyclare, Co Antrim, hoard is informative in that it contained not only twenty-two barbed-and-tanged arrowheads but also leaf-shaped blanks for a further 17 similar arrowheads (Flanagan 1970; Waddell 2010, 127, Fig. 4.6).

From a Sligo perspective there are at least three barbed-and-tanged arrowheads that were found in Co Sligo in the collection of the Duke of Northumberland at Alnwick Castle (Wood-Martin 1888, Plate IV). There are two other flint barbed-and-tanged arrowheads from south Sligo in the National Museum of Ireland. One was found by John A Dockry, Ballymote, in Ballybrennan bog, west of Ballymote (OS 33; NMI L1944:281). The other was found by Patrick O'Reilly, Jr, Carrownacluane, in plough soil on drained bog at Carrownagilty, near Conways Cross (OS 27 or 28; NMI 1976:20). More recently, a barbed-and-tanged arrowhead was found in a secondary deposit with 12 pieces of waste flint at Carrowmore No 7 passage tomb, Co Sligo, in 1978



(Burenhult 1980, 30, Photo on p. 31 and Colour Plate I:2).

Four barbed-and-tanged arrowheads and a now-lost wrist-guard from various sites in Co Fermanagh are illustrated by Foley and McHugh (2014, 84, Fig. 12). They also illustrate the fragment of a yew bow found very deep in Drumwhinney Bog, Kesh, Co Fermanagh (2014, 90, Fig. 15; Glover 1979). Though it may be much earlier than the Early Bronze Age it shows the idea.

Occasional chance finds of arrowheads with the means of attachment have survived for thousands of years. For a detailed illustration of the method of attachment to a shaft the barbed-and-tanged arrowhead from Gortrea, Killimor, Portumna, Co Galway, (Brindley 1994, 18, Photo 15) is a good example – it is said to have had an alder shaft (Waddell 2010, 129). In that case the gut that held the arrowhead in the shaft was found still wrapped around the tang. The barbed-and-tanged arrowhead found in a bog at Tankardsgarden, Newbridge, Co Kildare (Raftery 1951, 135, Fig. 121) is also informative in that it still has its binding of fine hair or sinew and its 42cm hazel shaft.

It is easy to imagine an Early Bronze Age person out hunting along the lakeside and shooting at a bird or

a fish and losing the arrow, which was then not to be seen for another 4,000 years. Considering its lakeside find spot perhaps it was used for catching fish by stabbing them.

A Beaker barbed-and-tanged arrowhead is quite acceptable in east Co Sligo. There is a shard of a Beaker pot from not too far away at Churchfield, Dromahaire, Co Leitrim (Roche 2013; Timoney 2013, 44). There are shards of three excellent Beakers from Moytirra, to the south of Lough Nasool (Wood-Martin 1888, 185, Figs. 146-148). Cahill (2013, 45-48, Figs. 1-3) treats of the four beautiful lunulae from Co Sligo which are broadly contemporary in Early Bronze Age Sligo. Cumulatively then, we have many good pieces but there may be other finds of that period from the county still in peoples' possession which could fill out the picture of Early Bronze Age Sligo even more. To do as Josephine Mannion did would be a good gesture!

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# Voluntary Transport

By Mary Kelly-White

Ah, I'm frustrated tonight, it's the Old People's Ball  
 It's eight thirty now will the car come at all?  
 I'm hungry and cold and afraid to make tea  
 If I go from the door he might go without me.  
 My spirits were high. It's so lonesome alone  
 I was full of excitement but the glee is all gone.  
 In a small town like this you'd think they'd have got  
 A place nearer hand and go there on foot.  
 A blue car gone by ... a green and a red;  
 A horn is sounding

He'll waken the dead.  
 He's waving and shouting!  
 My God! Where's my key?  
 The man in the red car is waving at me.  
 The party was great and the concert was too.  
 There's an hour to go but 'Time's Up' for you,  
 Your 'Chauffeur' is ready so you have to go;  
 Even at eighty you cannot go slow.  
 When the next party comes I think I won't go,  
 I'm too old for rushing and they won't go slow.

# Early Maps of Bunninadden

By Bridget King

In 1824 the director of the Ordnance Survey (OS) was authorised by Parliament to undertake a survey and mapping of all Ireland as part of the planned reform of local taxation. Work in County Sligo began in 1829 and the first edition was published in 1837. At a scale of six inches to one mile, the map provides a uniquely detailed and accurate record of the time, and we are fortunate to have a digital version for all to see in Sligo County Library's online map collection.

Some two decades earlier, two noted surveyors and engineers were at work mapping the county. The first, published in 1815, was the work of Alexander Nimmo and shows the projected mail coach routes between Boyle and Ballina. It is thus a partial map but nevertheless gives valuable and interesting details of the countryside alongside the projected road. A large detailed map of the whole county was published four years later in 1819. This was produced by William Larkin and was compiled for the county grand jury, whose numerous duties included the construction and maintenance of public roads and bridges. It comprises six engraved sheets which, when pasted together measure 1.795m by 1.690m, which is just under six feet wide and a little over five and a half feet high. It shows the county in remarkable detail. This beautiful map in its entirety, together with extracts



**The castle ruins at Bunninadden by the River, still visible today**

of Alexander Nimmo's map, are discussed and reproduced in Arnold Horner's book *Mapping Sligo in the Early Nineteenth Century*, copies of which are held in the county library.

These three maps enable us to create a picture of the landscape in the early decades of the 19th century and to compare it with what we see today. Taking Bunninadden village, the pattern of roads then and now is remarkably similar. All three show the road to Achonry, though with a ford rather than a bridge over the river. Alexander Nimmo and the Ordnance Survey show a road leading to the corn mill. William Larkin does not show this but it must have existed to allow access to the mill, which he

does show.

All three show the hilly road leading to the Gurteen to Tubbercurry road and the road coming into the village from Ballymote. However, on the maps of Alexander Nimmo and William Larkin, the road at the Tubbercurry end of the village turns left to Charlestown, as it still does, but the continuation towards Tubbercurry did not exist. It had, however, been built by the time of the OS map, allowing a straighter and less hilly route to the town than that via Roadstown and Chaffpool. The other big difference in the roads of the OS map compared to earlier versions is more intriguing. As well as the line of the present road to Achonry, the OS map shows another road leaving the present road roughly where Willie Gormley villas now stand, curving up to run just under the hill and then descending to re-join the old road just before the river. No trace now remains.

Only the rath, or 'Danish Fort' as William Larkin calls them, and a corn mill beside the river, appear on all three maps. The mill, in use until the middle of the twentieth century, still stands but is in a dilapidated and dangerous condition. The OS map also shows a kiln for drying the corn on the other side of the road but no trace can now be seen. Both Alexander Nimmo and the OS show the castle ruins, which can still be seen by the river. Between the castle and the road both maps also show a livestock pound and



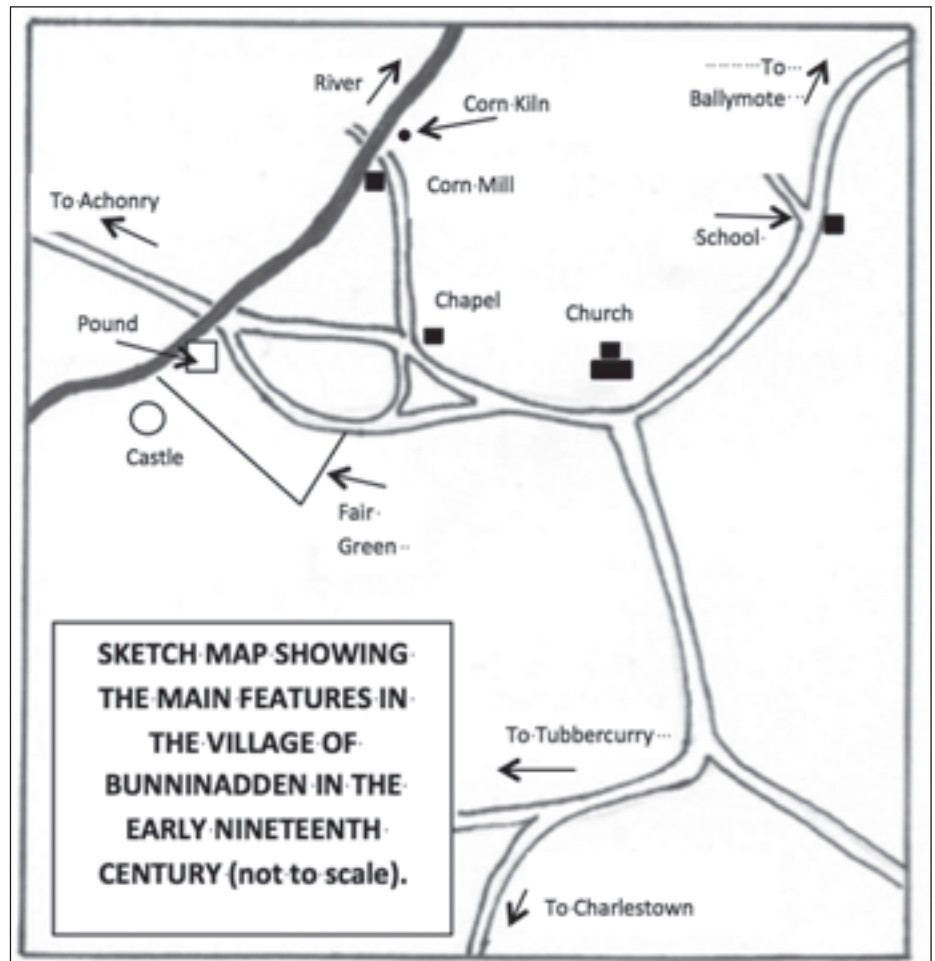
**The mill was in use to the middle of the 20th century. The access road was shown on two of the three early maps**

next to it, a fair green. We know from written records that fairs were held in Bunninadden and the maps confirm the exact location.

Another very interesting feature of Alexander Nimmo's map is a Catholic chapel, standing at the village side of the junction of the Achonry road and the road to the mill. This is very early as it was in existence at least 30 years before the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829. Again in this context it is remarkable to see that the Ordnance Survey map, surveyed from 1829 onwards and published in 1837, clearly shows the present church already in existence, basically as it is today. The map shows no trace of the earlier chapel nor is any sign visible today.

William Larkin has used Roman lettering for Bunninadden, which denotes 'towns, villages and fair places', yet he shows only the mill and two or three buildings. No castle, no chapel, no fair ground or pound. Alexander Nimmo shows five buildings along the Achonry road, two at the junction with the main road and nine more strung out at intervals along the road in the direction of Tubbercurry. All are right on the roadside. The OS map shows the same buildings along the main road with five new ones opposite the church. On what is now the Achonry road, the OS shows no buildings other than one immediately before the river opposite the pound, but eight of varying sizes along the second Achonry road which only appears on this map. Again, all the buildings are along the roadside.

The final point of interest is a



school. *The Topographical Dictionary of Ireland 1837* says that there was a hedge school of about 50 children but gives no clue as to its location. Neither Alexander Nimmo nor William Larkin show any such building but the Ordnance Survey shows a school right on the road opposite the turning to Flowerhill. This must be it. Interestingly, the first National School of 1883 was built only a short

distance further back from the road and the present National School, which opened in 2001, is also only a short distance away on the other side of the road.

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# Bed and Breakfast in Limerick

By Mary Kelly-White

Mallow Street in Limerick is a pretty sight  
 With all the windows lighted on a wintry night;  
 Forty steps up and I'm ready to flop  
 But it's worth what I see when I reach the top  
 Half way to Heaven, and I'm high as a kite  
 My mind is so active, I won't sleep tonight.  
 A week of bed and breakfast,  
 And all the walking it entails  
 Is wiped out by the Writer's Week,  
 And the wind that's in my sails.  
 The thrill of strangers stopping in the street  
 Talking as familiar as if we often meet.  
 It may not be visible to the naked eye

But I am two foot taller when we say 'goodbye'.  
 I cover the key hole with the tail of my coat  
 And I think of the drop if I hit the road.  
 There are fifty six windows on the other side,  
 But no one would hear me even if I cried.  
 Not that it's spooky in this high narrow house,  
 And the noises I hear are not made by a mouse.  
 I'm reminded of *Na Coisithe*;  
*I gcuim na hoiche cloisim iad, na Coisithe ag siuil  
 Cloisim iad, ní fheichim iad, ní fios cá mbeid ag dul.*  
 But I'm really not nervous, never, not I,  
 It's just that I'm air-locked so close to the sky.

# The Inspired Life of Fr Patrick O'Grady

By Ethna O'Grady

During this Year of Consecrated Life inaugurated by Pope Francis, it is fitting that we pay tribute to one of the great missionaries of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Fr Patrick O'Grady (1858 – 1943) spent 12 years in the Falklands, 16 years in pioneering work in Malta and eight years respectively in Warrenstown, Co Meath and Sunbury, Australia. He followed in the footsteps of Don Bosco, founder of the Salesians, whose mission it was to look after the young.

Born in Stonepark, Aclare, Co Sligo, he was the sixth son of Michael O'Grady and Bridget Brennan. Two of his brothers, John and Dominic, served as priests in the diocese of Achonry. Fr John spent 46 years as PP in Bohola where he carried out his role with great zeal and administrative ability. Another brother James became a Jesuit brother, while his only living sister Anne joined the French Sisters of Charity. His brother Martin emigrated to the United States where he became a very successful businessman, while his brother Michael stayed in the family home, married Anne Mullen and raised a large family.

Patrick answered the call to the priesthood at an early age. He began his studies in France but interrupted them due to illness. While recuperating at home he met the Archbishop of Toronto, who invited him to work in Canada. Patrick and three companions decided to go to Canada with the Archbishop. They went to Rome first to get the blessing of Pope Leo XIII and later met Don Bosco in Turin (1882). (Don Bosco had established the Salesians in the 1840s to care for the street children of Turin adopting the ethos of St Francis de Sales whose oft quoted maxim was: 'You catch more flies with a spoonful of honey than a barrelful of vinegar.'). As soon as Don Bosco met these young men from Ireland he realised he had work for them so he suggested that he would prepare them for their future tasks.

Patrick entered the Salesian Novitiate at San Benigno, receiving



**Fr Patrick O'Grady**

the habit from Don Bosco. At the end of the year he made perpetual vows. Shortly afterwards Patrick was sent to Argentina to teach English in one of their colleges. At the same time he completed his studies for the priesthood and was ordained in 1886. A year later he was diagnosed with cholera. He recovered when he received a medal of Our Lady Help of Christians from Don Bosco. He was then sent to the Falklands where he served for 12 years.

The people of Malta, to honour the Golden Jubilee of Queen Victoria, decided to build, by public subscription, a home for the less fortunate of Malta's young boys. The Salesians were asked to manage it. Fr O'Grady was sent to open St Patricks which would house the homeless boys and train them to become good and useful members of society. 'In this Fr O'Grady was singularly successful, earning the high respect of church and state and the affection of everyone who had anything to do with him.' At a later stage Patrick established a Festive Oratory to cater for boys who would receive a good decent upbringing as well as instruction in the faith of their fathers.

During his 16 years in Malta Fr O'Grady established on a sure and solid basis the work and ideals of Don

Bosco. He in turn benefitted from the experience. He was privileged to attend the International Eucharistic Congress held in Malta in 1913. Later this was re-enacted on a smaller scale at the annual Corpus Christi Procession in the local parish church. Patrick carried this memory with him in his future mission.

In 1919 Fr O'Grady was sent to Warrenstown, Co Meath, where he set up the well-known Agricultural College, which operated very successfully under the management of the Salesians until 2001.

Subsequently in 1928, at the age of 68, he was asked to take over the Rectorship of the Salesian College in Sunbury, in the state of Victoria, Australia. Archbishop Mannix, who was Archbishop of Melbourne from 1917 to 1963, assisted the Salesians to purchase the Rupertswood estate there in 1927, their first permanent base in Australia. Using the experience gained in Warrenstown, Fr O'Grady helped to establish another agricultural college in Sunbury which enjoyed a fine reputation until the agricultural faculty closed in the 1990s. It is recorded that 'he worked tirelessly in the first difficult years to gain the support of the people. He was much loved and esteemed.' The school at Sunbury continues to run as a Salesian, co-educational secondary school with a student population in excess of 1,000.

In 1931, Patrick organised, as an annual event, a grand Eucharist Festival similar to the ones he witnessed in Malta. On Palm Sunday of 1934, the Sunday before the Canonisation of Don Bosco in Rome, some 75,000 people who attended the Eucharist Festival in Sunbury pre-celebrated the canonisation of Don Bosco with Archbishop Mannix. The Sunbury Eucharistic Festival ran uninterrupted for 50 years.

When he was retiring at age 76, Fr O'Grady was told he could choose to live in any house in the Congregation. He chose the parish of Corpus Christi in San Francisco. Nine years later

when he attended the annual retreat he got very ill. He told one of his companions that Don Bosco told him he would die on his birthday. Early in the morning of August 16th, the birthday of Don Bosco, Patrick died peacefully, having spent his life, like

his founder, looking after the young. Recounting the life story of Patrick O'Grady inspires us to give thanks to God for the great missionaries, priests, religious and lay who have travelled afar to bring the 'good news' to the poor and to promote personal

and community development, especially among the disadvantaged and marginalised in our society. (Some of the information above was sourced in The Salesian Bulletin, Jan - Feb 2004.)

# The Cake That Nama Baked

By John McDonagh

The farming wasn't going well although I tried my best  
Horse burgers cost me dearly, my whole system got depressed  
I headed for the local pub, my sorrows there to drown  
Drinking pints of Guinness, I spent the day in town  
With a belly full of porter I headed home to bed  
After lots of caustic comment, I laid down my weary head  
But the public-house discussion was still running through my brain  
And as I entered slumber land it re-emerged again  
At this time of mental turmoil, half asleep and half awake  
I saw Enda and Michael Noonan divide up the national cake

A pie-chart, like a soda cake hung on the tavern wall  
While Enda, with a cue in hand, gave a lecture to us all  
He said 'Now listen up you peeheads, hear this, make no mistake  
'This here chart upon the wall, represents the national cake  
'And as our evening wears along, if you stay polite and nice  
'Michael Noonan and myself will see that everyone gets a slice.'  
Then Noonan interjected in a loud voice full of drama,  
'You never told them Taoisigh, that this cake was baked by Nama  
'The bakery works were all financed by The Anglo Irish Bank  
'All the fine ingredients came from businesses that sank  
'It grieves me much to say this now, it makes want to me cry  
'But politicians also, had their fingers in the pie  
'Mc Namara's and the Bailey's and of course The Ballsbridge Baron  
'Graham and McFeeley and a fellow called Ahearn  
'Supplied the flour and butter-milk, the salt and margarine  
'But ever very true to form, they'd first skimmed off the cream  
'There was an agent also to make the mixture rise  
'Supplied by Mayo-man Padraig Flynn who never told no lies  
'I'm not too sure what it contained but it really was effective  
'His appearance on The Late Late Show put all things in perspective.'

Then Enda took the cue again and pointing to the chart  
He started on the segments allocating every part  
A thin red line cut straight across the centre of the circle  
'There's something here for everyone - but the top half goes to Merkel  
'Next we have the bottom half - and please, don't make me nervous -  
'All in the national interest, half of that's for the Civil Service  
'Then half the half left after that, without any preconditions  
'Michael Noonan and myself here, reserve for politicians  
'And there again the segment left must be halved I am afraid  
'With the priority of portion going to pay for Legal Aid  
'And half of what's left after that—to consultants and commissioners  
'With half of the remaining piece, to medical practitioners  
'Now half of all that's left again, goes to shirkers and to lurkers  
'But ALL the generous portion left, goes ENTIRELY to the workers  
'And may I say how proud I am to end this mad austerity.'  
'Hold on, hold on,' said Noonan 'You're way up in Merkel's territory.'

Then there was pandemonium and commotion at the door  
A lady in a white lab coat came striding up the Floor  
She took the 'mike' from Enda and said 'My name is Dorothy  
'I'm the senior lab technician with the Food Safety Authority  
'This cake is not compliant with our standards of hygiene  
'The dough was kneaded in the 'Bertie Bowl' – EVERYTHING but clean  
'There are other issues also, I'll explain them in a minute  
'We have reason to believe, Bertie's testicles are in it  
'He once said 'Leeman Brothers had their testicles in everything' –  
'They could be accidently swallowed like a ring at Halloween  
'We also have been warned by our colleuges in Bord Bia  
'That anyone who eats this bread will succumb to diarrhoea  
'This leaves consumers feeling they've been very badly cheated  
'The government had assured them – they could have their cake and eat it.'

# The Village Blacksmith

By Micheál Murphy

In the olden days iron was believed to hold miraculous powers and the blacksmith, by association, held the same powers. So too did the water used to cool the hot iron in the forge. It was said to cure warts and rashes and sometimes treat eczema. The smith was often called on to extract human teeth or to castrate young bulls or foals, a true jack-of-all-trades. He was also credited with possessing supernatural powers and it was said that he could draw down a curse on an enemy by turning his anvil.

But the importance of the smith to the community had more to do with tradition and skill than with superstition. Up until the 1960s or later, the blacksmith was central to the life of every village. His was the oldest of all trades and he made the tools for every trade, including his own. The forge was always a hive of activity. In springtime it was busy with horses, mules and donkeys waiting to be shod. People brought their broken ploughs, spades, loys and other farm implements to be repaired. The smith would sharpen chisels and slashers

or put a handle on a sledgehammer or a graip. In wintertime he would manufacture gates or ornamental railing from iron, or he would make or repair the tongs, the crane or the hooks on which hung the cooking utensils over the kitchen fire.

The forge was conveniently situated in a central point of the village, adjacent to the road. Very often its doorway was distinctively framed in cut stone with an overhanging horse chestnut tree, symbolic of the trade. The interior was dark and gloomy, necessary to allow the smith to judge the temperature of the white hot metal. Central to the forge was the coal fire, raised on a platform for convenient working, the temperature controlled by a hand-operated bellows. A three-sided hood set against a solid wall extracted the smoke to the chimney above. Nearby was the anvil, raised on a solid block of elm, which gave extra spring to the hammer as it hit off the iron.

## Working the iron

Prior to the 1960s most farmers

owned a horse-drawn iron plough. The coulter was the blade of the plough, the part that broke up the soil ahead of the ploughshare. The coulter inevitably suffered wear and tear and was blunted by stony ground. The smith could repair the coulter by fusing a new piece of iron to the old, leaving an almost invisible joint. The process involved heating both metals to white heat and hammering the hot metals together with a seven-pound sledge. This was a job for visitors to the forge who were called on to help. The smith would tap the hot metal with his hammer, indicating the point where he wished the sledge to fall. There was generally someone in the locality with a well-deserved reputation for his accuracy in wielding the sledge.

## Shoeing the horse

There was a social dimension to the work in the forge. It was the great meeting place for the local men, the place where news was exchanged and discussed to the rhythmic ring of hammer on metal and the flash of the flying sparks. The smith made the shoes for each horse individually. He never needed to measure. His experienced eye allowed him to judge to perfection the required length of the raw shoeing-iron. The iron, held at the exact cutting point on top of an upturned wedge on the anvil, was cut with a single blow of the hammer.

The piece was then held in the flame until it glowed to the right heat and quickly hammered into shape on the anvil. Seven holes were punched along the groove in the shoe, four on the outside and three on the inside, the punch left in position on the last hole to act as a grip for holding the shoe against the hoof. With the horse's leg wedged between his own legs, the smith applied the hot shoe to the hoof to burn a groove so that the shoe would fit exactly. The acrid smell of burning hoof was the abiding smell of the forge. When everything was



Tools of the trade

to his satisfaction, he plunged the hot shoe into a large pot of water, buried in concrete near the anvil, the sizzling steam filling the forge as the iron was immersed to cool.

Speed was essential, and after applying the shoe to the hoof again the seven shoe-nails were inserted and the ends snapped off with the claws of a special light shoeing-hammer, the ends clinched securely in place before the horse got a chance to react. The final task was to place the hoof on a metal tripod, one leg of which was extended for the smith to stand on while he tidied up any jagged edges with a few deft draws of the rasp. Old horseshoes were seldom discarded. Instead they were converted into smaller shoes for mules, and these in turn were recycled to make shoes for the donkey. Sometimes their life ended as tips on hob-nailed boots!

### **Making the cart**

The smith could work wood and metal equally well, both materials necessary for his work as a cartwright. Making a cart was a multidisciplinary craft. The main body of the cart was constructed of red deal but the shafts were made of larch. Elm was the preferred timber for the nave or central cylinder of the wheel, while the spokes were made from oak and the curved felloes at the rim made of ash. The nave was turned on a lathe to form a cylinder and fitted with two circular pieces of iron on the inner and outer edges for protection. The centre of the nave was hollowed out and an iron box inserted to hold the axle.

Spokes had to be mortised to the nave in such a way that the wheel leaned out slightly from the body of the cart. This was called 'dishing' and enabled the cart to better withstand sideways forces, but it needed to be executed with skill and precision. The ends of the spokes were rectangular but the main shaft was oval in cross-section. There were always two spokes to each felloe. Fitting the spokes to the felloes at the rim was an intricate and exacting job, as was joining the felloes to form a perfect circle.

The wooden wheel was then carried



**The blacksmith's anvil**

to a special shoeing platform outside the forge. This was a circular structure built of concrete, with a hollow in the centre to accommodate the nave. 'Shoeing the wheel' - fitting the metal tyre to the rim - was critical. A piece of tyre-iron had to be cut to exact length. This was bent into a perfect hoop in the cold, a process that required great strength and dexterity. The ends were then heated and hammered together with the heavy sledge on the anvil until they had knit. It was important that the hoop be slightly smaller than the timber wheel so that when heated it would expand to the required size. The iron hoop was heated in a hot fire outside the forge near the shoeing platform. While still red hot it was lifted with iron 'dogs' or tongs by three people and placed over the timber frame. This shoeing sometimes caused the timber to ignite and a supply of cold water was always on hand to douse the flames. It was also the moment when the measurements were tested - if the metal tyre was too tight the timber buckled, but if too loose the tyre would fall off on its first journey. The final job was fitting the wheel to the axle and securing it with linchpins.

In time the felloes sometimes disintegrated, causing the tyre to be dislodged. It was the smith's job to fit new felloes and re-shoe the wheel.

A newly built cart on its way from

the forge was a joy to behold, the shafts and wheels painted with red lead oxide, the box coloured bright blue and the name of the proud owner emblazoned on the shafts as required by law. Each cart had its own distinctive rattle on the road. As youngsters, when we listened to the clip-clop of horses' hooves and the rattling of carts from our school desks, we could tell who was drawing home the turf or who was bringing banbhs from the market.

### **Farewell to the smith**

The arrival of the tractor led to the decline of the blacksmith's trade in the 1960s and 1970s. In some cases the blacksmith adapted his skills to new demands and became a successful welder, making steel gates, car trailers, repairing finger bars and other parts for mowing machines, and so on. But the techniques and the materials were different. Gone was the smell of the hot iron, the lead paint, the wood shavings and coal-smoke, the pungent scorching of hooves and the many skills that we have largely forgotten. The demise of the forge also meant the demise of one of the great social centres for the men of the area, the 'men's shed' of its day, where stories were told and news was exchanged before the rural pub and colour television became unsatisfactory substitutes.

# Strongman and Spy

## *Ernst Weber-Drohl's U-boat landing in Killala Bay, Co Sligo*

By Sam Moore

In 2014 I was very fortunate to be involved in a Peace III project 'Heritage Connects Communities', which looked at heritage sites of historical and political significance along Sligo's coastline. As part of the project I worked with Easkey Historical Society and the North Mayo and West Sligo Heritage Group. Part of the work involved research concerning activities along the coast relating to World War II, with particular emphasis on the Irish Coast Watching Service's Look Out Posts and various aircraft crashes.

One question that came up concerned the possibility of German U-boats landing to re-supply in the area between Easkey and Enniscrone. As I began to explore this theme I came across the episode of a German spy named Ernst Weber-Drohl, being landed by U-boat in Killala Bay in the early hours of a windy morning

in February 1940. This was briefly discussed in Padraig Feehily's article 'Guarding the North-West' (*The Corran Herald* 2013, 46). The following is a more detailed overview of this event, which in parts reads like a plot from a spy thriller.

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Ireland's neutrality during the war has been examined by a number of scholars (see Duggan 1989; Ó Drisceoil 2006). Its strategic position in the western Atlantic meant it was potentially vulnerable to attack from either side and it was poorly equipped militarily with a small army, old weaponry, and an almost complete lack of naval or air defences. British intelligence estimated that the Irish military might offer resistance to a German invasion for a maximum of ten days! Fortunately, the invasion and occupation of Ireland never became a strategic imperative for the

British or Germans, and any threat from Germany abated once Hitler focused his attention towards Russia in 1941. Churchill was furious that the Irish did not allow access to its ports, but Britain, and later America, made full use of the ports and airfields in Northern Ireland.

An important component of the war was German espionage activities which, as Hull points out, was a complete failure that bordered on the farcical: 'Hazy objectives, inter-agency rivalry, poor personnel screening, and dubious leadership, combined with an efficient Irish and British counter-intelligence system, proved to be hurdles that were simply too high to be overcome by German Intelligence' (Hull 2003, 278). However, over the course of the war a total of 12 known German spies operated in Ireland, and these are shown in the table below.

Agent	Dates	Method/Location	Mission	Equipment	Detained
Werner Unland	29 Aug 1939	Passenger ship/ Dun Laoghaire	General intelligence gathering, links with IRA.	Coded letters in ordinary post	21 Apr 1941
Ernst Weber-Drohl	9 Feb 1940	U-boat (U-37)/ Killala Bay, Sligo	Courier with radio and money for IRA	Radio (lost during landing), money	24 Apr 1940
Hermann Gortz	5 May 1940	Parachute/ Ballivor, Meath	IRA liaison re-Northern Ireland	Radio (lost during landing)	27 Nov 1941
Walter Simon	12 June 1940	U-boat (U-38)/ Dingle Bay, Kerry	Report on shipping conveys, weather	Radio (buried near Dingle)	13 June 1940
Wilhelm Preetz	25 June 1940?	U-boat (U-26?)/ Minard/Dingle area, Kerry	Shipping reports, weather, troops in Northern Ireland	Code book, radio (captured)	26 Aug 1940
Herbet Tributh, Dieter Gartner, Henry Obéd	7 July 1940	Small yacht/ Castletownshend, Cork	Sabotage in UK	Explosives, detonators, possible radio (?)	7 July 1940
*Sean Russell, *Frank Ryan	15 Aug 1940	U-boat (U-65)/ Ballyferriter, Kerry	Co-ordinate IRA sabotage activities against UK	Unknown	Mission cancelled
Gunther Schutz	12 Mar 1941	Parachute/ Taghmon, Wexford	Weather reports, cash for Unland, general intelligence gathering	Microdot, invisible ink, money, microscope, radio	13 Mar 1941
Joseph Lenihan	18 July 1941	Parachute/ Summerhill, Meath	Weather reports from Sligo	Two radios, invisible ink	23 July 1941 (MIS)
John Francis O'Reilly John Kenny	16 Dec 1943	Parachute/ Kilkee, Clare	Infiltrate Scottish, Welsh national movements and gather info on Allied troop movements in UK	Two radios, invisible ink, code-wheel	16 Dec 1943

Sixteen individuals associated with German espionage activity in Ireland (Based on O'Halpin 1999, Table 6.1 with additions from Hull 2003). The \* example of cancelled mission refer to the intended use of a U-boat.



### German espionage in Ireland

German espionage in Ireland had three distinct phases of operation. Firstly, they wished to coordinate missions with the IRA preceding the invasion of France; secondly, to direct military missions against Britain, with a particular emphasis on gathering information of shipping, troop movements and weather forecasts; and finally to conduct more political missions against Britain later in the war. Mark Hull (2003) details of each of the separate German missions, which illustrate a lack of capability by the German intelligence services and also indicate effective Irish and British counter-intelligence systems. Initially the Germans attempted to cultivate relationships with the IRA, and then tried to use other mechanisms, but the 'task of inserting and supporting agents went quickly from one disaster to another' (Hull 2003, 69). The effectiveness of the Irish Gardaí and Irish Military Intelligence or G2 can be seen from most of the dates of detainment (see table on previous page). None of the German spies were effective in any major way and most were arrested within hours or days of their arrival in Ireland. Mark Hull's excellent book details the variety of characters and the issues that surrounded them – villains, heroes, betrayals, deceit, politics, sex, violence, comedy, intrigue and incompetence are all features of the stories he outlines (Hull 2003).

### Background to Weber-Drohl's Mission

Ernst Weber-Drohl's mission was to deliver a radio transmitter, a sum of cash and a message concerning German involvement in the IRA's 'S-Plan'. The S-Plan or Sabotage Campaign was a campaign of bombing and sabotage against the civil, economic, and military infrastructure of Britain between 1939 and 1940, conducted by members of the IRA. It was conceived by James O'Donovan in 1938 at the request of the then IRA Chief of Staff, Sean Russell, who had previously met with Oscar Pfaus in Dublin in February 1939. Pfaus was sent by Abwehr II (the intelligence branch responsible for sabotage operations and contact with discontented foreign minorities) and Russell, who was in desperate need of funding, weapons and explosives,

agreed to assist the Germans.

There is evidence from documents from German Intelligence that the methods employed by IRA units carrying out the S-Plan generated only annoyance, because their attacks against civilian targets were not perceived as helpful in damaging British capability for waging war. There had been a very negative German and international reaction to the IRA campaign of terror in England, such as tear gas attacks on cinemas and the 1939 bicycle bomb at Coventry, which killed five people (O'Donohue 2011).

The German frustration with the conduct of the IRA was reflected in the opening lines of the message delivered by Weber-Drohl to James O'Donovan which reads: "The *Pfalzgraf* Section very urgently requests its Irish friends and IRA members to be so good as to make considerably better efforts to carry out the S-plan, which they received some time last summer, and to be more effectual against military as opposed to civilian objectives." (James O'Donovan Papers). *Pfalzgraf* was the codename for director of the *Abwehr* in Hamburg, Hauptmann (Captain) Friedrich Carl Marwede, with whom O'Donovan had met during his three visits to Germany in 1939 (Hull, 2003).

Ireland was to obtain a form of secure communication. The IRA did possess a radio transmitter but used it for internal propaganda broadcasts and did not realize its transmission source could be detected by the Garda and Irish Military Intelligence (G2). The transmitter, a code book and four IRA men were seized on 24 December 1939, which severed the only link between the Abwehr and any plans it had in Ireland with the IRA. It was primarily because of this that 'one of the most unusual individuals ever sent on a spying mission', Ernst Weber Drohl, was sent to Ireland (Hull 2002, 700).

On arriving in Sligo, Ernst Weber-Drohl was 61 years old, 5'5" tall, weighed 14 stone, had an Iron Cross tattooed on his chest; he was somewhat arthritic and had a stocky body shape due to a life of weight-lifting. He was born near Edelbach in Austria in 1879, and had worked as a young man in Ireland and the United States as a professional wrestler and strong-man act. When he toured Ireland, calling himself 'Atlas the Strong' and using the name Karl rather than Ernst, he had fathered two illegitimate boys (Emile and James) with a Dublin woman (Pauline Brady) between 1906-1908, whom he abandoned before going to the US (where he also fathered an



**Weber-Drohl under a car as a publicity image to promote his strongman act in Ireland. The photograph was paid for by James O'Donovan in 1941** (Image: O'Donovan Papers Ms21155(2), National Library of Ireland Manuscripts Collection)

The link between the IRA and the Abwehr started off poorly and a key issue that surrounded almost all German espionage missions to

illegitimate daughter). Pauline died in 1923 and his sons had worked in a fruit dealers in Newbridge before moving to England in 1933 (IMA

G2/1928). Weber-Drohl had been recruited into the Abwehr because of his familiarity with Ireland, his passable English, and, if captured, he could use his illegitimate children as an explanation for his visit, which he ended up doing (*ibid.*).



U-37 in Wilhelmshaven photographed two months after it landed Ernst Weber-Drohl in Sligo (Image courtesy of [www.uboot.net](http://www.uboot.net))

The Abwehr, commanded by Wilhelm Franz Canaris, and Korvettenkapitan Reinicke of the Naval Operations Staff of the Kriegsmarine (German Navy) had agreed in December 1939 on a specific mission proposal to land a German agent on the Irish coast by U-boat in order to strengthen the connection established with the IRA. Weber-Drohl, along with an expert radio operator, were to find a remote cottage in the Irish countryside and transmit intelligence to Germany with relative security. Only 48 hours prior to Weber-Drohl's departure from Germany, the radio operator said he could not continue with the mission as Weber-Drohl was just too odious. The Abwehr feared that such a personality conflict would jeopardise any success and therefore sent Weber-Drohl alone (Hull 2003, 69-72).

His mission to Ireland was to meet the IRA's director of munitions and chemicals, James O'Donovan, deliver a memorised message, hand over a sum of cash, supply an 'Afu' radio transmitter and then try return to Germany by any means possible. Weber-Drohl managed to do the first two parts of his mission, but had lost the radio transmitter and did not make it back to Germany until 1947.

### The landing of the German Spy in Co Sligo

At 9.00am on 28 January 1940, U-boat U-37, captained by Korvettenkapitan Werner Hartman, left the heavily fortified submarine base at Wilhelmshaven, Germany,

after being delayed by a number of days due to heavy ice conditions. During the first leg of its 31-day patrol, the U-boat sank a 1,365 tonne Norwegian steam merchant (the *Hop*) and a 4,330 tonne British steam freighter (the *Leo Dawson*); both on 4 February (Helgason n.d.). By 1.50am on 9 February 1940, Leutnant zur See Kuhlmann, third officer of the watch on board U-37, re-boarded his submarine after successfully landing the German spy Ernst Webber-Drohl (code-named 'Haupt-V-Mann') in a rubber dingy on the eastern shore of Killala Bay in the vicinity of Enniscrone, Co Sligo.

Earlier that night the U-boat dropped Weber-Drohl nearer the north Sligo coast but he had capsized in a strong westerly wind and was rescued by the aforesaid Kuhlmann after losing the 'Afu' radio transmitter he was carrying (Hull 2003, 72). Although the Kriegsmarine had instructed Korvettenkapitan Hartmann that no crew member was to accompany Weber-Drohl ashore, the weather situation and Weber-Drohl's near drowning meant that this had to be altered. Kuhlmann reported "I received orders to bring Mr Weber-Drohl, by rubber boat, to a point of land on the Killala Bay in

Ireland. About midnight, I departed the submarine with a rubber boat and Mr Weber-Drohl. I tried to pull away from U-37, but it was impossible due to the short oars that the boat had and by the large size of Mr Drohl. I continued unsuccessful, therefore, I returned to U-37 and they assisted me in making the boat ready for another attempt." After difficulties crossing three rocky reefs onto a rocky shoreline he proceeded to: "[help] ... Mr Drohl from the boat and then reached for the Hand Morse lamp to signal U-37 about the rocky reef. I knew that my commander intended to bring U-37 closer to shore so as to make my return easier. I did not want them to come closer due to the dangers of the reef... I now dismissed Mr Drohl. He had become wet during the journey with me to the beach. His rubber coat, which had money in it, was mostly dry, although his suitcase was half-filled with water... The landing was carried out without being noticed by anyone." (Christ 2004). Various scholars have said he landed in Sligo Bay or just state Sligo, but Hull has identified it to be Killala Bay (Hull 2003, 72, 312 (note33)), and coupled with Kuhlmann's description of crossing three rocky reefs onto a rocky shoreline it seems to suggest a location north of Enniscrone, possibly near Cahirmore townland (Paddy Tuffy *pers comm.*). U-37 returned to Wilhelmshaven by 27 February 1940, sinking a further five vessels during its patrol (a total of 24,539 tons) (Helgason nd).

### Ernst Weber-Drohl's first days in Ireland

Shortly after Weber-Drohl landed he appears to have met with Stephen Hayes, who had assumed command of the IRA after Sean Russell had gone to the USA to fundraise (and subsequently went to Germany). In the G2 files on Weber-Drohl (IMA G2/1928) a report to Col Dan Bryan, head of G2 and dated 10 February 1942, has a statement from Captain Joseph Healy of G2 saying that Hayes, who was in Mountjoy Prison at that stage, had told the governor of the prison that after Weber-Drohl landed in Sligo he met with him in a Sligo house owned by Barney O'Donnell. I have been unable to identify Barney O'Donnell or the house where Weber-Drohl met with Hayes. This suggests

that the IRA and the Abwehr had pre-arranged this meeting, and that the Kriegsmarine needed to get Weber-Drohl as close to this rendezvous as possible, even though Hartmann had been given options to land at Killala Bay, Clew Bay, Dingle Bay, Brandon Bay or Dungarven Bay (Hull 2003, 71).

Barney O'Donnell could be the Bernard O'Donnell that acted as a courier for another German spy, Hermann Gortz, who had parachuted into Ballivor, Co Meath, three months after Weber-Drohl's arrival (*ibid.* 150). This particular O'Donnell also travelled to Donegal in February 1941 in order to explore the possibility of organising Gortz' escape from Ireland via Inishduff Island. While there he purchased a boat called the *Sunbeam* and organised a crew; but this plan appears to have never come to fruition (*ibid.* 148).

Bernard O'Donnell also organised letter drops associated with German espionage activities as late as June 1943, where he and his wife collected messages (mainly from the incarcerated Gortz) at George Hicks butchers shop and Amadeo del Rio's cafe in Dublin (*ibid.* 246). There is a Bernard 'Barney' O'Donnell who was associated with the IRA. He was brother of the Irish Republican, socialist and anti-fascist, Peadar O'Donnell. Bernard O'Donnell was an IRA activist based in Gortahork, Co Donegal and a Captain in the Cloughaneely Company, 1<sup>st</sup> Donegal Brigade of the Irish Volunteers in 1920 (Murray 1957, 7). He drilled, trained and taught first aid to the 20 members of Cumann na mBan at Cloughaneely in 1918, one of whom became his future wife, Eithne Coyle, in 1935 (Coyle 1952, 1).

Eithne Coyle was an extremely active member of the Cumann na mBan and became its president from 1926 until 1941. She had opposed the IRA bombing campaign, the 'S' plan, in 1939-1940, and was also anti-fascist (Clarke 2009). It is unlikely therefore that her and her husband were involved in IRA activity associated with German espionage and further research is needed to identify the Barney O'Donnell and his Sligo house where Weber-Drohl met with Stephen Hayes. Weber-Drohl was apparently briefed first by Hayes before making his way to the house

of James O'Donovan in Shankill, Dublin.

Although Hull (2003, 72) states that the method by which he reached O'Donovan's house is unknown, the G2/1928 file on Weber-Drohl contains a statement from James O'Donovan from 27 January 1942 (when he was interred in the Curragh), which says that after Weber-Drohl's landing in Sligo he continued his journey by bus and arrived at O'Donovan 'soaked, exhausted and with swollen knees' (Hull 2003, 72). This suggests that after landing in Enniscrone, in the early hours of February 9, he made his way to Barney O'Donnell's house somewhere in Co Sligo, then got a bus to Dublin and travelled to Shankill on the same day while still in the clothes he capsized in. He gave O'Donovan \$14,450 instead of the \$15,100 dollars he was supposed to, keeping \$650 for himself as he had lost his own money when he capsized. He wrote out the memorised message (the 'Pflazgraf' Section mentioned above) which asked for an IRA agent be sent to Germany to co-ordinate shipment of weapons to Ireland and to arrange future activities.

Weber-Drohl's message also informed O'Donovan that another German agent was to follow him, code-named 'Dr Schmelzer' who would supply a code and operate the transmitter. This other agent was the spy Herman Gortz, who landed by parachute near Balivor, Co Meath on 5 May 1940... but that is another story!

#### **Weber-Drohl's arrest and time in Ireland**

After meeting O'Donovan, Weber-Drohl's actions were reported to Germany by Ambassador Hempel of the German Legation in Dublin on 27 March 1940, stating that 'Haupt-V-Mann' had given the money to the 'Irish friends' (*ibid.*, 73). With help from O'Donovan he rented a room in Westland Row, Dublin, but was arrested by Gardaí on 24 April 1940 in violation of the Aliens Act. He explained to the courts he had arrived in Ireland from Belgium and had capsized in a small boat he obtained from the ship just off the coast of Waterford in order to find his two illegitimate Irish-born sons.

He also claimed to be a chiropractor (which was a fake qualification

from the USA). Weber-Drohl had prearranged a cover story relating to his children via letters sent from Belgium to an Irish chiropractor, a Dr Counihan, who was later interviewed by G2 (IMA G2/1929). Based on Weber-Drohl's account in court and the statement he made to the Gardaí, his story was full of contradictions but was nonetheless incredibly accepted by the Irish District Court. He was fined £3 and released, only to be subsequently arrested by G2, three days later (27 April) and detained under the Emergency Powers legislation. G2 had checked his statement and realised that much of what he said to the courts were lies and a cover story (IMA G2/1929; Hull 2003, 73-75). Weber-Drohl's story of trying to find his children, Emile and James Brady, actually provided inspiration for the background of one of the assassins in Ian Fleming's *From Russia with Love* (O'Halpin 1999, 242).

Weber-Drohl was freed for over a year by a sympathetic Irish Department of Justice on 4 May 1940 but was kept under surveillance by the Gardaí and G2. With some financial assistance from James O'Donovan he attempted to tour Ireland performing his strongman act. He had engaged a young lady, Miss Mary Flanagan, as his assistant in his stage show (image above) but Mary's mother persuaded her daughter to leave him as she had heard reports about his bad character (IMA G2/1928; Hull 2003, 177-8). He did perform in the Olympia Theatre as a strong man act in October 1941, all the while being observed by G2 and the Gardaí. By this stage he had engaged the services of another assistant, Mrs Rosaline Park, aged 21, whose husband, Richard Park, a soldier in the Royal Welsh Regiment, was a prisoner of war in Italy at the time. Mrs Park, who was interviewed by G2 in June 1942, had got pregnant with Weber-Drohl in October 1941 and her daughter, Eithne Bracken, was born as a result.

Rosaline's mother and father, Elizabeth and Hugh Bracken, pretended the child was theirs. She reported all this to the Gardaí as Weber-Drohl was constantly harassing and following her. She also informed them he had told her that he had landed in a submarine in Sligo in 1940 and was being paid £15 a month by the German Legation in Dublin



**Weber-Drohl with an assistant, Mary Flanagan, in a publicity image to promote his strongman act in Ireland. The photograph was paid for by James O'Donovan in 1941 (Image: O'Donovan Papers Ms21155(2), National Library of Ireland Manuscripts Collection)**

(IMA G2/1929).

He was finally arrested on 13 August 1942, spending most of his time in confinement writing poetry and Republican ballads to Eduard Hempel and Jim O'Donovan, threatening suicide by hunger strike, or whining about his physical conditions (*ibid.* 238-240). He was flown out of Baldonnell Aerodrome by an American plane to Germany on 15 April 1947, along with other German spies Wilhelm Preetz, Dieter Gartner and Herbert Tributh. After interrogation he was released to his sister in 129, Gugel Strasse, Nuremberg. Nothing further was heard of him and his exact fate remains unknown (*ibid.* 254).

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# Seeking Irish Roots: An Introduction to Family History

By Kate Denison Bell



Noel Costello at King's Well

Genealogy has been a popular hobby for many years, especially for the Irish Diaspora abroad, but has garnered more interest from descendants in Ireland itself. This fascination has grown substantially in part due to the hugely successful 2013 tourism initiative 'The Gathering', television programmes such as *Who Do You Think You Are?* (featuring popular personalities in the context of social, political and cultural history) and Ireland Reaching Out ('reverse genealogy') ([www.irelandxo.com/](http://www.irelandxo.com/)).

## How to get started

Whether as an experienced genealogist or amateur family researcher, the 'golden rule' of genealogy is to gather as much information as possible on the immediate family and work backward. It's best to have the following information: family names (taking into consideration different spellings, and including women's maiden names); religion; parish or townland; and approximate dates of births/marriages/deaths. Interviews with kin, family bibles, letters, photographs and other mementos can

also provide valuable puzzle pieces.

Unfortunately Ireland has limited records, especially Protestant parish registers and earlier censuses, due to the 1922 Civil War Public Records Office fire at Dublin's Four Courts. Additionally, church records very rarely date back to pre-1800s and vary greatly from parish to parish. Still, due to an rapidly-growing records base and advancing technology, there is a plethora of information available,

much of it online and sometimes free of charge.

## FamilySearch

One universal source, including for Ireland, is FamilySearch (<https://familysearch.org/>), a nonprofit family history organisation operated by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. They have worked for more than a century to compile, image and preserve world family ancestry as part of their family-based Mormon faith. The Church offers a database of Irish civil registration indexes (1845–1958) to search free of charge through their website.

## Irish sources

Civil registration began in Ireland in 1845 for Church of Ireland (Anglican) marriages and in 1864 for all births, death and marriages. Certified copies are available to purchase from the General Register Office ([www.groireland.ie](http://www.groireland.ie)).

**The Church of Ireland Representative Church Body Library** offers a limited amount of digitised parish records, including



Noel Costello at Templevanney Grave

from the ongoing Anglican Record Project ([ireland.anglican.org](http://ireland.anglican.org)).

**The Irish Family History Foundation** (Irish Roots) ([www.rootsireland.ie/](http://www.rootsireland.ie/)) is the coordinating body of nationwide genealogy centres. More than 20 million digital Irish records are available and increasing each year, and searching indexes online is simple. To view and print records in their entirety, one must purchase a subscription (One month, six month, annual, or continuous) and the centres' vast databases include parish church records (Roman Catholic, Church of Ireland, Methodist and Presbyterian) of baptisms, marriages and deaths, civil records (from 1864/65), census returns and gravestone inscriptions. There is also information from Tithe Applotment Books, Griffith's Valuation (1847-1864), ship passenger lists and a variety of 16th and 17th century census substitutes such as the 1663 Hearth Money Rolls.

Each genealogy centre associated with the IFHF is staffed by trained and experienced researchers who can assist through personal consultations and can be commissioned to conduct individual, family record searches and initial assessments at fixed fees, including comprehensive family reports, if records available. Discrepancies often exist between dates of church and civil records and genealogy centre researchers are especially helpful in determining matches.

As just one family history centre example, the County Sligo Heritage and Genealogy Centre (CSHGC) (<http://www.sligoroots.com/>) offers the above services, in addition to location searches, which can offer reports using both old and new ordnance maps to pinpoint townlands and plots on which ancestors resided. CSHGC also holds outreach and heritage events for the community.

### The National Archives

The National Archives of Ireland (<http://www.nationalarchives.ie/>) offers a wealth of free information

including from the Census Records for 1901 and 1911, Census Survivals (1821-51), Census Search forms (1841-51), Tithe Applotment Books (1823-37), Soldiers' Wills (1914-17), and Calendars of Wills and Administrations (1858-1922). Not all records are accurate but the Archives works continually to improve and increase its information. The Archives also offers short personal consultations and advice by appointment.

In addition, the National Archives offers a list of excellent guides such as the *Irish Libraries, Archives, Museums and Genealogical Centres: A Visitors' Guide* by Robert K O'Neill (UHF, 2007), *Tracing Irish Ancestors, A Practical Guide to Irish Genealogy* by Máire Mac Conghail and Paul Gorry (Collins, 1997), *Irish Records: Sources for Family & Local History* by James G. Ryan (revised edition, Salt Lake City, 1997) and *Tracing Your Irish Ancestors, The Complete Guide* by John Grenham (3rd edition, Dublin, 2006).

### National Library of Ireland (NLI)

There are many family history sources located at the NLI ([www.nli.ie/](http://www.nli.ie/)) including Catholic parish registers, property records, newspapers, directories, local history society publications, a genealogy advisory service and free on-site access to subscription websites, just to name a few.

The NLI recently announced that 400,000 Catholic parish register microfilms, with information dating from the 1740s to the 1880s, will be available online for free by mid-2015. This massive digitisation project will be the "single most important source of information on Irish family history prior to the 1901 Census," according to Colette O'Flaherty, NLI Head of Special Collections.

Despite this mound of digital records going out into the ether, the importance of trained genealogy centre researchers to locate and verify links should be emphasised, said Ms O'Flaherty.

"We are fortunate, though, that the

network of local family history centres throughout the country holds indexes and transcripts of parish registers for their local areas. We would envisage direct access to the digitised registers will complement the work of these local centres by enabling researchers to cross-reference the information they uncover, and assisting them in uncovering wider links and connections to their ancestral community," she said. <http://www.nli.ie/en/list/latest-news.aspx?article=6b4b12e5-298d-4b0f-aeb5-f832af6c5711b>

### Northern Ireland

Civil records for the counties of Antrim, Armagh, Down, Fermanagh, Londonderry/Derry and Tyrone are available at the General Register Office of Northern Ireland ([www.groni.gov.uk](http://www.groni.gov.uk)).

Archives pertaining to government departments and courts of law, along with privately deposited archives, are available at the Public Records Office of Northern Ireland (<http://www.proni.gov.uk>).

### Subscription services and software

The most popular paid subscription family research service is Ancestry ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk)). This site offers collections for Ireland such as the census, civil/parish records, military, immigration, newspapers, directories, tax/criminal records, land wills, references and maps. It also allows a researcher to create a family tree, print and share it. Other genealogy software that can be purchased includes Legacy, Family Tree Maker and RootsMagic.

### DNA: The future of genealogy research?

There has been much excitement in recent years about DNA family history testing, due to such documentaries as RTÉ's *Blood of the Irish*. Also, the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland and the Genealogical Society of Ireland have begun to collaborate on the Irish DNA Atlas. The latter's aims, in part, are to identify genetic markers that arose in specific parts of Ireland



**Steve Lemken**

and depends on volunteers who have eight Irish great-grandparents born within roughly 30km of each other. There are several DNA genetic tests available to purchase, including through ancestry.com. However, if a company claims to link a celebrity to a major world figure like

### Case Study: Steve Lemken

In his house on the outskirts of Culfadda, Co Sligo, New Jersey native Steve Lemken stands beside the massive family tree he has drawn on a 10m by 3m scroll of paper. More than 800 names are sketched along sundry coloured lines tying individuals to family groups, all linked to two ancestors born before the Great Famine – John (1837-1910) and Mary (nee Donagher) Egan (1842-1917) of Cletty townland, Lemken’s great-great-grandparents.

It remains a work in progress. Like most Americans, Lemken’s background is a melting pot mashup. In addition to his Irish heritage, he has Swedish, German and English bloodlines, and his research has led him down those paths too. But it was his late mother’s formerly uncharted Irish background that began his ancestral hunt some 30 years ago.

Because he began his research before the wide availability of Irish information on the Internet, Lemken visited resource sites in Dublin such as the National Library of Ireland, the General Register and Valuation offices and the UCD Belfield Folklore Department. Locally he dug into records in the Sligo Library reference room and local parishes, studying

Charlemagne, or an Irish person to a broad population group such as Niall of the Nine Hostages, it is advised to take such findings with a grain of salt and hold on to one’s cash, according to many scientists.

“Be wary of news items about genetic history – that someone famous is related to the Queen of Sheba or a Roman soldier,” says University College London Professor of Statistical Genetics, David Balding. “Often these come from PR material provided by genetic testing companies and can be trivial, exaggerated or just plain wrong. Genetic relatedness isn’t very meaningful beyond a handful of generations away, because the amount of DNA you share with a very distant

relative is negligible compared with the huge amount of DNA we all share from our common ancestors.” ([www.senseaboutscience.org/pages/genetic-ancestry-testing.html](http://www.senseaboutscience.org/pages/genetic-ancestry-testing.html))

### Follow the paper / digital trail

So, if someone would like to begin or continue their family history research, start the old-fashioned way by rooting around in the loft and having a chat with relatives, then visiting the many excellent sources available to assist. In addition to being an enjoyable pastime of sleuthing, found family history is a gift to leave for generations ahead. Best of luck in searching!

Ordnance maps and the Census records of 1901 and 1911 to gains leads into family connections and whereabouts. A trip to the Public Records Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI) shed more light with a look at the Lissadell records of the Gore-Booth and Irwin estates.

Despite the obstacles of lost and destroyed records which make Irish research interesting, Lemken said, “Learning to know what resources are available, in archives or online, is important. Getting to know townlands, parishes and dioceses old and new, Poor Law Unions and other political divisions is essential.”

He continues to do a lot of supplemental reading about the area, all to gain insights on the times and lives of people past and present. Perhaps most importantly, he has relied heavily on listening to members of the family and neighbours and friends.

“Everyone I’ve met with over the years has been most helpful,” he said. “Each has had a nugget of information to examine. Without their knowledge and insights my work in making the connections of our extended families would be filled with holes. I would not understand them and their history and

the lives they lead today. I’d be lost without understanding the context of their lives and times.”

Defying genealogy’s ‘golden rule’ of starting with the present and working backward, Lemken describes one of his research techniques as a ‘scoop and sift’, pulling out information from a pile of, for instance, birth/marriage/death certificates, the names of witnesses to each event that he believed might pertain to his family and then cross referencing them with Census and other records. With dogged determination, it has been a successful course of action for him.

His quest started with two names given to him by his Aunt Kate (Katherine) (nee Peterson) Nilsson (1894-1986).

“Kate was the daughter of Jennie (nee Egan) Peterson (1863-1924) who was the second child of John and Mary,” Lemken said. “Jennie is my great-grandmother who emigrated to the States in 1881. Aunt Kate and her elder sister, a nun, had kept in touch with kin in Ireland for a while. I wish I knew more of the story but the past wasn’t talked about in great detail when I was growing up. When I did become interested, it was almost too late. My elders were dying. Luckily, Aunt Kate

gave me two names before she died: Mollie (nee Egan) Cawley and Annie (nee Egan) McCormack. They'd be second cousins to my mother. I gave the names to my mother's cousin Mary Jane (nee Peterson) Franey, who met Mrs. Cawley in the early 1990s in Ireland. Mrs McCormack had passed away in 1980. I began writing to Mollie and in 1995 finally got to meet her and her family. It's been a journey of discovery since."

"She remembers the farmers and musicians, the work and products, the berries to be picked, the places folks danced at and so forth," he said.

"Such information has helped me understand the context and the continuity of families in the area. I feel a lot closer to my great-great-grandparents and their time when I drive and walk in the area. I understand these were hard times. I'm not a romantic. People struggled mightily with all the events from the Famine onward. Death and hardship were never far. Partings frequent. But they worked and played and got on with life, just as we all must do."

As a history enthusiast Lemken is interested in the social, political and economic aspects of his ancestor's times, here in Ireland, in the States and other countries.

"I care about how people lived, and how each generation improved their lot," he said. "People were able to survive, adapt and thrive, be it with the land, by securing a new trade or profession, or by scattering to try their hand elsewhere. These are universal lessons to be remembered."

### Case Study: Noel Costello

South County Sligo-based farmer and architect Noel Costello said 'clues in the landscape', such as abandoned potato fields blighted during the Famine and never recropped due to poor soil, are evidence of history, albeit a sad one. The ridges of these ghostly plots of rocky limestone, planted in probable desperation near Keshcorran, are most obvious after a light snowfall, he said.

Other telling signs through the

region of those dark days, near Ballymote, include such objects as a large metal pot, now used to water cattle. Noel said it once held soup during those impoverished times.

"I think the young people today have no idea at all," he said, referring to the quintessential Irish connection to land and its history. "I think we're going to lose that with this generation."

Because fewer youth are becoming farmers, Noel said he's concerned some of the folklore might be forgotten, such as aptly-named fields and townlands, as his own home place, Greenaun/Grianan ('the sunny place').

Although Noel said he didn't listen enough to his elders, he did absorb a lot of the folklore. For instance, he was told that to establish law and order in lieu of courts and police, blacksmiths were called on to settle disputes. With the strike of an anvil, 'the deal was sorted,' he said.

Noel said there are family artefacts and photographs, and a treasured will of his mother's grandfather that was handwritten in 1890 by Michael Doyle, principal teacher in Ballymote (1868-1913), who founded the Irish National Teachers' Organisation, and for whom a statue was unveiled in 1930 in his honour in front of Ballymote Courthouse. Once again, he said in place of unavailable professionals such as lawyers and judges, a priest or schoolmaster would carry out official tasks such as writing wills.

In exploring places like graveyards, Noel said patterns sometimes emerge, such as when his mother pointed out many headstones in the Ballymote cemetery marking those who died at a young age in 1918, some of whom were friends and neighbours of his family. Noel realised that this was the year of a devastating influenza pandemic, sometimes referred to as the Spanish Flu, when 500 million people died worldwide, many of them previously healthy young adults.

Noel said he heard lots of stories about his family and local history, but wishes he had paid more attention and asked questions before his relatives

passed away. Like most young boys, he was more interested in fishing, playing football and shooting rabbits than listening to his parents, grandparents and other kin talk about days gone by. Both of his parents passed away at the ripe old age of 89, so had a lot of life to share.

But there were some taboo subjects such as the 'Great Hunger.' "No old person I knew ever mentioned the Famine," he said, though their grandparents would have lived through it. He believes the reason was 'survivor's guilt.' But still, there were bleak stories about blighted potato fields of 'pure black' and passing desperate people walking along the roads, some of them dying, asking how far was Boyle. They were probably headed to the workhouse, he said.

### Genealogy made easy

Noel is fascinated by his genealogy and has been able to trace back his family to pre-famine times. He said accessing online sources, such as the Census and Tithe Applotment Books, has been helpful and easy.

As another good genealogy source, he cited the Irish Flax Growers Bounty List of 1796, which encouraged farmers to plant flax and hemp seed for the production of linen. The flax industry was quite large in the Ballymote area for a short but intensive time, so many from the area could be related to those people, some of whom moved in from the North and other areas.

In his case, because Noel has relations dating back at least two centuries ago (if an ancient 1700s Knockbrack grave marker is any indication), he reckons he has loads of relations spread all over the Keash region.

"If your people have been in the area for about 200 years, you're probably related to half of the parish!" he laughed.

Like thousands of other Irish families, Noel said many of his people left for America. He visited the Family Immigration History Center



at Ellis Island, New York, where he found his two grand-uncles' names on one of the ship passenger manifests of the Lusitania, which travelled many times between Liverpool/Queenstown (Cobh, Co. Cork) between 1907 until it was torpedoed by the Germans in 1917, killing 1,195 people and further igniting World War I.

Also while at Ellis Island, site of the Statue of Liberty, Noel was struck by the thought of millions from around the globe who had emigrated to find new lives. He was particularly touched by a photograph near the museum front door of a little girl in her Holy Communion outfit, who had just landed in America from Collooney,

Co. Sligo.

"To think I had arrived from Ballymote, only a couple miles up the road, and seeing this girl arriving in 1906 or 1907," he said. "The expectation was so high."

Noel said his grandmother's emigrant sister acted as an informal 'welcome wagon' for recent arrivals from the Keash area by offering short-term lodging in her house and networking to help find them jobs.

He said his Hannon ancestors who emigrated to the United States had 'bad luck enough,' with one grand-uncle killed at a building site, and other brother, along with his wife, succumbing to tuberculosis –

tragically, their child was placed in an orphanage, but went to work and found his way to an aunt, who took him in.

"These were tough times, but some of them got on very well," he said.

Noel's family gathering experience is just one example of successful 'reaching out' genealogy tourism for Co. Sligo and a rewarding experience for all the clan. More connections can yet be made because Noel's genealogy research continues, with 'assumptions that need to be proved.' "I must see where we all fit in," he said.

## The Life of Arthur Taylor (1829-1896)

By John Taylor

Arthur Taylor of Cleavry, Castlebaldwin, Co Sligo was born in the year 1829 and was the eldest son of Richard and Jane Taylor. He served in the 17<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Foot in the British military during the Crimean War. He was my great-grand-uncle.

Arthur participated in the famous siege of Sevastopol. After the war he continued his role in the military from which he retired with the rank of lieutenant colonel in 1881. His service records survive and show the many and varied places he visited as a British army officer. Apart from Crimea, Lt Col Taylor was posted to Ceylon, India, Gibraltar (twice) and North America.

Arthur lived on until the year 1896. He was buried in Kingston Cemetery, Portsmouth, upon his death. Arthur's military legacy continued in his only son Bernard Taylor (below) who served in the Royal Marines through WWI.

The story of how Arthur Taylor had emigrated from Ireland has been passed down through my family for generations. As the first born son of his family, Arthur was in line to inherit a substantial amount of land when he came of age. However while out one day with his father's favourite horse



**Lt Col Arthur Taylor in full military attire. This photo has been in the possession of my family for over 140 years. Arthur was known not have returned home to Ireland at any point. The photo was therefore likely sent by him to show his family of their eldest son.**

he accidentally killed the horse on the locally known 'Rock of Doomeegan' on the Red Earls Road, which leads from Castlebaldwin to Ballymote. In the ensuing confrontation Arthur stormed off and left Ireland for a new life abroad.

In 2013 the Sligo Folk Park hosted a Taylor family reunion where distant relatives came to share their family history. Included within the diaspora was Arthur's great-great-grandson Phil Curme, who currently retains Arthur's Crimean war medals, his swagger stick and his sword as well as other miscellaneous items and photographs.



# Virgil and the *Book of Ballymote*

## How Irish scholars brought the Aeneid to life

By Neal Farry

Virgil's epic poem *The Aeneid* (31 BC – 19 BC) was commissioned by the Emperor Caesar Augustus in celebration of his victory over Anthony and Cleopatra at the Battle of Actium (31 BC), when the Roman Empire was reunited after a disastrous civil war. The poem is written in 9,896 hexameter Latin lines and tells of how Aeneas, urged by benevolent deities, leads survivors of the fall of Troy in circa 1240 BC, westward around the Mediterranean through many adventures in search of a new kingdom in Italy. Here he allies himself with King Latinus, defeats their Italian enemies and establishes the dynasty that eventually founded Rome. Aeneas is portrayed as the heroic ancestor of Virgil's new Emperor Augustus, through descent from the marital union of Ascanius, son of Aeneas and Lavinia, the daughter of King Latinus. *The Aeneid* was translated into Irish during the first half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century by an anonymous scribe, and it was transcribed in the *Book of Ballymote* by Solomon ó Droma during the last decade of the 1300s. The *Irish Aeneid* or *Imtheachta Aeniassa* contains 3,400 prose lines in Middle-Irish. Each line is of similar length to a hexameter Latin line from Virgil's poem.

In this article I will endeavour, with noteworthy assistance from a number of international scholars who shared an abiding interest in the *Irish Aeneid* and in the *Book of Ballymote*, to disclose how the application of a medieval Gaelic intellect produced a meritorious translation that is true to the original Latin epic, yet dissimilar in the sense that it is distinctly expressive of the Gaelic culture of the translator.

The Ballymote historian JC McDonagh, when treating of *The Irish*

*Aeneid* from the *Book of Ballymote*, has designated the Gaelic version of Virgil's epic as a 'resume' of the classic Latin poem. I am confident that at least three eminent modern academics would consider such a dismissive evaluation as failing to appreciate and esteem the work of the anonymous Irish scholar who had translated *Imtheachta Aeniassa* from the Latin of Virgil at least 250 years before Solomon ó Droma recorded the epic in the *Book of Ballymote* (BB) manuscript.

George Calder, Lecturer in Celtic Languages & Literature at the University of Glasgow, Erich Poppe, Professor of Celtic Studies & General Linguistics at Marburg University, Germany, and formerly of Cambridge University, and Eorann O'Connor, King's College, Cambridge University, have all treated *Imtheachta Aeniassa* in BB with much greater regard and a more profound degree of academic analysis.

When George Calder edited and translated the *Irish Aeneid* into English prior to its publication in 1907, the BB was the only known source of the epic in Irish. Not even a paper copy of the tale could be found. Since then, however, two additional medieval manuscripts containing incomplete versions of the *Imtheachta Aeniassa* text have been discovered. One of these is now preserved in the Killiney Franciscan House of Studies and was written down by Dáelghus ó Duibhgeannáin during the 15<sup>th</sup> century and is 314 lines shorter than Solomon ó Droma's BB 1391/2 AD text. The second incomplete version is 80 lines shorter than the Ballymote text and was penned by Moílchleann ó Cianáin of Fermanagh at the same time as the Ballymote *Aeneid*. This manuscript

is now deposited in the King's Inn Library, Dublin. It is believed that all three surviving texts are descended from a lost hyparchetype of the translation that the anonymous Gaelic scribe had made over 250 years before the *Book of Ballymote* was compiled. Early indications show that the three texts tend to agree quite closely with minor differences resulting from the scribal transmissions. All three modern commentators based their analyses of the *Irish Aeneid* on the BB manuscript.

George Calder asserts that the subject matter of *Imtheachta Aeniassa* is mainly identical to Virgil's original Latin epic. Some alterations occur that take into account the cultural differences between Imperial Rome and medieval Gaelic Ireland and Scotland. Matters that would have appealed to a Roman readership that lived a millennium previously, like some genealogies and speeches of the gods, are omitted. Such concerns would find few admirers in medieval Gaeldom. On the other hand, the translator has provided some supplementary material to the Gaelic text that would certainly arouse the interest of medieval Gaelic readers or listeners. Well-known passages of Gaelic literature are incorporated and used to enhance the descriptions of Aeneas, of Pallas son of Evander, of other notable characters in the action, and of the sword of Pallas. The woes of defeated heroes, parting sorrows, gold and silver ornaments, splendid houses and weapons, beautiful landscapes and fair weather are emphasised in the Irish tale. The battles, sieges and fortunes of Aeneas are frequently given more emphasis in the *Irish Aeneid* than in the original Latin epic poem.

I believe that it will be useful to examine Virgil's Latin description of Aeneas arriving at the Court of Queen Dido in Carthage (Tunisia) followed by two English translations and ó Droma's Irish translation of Virgil's narrative:

*Restitit Aeneas claraque in luce  
refulsit, / os umerosque deo similis;  
namque ipsa decoram / caesariem  
nato genetrix lumenque iuventae /  
purpureum et laetos oculis adflarat  
honores; / quale manus addunt  
ebori decus, aut ubi flavo / argentum  
Pariusve lapis circumdatur auro,*

Here following is John Jackson's 1908 literal prose translation of the identical scene;

*Stood Aeneas, glittering in the lucent  
day, godlike in aspect and frame: for  
the mother (Venus) had breathed on  
her son, and his locks were beautiful;  
he was clad in the rosy light of youth,  
and his eyes were lustrous and glad  
– as when the artist-hand lends  
loveliness to the ivory, or when silver,  
or Parian stone, is enchased in the  
yellow gold.*

Depicting the same passage the 12<sup>th</sup> century Irish translator wrote in the following terms:

*Doluid chucu Aenias i soillsí móir  
& ba suairc, & ba sochraid, & ba  
sercach soicheneoil in laech táinic  
and. Mong findbuidí, farórda fair,  
gnúis caem corcurda aigi, rúisc  
cochlacha caindelta ina chind cosmail  
re delb ndea, in delb rola a máthair .i.  
Uenir, o li serceina ghnúis, co rocarad  
gach aen hé in nech rosillfed fair, &  
agaillidh in rigan, & is ed róraid fria.  
(Lines 347 – 351 BB MS)*

Here I append George Calder's translation of the foregoing *Book of Ballymote* Irish version:

*Aeneas came upon them in great  
brilliance. Pleasant, comely, lovely  
and well-born was the hero that came  
there – fair, yellow, golden hair upon  
him; a beautiful ruddy face he had;  
eyes deep-set, lustrous in his head  
like the image of a god, the expression  
which Venus, his mother, with love's  
splendour, threw into his face, so that  
whoever looked upon him should love*

him.

Erich Poppe believes that the Irish translation describes Aeneas in more sensuous terms than Virgil's Latin verse achieved, because it contains the immediate effects of his beauty. The Irish translator liberally employs descriptive alliteration that was adopted from the Gaelic oral storytelling tradition.

Professor Calder is adamant that the main purpose of the pre-1150AD translator was to produce a 'scél' with the main features of a modern novel. He has noted that the translator possessed the required literary talent and had a thorough knowledge of the Virgil's original Latin work that enabled him to 'select, curtail, amplify, or transpose his materials in order to meet the taste of his medieval Gaelic readers.'

Prof Calder clearly visualises *Imtheachta Aeniasa* being read individually or delivered to an audience for entertainment purposes at a public Feis or at a clan Cóisir.

Professor Erich Poppe in his *New Introduction to Imtheachta Aeniasa* (1995) replaces the term 'translator' with 'redactor' to describe the scholar who drafted, edited and revised for publication in the middle-Irish language the Virgilian Latin poem in a prose form, without providing the literal rendering of every phrase and sentence in Virgil's epic. Prof. Poppe also finds it difficult to imagine a prince like Tomaltagh Mór Mac Donagh of Corran relaxing over the contents of the *Book of Ballymote* considering its remarkably miscellaneous and complex collection of texts.

The German academic contends that *Imtheachta Aeniasa* seems to reflect scholarly, historical and antiquarian interests, and he argues that it was perceived by its Gaelic translator / redactor in the 12<sup>th</sup> century as a historical narrative rather than as a literary epic or mere entertainment. Herr Poppe has identified a thematic relationship between the Gaelic versions of the four classical Greek and Roman texts recorded in sequence

in the final section of the *Book of Ballymote* consisting of the following: (1) De Excidio Troiae Historia (Tógáil Troí) or 'The Fall of Troy' by Dares Phrygius, (2) 'The Wanderings of Ulysses' (Merugud Uilix), (3) 'The Irish Aeneid' (Imtheachta Aeniasa) by Virgil, (4) 'Alexander the Great' (Alaistair Mór). Text No. 1 deals with the fall of Troy and the three succeeding texts all have prologues affixed by their Gaelic translators showing the destruction of Troy as the starting point for the events in the three Greek narratives. The *Book of Ballymote* texts 1 and 4 had been translated into Irish during the 10<sup>th</sup> century and text No 2 first graced a Gaelic manuscript in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. The Marburg Professor bolsters his argument with the fact that the inter-textual connections between the four *Book of Ballymote* classical texts depicting the destruction of Troy, are brought out explicitly in the first sentences of *Merugud Uilix* (Ulysses) and *Imtheachta Aeniasa*. Prof. Poppe interprets these prologues as evidence of the learned, historical interests of the compilers of the *Book of Ballymote* in 1391/2 AD, ie Solamh O Droma, Robeartus Mac Síthig, Mághnus ó Duibhgeannáin, Tomaltagh óg ó Conchubhair and the supervising tutor, Dómhnaíl Mac Aodhagáin.

JC McDonagh believed that the *Ballymote* manuscript was compiled from a mass of loose manuscripts in the possession of Mac Aodhagáin who sold their copyright to the Corran chieftain Tomaltagh Mór Mac Donagh.

In Virgil's Latin *Aeneid* the narrative begins in Book I with Aeneas and the surviving Trojans leaving Sicily en route to Italy when they are blown off course towards the coast of Carthage in North Africa. In Book II Aeneas recounts to Queen Dido of Carthage the destruction of Troy by the Greeks. In the *Book of Ballymote Imtheachta Aeniasa* version the story opens with a historical prologue that differs entirely from Virgil's account. This Gaelic



**Aeneas and his Family Fleeing Burning Troy by Henry Gibbs**

innovation sets out the reasons for the banishment and exile by the Greeks of Aeneas and his followers, as traitors from Troy after the fall of the city. This characterisation of Aeneas as a traitor to both his native city and to the Greeks stands in marked contrast with Virgil's personification of 'Pius Aeneas', whom he portrays as a heroic and virtuous ancestor of his patron who was alive and well in 31BC, ie the Roman Emperor Caesar Augustus. The Irish translation distinctly differs from Virgil's Latin account by following the natural chronological course of events throughout the story. *Imtheachta Aeniasa* concludes with a short historical epilogue which is not found in Virgil's Epic. The Gaelic translator / redactor avails of this epilogue to introduce a view of historical and dynastic continuity that sets out a claim that not only the Romans but all the rulers of Europe descend from 'the seed of Aeneas, his son Ascanius and daughter-in-law Lavinia,' thereby diminishing the importance of the Emperor Augustus and ignoring the efforts of Virgil to

enhance his master's political status. Dealing with the content and style of *Imtheachta Aeniasa*, Prof Poppe emphasises that the work is not so much a translation from one language to another but rather from one culture to another. Words are not fixed but nothing essential is omitted, and additions the translator made are native Gaelic elaborations on the original Roman content.

For example, in Book VI the entrance to the underworld is represented as the Sicilian volcano, Mount Etna. This supposed location is a medieval image of the doors of hell from a contemporary medieval Christian viewpoint. This approach indicates a direct divergence from Virgil's description of Aeneas' subterranean journey where Mount Etna is not alluded to in any circumstance.

On the level of style, the Gaelic scholar adapted his text to suit contemporary Gaelic narrative, ignoring the subtler poetic effects, especially the descriptive adjectives and similes of the Latin text. The characteristic feature of the Middle-

Gaelic narrative style involved a generous use of alliterative phrases and words combined with doublets and triplets of synonyms and adjectives. Our German commentator views the Irish Aeneid as a reworking of the Virgilian epic poem from an Irish perspective that tells us much about the mentality and interests of its medieval Irish audience.

King's College, Cambridge academic Eorann O'Connor, in her Part II Thesis, has investigated *Imtheachta Aeniasa* from a clearly different cultural viewpoint. Ms O'Connor inquires whether the 12<sup>th</sup> century Irish translator's unusually secular interest in the classics pertained to an awareness of a pre-Christian Gaelic oral cultural inheritance. She examines the omissions, the retentions and the ideological adjustments this anonymous Irish translator / redactor made, that she believes derived in part from his pre-Christian linguistic inheritance as distinct from a post-Christian continental tradition.

The contrasting descriptions of the youthful Trojan warrior Pallas and his

weapons by Virgil (31-19BC) and by his Irish translator (circa 1150AD) are aptly set forth in the passages in the following sequence: (a) John Jackson's 1908 beautiful literal translation of Virgil's Latin epic; (b) the 12<sup>th</sup> century Irish translation as in the *Book of Ballymote*; (c) George Calder's 1907 English translation of the pre-1150 Irish translation.

(a) *The princes of Troy issued from the open gates, while in the midmost line rode Pallas himself, having been consigned twice a hundred Arcadian horsemen, the choice of their cavalry, conspicuous in brodered scarf and emblazoned arms; such as the star of morn, that Venus most loves of all the sidereal fires, when, laved in the ocean flood, he uplifts his sacred head unto heaven and the darkness melts away.* (J Johnson)

(b) *Ba caemh dócas and. Marcshluag na n-Arcaide fo Pallas. Ba crúthach an maccaem robaí etarru. Mong fhochos órbhuidhí fair, rocs gorm glainidí ina chind. Ba cosmail ri forcleithí caillí cetemuin no fri sian slebí cehtar a dhá gruadh. Anndar lat ba fras do nemanduibh rolad ina ceand. Anndar lat ba dual partlaingí a beoil. Ba gilithir sneachta n-aen aidchi a braigí & a cneas ar cheana ..... at e seme fata fògeal có hindaib a lámh & a cos. Brat corcra corrthorach uime. Liagdelg óir ara bruinde. Muntorc óir ina braighit. Lení srebnaidí sidaighí fria gelchnes. Cris óir có ngemaib do lig logmuraib imo taebú. Cloídem órduirrn for a crí, a suigedad, fillti a rind có urdorn, sinig amal colg. Ledraig finda fo usce, ledrad finda for cind, & ní tescadh tuind. Danid dá leith don duine & ní cluined co hiarcen. Dergsgiath bocóidech có rindad & có tuaigmilaibhóir fora chliú. Ba suaire segúnta an mac sin.* (Lines 1921 to 1937 BB MS)

(c) *Beautiful was the march there. The cavalry of the Arcadians under Pallas. Comely was the youth [Pallas] that was in their midst. Golden hair upon*

*him, slightly curling; a clear blue eye in his head; like the prime of the wood in May, or like the purple foxglove was one of his two cheeks. You would think his lips were a loop of coral. As white as the snow of one night, were his neck and the rest of his skin. There are fine [robes] long, almost white, to the extremities of his hands and his feet. A purple-fringed mantle about him. A pin of precious stone set in gold upon his breast. A girdle of gold with gems of precious stones about his loins. A gold-hilted sword on his body, its blade, having been bent back from point to hilt, straightens itself like a rapier. It would cut a hair on water; it would sever a hair upon a head, and would not cut skin; it would make two halves of a man, and he would not hear it till long afterwards. A red embossed shield with engravings and buckles of gold upon his left arm. Pleasant, stately was that lad.* (G Calder)

Eorann O'Connor considers that the Irish description of Pallas and his weapons, with its elaborate system of alliteration, and the use of imagery typical of descriptions of native Irish warriors, contain resonances of the oral story-telling tradition of pre-Christian Ireland.

Ms O'Connor lists an abundant number of Greek historians and philosophers who view Aeneas as a collaborator with the Greeks and in particular with Odysseus (Ulysses). Sophocles, Dionysius, Xenophon in his *Cynegeticus*, Hellanicus and Menecrates all tell of hostility between Aeneas and his defeated fellow Trojans. Virgil and his Roman audience adhered to their tradition of 'pious Aeneas' as a founding father of Rome who had saved his Trojan household under divine instructions to pursue a higher purpose, ie the foundation of the Roman civilisation where he would later be revered as the heroic ancestor of the Emperors. This adoring Italian public's image of Aeneas was certainly at variance with the opinions of the Greek literati.

Our Cambridge scholar has also

reported the fact that two medieval European written versions represent Aeneas and Antenor working in league with the Greeks in victory over their native city. One such account, Dares Phrygius' *De Excidio Troiae Historia* (Togáil Troí) from the 6<sup>th</sup> century AD can be found adjacent to *Imtheachta Aeneasa* in the *Book of Ballymote*. The second account of the treachery of Aeneas, *Ephemeris Belli Troiana* by Dictys, was chronicled in the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD. Nevertheless, the reputation of Aeneas as the pious hero, probably influenced by Roman Christian educational and political interests, was eventually given more credence in mainland Europe. Although the counter-tradition of a treacherous Aeneas had been widely held in Ancient Greece and was still acknowledged by many Christian Europeans, the opposing dominant general consensus of the status of Aeneas as pious hero, adapting to his new Christian surroundings where 'pietas' was replaced by piety, eventually held sway in mainland European consciousness.

To Imperial pagan and Christian Romans, the quality of 'pietas' was defined as devotion to one's country, one's parents and other blood relations, and to a person's duty to the deity, be that the Christian God or the pagan deity Jupiter. While acknowledging the alleged treachery of Aeneas to Troy all parties recognised his 'pietas' in following the instructions of Jupiter delivered to him by Nestor, to sail to Italy as leader of the Trojan survivors and there to establish a magnificent civilising nation.

Ms O'Connor observes that after the prologue of *Imtheachta Aeniasa* in the *Book of Ballymote*, the Irish translator-redactor proceeds to transform Aeneas into a Gaelic warrior of heroic proportions, thereby eventually entertaining and integrating the Imperial, Christian and pagan Irish interpretations of the pious character of Aeneas.

In Ms O'Connor's thesis it is registered that *Imtheachta Aeniasa*

preserves much of the classical pagan genealogy from Virgil's *Aeneid* while simultaneously embellishing Virgil's writing in many instances. The Irish account describes Aeneas' son Ascanius coming into battle as 'son of Aeneas, son of Anchises, son of Ilus, son of Tros, son of Erichthonius, son of Dardanus, son of Jove, son of Saturn, was that Ascanius ... for from him sprang the emperors of the world.'

In contrast the equivalent passage in Virgil's *Aeneid* simply outlines the genealogy of Ascanius in the following terms: '[I]n their midst, his fair head unhelmed, was the Dardan boy [ie Ascanius, son of Aeneas].' In this instance the Irish translator has for the second time on behalf of non-Roman rulers claimed descent from Aeneas, thereby undermining the unique vanity and hubris of the Roman emperors.

We are also informed that early Irish language and Latin pseudo-historical tracts like *The Book of Invasions of Ireland* and *The Six Ages of the World* interpreted Irish pagan myth within the framework of Judaeo-Christian theology and historiography. Moreover, Ms O'Connor when contrasting the approaches of Virgil and his Irish translator to a vital genealogy of Latinus, the Italian father-in-law of Aeneas, draws the conclusion that Virgil nominated that Italian ally of the Trojans, as a descendant of the god Saturn through Faunus, Marica and Picus. The 12<sup>th</sup> century Irish translator places Saturn, Neptune and Apollo into the genealogy of Latinus, in addition to Mizraim, Ham and Noah, three characters from the Old Testament. In this case he was obviously influenced by Jewish theology.

Our Cambridge reviewer points out that many continental translators have radically reshaped the story of Troy by exchanging pagan motifs for a totally Christian narrative, while the Irish translator / redactor of the *Imtheachta* cleaves faithfully to Virgil's pagan text, retaining with precise accuracy pagan customs. The Irish translator

even incorporates into *Imtheachta* the Irish pre-Christian goddess of battle, Bádth. This spirit appears to echo the role of a Greek pagan fury, Alecto, who wreaks havoc among the Trojans and Latins in the *Aeneid*:

*'[O]cus ba failidh Bádth derg ac imchoisait etir in dá chath sin' / 'And joyous was red mad War a-stirring up mutual strife between those two battalions.'* (G Calder)

Ms O'Connor concludes as follows: 'Yet, Ireland, one of the few Western European regions not conquered by the Romans, also retained its own customs and institutions, mythologies and narrative heritage, a highly evolved system of rhetoric and one of the most sophisticated poetic forms that ever existed. Consequently the *Irish Aeneid* contains resonances of the cultural identity of its translator.' It is significant that Ms O'Connor expresses regret that *Imtheachta Aeniassa* is an under-researched work. The fact that such august European academics have so objectively studied *Imtheachta Aeniassa* from the *Book of Ballymote* displays conspicuous international recognition of the work of Domhnal Mac Aodhagáin, his team of 14<sup>th</sup> century scribes and of the 12<sup>th</sup> century translator who produced such a highly acclaimed Irish version of Virgil's *Aeneid*.

I am inclined to take issue with Prof Poppe who seems reluctant to consider a medieval Gaelic prince relaxing over the contents of the *Book of Ballymote*. If we take into account that one of the scribes of BB was Tomaltagh óg ó Conchubhair, son of the titular Gaelic King of Connacht and that the family of Mághnus ó Duibhgeannáin, one of the BB scribes, provided hereditary historiographers to the Mac Dermotts and Mac Donaghs, we must admit the possibility that Gaelic princes like Tomaltagh Mór MacDonagh of Ballymote possessed a higher level of literacy and education than Prof Poppe considered likely.

In the vicinity of medieval Corran there were at least five monasteries, Emlaghfad, Toomour, Kilmorgan,

Ballinaglough and Ballindoon, where young men of substance could receive an education in the classics. The roads of Ireland were awash with Filidh who were welcome visitors in the houses of chiefs and who were willing and able to pass on the Gaelic heritage to the families of their hosts. Accordingly, I believe Tomaltagh Mór Mac Donagh, Taoiseach Chorainn, could indeed have spent many a pleasant evening relaxing over the contents of his valuable tome. I support the position of Prof George Calder on this point. The scribe, Solomon ó Droma was a pupil of Mac Egan, first editor of the *Book of Ballymote*. Following immediately upon ó Droma's signature in the original BB manuscript is an appreciation in a practised modern hand:

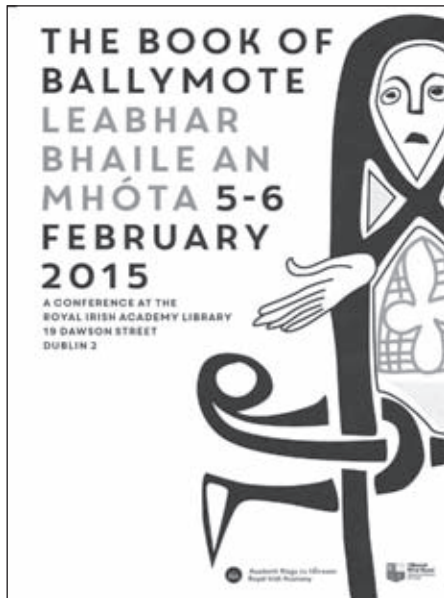
*'Bennacht for hanmoin a mhic Ui Droma gi gur ecc tu ccc bliadhain ria mesi do ghenedh.'* Translated it reads: 'Blessing on your soul, Mac Ui Droma, though you died three hundred years before I was born.' (G Calder) This appreciation was added anonymously to the manuscript in approximately 1700AD. In his introduction to his translation in 1907 Professor Calder added his own tribute of admiration to ó Droma's beautiful penmanship and his general accuracy.

#### Sources

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# Book of Ballymote Conference at the Royal Irish Academy, February 2015

By John Coleman



The Royal Irish Academy, in collaboration with NUI Maynooth, held a two-day conference on *The Book of Ballymote* in the beautiful Academy building in Dawson Street, Dublin earlier this year on 5-6 February. Organising such a conference underlines the significance of the book, which has been in the RIA library since 1785.

The large vellum manuscript is more than 600 years old having been compiled in Ballymote castle before 1400 for the McDonagh clan, rulers of Corran. The manuscript is mainly written in Irish and deals with a wide variety of subjects, including genealogy, topography, biblical stories and lives of saints. It includes the ancient story of the destruction of Troy and the history of Alexander of Macedonia – demonstrating an awareness of wider world history and culture in Ballymote in medieval times.

The event was very well attended over the two days, including a distinguished academic audience and some members of Ballymote Heritage

The Book of Ballymote (RIA MS 23 P 12) was compiled in the late fourteenth century. It is a large-format manuscript (40cm x 26cm), written on vellum, and now contains 251 folios. The writing is in two columns. There are decorated capital letters and the colours used in the interlaced designs on the capitals are vermilion, chrome, red, black, green and blue.

It is a composite work, containing genealogical, topographical, biblical and hagiographical material, including *Sex Aetates Mundi* (Six ages of the world), *Leabhar Gabhála* (Book of Invasions), *Leabhar na gCeart* (Book of Rights), *Dinnsheanchas* (lore of places) and a key to the Ogham alphabet. It also has versions from Latin of non-Irish texts including the Destruction of Troy and the History of Philip and Alexander of Macedonia.

The manuscript was written mostly in Irish at Ballymote Castle, Co. Sligo, the former seat of the Mac Donnchaid of Corann. The principal scribes were **Solam Ó Droma**, **Robertus Mac Sithigh** and **Maghnus Ó Duibhgeannain**, all of whom studied at a MacEgan school. It would appear to have belonged at first to **Mac Donnchaid** (McDonagh). In 1522 it was purchased by **Aed Óg O'Donnell**, lord of Tir Conaill, and was available to **Ó Cléirigh** historians. It turned up in Trinity College, Dublin, in 1686, probably as part of **James Ussher's** library, as did the Book of Lecan. Trinity College issued it on loan to **Anthony Raymond (1675-1726)**, vicar of Trim, in October 1719. While Raymond had it from 1719-26 he allowed other scholars some access to it. After Raymond's sudden death in 1726, the manuscript came in to the hands of **Tadhg Ó Neachtain** (1671-c. 1752) and other Dublin scribes who copied material from it (24 P 41). It was in Drogheda in the 1770s, and was purchased for £20 by **Chevalier Thomas O'Gorman**, who then lent it to **Charles O'Conor** of Belanagare, and later to Sir Lucius O'Brien (24 D 18).

The Royal Irish Academy Minutes for 6 June 1785 (vol. 1, p. 9), record that the Book of Ballymote was presented by **Chevalier Thomas O'Gorman**, MRIA (1732-1809), with Colonel Charles Vallancey as intermediary. O'Gorman's income primarily derived from producing pedigrees for elite Irish migrants in France, Spain and Austria. His involvement in genealogical research meant that he had a particular interest in manuscripts that contained genealogical compilations of the leading Gaelic families. The Book of Ballymote was one such manuscript, and O'Gorman had owned it for some years prior to presenting it to the Academy. In correspondence with him (24 D 18), **Charles O'Conor**, MRIA (1710-91) referred to 'your book of Ballymote', but O'Conor also noted in 1781 that he had the manuscript on loan from O'Gorman for more than three years.

**THE BOOK OF BALLYMOTE AND THE ROYAL IRISH ACADEMY, 1785-2015**  
AN EXHIBITION  
FEBRUARY - APRIL 2015



Group and supporters of our annual heritage weekends. The RIA Librarian and conference organiser Siobhan Fitzpatrick extended a particularly warm welcome to members of the Ballymote Heritage Group in her opening remarks and again thanked us for our support in her closing remarks. Coinciding with the conference the RIA organised a special exhibition about the book this year.

We are very fortunate in that

one of the conference speakers, Dr Elizabeth Boyle, a leading young scholar at Maynooth, has agreed to speak about her new research on the Book of Ballymote at the 2016 Ballymote Heritage Weekend. An excellent account of the history of the book and its content can be read on the RIA website [www.ria.ie](http://www.ria.ie). The full manuscript is available to view on line thanks to the Irish Script on Screen project at [www.isos.ie](http://www.isos.ie).



Some of the Ballymote contingent at the two day Book of Ballymote Conference in the Royal Irish Academy. [Left to right] Kate Bell, John MacDonagh-Dulmer, Etta MacDonagh-Dulmer, John Coleman, Mary Killoran, Bernadette O'Grady (née Scully). Etta MacDonagh-Dulmer is the daughter of James Christopher (Chris) MacDonagh author of the well known History of Ballymote.

## Last Times

By Bernie Gilbride

As we go through life  
Last times are rife,  
Unrecognised as such  
Otherwise it would be too much  
A last time to tie their shoes  
A last time to mend their clothes  
A last time to button their jackets  
A last time to check their pockets.  
A last time to walk them to school  
A last time to walk them home  
A last time to comb their hair  
A last time to tell them what to wear  
A last time the garden they'll keep  
A last time their friends here meet  
A last time crowd into the car  
A last time settle a minor war  
A last time hear their prayers.  
Are any prayers said these years.

## Redeployed

By Mary Kelly-White

Dear Mr. Melly,  
Please listen to my plea;  
The work in Cloonamahon is too hard for me;  
I opted for the kitchen rather than the floors;  
But I had no idea of the workload or the noise.  
I didn't get the concessions  
I asked for at the start,  
'A straight week, not the rota'  
It wasn't much to ask.  
You would have given me 'Easkey'  
But it was too far away, Now I'm asking for 'Charles  
Street'  
What do you say?  
I'm ten months in Cloonamahon  
I've surely passed the test  
For endurance and flexibility  
I must be the best.  
Make me the new 'Caretaker'  
Working nine to five  
I'll forgo the weekend money  
And use the time to live.  
The kitchen in Cloonamahon  
Is a happy place to be  
But as I said at the beginning  
It is too hard for me.



# War Poems in Sligo newspapers 1915

By Michael Farry



**Photograph of John O'Dowd MP (Kilgannon, Tadhg, Sligo and its Surroundings)**

*Old Erin's sons are fighting now  
On Belgium's gory plain  
—The Old Green Flag, M J Kearns,  
Sligo Champion 10 July 1915*

Intimidated by the flood of information regarding the early years of the Great War, I recently reread the 1915 issues of the local Sligo newspapers, the *Sligo Champion*, *Sligo Independent* and *Sligo Nationalist* to get a feel for what it was like to live in those times. *The Sligo Champion*, with the largest circulation, was a confident, aggressive voice in support of John Redmond, the Irish Parliamentary Party and Home Rule. *The Sligo Nationalist* was similar in political stance and tone. The long established *Sligo Independent*, conservative and unionist, was anti-Home Rule but stressed its commitment to the betterment of Sligo.

Poetry was a popular cultural form at this time and was regularly included in local newspapers. A significant amount of this verse was written by local poets, women and men for whom having a poem published in the local paper must have been quite an achievement.

The year 1915 was exceptional as regards newspaper poetry with a

great increase in the number of poems published. *The Sligo Champion* published 47 poems in 1915 as against 19 in 1914. The corresponding figures for the *Sligo Nationalist* were 39 and 26, and the *Sligo Independent* 26 and 8. Roughly half the poems published in the two nationalist newspapers were war-related, versus all but two of those published in the *Sligo Independent*.

This reflected the enormous flood of poetry caused by the outbreak of war. The *London Times* estimated that it received at least a hundred patriotic poems a day during August 1914, the majority written by amateur poets. This poetry represented the then-accepted view of the war, that the cause was just and noble and that the war effort should be continued and intensified. Much of the poetry was stridently jingoistic, full of lofty phrases and archaic vocabulary.

Many recognised and admired poets also wrote similar poetry. Some of these were members of the secret organization of eminent writers working with the War Propaganda Office at Wellington House, London. All this poetry was welcome propaganda, encouraging enlistment and raising morale. Conscription had not yet been introduced in any part of the United Kingdom and recruits were badly needed.

In early 1915 the attitude of nationalist Ireland to the war had not yet been coloured by the threat of conscription or by the 1916 rising or its aftermath, and there was still hope that the war might be concluded quickly. 'The general feeling of the public is completely loyal and great interest is taken in the progress of the war,' the Sligo RIC County Inspector said in his January 1915 report. His March report included: 'The tone of the local press is very good and its loyalty and moderation reflect the temper of the people.'

The war poetry published in the three Sligo newspapers in 1915 was

similar to that published elsewhere in the United Kingdom. There were however interesting local variations. All three local papers reprinted poems taken from British and Empire newspapers but the *Independent* carried many more of those. The *Champion* and *Nationalist* were more likely to print poems with an Irish reference and their authors were more likely to be Irish. The exploits of regiments like the Connaught Rangers and the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers were celebrated and references made to Home Rule and to John Redmond, the Irish Parliamentary Party leader. Three poems published in January 1915 give a good flavour of this poetry.

On 2 January the *Sligo Nationalist* published *The Connaughts to the Rescue* without naming an author but labelling it as 'Special', possibly indicating that it was composed especially for the newspaper. It recounts an action on the western front in late 1914 when Connaught Rangers came to the assistance of a group of Indian soldiers and helped them drive back the Germans.

*Three cheers the fearless Rangers  
gave;  
At length they won the day,  
Tho' many a well-loved comrade  
Had fallen in the fray.  
But yet it was a victory  
Which shall live in martial story—  
How the Connaught Rangers fought  
and won  
That fight for country's glory!*

On 9 January the *Sligo Champion* published *Arise Ye Sons of Britain* which had been written by a Sergeant McCusker of the Irish Guards and sent to Mrs Perceval, Templehouse, Ballymote. Surprisingly, she submitted it to the *Champion* rather than to the *Independent*. This is the first stanza:

**FORD MOTORS.**

— — — — —

When cannons flash and bayonets clash  
 Beneath the distant skies,  
 And we have read of slaughter dread  
 Till tears are in our eyes—  
 It is a calm and sweet release  
 To turn from the sword,  
 And have a graceful, healthful ride  
 Upon a trusty "Ford."

**AGENT:—**  
**J. GILBRIDE, SLIGO.**

Two Seaters, £115; Touring Cars, £125;  
 Delivery Van, £120; Laundrette, £175;  
 Ex Works, Manchester.

**FAST, RELIABLE**

**This Ford Motors advertisement making reference to the war in poetry appeared regularly in the *Sligo Nationalist* 1915**

*Arise ye sons of Britain, and answer  
 to the call,  
 The Motherland is waiting and  
 watching for you all,  
 Then, roll up, my countrymen, and let  
 the Kaiser see,  
 We are ready to help the weak and set  
 brave Belgium free.*

On 30 January the *Sligo Independent* published *The Way of the British* by Lilian Leveridge (1879-1953), which had been originally published in a Canadian newspaper. Lilian Leveridge was born in England and went to Canada with her parents at the age of four. She became a well-known writer and her war poems were especially popular.

*It isn't the way of Britain  
 To grasp with greedy hand,  
 And hold with a despot's power,  
 Domain in a friendly land.  
 But she fights for "a scrap of paper,"  
 She dies for "an old colored rag,"*

*When the one is her word of promise,  
 And the other her blood-stained flag.*

All prominent Sligo nationalists followed the Irish Parliamentary Party's lead and supported recruiting. There was dissatisfaction on the part of the authorities with the number of Sligo recruits, especially from the country areas. At the end of May 1915 the RIC County Inspector said that most Sligo recruits were labourers, adding 'Farmers are getting big prices for their stock and produce but no class in the community has done less for recruiting.' Advertisements for a Sligo county recruiting tour by the Irish Guards in April asked farmers especially to attend the meetings. The band received a warm welcome everywhere, but few new recruits. Recruiting tours in the county in June, September and November had similar results.

John O'Dowd (1856-1937), Irish Parliamentary Party MP for South

Sligo, followed John Redmond in supporting the war effort and at the November 1914 South Sligo United Irish League executive meeting promised that 'Ireland would nobly and willingly do her part in defence of that Empire of which she was now an integral part.' O'Dowd was also a well-known poet, his collection, *Lays of South Sligo*, having been published by Gill in 1889. During 1915 the *Sligo Champion* published a most interesting group of four poems by O'Dowd, two of which praised and encouraged Irish involvement in the war.

Cork-born Major Michael John O'Leary (1890-1961) was awarded the Victoria Cross for single-handedly destroying two German barricades defended by machine gun positions near the French village of Cunchy on the western front in February 1915. This got widespread publicity in Britain and Ireland and JF Cunningham, the *Sligo Champion's* Parliamentary Correspondent, devoted most of his London Notes column of 27 February to the award. He wrote: 'A deed such as O'Leary's should live on in song. May I suggest to the local poets to immortalise the event in a ballad? If Mr O'Dowd MP would take the matter up, in his own inimitable style, he alone could convert it into imperishable verse that would go for ages drumming down the echoes of time.'

James Frederick Cunningham was a native of Bunninadden who had had a distinguished career in the British Colonial Service in central Africa. He wrote *Uganda and its Peoples*, a 370-page volume with maps and photographs which was published in 1905. He retired in 1912, studied law and was called to the bar in February 1915.

O'Dowd rose to Cunningham's challenge and his poem *Mike O'Leary* was published in the *Champion* on 10 April. It is a tour-de-force with wonderful use of rhythm and some gloriously inventive rhymes. This is the opening stanza and chorus:

*You have heard of Scott and Peary,  
 And the men of Tipperary,*

And heroes too of every rank and station;

But here's your health O'Leary,  
May the angels bless and cheer ye,  
You're the idol and the darling of the nation!

Chorus:

Then slain the, Mike O'Leary,  
Faith the Huns have cause to fear ye,  
You're acclaimed by men of every rank and station,  
From old Cork to Londonderry,  
And from Sligo town to Kerry,  
As the foremost boy in all the Irish nation!

O'Dowd's second war poem, *Old Ireland's Brave Boys*, published on 4 September, includes a more direct appeal to Irishmen to enlist and fight 'the proud tyrant who threatens the world.'

All hail to our heroes, old Ireland's brave boys,  
Who've left their loved country, her sorrows and joys,  
And gone to fair Flanders to gallantly fight  
For God and their country, for freedom and right!

Captain William Redmond MP, to whom this poem was dedicated, was the brother of the Irish Party leader and was killed in June 1917 during the attack on the Messines Ridge.

The November Sligo recruiting tour included the Irish VC, Mike O'Leary himself and the chorus of O'Dowd's poem was sung at a meeting in Sligo. O'Dowd did not attend. He did speak in April at the Irish Guards recruiting tour meetings outside Sligo Town Hall and at Bunninadden but neither he nor the other Sligo MP, Thomas Scanlan, attended any of the recruiting tour meetings later in the year. There is a suspicion that as the war continued and recruiting became less popular they preferred not to be directly involved.

In the latter part of 1915 fear of compulsory conscription was fuelled by a recruiting letter sent to all men of military age in Ireland and full page recruiting advertisements in

**4 Questions to the Women of Ireland**

1. YOU have read what the Germans have done in Belgium. Have you thought what they would do if they invaded Ireland?
2. Do you realise that the Safety of your Homes and Children, and the Sanctity of your Churches depend on our defeating the Germans in Belgium?
3. Do you realise that the one word "Go" from you may send another man to fight for Ireland?
4. When the War is over and your husband or your son is asked, "What did you do in the great War?"—is he to hang his head because you would not let him go?

**Women of Ireland do your duty!**  
Let your men enlist in an Irish Regiment—**TO-DAY.**

**GOD SAVE THE KING  
GOD SAVE IRELAND**

**'4 Questions to the Women of Ireland' (Sligo Independent 20 February 1915)**

local newspapers. At an October Tubbercurry meeting 33 men signed a document stating that they would resist compulsory military service with their lives. Patrick Dyar, one of the organizers, was arrested and sentenced to one month of hard labour. When he returned to Tubbercurry at the end of December he was welcomed by a bonfire and a brass band.

It appears that in light of the widespread unease at the prospect of conscription and having nailed his colours to the recruiting mast, O'Dowd was anxious to remind the readers of his impeccable nationalist credentials. To achieve this, he had two poems, originally written in the early 1880s during the land agitation led by the Irish Party, republished in the *Champion* in late 1915.

*The Returned Exile* was published

on 11 September. To ensure no one would miss its political relevance it was subtitled 'written in Sligo Prison.'

*Vile "ruffians," "village tyrants," too,  
They call the spirit brave  
In face of threatening dangers who  
Stepped forth the land to save;  
Who strove together side by side  
To end the spoiler's reign  
And bring back peace and happiness  
To the old land again!*

His poem *Eighty Two*, published on 2 October, was subtitled 'written in Dundalk Prison.' It had originally been published in the *Champion* in 1882 for the centenary of Grattan's Parliament which had resulted in two decades of parliamentary independence ended by the Act of Union in 1800. O'Dowd may also have been anxious to stress the parallel between Home Rule on the statute book.


*In strength and mind as brothers, one,  
Let us the glorious strife pursue  
And win the vict'ry—now half won,  
Ere fall the shades of "Eighty-two."*

The well-known poet, Michael J Kearns (1886-1967), the 'Bard of Geevagh', had had poems published regularly in the *Sligo Champion* while living in Glasgow. He came back to Ireland in 1915 and worked for some time in a hotel in Boyle, returning to Glasgow in 1920. Kearns had six poems published in the *Champion* in 1915.

His *St. Patrick's Day* of 20 March has an exile rejoicing that Home Rule has been passed and praising Irish Party politicians including Thomas Scanlan, MP for North Sligo:

*My native land to-day is free,  
'Twas freed by Redmond true,  
With Scanlan and John Dillon brave,  
Old Ireland's chosen few.  
God bless the leaders of our race  
For this great hope begun,  
God bless the gallant peasant class  
For this great victory won.*

In a poem 'To Mr. John O'Dowd, MP' published on 17 April Kearns heaps lavish praise on the South Sligo



**SLIGO RECRUITING COMMITTEE.**

**NOW IS THE TIME**  
during the visit of the CONNAUGHT RANGERS'  
BAND, accompanied by

**Lieut. MIKE O'LEARY, V.C.,**  
— AND —  
**Sergeant KENNY, D.C.M.,**  
to enlist and defend your Country.

**Monster MEETING**  
IN FRONT OF TOWN HALL, SLIGO,  
On SATURDAY, 6th INST., at 8 o'clock.

**HIS WORSHIP THE MAYOR will present**  
**Certificates of Honour.**

**BAND will play at STRANDHILL on SUNDAY, 7th INST.,**  
at 3 o'clock.

12.5

Notice of the Connaught Rangers recruiting tour of Sligo featuring Mike O'Leary VC (*Sligo Champion* 6 November 1915)

MP, especially praising his *Mike O'Leary* poem which had appeared in the previous week's *Champion*, incidentally showing Kearns' speed of composition:

*At Mass and meeting, fair and dance,  
No matter where you go,  
You're sure to hear his honoured name,  
The bard of South Sligo.  
In Parliament and out of it  
He labours true and hard,  
He is revered by old and young,  
South Sligo's brilliant bard.*

Kearns' poem *The Old Green Flag*, published on 10 July, celebrates a war hero, John Joseph Cunningham

of the Irish Guards. Cunningham had been born in Sligo but the family had moved to Dublin before 1915. This exploit involved Cunningham, though wounded, raising the Irish Guards' flag and rallying the soldiers successfully against the Germans.

*'Twas he who raised "the Old Green Flag"*

*That stopped the prowling Hun,  
When English troops were falling fast  
'Twas Erin's flag that won,  
I'm proud he is a Sligo man,  
A youth of tender age,  
His name and fame and glory too  
Will shine in history's page.*

In *The 'Sligo Champion' at the Front*, published on 16 October,

Kearns manages to praise both the newspaper and Sligomen at the front.

*In the trenches here in Flanders,  
Where the shot and shrapnel blaze,  
'Mid the din of strife and battle,  
And the weary nights and days,  
We keep vigil for the postman,  
And we greet him with a shout  
As he takes the SLIGO CHAMPION  
To our lowly new dug-out.*

*Some are sleeping here in Flanders,  
Sligo's loyal men and true,  
Yes, they gave their life-blood freely  
For their king and country too.  
Well they fought for Belgium freedom,  
And for freedom's cause they fell,  
'Twas old Ireland's Connaught  
Rangers  
That first met the shrapnel shell.*

John George Quilty from north Sligo was a frequent contributor of poems to Sligo newspapers in 1911 and 1913. He had been a prominent nationalist politician and a county councillor. In 1915 the *Sligo Nationalist* published three of his war poems, reflecting the general pro-war feeling, admiration for the Irish in the British army, criticism of men who hadn't joined, and sympathy for women left behind. Quilty was obviously very familiar with traditional song and his compositions are in the ballad format with effective use of refrains and repetitions though his attempts in some poems to suggest a rustic accent by non-standard spelling can be irritating.

Two of these poems are written in the voice of women whose love has gone to the war, though the language and tone is different in each. In *Molly's Soliloquy*, published on 13 March, a girl searches for shamrock to send to her Patrick who has joined the Connaught Rangers.

*I'll search the green bank in the lone,  
willow grove,  
Where Patrick first met me, an' taught  
me to love;  
For the laives that remind me of faith,  
hope and joy—  
The Shamrock to send to my dear,  
sojer boy:-*

**To the**  
**FARMERS**

— OF —  
**Co. Sligo.**

Lay down your Spades on MONDAY  
NEXT, 26th inst., and come to SLIGO  
to see and hear the world-renowned

**BAND**

**Of H. M. Irish Guards.**

They are to arrive at 2.18.

A huge RECRUITING MEETING  
is to take place outside the TOWN  
HALL at 5 o'clock.

**Several distinguished Speakers  
are to attend.**

**TUESDAY.**

The Band will leave Sligo on Tuesday  
Morning, 27th inst., and will visit  
the following Towns: Ballysodare,  
Collooney, Ballymote, Bunninadden,  
and Tubbercurry.

**HOURS OF VISITS.**

Leaving SLIGO at 9 o'clock; arriving  
in COLLOONEY at about 9.30 o'clock.  
BALLYMOTE            about 11 o'clock.  
BUNNINADDEN        "    2.30    "  
TUBBERCURRY        "    3        "

**THE FIFE AND DRUM BAND**  
Will visit Lissadell and Grange about  
4 o'clock.

"To the Farmers of Sligo" notice of recruiting tour of Sligo (Sligo Champion 24 April 1915)

*My Ranger boy brave!  
Who far o'er the wave,  
Strikes many a blow  
At the false Germin foe;  
Our fair land of Erin from horrors to  
save.*

Though courted by 'cowards' who have refused to go to war, she intends to wait for her hero:

'My mother—she scoulds! an' my father—he fumes!  
When they see me hunt from me the rich would-be grooms.  
Croak they—"Wait, my colleen, the day will kum yet,  
Whin a lonely, ould maid, you'll look back with regret."  
By tongue an' by plan  
Let them do what they can,  
But my love won't be sold  
For cattle or gold  
An' whin Paddy comes home, thin I'll marry a -man!'

*Lament*, published on 15 May, was written in response to a newspaper report that some wounded British prisoners in Germany had died from neglect. Quilty writes in the voice of a girl whose love is one of those prisoners who has died. The poem has echoes of the traditional ballad *High Germany*.

*One thought shall soothe me through life's brief span—  
His death became a true Irishman;  
For God and Erin, his King and me  
Died my soldier lad in far Germany.*

Quilty's poems are interesting and inventive and much more lively than the bulk of the war poetry.

Among the many standard war poems published by the *Sligo Independent* there were some by local poets. *R.I.R's. at Neuve Chapelle*, published on 19 June, was written by Sligo soldier, R Browne of the Royal Irish Rifles (RIR), and sent home from the front. The Battle of Neuve Chapelle in March 1915 was a British offensive in the Artois region of France and was the 1st Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles' first major action. They suffered very heavy casualties.

*Then here's to the gallant R.I.R's.,  
those riflemen so brave,  
Who nobly did their duty and found a  
soldier's grave.  
So may their glory ever shine, for they  
have proved their worth,  
And laurels brought to Ireland for the  
honours of the North.*

I presume that the Sligo native, Rifleman Richard Brown, Royal Irish Rifles, who died in France/Flanders on 23 October 1916, was the author of this poem.

Also published on 19 June was *Lines on Recruiting* by John Gillan from Sligo town. Gillan had many poems published in the *Sligo Nationalist* in 1913 and in 1914 until the outbreak of war when his poems ceased. His poems are of enormous interest because of his inclusion of fascinating details of day to day life in the town. This poem in the *Sligo Independent* is much blander and was his only published work in 1915.

*Brave boys of Sligo city  
Enlist, enlist today!  
For your king and country needs you  
To keep our foes at bay.  
To fight the enemy in by-gone times  
Erin's sons were never shy;  
On the battlefield with gun or sword  
They'd conquer or they'd die.*

The *Sligo Independent* on 26 June reprinted *The West's Awake* by Archdeacon McCormick, Collooney, which had previously appeared in the *Irish Times*, adding that it was set to the air of *The West's Awake*, and was addressed to the young farmers of Ireland who were reluctant to enlist:

*Awake! To arms! Confront the foe  
(The slogan sounds; the war pipes  
blow),  
And let the perjured Germans know  
Gaels shall fight for right, come weal  
or woe.  
Shall Flanders, soaked in blood and  
tears,  
Appeal in vain to Irish ears?  
Down spades and shoulder  
bandoliers;  
The nation calls for volunteers.*



**‘Men of Ireland Come to the Aid of the Oppressor’ recruiting advertisement (Sligo Independent 27 February 1915). The caption underneath read: ‘At Buecken many inhabitants were killed, including the priest, who was over 80 years of age. At Colbeck, a young girl, 16 years of age, was insulted by German soldiers, who stabbed her in the breast with their bayonets . . . She received Extreme Unction from the Parish Priest.’ – (Extract from the Belgian Government Official Report.) Irishmen! Your help is needed to prevent further crimes against civilisation and order. Join the Army to-day and strike a blow for Liberty and Freedom.**

Katharine Tynan (1859–1931) was a prominent Irish literary figure and a poet of note. She wrote a number of poems dealing with the war most of which show sensitivity and awareness of the sufferings of those left behind. Her *A Call to Connaught* however is a straight forward recruiting poem. It repeats the usual content of recruiting posters and advertisements, suggesting to Irishmen what might happen to their land, their churches and their loved ones if the Germans won the war.

*A Call to Connaught* originally appeared in the *Irish Independent* on 4 December 1915 and in the *Sligo Independent*, *Sligo Champion* and *Leitrim Observer* on 11 December 1915. It also appeared in the *Impartial Reporter*, published in Enniskillen but covering parts of Leitrim, on 16 December 1915. These publications

may have been part of an orchestrated pro-recruitment campaign.

*The pleasant land of Connaught  
Has many a holy place  
God’s house defiled in Connaught  
Would be your black disgrace.  
For God, for Home, for Women  
It’s up and clear the way!  
And smite the country’s foemen  
To-day, my lad, to-day.*

By the end of 1915 it became clear that voluntary enlistment would not provide the number of recruits needed and the government decided to introduce conscription. This was done by the Military Service Act which came into force on 2 March 1916. Ireland was excluded from the operation of the act.

Subsequent events, the terrible loss of life during the major battles of

1916 as well as the Easter Rising and the government’s reaction ensured that very soon everything changed, “changed utterly” as another Sligo poet wrote, one whose work had not been published in the local Sligo newspapers in 1915.

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# Sligo town as a child in the 1930s

By Bernie Gilbride

There were forty houses in Temple Street in Sligo in the early 1930s. Half way over it was divided in two by a wide road, the main entrance to the then Market Yard. On the West entrance to the Market Yard was a public house and family grocery store, owned by the Hughes family, the only business premises on that street. Temple Street was a residential area on the outskirts of Sligo town. Its houses varied in size, with red brick facings around windows and doors on most of the buildings, giving the street a rather Georgian look.

Each house opened onto the stone-flagged footpath, with a curb and water gully beyond. To the rear was a yard with a passageway beyond, giving back entrances to each house. Beyond the passageway was a garden, long and spacious with some of the houses where fruit trees and vegetables were grown for the use of the occupants. The roadway was tarred, curved at the centre for drainage, which the gulleys took when necessary. The houses were plastered, though some stone built, all uniform in colour. At that time these houses faced a high stone wall on the other side of the road, behind which was the town Fair Green with two wide entrances and high gates which were kept locked except on fair days, market days or when the Green was in use for other activities.

As the houses faced south, most of the doors were covered with colourful striped canvas drapes during the summer months to protect the paint work from the sun. These drapes had openings in them to allow for knockers, letterboxes, and keyholes. Inside each hall door was a mat well, edged with brass, with a coarse sisal mat for cleaning shoes. The knockers were usually brass, in the shape of a

lion's head, and could be heard clearly all over the house. The letterboxes and locks were also in brass, necessitating much Brasso-ing and polishing every few days.

Many of the houses were occupied by older people who had lived there all their lives. There were only about ten families with children, but the older folk were very welcoming, always ready with something nice for small people. As we grew up they followed our doings with great interest, whether it was our taking part in the Feis or our events at school. They also kept a close eye on us, making sure we were safe in our play and settling any scores that arose. In fact they were like a whole lot of grannies and granddads to us all. All streets were like small villages and we gladly performed what we were doing for them, be it singing, dancing, reciting or even parts in plays. Should you be unlucky enough to fall, you had your knee or hand bandaged and were given something nice as compensation. Life was good, secure, sheltered, and happy.

When St Patricks Terrace was built it was the end of the big high wall, and a row of houses with gardens in front and to the rear, railings and gates faced old Temple Street. Most of these houses were family homes with lots of small children. Our world changed over night and now we had lots of new friends to play with. As we grew older we learned to play many tricks, especially on the boys, who could go to the pictures and loved to copy the cowboys and Indians, taking sides and pretend-shooting, dying and winning or losing. This caused many rows as nobody wanted to be on the losing side. The games became rough at times as boys considered girls games 'sissy', though sometimes they took

part until they were called names like 'Mary Ann' or just 'sissy' for playing with the girls.

Reading was a great pastime then and comics were very popular. The *Dandy* and *Beano* had characters we all became familiar with, and whose doings were discussed at length. Comics were swapped and loaned until they fell apart. Many were the games we played on the road, as there was little or no traffic, only the odd horse and cart. They could be seen a long way off and one had lots of time to run back onto the footpath

Skipping was one of the many games, and weather permitting went on for whole days. There were individual and group contests, two winding a heavy rope and the others running in and skipping so many times and then running out without touching the rope. There were lots of rows when one tripped, then the winders were always blamed, never the skipper. Game over but all forgotten in a few minutes and another game started. Depending so much on each other we could not fall out for long, so all differences were speedily sorted.

Saturday mornings were clean-up days in most town houses. Windows were washed, brasses polished, floors swept and polished, mats brought outside shaken and thrown over the line and beaten with a flat brush, with much coughing from the dust released. Everything had to be clean for Sunday when no work of any kind was done. If the Lord rested on the Sabbath then all Temple Street did likewise. All families went to church, cathedral, friary, or St John's Cathedral.

For Christmas, Easter and going back to school, we got new clothes. Not always brand new – if one had an older sister the outgrown frocks or

pinafores were handed down, taken in or let out as the case may be. All clothes had wide seams for this purpose. Boys were different as they wore suits and they were seldom in a condition to be handed on and trousers were too hard to alter, I imagine. Whenever one did get a brand new garment it was treasured and well cared for – clothes had to last and last. The only thing that had to be replaced often were our shoes. Though leather was good for feet, allowing them to breathe, it lasted a very short time. And holes would appear very quickly. The shoemaker had a shop just around the corner and was kept very busy. I can still hear my father telling us to mind our shoes or boots. In winter we wore Wellingtons if it was wet, with footies over our heavy stockings for warmth. These were discarded at the back door on our way in and the footies worn as slippers. They were soft with elastic over the instep to keep them on. In cold weather we wore boots with buttons up the side.

By the day of the week we knew what would be for dinner. Sunday was roast beef, Monday the remains cold with the usual vegetables. Always plenty of vegetables, carrots to make our eyes sparkle and have good sight, cabbage to have nice skin, turnips we loved as they were sweet and make you happy, with lots of potatoes. Tuesday was bacon and cabbage, Wednesday pork or mince, Thursday stew and Friday fish with boiled dilisk as vegetable. It had to be eaten whether we liked it or not as it was full of iron and all sorts of goodness straight from the sea. Sometimes we had carrigeen moss for desert, never cooked but also good for us.

There was porridge for breakfast with milk and sugar. Cornflakes were unheard of in our house. For tea we had soda bread with jam or scones with raisins in them, and as a special treat toasted crumpets, which we loved. Perhaps a boiled egg, bread and



butter, with apple cake when we had apples in the autumn.

We had homemade jams, rhubarb, gooseberry, strawberry, blackcurrant and apple jelly. As these fruits ripened we had to pick them but we never minded the work as we always helped ourselves as we picked. We picked blackberries in September from the hedges around the town, eating as many as we liked but getting scratched hands and arms as the best ones were always the highest and most inaccessible and brambles had lots of thorns. Many's the thorn that went in deep and had to be taken out with a needle when we got home. This was one aspect of blackberries we hated.

In summer as we grew older we were allowed to go to Rosses Point on the bus with the other children from the street, as a special treat. Always we travelled with Mrs Gillen who knew how many of us were down with her, and she would count us all in on the last bus to town about 7pm of a summer evening. If we were late leaving the beach she waited at the hotel blowing the horn and scolded us when we came. That was the end of the road back then – we walked over the green to reach the beach as there was no tarred road only a track through the dunes. We loved those days and played and swam to

our hearts' delight. On these trips we brought bottles of water and bread and jam often eaten on the beach. I still remember the crunch of sand in my mouth, but it never did us any harm. It was there on the first beach we learned to swim in water lukewarm having come in over the hot sands. Were all the summers sunny and warm or do I just remember the best times?

When we made our Confirmation the odd one was lucky enough to get a bike and we would beg for a spin. We helped each other learn to ride along the road or sometimes on the footpath. The feeling of elation when we had learned and could go by ourselves was great. The rows were mighty too – if one got off for a minute the bike was gone, especially if there were boys around. The adults often had to make the peace, allotting so many minutes per person

So we grew up playing on the streets. We learned to be streetwise and to mind ourselves and our siblings. To stand up for and defend our friends and to share whatever toys or games we had with others. Living in towns was no different to the country except we had no green fields to roam and I imagine fewer chores to do.



# A Walk in Union Wood

By Michael Bell

Union Wood, a piece of Co Sligo's rich natural heritage, is situated between the towns of Collooney, Ballysadare and Ballygawley. Much of the forest is managed by Coillte, primarily for timber production, and consists of large tracts of sitka spruce (*Picea sitchensis*), Norway spruce (*Picea abies*), lodgepole pine (*Pinus contorta*) and other non-native conifers. However, about 60 hectares, consisting mainly of old oak woodland, has been designated as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC). The majority of the SAC is owned by the National Parks and Wildlife Service and is a designated Nature Reserve. This part of Union Wood is easiest accessed from the Collooney side of the wood and is a popular area with walkers, runners and horse-trekkers. This article will highlight some interesting observations of wildlife in the area, particularly within the SAC, that have been recorded over the previous several years.

The underlying geology of the area consists of metamorphic schist and gneiss, these rocks being much older than the surrounding carboniferous limestone and giving rise to acidic soils. Within the oak woodlands much of the conifer and other non-native tree cover has been removed. A fence was installed around a large part of the woodland with the intent of reducing over-grazing by deer in order to encourage natural regeneration of the woodland. A large number of native trees have also been planted with protective guards to prevent damage from browsing deer. Rhododendron (*Rhododendron ponticum*) and cherry laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*) are invasive plants that shade out native ground flora and prevent regeneration of trees. They have been cut back but will require ongoing management.

The dominant tree in these woodlands is sessile oak (*Quercus petraea*). Other native trees include ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), hazel (*Corylus avellana*), holly (*Ilex*

*aquifolium*), downy birch (*Betula pubescens*), blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*), rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*), hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) and Scots pine (*Pinus sylvestris*). Some large non-native trees, including beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) and sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) are also present.

Spring is the best time for observing the woodland flora. Much of the ground cover is dominated by great wood-rush (*Luzula sylvatica*), the grass-like leaves of which often remain green through the winter. More colourful wildflowers include primrose (*Primula vulgaris*), early dog-violet (*Viola reichenbachiana*),



**Woodland flowers: Many flower take advantage of the extra light reaching the woodland floor in spring before the leaves of deciduous trees open**

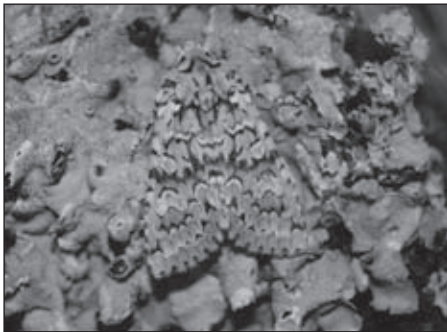
common dog-violet (*Viola riviniana*), lesser celandine (*Ranunculus ficaria*), wood anemone (*Anemone nemorosa*) and bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*). At this time of year, there is also often a strong scent of ramsons/wild garlic (*Allium ursinum*) in the air, particularly near the large patch of ramsons at the gate along the fence on the western side of the SAC. Lords-and-Ladies (*Arum maculatum*) is also plentiful, though it is most obvious when the poisonous orange-red berries ripen in autumn.

To date I have recorded 13 species of butterfly on site with the most common being peacock (*Inachis io*). This widespread species uses nettle (*Urtica dioica*) as a larval foodplant and there are many patches of nettles alongside the walking trails. Surprisingly, I have relatively few records of small tortoiseshell (*Aglais urticae*), another common and widespread butterfly species that also uses nettle as a food source. Speckled wood (*Pararge aegeria*), ringlet (*Aphantopus hyperantus*) and green-veined white (*Pieris napi*) are also very plentiful as might be expected, as they are common woodland/hedgerow species. Holly blue (*Celastrina argiolus*) and silver-washed fritillary (*Argynnis paphia*), much scarcer species in Co Sligo, have also been recorded regularly. The latter is often seen nectaring on buddleia (*buddleja sp.*) along the road just before reaching the SAC. These same plants often attract red admiral (*Vanessa atalanta*) and painted lady (*Cynthia cardui*), both immigrant species, in late summer.

Moths along with butterflies make up the insect order Lepidoptera. Most species are nocturnal so are rarely seen. The poisonous orange and black caterpillars of the cinnabar (*Tyria jacobaeae*), however, are very obvious feeding on ragwort (*Senecio jacobaeae*) by day. During July 2013 I observed large numbers of gold swift (*Hepialus hecta*) hovering over

bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) at dusk. Swift moths have the unusual habit of forming leks where males assemble in large numbers and hang in the air as if suspended by a thread. The male gold swifts also give off a musky pheromone or scent to attract females which fly in and select a partner.

I have recorded an additional 16 moth species by day, some as larvae and some in adult form, including the day-flying emperor moth (*Saturnia pavonia*). The total number of moth species I have recorded at Union



**Merveille du jour: The aptly-named moth frequents mature woodland**

Wood is 166. The majority have been recorded using a Heath moth trap. This method of recording uses a light source to attract moths which are then trapped in a special box. The moths can be examined the following morning before being released unharmed.

Some notable species recorded are twin-spot carpet (*Perizoma diymata*), waved carpet (*Hydrelia sylvata*), brindled beauty (*Lycia hirtaria*), oak beauty (*Biston strataria*), scarce umber (*Agriopsis aurantiaria*), satin beauty (*Deileptenia ribeata*), grey shoulder knot (*Lithopane ornitipus*), merveille du jour (*Dichonia aprilna*), oak nycteoline (*Nycteola revayana*) and the micro-moth *Eudonia delunella*. The presence of so many scarce species is undoubtedly due to the quality of the habitat.

To date I have recorded 14 species of hoverfly at Union Wood. The most notable species is *Portevinia maculata* which has a strong association with ramsons. The larvae tunnel through and overwinter in the bulbs of this plant, and the adults can be seen basking on the leaves when

the plant is in flower. Though there is little habitat for Odonata (dragonflies and damselflies) in Union Wood, six species have been observed to date. The most interesting is banded demoiselle (*Calopteryx splendens*) which has been observed along the Ballysadare River. This species can often be seen upstream near the bridge over the Unshin River which is crossed just before entering Union Woods.

The woodland is home to many resident bird species and wren (*Troglodytes troglodytes*), robin (*Erithacus rebecula*), blackbird (*Turdus merula*), chaffinch (*Fringilla coelebs*), coal tit (*Parus ater*), goldcrest (*Regulus regulus*) and woodpigeon (*Columba palumbus*)



**This hoverfly can be found around stands of flowering ramsons**

are among the birds that are common year round. Jay (*Garrulus glandarius*) is another common species though these shy birds are much more often heard than seen despite their striking appearance. They are perhaps easiest observed in the autumn as they collect acorns and other seeds along the trails. Many of these nuts will be stored away for consumption during winter with the birds showing a remarkable ability to memorise the location of their caches. Another charismatic woodland bird is the treecreeper (*Certhia familiaris*) which is usually seen creeping mouse-like up the trunk of a tree in search of insects and other invertebrates. Upon reaching the top of a tree it invariably flies down to the base of another nearby tree to start the process again.

The buzzard (*Buteo buteo*) is a fairly large bird of prey that was driven to extinction in Ireland by the late nineteenth century, largely as a result

of persecution. Since recolonising Ireland in the 1930s it has slowly spread westwards across the country and was confirmed breeding for the first time in living memory in Co Sligo in 2007, when a nest was found at Lissadell. Buzzards, which are often seen soaring over Union Wood in early spring, are now quite possibly breeding in the area.

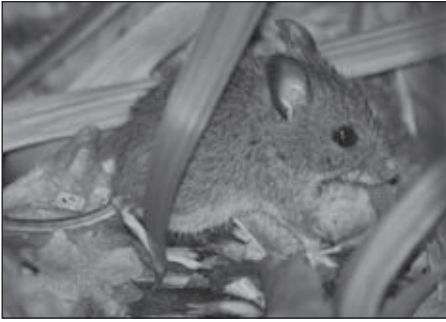
Resident birds are joined by summer migrants and the woodland is a nesting site for good numbers of chiffchaff (*Phylloscopus collybita*), willow warbler (*Phylloscopus trochilus*), blackcap (*Sylvia atricapilla*) and spotted flycatcher (*Muscicapa striata*). The dawn chorus from mid-April to late May in Union Wood can make a wonderful backdrop to an early morning walk. One recent arrival



**Wood Warbler: A rare breeding bird that has been present in Union Wood in recent years**

to Union Wood that has generated excitement with bird watchers is the wood warbler (*Phylloscopus sibilatrix*). A singing male was found by Declan Skehan in June 2011 and one to three singing birds have been heard during the last two summers. The wood warbler is very rare in Ireland but with the active management with the oak woodlands it is hoped that a small population will become established in Union Wood.

Mammals are also well represented in Union Wood. There is a healthy population of red squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris*) though they are quite wary and more likely to be seen when few other walkers are in the area. The pine marten (*Martes martes*) is more often seen at dawn or dusk though I have observed them during the middle of the day on a couple of occasions. Signs of foraging badger (*Meles meles*)



**Wood Mouse: A common woodland resident that is rarely seen**

are scrapings in the ground where earthworms and other tasty morsels have been dug up during night-time. Fallow deer (*Dama dama*) are common in the woodland. Small numbers of red deer (*Cervus elaphus*) have been observed not far to the east of Union Wood and could potentially be present, though I have never seen one in the forest myself. Small mammals such as wood mouse (*Apodemus sylvaticus*) and pygmy shrew (*Sorex minutus*) are

undoubtedly common but rarely seen. Otter (*Lutra lutra*) is present along the Ballysadare River and also nearby at Ballygawley Lough.

Union Wood is an enjoyable place to visit at any time of year and it is fortunate that the rare oak woodland habitat is being managed in such a positive manner. Hopefully future generations will be able to appreciate the rich biodiversity that this special place supports.

# Hare-Raising Traditions

Submitted by Alfie Banks

## HARE-RAISING TRADITIONS

ON ST John's Eve (June 23), the tradition was to light bonfires to protect the crops. Lighted branches were taken from the fire and cast into each field to ward off bad luck, or else the last embers of the fire were scattered in fields, depending on the local tradition.

In some areas, it was customary to drive cattle 'idir na tine lasta', or between two fires, on St John's Eve to ward off bad luck.

Any man who had built a new house would take a shovel of red hot sods to his new home to become the first fire in his house.

**LUCK**  
St John's fire was also used against the bad luck that people brought on themselves by building their house on a fairy path. The inhabitants of such houses were often tormented by bad luck and nocturnal disturbances.

Fairies were a major factor in the old traditions and people generally believed you should give the fairies what they wanted, be it milk, turf or whatever, to keep them on your side.

However, a freshly calved cow with plenty of milk could be protected from the fairies



by applying a blessed candle to the udder, followed by a prayer and a rub of the pungent-smelling marsh marigold.

This was a combination of the six things that fairies were afraid of: something holy, something red, salt, fire, something dirty and flowing water.

They believed that both fairies and the women who worked piseogs could take the form of hares (above). If a hare was seen sucking a cow, you needed to be very careful and watch where it went to decide if it was a fairy or the old hag next door.

If the hare returned to the fairy fort, it was a fairy and should be left alone but if it was the old hag, you could shoot the hare with a silver bullet made from an old Victorian shilling that had a cross on the back of it.

# The 'Buck Ruane'

By John McDonagh

Many years ago I used to hear the older generation of that time discussing the exploits of a character who lived in this townland of Spurtown way back in the second half of the nineteenth century. It was long before their time but his exploits as a criminal, poacher and petty thief lived on for generations after his demise.

I never heard him referred to as anything but 'the Buck Ruane', and according to the stories that were told he seemed to be always in trouble with his neighbours, with game-keepers and the RIC.

Griffith's Valuation, the only reliable documentation that I could find relating to that period, lists two Ruane families in the area, and it took quite a bit of sifting before I could determine whether it was William or James that qualified for the rather disparaging title 'Buck.'

At that time, before the Owenmore River was first drained, the river and its many tributaries were in an almost perpetual state of flooding, especially during the winter months, making the area an excellent wildlife habitat. Many species of wildfowl including huge flocks of mallard, widgeon, teal, and of course, the most prized bird of all, white fronted geese, came in to feed in these flooded areas nightly. They afforded wonderful shooting to the local people and were a much-needed and valuable source of protein to the many families that the area supported. Shooting then was very much a business, rather than a sport.

Wild-fowling, duck shooting and rabbit snaring were almost cottage industries at that time in the aftermath of the Great Famine, and according to legend Buck excelled at them all. He sold the surplus products at the markets in Ballymote and drank the proceeds, but apparently he wasn't above helping himself to rabbits from his neighbours' snares or sending his dog across the flooded river to retrieve the spoils of somebody else's gun.

At that time farms were small and fragmented – most farmers had only a cow or two which were usually never

housed and were milked outside in the fields. According to the stories I heard, the Buck was a dab hand at milking other people's cows in the early mornings. It caused much puzzlement to many people that for some inexplicable reason their cow had gone dry for a turn or two and then returned to normal production.

A retired RIC constable, one Mathew Gallagher, from Lissanannee, together with his two brothers, Michael and John, suspected that their cow was being milked. When they kept an early-morning vigil they caught the Buck red-handed and attacked him, but he was no easy target. According to the story he was overcoming all three until the tricks and experience of the ex-policeman came into play. Apparently Mathew managed to pull the Buck's trousers down around his ankles, leaving him immobile and helpless. The Gallagher brothers then proceeded to give him an unmerciful beating.

It was this story that eventually led me to identify the Buck Ruane. A couple of years back, while exploring the invaluable website findmypast.ie, I came across records of the Petty Sessions in Ballymote courthouse from 1828 to 1912. Needless to say they gave me endless hours of enjoyment reading about the indiscretions and misbehaviour of my own and everybody else's ancestors. But what really intrigued me was that I found the court records of the Ruane-Gallagher proceedings. It was exactly as the story had been told around the fireside, many years ago.

On the 9<sup>th</sup> October 1879 James Ruane or Ryan, of Spurtown, was brought before Magistrates R A Duke and Col Cooper. Complainants were Mathew, Michael and John Gallagher of Lissanannee. The complaint: milking complainant's cow and violently assaulting complainants at Aughris on 13<sup>th</sup> Sept 1879. The witnesses were Mathew Gallagher, John Gallagher, Michael Gallagher, Edward McGettrick and Head Constable Timothy O'Riorden. The proceedings

resulted in a court order from RA Duke remanding Ruane 'in custody to the quarter sessions on 16<sup>th</sup> inst.' At the same court James Ruane brought proceedings against Gallaghers for assault causing serious bodily harm, but his claim was dismissed.

I found the next episode of the saga in the *Irish Prison Register* 1790-1924, when James Ruane was serving his sentence. He was sentenced to two calendar months for his assault on John Gallagher and a further month for his assault on Michael (concurrent sentencing does not appear to apply at that time). One can only assume that the judge felt that the assault on Mathew was negated by him (Mathew) pulling down Ruane's trousers.

I learned from the prison register that it was his fourth prison term. Of the previous three, one was for stealing turf, the property of Owen Flynn of Spurtown, on Spurtown bog, and the other two were for infractions of the game laws. I also learned that he was 41 years old, six feet one inch in height, and weighed thirteen stone eight pounds. He had brown hair, grey eyes and was of fair complexion with no remarkable or distinctive features. It's hard to believe that four generations later I verified all this via my laptop at the same fireside where I first heard his exploits discussed in the days before television took over!

According to the local story the Buck Ruane never got over the beating he took from the Gallaghers and died a young man in the workhouse in Tubbercurry in 1882. I failed to find a record of his death but I managed to verify it from another source: on July 12<sup>th</sup> William Heron, head constable, prosecuted widow of James Ruane for £1/4/8 county cess due on her holding, at the Summer Assizes 1883.

The Ruane family of Spurtown had no descendants and is gone from the area since the early 1900s. Some of the Gallagher descendants lived on in Lissanannee into the 1960s but they too have all died out. Perhaps their unusual tale is worthy of a place in the local history.

# Sligo Men of the 1798 Rebellion

By Cian Harte

The exploits of some of Ireland's soldiers in the United Irishmen Rebellion are well known. The lives of people such as Bartholomew Teeling and Theobald Wolfe Tone are well accounted for. But what about some of the ordinary rank and file Irishmen? Some of Sligo's participants in this insurrection, the men who joined Humbert's forces as he marched through Co Sligo, are almost totally unknown, and there is very little documentation on them.

Nevertheless there does remain at least one source that reveals a handful of Sligo's United Irishmen – a letter written by Charles O'Hara of Sligo to an unidentified person. The letter includes descriptions of some of the suspected participants which are often one line in length but still make for very interesting reading.<sup>1</sup>

One year before the rebellion on 4 May 1797, a meeting was held in Sligo by the magistrates of the County and the captains of yeomanry corps, where several resolutions were passed. The meeting related to the security of the region against impending insurrection. Motions proposed and passed included reporting to the Lord Lieutenant regularly about the state of this part of the kingdom, a calling for the creation of a secret committee to be formed to gather intelligence, and yeomanry units were ordered to patrol in cooperation with regular units.<sup>2</sup> Despite their increasing awareness of something afoot, nobody foresaw the French landings the following year.

Humbert and his 1,000 French troops landed at Killala Bay and marched on the town. Thereafter Ballina was captured within a few days. The march to Castlebar went unhindered and the French forces with their Irish allies routed the larger English garrison force from the town. From



**The so-called 'Races of Castlebar' when French and Irish troops defeated the British garrison in the town of Castlebar, 27 August 1798**

here the forces marched north towards Sligo, travelling through Tubbercurry en route and defeated the English garrison of Sligo close to Collooney in the battle of Carricknagat. This was where Teeling etched himself a niche in Irish history by committing extraordinarily brave deeds on the battlefield – apparently he single-handedly routed the forces perched on Union Rock while wielding a mere pistol and on horseback.

Instead of continuing to travel north to Sligo, Humbert and his small army veered eastwards towards Dublin and travelled through Dromahair where they dumped cannons in a local river as the unwieldy armaments slowed their way to Drumkeerin. The army was eventually caught up by English forces much superior in number led by the Duke of Wellington, and were defeated at the battle of Ballinamuck.<sup>3</sup> So ended the French incursion.

Personal accounts of the French expedition survive written by French officers. Many set the context of the rebellion and detail the battles, but Capt. Jean Louis Jobit informs the reader of the character of the country

and the men who enlisted. He writes:

One thing which surprised us greatly at the outset was the extreme poverty we encountered everywhere we looked. Never has there been a more wretched country: the men, women and children go about half naked, with no shelter other than their poor cramped little huts, which do little to protect them from the ravages of the weather. And to make things worse, they share these flimsy dwellings with all their farmyard animals'.<sup>4</sup>

Speaking more directly about the character of the Irish rebels who joined his French forces. Capt Jobit writes:

'But the events I am about to describe will reveal how unwise it was to give arms to these rebellious and undisciplined quasi-savages, whose only concern was to break ranks and go looting and pillaging, and who, on top of everything else, were just as cowardly as they were wild and

ignorant'.<sup>5</sup>

Some of these 'quasi-savages' names, residencies and general observations made of them are known. They were detailed by Charles O'Hara. In the letter, Charles listed suspected Sligo participants of the rebellion. Some of the suspicions were tenuous such as for John and Brian 'Whoody' of Bunnanadden, who were under suspicion because they were 'absent during the rebellion'. Other cases were clearer cut such as Michael Scanlon of Quarryfield. He was known to have been 'severely wounded in French service during rebellion'. Some of those involved confessed their role. Tim Killoran of 'Killanty' (close to Ballymote) 'confessed to Mr Perceval he had march'd with the French to the bridge of Ballinamuck and there deserted them'. Another Scanlon (forename not mentioned) of Ballinacarrow was a rebel. 'His father confessed to Mr. Perceval he had marched with the rebels'. Not all the characters were of a lowly rank. Matthew Doyle of Curry was known

to authorities for he was 'represented to be a fellow of infamous character. A swearer in of unlimited men and captain of rebels.'<sup>6</sup>

It is clear that such men joined the marching French along the Charleston to Collooney road which passed through, or came close to directly doing so, areas that the named men above resided in.

One of the names among the 1798 papers archived in Sligo Central Library is that of Alex McCabe of Keash, who was deported. Readers ought to recognise the name for in little over 100 years after the events described above, a prominent namesake (very likely a relation of some kind) from a similar geographic area would engage in the fight for Irish freedom during the War of Independence.

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<sup>1</sup> Cían Harte of Riverstown endeavours to reconstruct the lives of Sligo's forgotten soldiers irrespective of why and who they fought for. Follow Cían Harte's research at [www.cianharte.com](http://www.cianharte.com). He is the author of 'Soldiers of Sligo' and intends to publish *The Lost Tales: Riverstown's Great War*

1914-1918' independently in 2015.

<sup>2</sup> Members of the committee included O. Wynnem (Captain of the Carberry Cavalry), A. Irwin (Captain of the Drumcliffe Cavalry), T. Soden (Captain of the Sligo Loyal Cavalry), J. Wood (Captain of the Tirrearagh Infantry), C. West and J. Jones (Justices of the Peace).

<sup>3</sup> Altogether 152 Loyalists from Co. Sligo claimed for compensation for loss of earnings/damage to property, losses inflicted upon their lands, so they claimed, as a direct result of the French/Irish forces. Their names are too many to list here in full but represented almost every district in Co. Sligo. Claims were as small as £1 or less and as high as hundreds of pounds.

<sup>4</sup> The 1798 Campaign by a French Lieutenant Jean Louis Jobit, Captain of the 2nd Battalion of Grenadiers, 70th Half-Brigade of the Line (Translated by Martin Sixsmith, Westprint, Sligo, 1990), p. 6

<sup>5</sup> The 1798 Campaign by A French Lieutenant Jean Louis Jobit, pp. 8-9

<sup>6</sup> Information sourced from 'Return of Persons supposed to have been in the late rebellion'. Letter written by Charles O'Hara and archived in Sligo Central Library.

## Mirrors

by Joan Gleeson

A mirror hanging on our wall  
Was called a looking glass  
When I was small.  
It hung way up, too high for me,  
Impossible for my face to see.

This does not mean I saw no reflection  
Outdoor images my recollection.  
Crystal clear pond, deep spring well  
Where once while looking in, I fell.

Mirrored there were shimmering trees  
And tall wild flowers.  
I watched my reflection  
In those leafy bowers.

When darkness fell, the window pane  
Was perfect for my portrait's frame.  
A small child's world, such secret place,  
Needs no mirror to see her face.

## The Trellis

By Bernie Gilbride

Tiny green buds, pale green leaves,  
The thorny old rambler covers the trellis with these,  
Soon blossoming eye catching posies  
Become beautiful pink summer roses.

Intermingled like vines  
Honey suckle entwined  
Intoxicating night air  
With perfume so rare.

Remembered when winter bare.

# Sligo and Catholic Emancipation

By Pdraig Deignan

*Beidh ceart agus dlí díobh i dtír is i dtalamh, Ní baolach dúinn coíche faid is mhairfeas Ó Conaill<sup>1</sup>*

At the beginning of the century Catholics had many freedoms, but one right denied to wealthy middle class professional Catholics was the right to sit in parliament. In 1811, Daniel O’Connell established the Catholic Board, which began the campaign for Catholic Emancipation.

O’Connell (1775–1847), often referred to as ‘The Liberator’ or ‘The Emancipator’, was born at Carhan near Cahersiveen, County Kerry. O’Connell qualified as a barrister and was a landowner himself. In 1823 O’Connell set up the Catholic Association, which acted as a pressure group against the British government. It aimed to secure the betterment of Irish Catholics and force electoral reform, reform of the Church of Ireland, tenants’ rights, and economic development. The Association was funded by a membership charge of one penny per month, also called the Catholic rent, a small amount with the hope of attracting as many

people as possible and gaining mass support. The subscription was highly successful, and the Association raised a large sum of money in its first year. The money was used to campaign for Catholic Emancipation, specifically funding pro-emancipation MPs standing for Parliament.<sup>2</sup>

The Catholic Association has been in existence in Sligo from 1824.<sup>3</sup> The chief opposition to Catholic Emancipation in Sligo came from the Orange Lodges. The Brothers of Knights Templars and Royal Orange Lodge No 626 operated in Sligo in December 1793, predating the foundation of the Orange Order at Loughall, Co Armagh, in 1795.

<sup>4</sup> Around the same time Lodge No 562 operated in Sligo town with a membership of 600.<sup>5</sup> In March 1823 Sligo Orange Association Lodge No 1674 with 200 members held meetings in the Linen Hall. Toasts were frequently drunk to Owen Wynne, described as ‘the steady supporter of Protestant interest; to Colonel Alexander Perceval and the Independence of the County; and to John Black and the Independent

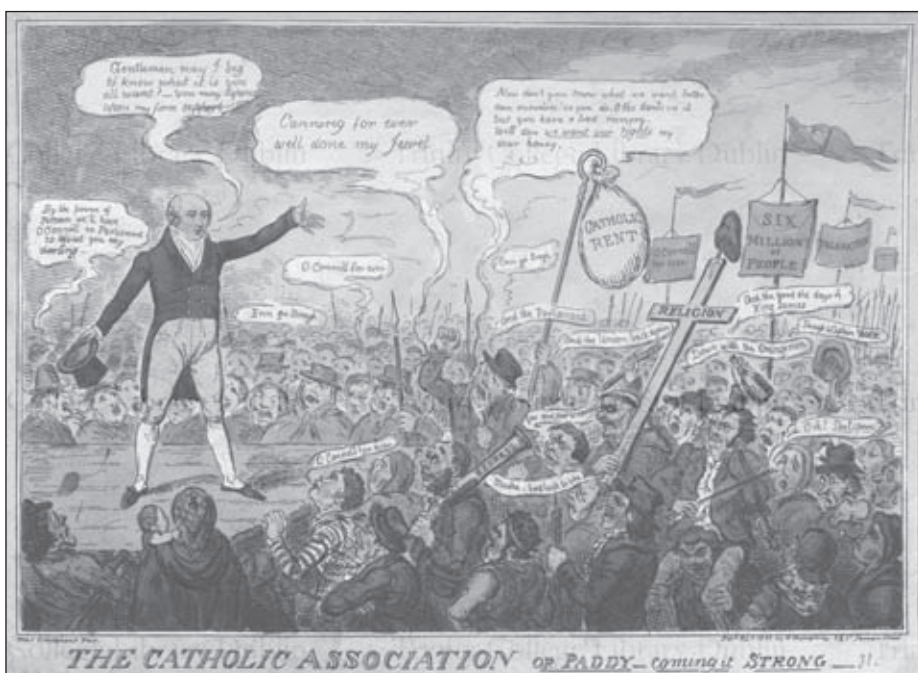
Protestants of Sligo Town’.<sup>6</sup>

By July 1824 at least four lodges were operating in Co Sligo. They were Ballymote Lodge (No 795) meeting in Finn’s Hotel; Sligo Orange Lodge (No 1674) in the Nelson Hotel; Lodge No 464 (Sligo) in the Lodge Room, and Orange Lodge (No 1686) in the Large Room, King’s Arms, Gaol Street.

Brunswick Clubs – ‘to unite in defence of the principals which placed the illustrious House of Brunswick on the Throne of these Realms’.

Protestants, feeling under threat from the Catholic majority in their pursuit of emancipation, began to form the Brunswick Constitutional Club of Ireland around the existing core of Orange Order members in order to maintain their dominance of politics and control over positions of influence. The Clubs were strongly conservative, aristocratic and virulently anti-Catholic. Key Sligo Protestants attended the first annual general meeting of the Brunswick Constitutional Club at the end of the summer of 1828 and included Edward Cooper MP, Colonel Alexander Perceval, Colonel John Irwin and Colonel John Ffolliott. Colonel Irwin was the first Sligo County Grand Master of the Orange Order.<sup>7</sup>

On 17 August 1828 the County Sligo Brunswick Club was formed by the Protestants of Sligo Town and County in the Courthouse, with Colonel Edward Wingfield as chairman.<sup>8</sup> John Ormsby proposed a resolution ‘that a Club be formed, to be called the Brunswick Club of the County of Sligo, on the principals of preserving the integrity of our Protestant Constitution.’ John Gore Jones of Raughly was appointed secretary and George Dodwell treasurer. The editorial in the *Sligo Journal* called on Protestants in the county ‘to unite in defence of the principals which placed the illustrious House of Brunswick on the Throne of these Realms’, arguing that ‘it was in



‘The Catholic Association or Paddy coming it strong!’



**A pro-Union cartoon celebrating ‘the Union Club’ – ‘We’ll join hand in hand, all Party shall cease / And Glass after Glass, shall our Union increase / In the cause of Old England we’ll drink the Sun / Then toast Little Ireland & drink down the Moon!’**

this County the Catholic clergy first caused the ‘forty shillings’ to array themselves against you – now be you the first to overturn the ladder by which Popery is scaling the walls of the Constitution’.<sup>9</sup>

On 26 September 1828 the Drumcliffe Brunswick Club was formed with 400 attending. Sir Robert Gore Booth, the chairman of the meeting, declared in conciliatory language ‘let it not therefore be said that we come here for the petty, paltry, ignominious design of irritating our Roman Catholic brethren – let it not be said that we meet here for the purpose of taunting or insulting our fellow men. We meet, sir, for a more noble, a more generous purpose. We are met here to form a Protestant phalanx to guard those Institutions which have been hallowed by time – to protect that religion...’<sup>10</sup> Sligo Borough founded a club around the same time, with Henry McKee as president.<sup>11</sup>

Over the next two months clubs were founded at Ardnaglass, Ballymote, Collooney, Drumcliffe and Easkey. However following the passing of Catholic Emancipation, the Brunswick Clubs quietly melted into history, replaced once again by the Orange lodges. On 13 July 1832 there were reports of Lodge No 51 Sligo

Town as well as others celebrating ‘the Twelfth’.<sup>12</sup> In 1833 there were seven Orange Lodges in Sligo, Nos 464 and 465 (Collooney); 562 and 795 (Sligo Town); 870 (Coolaney); 929 (Carney) and 1050 (Ballymote). Col John Irwin was County Grand Master.<sup>13</sup> In a report on Orangeism in Sligo John Gore Jones – magistrate of Co Sligo from 1817 to 1831 and a member of the County Sligo Grand Lodge who resigned on his appointment as a Stipendiary Magistrate in 1832 – was keen to relay the peaceful nature of the organisation in the county. ‘In my native Sligo the Orangemen merely met on certain festivals and enjoyed themselves in a very temperate manner,’ he said. ‘There were no uncharitable feelings engendered by it and the most perfect harmony seemed to exist between them and the Catholics’.<sup>14</sup>

Despite the efforts of the Brunswick Clubs and the Orange Order the Emancipation movement had mass support in Ireland and a great deal of sympathy from the establishment in Britain. The matter came to a head when O’Connell stood in a by-election to the House of Commons in 1828 for County Clare for a seat vacated by William Vesey Fitzgerald, who had been a supporter of the Catholic

Association. After O’Connell won the election he was unable to take his seat as Members of Parliament had to take the Oath of Supremacy, which was incompatible with Catholicism. The Prime Minister and fellow Irishman, the Duke of Wellington, and the Home Secretary, Sir Robert Peel, even though they opposed Catholic participation in Parliament, saw that denying O’Connell his seat would cause outrage and could lead to mass civil disobedience in Ireland.<sup>15</sup> Peel and Wellington convinced George IV that Catholic emancipation and the right of Catholics, Presbyterians and members of all Christian faiths to sit in Parliament needed to be established. With the help of the Whigs it was signed into law by the king in April 1829.

The old oaths of allegiance were replaced by an oath of allegiance to the Crown and the Protestant succession. Catholics were eligible to occupy all the offices of state except that of Regent, Lord Chancellor of Ireland or England, or Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. Catholic religious celebrations could not be held outside homes or in churches, Catholic bishops could not assume titles of sees already held by members of the Established Church and all members of religious orders entering the country were liable to banishment, although most of the restrictions were ignored. The Catholic Association dissolved itself and the politically and professionally ambitious Catholic middle class and gentry could now aspire to the higher offices of state. However, the Protestant establishment maintained their dominance over offices and it was still difficult for Catholics to penetrate this fortress of Protestantism.

An important and long lasting affect of Emancipation was the part of the Emancipation Act which disenfranchised the forty shilling freeholders. The forty-shilling freeholders were those who held a lease for life on property or land and were granted the right to vote in 1793. With the passing of Emancipation Act of 1829 the voting qualification was





‘O’Connell driving the foreign toads and vipers from the land.’

raised from forty shillings to £10. The electorate in Ireland was reduced from over 100,000 to 16,000 and in Co Sligo it was reduced from 5,036 in 1829 to 610 in 1830.<sup>16</sup> O’Connell consoled himself that the forty shilling freeholders were sacrificed as under the existing electoral system they were under the control of their landlords and could not act independently.<sup>17</sup> The disenfranchisement of so many did result in the eviction of some tenants who had defied their landlords and could no longer be trusted, and it appeared that once they had fulfilled their usefulness they were discarded onto the scrap heap of history and their holdings consolidated. However the Catholic Association and O’Connell’s campaign had sown the seeds of political defiance in Ireland

and involved the Catholic clergy in harnessing mass protest. The tenants also had clear evidence of what could be achieved by large numbers involved in peaceful constitutional agitation. But for the moment, the only winners were the Catholic middle classes.

**Sligo Liberal Club - ‘He said that the Tories, without more delay, should be kicked out of office the very next day’<sup>18</sup>**

On 2 August 1828, less than a year before the granting of Catholic Emancipation, Daniel O’Connell visited Sligo and the Catholic Association held a public dinner for him on the following day in the Catholic School in Chapel Lane. Upwards of 130 people attended with Charles McDermott as chairman along with

Rev Dr Patrick Burke in attendance also.<sup>19</sup> On the following day a meeting of the Sligo Catholic Association was held with John Chester in the chair. O’Connell condemned the Sligo MPs, maintaining that ‘both are determined foes to civil and religious liberty – they have voted for every job – they have voted against Catholics...’ He also referred to the state of the union between Britain and Ireland and set the seeds for what would later become the demand for repeal of the union. O’Connell argued for ‘a separation from the British parliament in order to recreate the Irish Legislature’. However, he insisted that he did not wish to separate from the Crown of England and he called on the members to form a Liberal Club in Sligo.

Following O’Connell’s visit, the



**O'Connell addressing the crowd**

Sligo Liberal and Independent Club was founded in October 1828 'to watch over and protect the Forty Shilling Freeholders of the County should they suffer persecution on account of the conscientious discharge of their duty towards religion and Country.' However as we have seen they were not protected and were sacrificed on the altar of Emancipation. The meeting was held in the Catholic Schoolhouse in Chapel Lane. Leading Catholic gentlemen of the town and county attended. Six of them were magistrates. Charles MacDermot was elected president at the meeting. The Bishops of Elphin, Killala and Achonry were on the committee and committees were formed in each barony.<sup>20</sup>

The Liberal Club included middle class Catholics and a few Liberal Protestant landlords, including Sir James Crofton of Longford House and William Parke of Dunally. In January 1836 over 2,000 attended a meeting of the Sligo Liberal and Independent Club, which took place to prepare an address to Earl Mulgrave, the Lord Lieutenant on his anticipated visit, with the chair occupied by Sir James Crofton.<sup>21</sup> He later visited the town in August 1836 and knighted William Parke for his support. The meeting was significant in that it



**Sir James Crofton**

was the first public gathering of the Catholic Freeholders of Sligo Town and County. The Liberals required an organ to espouse their views and in April 1836 the *Sligo Champion* was established at a Liberal meeting.

The growing impact of local Liberals had already taken effect on local politics and they achieved a victory in the Borough Parliamentary Election of December 1832 with the return of John Martin of the Cleveragh estate on the banks of Lough Gill and the Garvogue River. Had had 213 votes to the 159 of the outgoing Tory John Wynne of Hazelwood, who had held the seat since 1828. Daniel O'Connell had doubts surrounding Martin's political convictions but as an individual he held Martin in high esteem. At the next election in January 1835 Martin was returned unopposed. Martin had his Catholic/Liberal support withdrawn at the following election in 1837 when he reneged on principles which had guaranteed his election twice before.

Dean James Donlevy (1791 - 38) with the 'blessing' of both Patrick Burke, the Bishop of Elphin and Daniel O'Connell advocated John Patrick Somers of Chaffpool, Co Sligo. He was educated at Harrow where he became a friend of Lord Palmerston. O'Connell was much more comfortable backing Somers, describing him as 'my young friend'.

<sup>22</sup> Somers also received the backing of

leading local Liberals and prominent merchants Martin Madden and Andrew Walker, securing his election over Martin with 262 votes to 208.<sup>23</sup> In 1841 following a meeting of the Liberal voters of Sligo presided over by Rev Owen Feeney, PP, Somers was returned as MP for Sligo Borough unopposed. By 1847 the Rev Owen Feeney and a majority of the Liberal electors of Sligo Borough became unhappy with John Somers's performance at Westminster and they approached Charles Towneley of Lancashire, a member of a leading Catholic family, to run for the Liberal Party in Sligo. The Bishop of Elphin, Dr Browne, gave his full backing to Towneley and he won the 1848 election but was later unseated on a petition. Somers won the following election later in 1848 defeating both the Conservative and Liberal candidates.



**Daniel Jones Snr**

In November 1836 a Sligo branch of the Registration Club in Dublin was founded and named the Reform Registry Association of Sligo, also known as the Registration Club, at a meeting in the Linenhall. Sir James Crofton was president and also attending were Daniel Jones, Sir William Parke, Major Bromhead, Dr Patrick Burke, DD, John Patrick Somers and numerous members of the Catholic clergy from around the county. They wanted Independent representation in parliament. The

growing confidence of the Liberals in Sligo was felt at a county level as well, and in the election of 1837 Daniel Jones Jnr of Benada challenged the two outgoing Conservative members Joshua Cooper and Colonel Alexander Perceval. However some Protestants reneged on their promise to vote for Jones and both Cooper and Perceval were returned.

Following municipal reform in 1842 the old Tory Corporation was swept aside. Martin Madden, a leading Sligo Liberal became the first Catholic mayor in 1843 since the Reformation. From 1837 to 1869 when the borough was disenfranchised, Liberals and the Conservatives held the office alternatively. County representation remained in Tory hands until 1852 when Richard Swift took a seat and in 1868 and 1874, Denis O'Connor took one of the seats under the Liberal banner. Sir Robert Gore Booth was the last Conservative for Co Sligo. Robert Edward King-Harman (1838-1888), of Rockingham House, Boyle, who stood as a Home Ruler although later declared for Unionism, replaced Gore Booth on his death.

### Repeal of the Union– ‘give the Emancipation Act its natural effect’

Following the achievement of Catholic Emancipation and the growing success of the Liberal Clubs around Ireland, O'Connell turned his attention to the repeal of the Act of Union. In 1801 the act had united the Parliaments of Great Britain and Ireland to form the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. Throughout the 1830s O'Connell canvassed support for repeal of the union at Westminster and argued for social, political and electoral reform in Ireland.

In April 1840 O'Connell, anticipating the fall of his Whig allies from power, felt the time was right for the foundation of the Loyal National Repeal Association, demanding that the Act of Union be repealed and the Irish Parliament restored. O'Connell argued for the re-creation of an independent Kingdom of Ireland to govern itself, with Queen Victoria as the Queen of Ireland; something along the lines later suggested by Arthur

Griffith when he founded the Sinn Féin Party in 1905. O'Connell appealed to the largely Catholic masses and held a series of what became known as 'Monster Meetings' throughout much of Ireland. These rallies alarmed the British Government and the Prime Minister, Sir Robert Peel, banned a proposed monster meeting at Clontarf in 1843. This occurred after the biggest monster meeting in Tara. Despite appeals from his supporters, O'Connell, an opponent of violent means to secure political ends, refused to defy the authorities and he called off the meeting.

Co Sligo was relatively quick off the mark in joining the Repeal campaign, and on 1 August 1841 at least 20,000 people assembled at Ballymote to call for the Repeal of the Union, with Joseph McDonnell of Doo Castle in the chair. Resolutions were passed calling for legislative independence from Britain.<sup>24</sup> In early 1843 the Sligo Repeal Association was founded and weekly meetings were held in the Bazaar Rooms, Knox's Street. In April 1843 Sligo Corporation passed a resolution demanded Repeal. In May 1843 thousands attended a Repeal meeting in Kelly's Field, Cartron, Martin Madden along with O'Connell himself addressed the crowd. Madden was the first Catholic mayor of the reformed corporation of Sligo.

Large meetings were held around the county over the summer of 1844. By 1845 the Sligo Repeal Association had a membership of over 1,000. Daniel O'Connell attended a Monster meeting in Sligo in October 1845 in what was described as 'a great day for Sligo, for Ireland and for Repeal'. Martin Madden chaired the meeting and a resolution was passed at the meeting declaring that 'we solemnly pledge ourselves from this day forward to give our uttermost and untiring aid to the immortal Liberator, O'Connell, in his glorious struggle to Repeal the iniquitous act of Union, impressed, as we are, that there are no other means left of raising Ireland to her rank amongst the nations of the world.' A banquet later that night in the Repeal Rooms was chaired by John P Somers, MP for the Borough

of Sligo. The Bishops of Elphin and Killala were also in attendance.<sup>25</sup>

The Famine, dissention amongst the Repealers along with O'Connell's death in 1847 in Genoa, Italy, while on a pilgrimage to Rome at the age of 71, brought the Repeal movement to an end. By 1848 in a famine-stricken land, it was a spent force.

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To read more about issues affecting Sligo in the pre-Famine years and in the second half of the nineteenth century consult my new book *Land and People in Nineteenth Century Sligo: from Union to Local Government*. The book investigates the interaction of land, economics and politics in the county in the period following the end of the Napoleonic Wars to the Local Government Act of 1898 and is available in local bookshops.

<sup>1</sup> 'You will have right and just law throughout the land, There's no fear of us from now on, so long as O'Connell is alive' – Raifteirí

<sup>2</sup> Patrick M Geoghegan, *King Dan* (Dublin, 2008), p168

<sup>3</sup> Palmerston Papers, February to October 1824 (University of Southampton, Palmerston Papers, BR150/1/24/1-2)

<sup>4</sup> SJ, 20 Dec 1793

<sup>5</sup> John C McTernan, *A Sligo miscellany* (Dublin, 2000), p 454

<sup>6</sup> SJ, 22 Mar 1823

<sup>7</sup> Report of Proceedings of ... the Brunswick Club of Ireland, 1828 (NLI, Brunswick Clubs, MS 5017)

<sup>8</sup> SJ, 29 Aug 1828

<sup>9</sup> Ibid

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 30 Sept 1828

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 3 Oct 1828

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 13 July 1832

<sup>13</sup> *Report of the Select Committee appointed to inquire into ... the Orange Lodges in Ireland, 1833*

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 1835

<sup>15</sup> Oliver MacDonagh, *The Life of Daniel O'Connell* (Dublin, 1991)

<sup>16</sup> *Sligo Observer*, 9 Apr 1829

<sup>17</sup> Gearoid O'Tuathaigh, *Ireland Before the Famine 1798 – 1848* (Dublin, 2007), p 61

<sup>18</sup> From *The Banada Bear*, published in the SJ, 5 May 1837

<sup>19</sup> SJ, 4 Aug 1828

<sup>20</sup> *Sligo Observer*, 6 Nov 1828

<sup>21</sup> SJ, 22 Jan 1836

<sup>22</sup> John C McTernan, *In Sligo long ago* (Dublin, 1998), pp 130-41

<sup>23</sup> SC, 12 Aug 1837

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 7 Aug 1841

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, 18 Oct 1845

# A Night at the Opera

By Bernie Gilbride

On deciding to return to Riva at the top end of Lake Garda, the foot of the Italian Alps, we immediately made plans to attend an opera in the city of Verona's outdoor amphitheatre. We had missed out on a similar performance the previous year by a few days.

As soon as our courier arrived at our hotel to advise on available tours we asked that he arrange this night trip for us, and he duly did. Our preference was for Giuseppe Verdi's *Aida*, but as this was completely booked out we settled for *La Traviata* on the following Wednesday night.

From Riva to Verona is approximately an hour's journey by bus, so we planned to stay near the hotel from lunch on. The morning was beautifully warm and sunny, typical Italian summer weather, and we spent it on the shores of Lake Garda, walking, swimming, and just lounging about until it was time to prepare for our evening at the opera.

The bus was leaving at 4pm but we were ready long before that, dressed in our most glamorous gear – long flowing skirts, our highest heeled sandals, and so on. The hotel had been most helpful, providing us with take away dinners beautifully packed, and the receptionist advised we take a cushion each from the chairs in the gardens. It was indeed a merry and excited band that set forth.

We had been only about 15 minutes on the bus when the first drops of rain arrived, and in seconds it turned into a downpour. The wipers on the bus could hardly cope, the rain was so heavy. This was our first experience of Italian rain and we were shocked. David, our courier, told us not to worry it would probably stop as fast as it began, and we were happy to listen to him, assuming it would last only a few minutes. Verona was still a full 30 minutes away and the Opera

was at 8 pm. We settled back though a little uneasy.

The rain continued right into Verona. Again David assured us that by the time we had had a nice cup of coffee it would probably be over. We dashed to the restaurant beside the amphitheatre and ordered our coffee and sat with fearful hearts as the beautiful square outside become deserted. Towards 8pm the sky began to lighten and our hearts lifted. We made our way to the nearest entrance and gladly took our places in the queue. Eventually we climbed – and I really mean climbed – to our seats high up in the 'gods', as would be said at home. We ascended wide shallow stone stairs, with wide landings which ran all around under the tiered stone seating, well planned by ancient Romans to cater for thousands of spectators. It is reputed to seat 30,000 people comfortably and no doubt it does. It was known to be in full use in 39AD.

The original walls were 30.75m high, part of which are still standing and were floodlit, a fabulous sight. The outer remaining wall is 18.5m, still a good height. We settled on the terraced stone seats and were very glad of our cushions.

The opera was due now to begin at 9pm so we settled in and watched the crowds. The locals greeted the well-known and famous with a big cheer as they arrived and were recognised. They occupied the plush seats facing the stage on the ground floor. From our height we had a spectacular view. The orchestra arrived and begin to tune up their instruments. The arena was packed. As the orchestra started into the overture the place became electric, with a feeling of magic. The lights dimmed and all around this beautiful elliptical theatre a myriad of small candle-lamps appeared and the opera began. The massive stage was filled with movement and glowing

colour. The chorus started and a large white receptacle glided onto the stage, representing a tomb. Out stepped the diva in shimmering white and started to sing. A hush descended on the huge arena.

The acoustics were superb, every note and nuance audible. We relaxed and allowed ourselves to be born away to another world of song, music and intrigue. As the first aria drew to a close, horror of horrors the first drops of rain hit our cheeks – it was a second deluge. The orchestra jumped to their feet, holding their instruments to their chests, and rushed for their entrance. The diva jumped back into her tomb and was pulled back stage, and a voice in Italian advised it would continue after the rain.

We jumped too and began the climb down to the stairway, long skirts now sweeping the water from the steps down into our shoes. We were drenched in minutes and glad to reach the shelter of the stairways where we commiserated with each other and the many others sheltering with us. The landings and stairs were policed with armed guards and in no time the 'craic' was mighty, everyone trying to make the most of a small disaster. The rain lightened after about 30 minutes and we proceeded back to our seats only for the rain to recommence with a vengeance. The Italian voice came back announcing with regret the Opera must be cancelled, all money would be refunded—as if we cared about the money!

In a downpour we made our way back to the bus disappointed but satisfied to have experienced, even for a short time the magical night it might have been. On the bus home my friends sang many of the current hits of the day and even some of the better known opera pieces which helped take the edge from our disappointment.

# The Passing of Old Mullaghmore

By Joe McGowan

The ass and horse carts of old Mullaghmore, with their bright colours of red and blue, rattle up and down the rough and stony roads of my mind. On a quiet evening each one, with its own distinctive sound, could be heard and identified by the knock of the axle long before it was seen. ‘That’s Johnny Gallagher coming home from the bog with a load of turf,’ or ‘Sounds like James Gorman coming up at Lena’s,’ my father might say, as he paused in his work to decipher the approaching sound.

As the little seaside village increased in popularity, cars and caravans came more and more frequently with each passing year, and each year the carts became fewer and fewer. There were a few who carried on the old ways but one by one the tidy farms fell into disrepair and the tillers of the soil passed on.

Paddy was one of those who still saved hay, grew his own vegetables, and kept cattle, hens, ducks and geese. The holidaymakers who increasingly clogged the roads in the busy summer days were a constant source of frustration to him.

‘Christ, it’s all right for them they have nothing to do!’ he’d declare. ‘There was two of them talking across from two cars blockin’ the road there the other day and me in a panic to get a few bales of hay in before the rain. Ye’d think they owned the place! I stopped for a minute or two but there was no sign of them movin’. I got outa the car finally anyway an’ says I to them rale nice:

“Are ye on holidays?”

“Oh we are,” says they, looking round.



“Well I’m not,” says I. ‘Get to hell outa the way.’”

*‘...Alone, as if enduring to the end  
A valiant armour of scarred hopes  
outworn,  
He stood there in the middle of the  
road  
Like Roland’s ghost winding a silent  
horn...’*

– Mr. Flood’s Party, Edwin Arlington Robinson, 1869-1935<sup>1</sup>

<sup>a</sup>  
The changes multiplied. Homes became properties and fields became sites. The old road down to *Claddagh Dúbh*, once a busy highway for farmers drawing wrack and *feamnach* to meadow and crop, and the place where I laboured under ganger Tom Kennedy at my first real job, mouldered away. Now a yacht club, symbol of the new Mullaghmore, straddles this once vital artery.

Recently I attended a performance by the Sligo Baroque Ensemble at

the old schoolhouse in Mullaghmore. Very few faces there were known to me where once I knew everyone. I listened with rapt attention as the strains of Borodin’s *Nocturne* wafted around the old walls. My mind strayed back to when Kevin McGrath, Petie Mullaney and myself played *The Frost is all Over* and *The Rose of Aranmore* there to an appreciative and uncritical audience of locals.

As the gentle strains of Mozart’s *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik* thrilled the listeners, Steve Wickham’s fiddling elbow faded away in a time-changing mist, and in my mind’s eye was transformed into my old teacher’s strong right hand. Wickham’s gifted bow became Sr De Pazzi’s righteous rod; I was back again in a time when the only music heard in this old school was a loud yodelling as that valiant nun tried to beat the three ‘R’s into her unpromising charges. Steve and *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik* re-emerged from the vision and, awaking, I

looked for the row of steel brads on the floor where long ago we toed the line in anxious, short-trousered attention as De Pazzi coaxed, pleaded and threatened, doing her holy best to beat knowledge into our thick and inattentive heads.

Yes, all is changed now, and as in Robinson's poem, changed forever: the roads, the harbour, the fields, the houses. Telemann's *Trio sonata in F Major* has replaced *The Rose of Aranmore*. Thatched cottages have been replaced with holiday homes, fishing boats with pleasure cruisers. Mullaghmore is a beehive of pleasure seekers in the summertime. Resembling the flight of the Mayfly

activity fills the air, and it seems everyone is on the move. Hordes of sun-worshippers are busy to-ing and fro-ing indulging their respective hobbies: fishing, diving, surfing, yachting, paragliding, pleasure cruising.

Too soon the sun sits low and lower in the sky. Winter nights close in; the hordes leave for their winter seats; their domes of pleasure sit soon again in empty silence. The dull eyes of shuttered windows look blindly out to sea; no footfall disturbs the silence; old ghosts reclaim the empty places. When Easter comes again the lengthening days will chase away the ghosts of winter; the pleasure seekers

will return once again to dance the brief seasonal dance of the Mayfly.

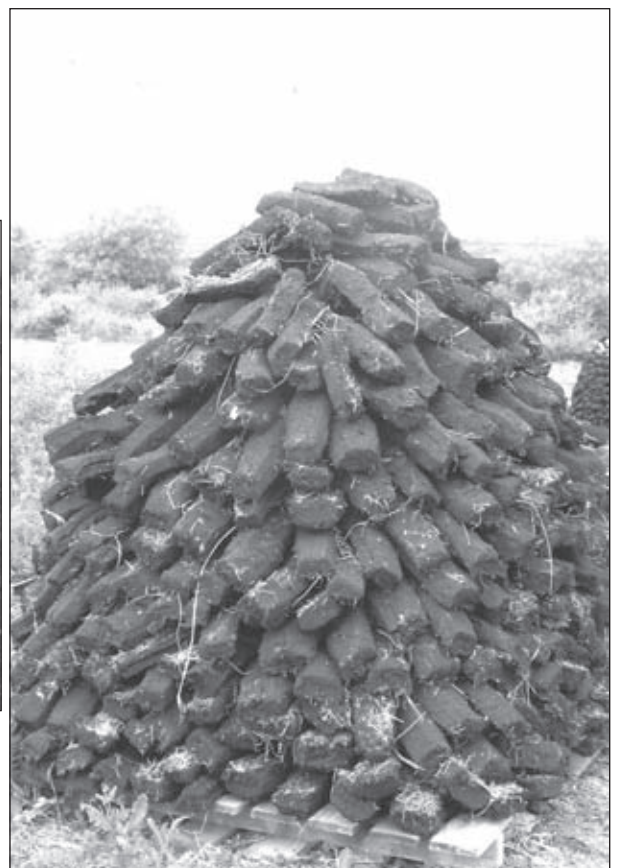
...And there is nothing in the town below –

Where strangers shut the many doors  
That many friends had opened long ago.'

--  
'Roland, the tragic hero of a French epic poem, *The Song of Roland (La Chanson de Roland)*, centering on the Battle of Roncevalles (near a village with a similar name, Roncevaux) in 778 between the forces of Charlemagne and an invading force of Moors. As Roland commands Charlemagne's rear guard at Roncevalles, he fights valiantly but dies after blowing his horn to summon help that never comes because all his soldiers are dead.

# Artistic arrangement of turf on a Ballymote bog

by Pam Benson of Ballymote Heritage Group



# From Carrigans to the World

By Jim Higgins

Carrigans National School has been closed since 1974, just three years before I came to live here, on lands where my mother's ancestors (Bretts) lived and worked for generations. The school had been in existence for 95 years, opening its doors for the first time in 1879. Frequently observing this neglected building sets my mind to imagining what life must have been like for those ancestors who attended the school since 1879, and indeed what life must have been like for my mother who also attended here. She was raised from the age of four by her aunt, on the premature death of her own mother in 1914. What were the burning questions of the day?

## Political Situation

Ireland in 1879 was a relatively insignificant part of the Great British Empire ruled over by Queen Victoria and which stretched around the globe, from Australia and New Zealand to Africa, the Americas, the Middle East and India. Since the devastation of the Great Hunger of 1845/47 the lot of the average Irish tenant farmer who survived starvation and emigration, had improved very little.

Indeed another famine in 1879 might have caused similar havoc were it not for the intervention of the London government and charitable organisations in the distribution of food and clothing. The MP for County Sligo at the time was none other than Edward King-Harman of Rockingham Estate, Boyle, Co Roscommon, who held title to most of the land in Carrigans at that time, so the Westminster government in London could be in no doubt about the desperation of his tenants.

The worst suffering and effects of hunger were experienced in Mayo, Sligo, Leitrim and Donegal. The Land War took centre stage and Michael Davitt was arrested while addressing a huge meeting on 3 November 1879 in Gurteen. He was imprisoned in Sligo jail. Parnell and Davitt joined forces



**A photo taken of pupils of Carrigans National School, Ballymote, in 1941. If readers know who any of the people are, please contact *The Corran Herald* or Ballymote Heritage Group. Photo courtesy of Raymond Hever.**

in the belief that land ownership could only be brought about when Home Rule became a reality.

Despite some hopeful efforts, successive prime ministers Benjamin Disraeli and William Ewart Gladstone failed to deliver, so physical force was becoming a last resort for a population who were constantly in danger of starvation. Patrick Pearse was to be the catalyst for a new independent Ireland was born in this year of 1879.

## From Carrigans to Glasgow

Thomas Brett married Catherine Gillespie and they supported themselves and their nine children on a farm of less than 20 acres situated in Carrickbanagher, just a few fields behind Carrigans School.

It is reasonable to assume a pretty frugal lifestyle with few of life's luxuries. Potatoes, in their many forms such as colcannon, potato cakes and 'boxty', would have been on the 'menu' regularly. Eggs, poultry, bacon, homemade butter and buttermilk would be available to some degree while in season. The Census of 1901 shows that they could

all read and write, and on emigration to Scotland the family of John Brett wrote letters regularly to my mother. They sent parcels of books, sweets and chocolates every Christmas.

As a child I have cherished memories of meeting this granduncle as he made several holiday visits to our home to reminisce with his brother Charlie who came to live with us in the 1950s. He was in his declining years, widowed and totally blind, and I was privileged to be his guide. The highlight of each holiday was a day set aside for him to explore the old family homestead, which by then was roofless and falling asunder. He dispensed with all assistance once we reached the entrance gate, which was about 50 yards from the door of the cottage, and he would slowly and carefully negotiate his way using the stone wall fence as a guide. Once at the door he would caress the jambs and the lintel with his hands, and for some moments he would be lost in his own thoughts. The words of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow in his poem *My Lost Youth* come to mind:

*There are things of which I may not speak;*

*There are dreams that cannot die;*

*There are thoughts that make the strong heart weak,*

*And bring a pallor into the cheek,*

*And a mist before the eye.*

He recounted many stories of making ridges with a 'loy' and cutting oats with a reaping hook. Saving turf on Derreen bog was an annual event. When the turf was dry it was brought across the Owenmore river in a boat, thus shortening by several miles the journey home by donkey and cart. The donkey and cart was also used as a taxi when he set out as a young man to travel to Scotland, and he would catch the train at Collooney to travel to Enniskillen and onwards to Belfast and Larne. The Sligo, Leitrim and Northern Counties Railway was also born in 1877-1879 and remained in existence for 80 years until closing in 1957-1959. It served counties Fermanagh, Cavan, Leitrim and Sligo with stations at Manorhamilton, Dromahair, Ballintogher, Ballygawley, Collooney (Carrignagat), Ballisodare and Sligo.

There were many other stories which are now long forgotten, but the soothing, reassuring sound of his kindly voice, despite all his personal sorrows, still whisper to me across the decades, just as I used to hear him whisper the rosary to himself as he retired at night. I'm sure that stories of the Apparition of Our Lady at Knock in 1879 were familiar to him as he wielded the loy and saved the turf in his youth.

### **From Carrigans to Marseille and Manchester**

Eleanor Brett was the fifth eldest and was born on 7 June 1880. She dreamed of nursing the poor, the sick and the underprivileged, and to that end she joined the Sisters of Saint Joseph of the Apparition and completed her noviciate at the Mother House in Marseille. As Sister Gabriel she trained as a nurse at the Manchester Royal Infirmary.

In 1909 she was appointed to work at 'The Home' in Whalley Range to care for 'aged' women, and to

do 'outdoor' nursing. Appointed as Mother Gabriel in 1926, she embarked on an ambitious plan to build a state-of-the-art hospital but having no funds or wealthy benefactors, she spent 'countless hours before the Blessed Sacrament, night and day.'

Although subject to extreme personal ill health and suffering 'even to the point of death,' she cheerfully and relentlessly pressed ahead with her building programme, and miraculously as each wing was completed it was paid for. Saint Joseph's Hospital was officially opened and dedicated in 1931, and expert nursing care was open to the poor of Catholics and Non Catholics alike. (The site is occupied since 1981 by BUPA Spire Hospital Manchester and the convent is now St Luke's Clinic).

But this was only the beginning, as further hospitals and maternity homes were opened in Bowden, Liverpool, Penmaenmawr and Wrexham in Wales, Mansfield, Carlton Road, Danesfield and in 1944 at Warren Point County Down on Carlingford Lough. Some further hospitals were opened in her name even after her death at the age of 69 on 12 March 1949, most notably Saint Joseph's Hospital Garden Hill Sligo.

At her funeral mass, Fr Kershaw described her as 'one of the greatest women in post-Emancipation England.' Her life is surely testament to the fact that from the most humble beginnings great and noble achievements are possible.

### **From Carrigans to Nigeria**

From 1974 to 1976 I taught in Nigeria. The Cork-based SMA Fathers had several priests in that area, one of whom was Revd Fr Dominic Kearns from Carrigans, and he became a lifelong friend until his death a few years ago. This indefatigable, jovial, spiritual and prayerful man of God spent 50 years bringing Christian witness to the poorest of the poor and establishing schools and health centres to care for their basic needs.

Water shortages were and still remain a huge problem over vast areas of Northern Nigeria, and the daily task of getting water takes up most of the day. It usually falls to the women to carry

on their heads calabashes filled with water over long distances. Fr Kearns was not altogether unaccustomed to water shortages, as the Carrigans of his youth had no water scheme and no naturally occurring water sources, so he made every effort to help the locals to dig deeply through the laterite to provide water for their daily needs.

Such projects, involving many weeks intensive and dangerous physical work, often ended in bitter disappointment if no water was found. But help was at hand. A young teacher from Longford, who taught at the same college as I, discovered that he possessed the gift of dowsing and he honed his skills while on annual leave. Returning to Nigeria in 1975, Denis Glennon gave generously of his time, travelling by motorbike to many SMA missions in the state and successfully located good water sources in each and every one, without exception.

Fr Dominic talked with great affection about the Carrigans of his youth with the handball alley and the Derroon football team being central to his memories. His journeys to Cork by train from Collooney took many long hours and stopped at innumerable stations on the way. Collooney was a very busy central railway station with connections to Dublin, Cork and Belfast (via Enniskillen).

He enjoyed nothing better than recalling stories from his youth, and he had a fine oral collection of *seanfhocail gaeilge*. One of his favourites was '*Is ding den leamhán a scoilteann é féin*', which when translated means 'Only an elm wedge can split an elm log.' His great love for the *Gaeilge* and all things Irish were no doubt carefully cultivated by his National School Teacher, and the last principal teacher of Carrigans National School, Tom McGettrick.

I'm sure that many other emigrants from Carrigans made outstanding contributions to societies throughout the four corners of the earth and that their descendants reflect upon their experiences as they pass 'the school with nobody in it', to paraphrase Joyce Kilmer. Perhaps we may read of such exploits in future editions of *The Corran Herald*.



# O Cebreiro – A tiny Spanish Village of World Fame

By Frank Tivnan



**A Celtic dwelling typical of the area**

O Cebreiro is a tiny hamlet in the province and diocese of Lugo of the Celtic region of Galicia in the north west of Spain. It is situated at an altitude of 1300 metres on the mountain range of Os Ancares and is 4km from the A-6 highway between La Corunna and Madrid.

O Cebreiro is derived from the Latin *Cebrarium* which means ‘the place of the Asiatic wild asses’. However the Celts had settled on this mountaintop long before the Romans, as testified by their very-well-presented Celtic stone oval-shaped huts called ‘pallozas’.

The capital letter ‘O’ of the first element of the name is masculine singular of the definite article in Galego, the native language of this part of Spain, a Romance language closely related to Portuguese. Spanish is also spoken in Galicia.

The true Galicians belong to the Celtic race who speak a language which comes from vulgar Latin. Their culture has much in common with the Irish one, including playing the bagpipes. Pilgrims who do the walk on the Camino Francés of St James pass through the village of O Cebreiro about 168km from the goal of their pilgrimage, the tombs of the Apostle

of St James Major in the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela.

In the ninth century, a church, a hospital and an inn were established by Benedictine monks from the Abbey of Aurillac, France, to cater for the needs of pilgrims who passed through this mountain stop, which is now Stage 25 of the Camino walk. This stop is the first village of Galicia the pilgrim meets after coming from León-Castille.

The Benedictines built a fine pre-Romanesque basilica-style church in the area and dedicated it to Royal St Mary. The ‘royal’ tag shows that O Cebreiro enjoyed the protection of many Spanish monarchs. It is the oldest extant church of the whole Camino Francés.

A wonderful event took place in the early 14<sup>th</sup> century in Royal St Mary’s which is known as ‘the miracle of O Cebreiro’. On a very windy, sleety day, a farmer from the nearby village of Barxa Maior travelled a few miles to hear mass in St Mary’s. The celebrant, a Benedictine monk of weak faith, on seeing the farmer in the church said ‘what a fool to brave the elements just for a piece of bread and wine.’ However during the consecration of

the mass, the bread and wine visibly became real bread and real blood of Jesus Christ. The precious relics are stored in rock crystal reliquaries donated by Isabel and Fernando, and are on display in a secure showcase to the right of the main altar.

The Catholic monarchs visited O Cebreiro in 1486 on their way to Compostela. The story of the miracle of O Cebreiro spread throughout Europe and greatly influenced Richard Wagner’s opera *Parsifal*. The 12<sup>th</sup> century chalice involved in the miracle forms a major part of the Heraldic Shield of Galicia. The witnesses of the miracle, the officiating monk and the farmer are buried in two adjacent niches in the chapel of the miracle. It is interesting to see the large number of candles burning on the farmer’s tomb in contrast with the few lying on the monk’s tomb.

To the left of the main entrance of St Mary’s we find the baptistery, which contains a medieval stone tub where baptism by immersion took place. In 1835 the Benedictines were expelled from the O Cebreiro monastic complex as a consequence of the masonic Prime Minister Mandizábal’s ecclesiastical confiscations. The Church of St Mary and adjacent buildings became a complete ruin. However, in 1962 Fr Elías Valina Sampedro was appointed PP of the O Cebreiro group of churches. He is known to history as ‘El Cura’ of O Cebreiro. Fr Elías was born in 1929 in Mundín near Sarria, Galicia. He got his PhD from the Pontifical University of Salamanca. His doctoral thesis was entitled ‘El Camino de Santiago: studio histórico- jurídico’ (‘The Way of St James – a histórico legal study’). Fr Elías restored the church of St Mary Royal and two ancillary buildings. He introduced electricity and running water to the area. He restored much



A church in O Cebrero

of the Camino track and pilgrims' hostels, and was responsible for the now famous yellow arrows and shells that guide pilgrims to the correct Camino from Roncesvalles to Compostela, a journey of 500 miles.

By giving illustrated lectures on the Camino all over Europe and the USA, he greatly helped to restore the popularity of the Camino of St James. Sadly Rev Doctor Elías died in 1989 at the age of 60 from cancer. Fittingly he is buried in front of St Benedict's altar in his beloved Royal St Mary's of O Cebreiro.

# A History of Handball

Submitted by Gerry Cassidy



Ballymote Handball Club officials receiving Silver Cups and Replicas—From right: Mr. Bob Hogg presenting the Hotel Denette Trophy to Michael Hannon, and left, Mr. Frank Ketrtrick presents the Silver Cup from Messrs Egan Brothers Concretes, Alfreton, Derbyshire, England. Included also in the group are Tim Daly and Michael Cunnane.



Ballymote Handball Club Committee—Seated (from left) Messrs. Alfie Banks, Michael Cunnane, Secretary; Tim Daly, Vice Chairman; Michael Hannon, Chairman; Joe Flannery, Tommy Duffy. Standing (from left) Messrs. John Kilcoyne, Mike Hannon, Gerard Cassidy, Des Walsh, Aloysius Ward and Joseph Mattimoe.

# Contemporary accounts of the Cholera outbreak of 1832

By John C McTernan

While researching the Wynne Papers on a recent visit to the Public Record Office in Belfast, I stumbled across a rather rare booklet entitled *A Record of Cholera Asiatica as it occurred in Sligo in the months of August & September 1832*, written by Henry Irwin, MD, the then physician to the Sligo Fever Hospital. It was inscribed to Owen Wynne of Hazelwood House 'with best wishes'.

Irwin's account of the epidemic was known to exist in one form or another and was published by Dr Patrick Henry in his *Sligo Medical Care in the Past*, but did not include the chart detailing the daily numerical record of cases for the duration of the epidemic. Although Irwin's publication is principally concerned with the medical aspects of the disease, such as its effects, its treatment, etc, it does contain snippets of general information not otherwise reported upon in the pages of the *Sligo Journal* newspaper. For instance, it notes that the first fatal case of cholera occurred on 29 July 29 1832 at Mannionstown, Strandhill, which was then a popular resort for sea-bathers from as far distant as Longford.

The first recorded case in Sligo, resulting in death, occurred at Barrack Hill two days later. Over the following ten days no cases were reported but from August 11 onwards to 30 September, the number of cases reported daily increased dramatically, as did the number of deaths. In the words of Dr Irwin it became 'an overwhelming calamity.'

'Let anyone contemplate the scenes that occurred here,' he wrote. 'Men and women, screaming and shrieking, as they followed the bier, the bearers, or the rumbling cart containing their

**Daily Numerical Report of Cases of Cholera in Sligo,  
from 10th August to 30th September, 1832, inclusive.**

General numerical Return of Cholera Cases in Sligo, this includes the Hospital Return.						Hospital Return of Cholera Cases.					
Date	No. of Cases	Dths.	Date	New Cases	Dths.	Date	New Cases	Dths.	Date	New Cases	Deaths
1832 Aug. 10	1	0	1832 Sept. 5	10	5	1832 Aug. 10	1	0	1832 Sept. 5	3	2
11	12	10	6	8	4	11	1	0	6	4	2
12	9	5	7	4	5	12	3	3	7	2	2
13	18	0	8	3	3	13	3	2	8	1	3
14	33	13	9	6	1	14	13	3	9	1	2
15	46	14	10	3	1	15	19	8	10	2	0
16	92	44	11	3	1	16	20	15	11	2	1
17	76	44	12	4	3	17	25	16	12	0	1
18	103	49	13	3	1	18	21	18	13	9	0
19	102	53	14	1	1	19	28	19	14	1	0
20	119	46	15	0	0	20	38	26	15	0	1
21	119	53	16	1	0	21	39	21	16	1	0
22	115	53	17	3	0	22	42	29	17	1	0
23	92	61	18	4	2	23	45	28	18	0	0
24	57	41	19	1	2	24	34	35	19	1	0
25	28	28	20	2	0	25	20	19	20	1	0
26	29	18	21	0	0	26	16	16	21	0	0
27	20	16	22	0	0	27	21	11	22	0	0
28	15	14	23	3	0	28	12	8	23	2	0
29	15	7	24	0	0	29	8	5	24	0	0
30	17	4	25	0	0	30	5	5	25	0	0
31	21	12	26	2	0	31	6	1	26	2	0
Sept 1	10	13	27	0	0	Sept 1	12	6	27	0	0
2	12	9	28	0	0	2	4	3	28	0	0
3	8	4	29	0	0	3	4	4	29	0	0
4			30	0	1	4	4	1	30	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>1169</b>	<b>611</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>444</b>	<b>302</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>15</b>

*Abstract of General Return.*  
 General Total of Cases 1330  
 Deaths 641  
 This includes the Hospital Return of Cases.

*Abstract of Hospital Return.*  
 Total Cases in Hospital 470  
 Deaths 317

**HENRY IRWIN, M.D.**

dead, or dying wives, husbands and children; horror displayed in every countenance and shocking incidents on every side, such as children being left, of all ages from the most helpless

infancy, parentless.' Its arrival had been preceded by thunder and lightning, accompanied with a hot, close atmosphere, and over the following weeks the malady reaped

a harvest greater than that experienced elsewhere in the land, with an average of 50 people a day succumbing to the disease. The epidemic appeared in its most virulent form in the areas immediately adjoining the river, notably in Stephen Street, Knox's Street (O'Connell St) and Radcliffe Street (Grattan St) The thoroughfares were deserted except for the footsteps of those running to seek medical aid, or the movement of those carrying the dead to their last resting place.

It was no uncommon thing in those direful days to see persons who had fallen victims to the malady lying dead on the streets, the corpses wrapped in sheets smeared with pitch to prevent the spread of the disease, and eventually being removed by the cholera carts employed by the Board of Health.

Quite often the cholera-cart was kept waiting at the door of a house in which a person was stricken by the pestilence until the patient was dead – for in the early part of the epidemic people succumbed to the disease in a short time. In the case of one particular family, that of Robert Holmes, Collector of Excise, Robert, his mother, two sons and a daughter all died and were buried within the space of one day.

One of the most interesting and vivid accounts of the cholera epidemic in Sligo was penned by Bram Stoker's mother, Charlotte Thornley, then residing with her parents in Sligo, who wrote as follows:

*Rumours of the great plague broke on us from time to time but gradually the terror grew on us as we heard of it coming nearer and nearer. One evening we heard that a Mrs Feeney, a music teacher, had died suddenly and, by the doctor's orders, had been buried an hour after. With blanched faces men looked at each other and whispered "Cholera", but the whispers next day deepened to a roar and in many houses lay one, nay two or three dead. One house would be attacked and the next spared. There*

*was no telling who would go next.*

*Amongst those who fell victim to the disease was a man known as 'Long Sergeant Callen', who it seemed had died in the Fever Hospital. However, because of his great stature he did not readily fit into a standard coffin and it was decided the only way to accommodate him was to break his legs. The first blow roused the sergeant from his stupor and he started up and recovered. I often saw the man walking the streets afterwards.*

*In a few days the Town became a place of the dead. No vehicle moved except the cholera carts or doctor's carriages. Many people have fled and some of these were overtaken by the plague and died by the roadside.*

*The County Infirmary and the Fever Hospital were turned into a cholera hospital but were quite insufficient to meet the requirements of the situation. The nurses died one after another and none could be found to fill their places but women of the worst description, who were always more than half drunk. When a new batch of patients arrived, and for whom there were no beds, some of those wretches were known to have dragged patients, who were stupefied from opium, and nearest death, down the stairs by the legs with their heads dashing on the stone steps in an effort to make room for the new arrivals. A number of doctors also fell victims and were replaced by others, a number of whom also succumbed to the disease.*

*As the epidemic continued to rage we stayed pretty much in the house. There was constant fumigation kept up. Plates of salt on which vitriolic acid was poured from time to time were placed outside all windows and doors. Every morning, as soon as we woke, a dose of whiskey, thickened with ginger, was given us all, in quantities according to our ages. Gradually the street in which we lived thinned out as by twos and threes our dead neighbours were carried away. At night tar barrels and other combustible matters used to be*

*burned along the street to try to purify the air. The cholera carts and cots had bells which added to the horror, and the coffin maker, a man named Young, used to knock on the doors to inquire if any coffins were wanted.*

*Day by day went by without any change, the plague was not stayed. On some days the cholera was more fatal than on others and on those days we could see a heavy sulphurous looking cloud hanging low over our street. On the morning of the 14<sup>th</sup> day of the outbreak my mother found several of our poultry dead or dying in the backyard. It was then decided it was time for us to pack up and go. My parents, two brothers and myself boarded the mail coach for Ballyshannon, where friends of my father resided, and who we hoped would shelter us until things returned to normal.*

The cholera epidemic raged in Sligo for over a month and it was middle of September before the *Sligo Journal*, whose proprietor, Alexander Bolton, and his eldest son, had died in the epidemic, could state with conviction that the spread of the disease was on the wane. A week later in its edition, dated September 21<sup>st</sup> the paper announced that the danger had finally passed:

*The Town of Sligo is once more assuming its wonted appearance of bustle and activity. Its inhabitants have awoke, as it were, from a torpid state – business is again the order and concern of the day. The markets are abundantly supplied with provisions of all sorts. The cholera has disappeared as there are but very few cases now known to exist.*

Within a few days of the outbreak it was estimated that half of the population of 15,000 had fled the town, and of those who remained, 1,230 caught the disease, 641 died, 317 of them in hospital. Those figures are far from complete as they do not include unreported deaths.

# Remembering the Irish in the American Civil War

*Speech from John Perry TD at the unveiling of the monument in Ballymote, with An Taoiseach Enda Kenny*



Distinguished visitors, ladies and gentlemen – it is my honour and my great privilege to welcome each and every one of you to Ballymote to this solemn commemoration ceremony. A ‘cead mile failte’ to all of you.

I wish to welcome our guests of honour today: An Taoiseach Enda Kenny, US Ambassador Kevin F O’Malley and his wife Dena, Oireachtas members and Cathaoirleach of Sligo County Council Joe Queenan.

I also wish to welcome our distinguished guests representing our Defence Forces, as well as a range of Sligo commercial and business organisations, and members of Veterans associations and representatives of local public service bodies.

In addition I also extend a special welcome to all retired US Service personnel, US citizens living in or visiting the region, and local citizens to our ceremony.

We are gathered here on the 150th anniversary of the day that President Johnson officially declared a cessation of military actions, marking the end to the American Civil War. Today An Taoiseach will dedicate our monument to the honour and lasting memory of those Irish emigrants and of Irish heritage who served and died during the American Civil War.

For our monument we selected a bronze sculpture of a soldier on horseback. This form of monument represents the era when the horse was an essential part of warfare and indeed of social and economic life. In addition, this monument also acknowledges the achievements of Sligo emigrant Martin Milmore. Martin was born in 1844 at Lackagh, Drumfin, just a few kilometres outside Ballymote. I would like to acknowledge members of the Milmore family present at our ceremony today.

After the Famine, one branch of the Milmore family emigrated to Boston where Martin became a

brilliant sculptor. He designed and executed a number of monuments to commemorate the soldiers of the American Civil War including the Roxbury Soldiers’ Monument at Forest Hills Cemetery in Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts, and the American Sphinx in Mount Auburn Cemetery, Cambridge, Massachusetts. His greatest achievement was the Soldiers’ and Sailors’ Monument now on Boston Common, and which the city is proud of to this day. In unveiling a sculpture to the memory of Irish emigrant and heritage soldiers in the American Civil War, we also remember Martin Milmore and his pre-eminent role as sculptor of America’s Civil War Memorials.

The 150th anniversary of the ending of the American Civil War is a suitable occasion to mark the Irish contribution to the United States at a significant point in its history.

When the American Civil War started, recent Irish famine emigrants



together with earlier emigrants of Irish heritage answered the call to arms. At least 200,000 served in the armies of the North and the South, the significant majority of them serving in the Union Army. They occupied all ranks from general to private. The

served not just as soldiers but also as religious – over 50% of the battle field nurses were Irish nuns.

The Irish were the largest ethnic group to fight in the war. Some units were nearly 100% Irish and in others the Irish made up the majority. They took part in some of the hardest fighting and as a consequence, Irish units also were among the units that suffered the greatest casualties and injury. As a testament to their courage, eleven were awarded the Medal of Honour for outstanding bravery in the American Civil War.

The Irish contribution during the War

played a significant role in redefining the place of the Irish emigrant in US society. The new post-Famine Irish emigrants together with the earlier Irish emigrants went on to play their part in forming the rich heritage and culture, the economic success that is the USA today.

With the unveiling of this new monument to commemorate the Irish contribution during the American Civil War, we enhance public understanding of the prominent contribution made by people that left Ireland and served in the War and we broaden our links to the wider Irish

American community. We shared with the citizens of the United States in one of its most painful periods. The bonds of heritage and shared history that join our two countries together run deep. In unveiling and dedicating a monument to recognise the Irish participation in the American Civil War, we remember all those brave soldiers and the sacrifice they made in the interests of their adopted homeland.

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For more on Martin Milmore, see page 80 of this edition of *The Corran Herald*

## Vanished Shop Fronts - 3

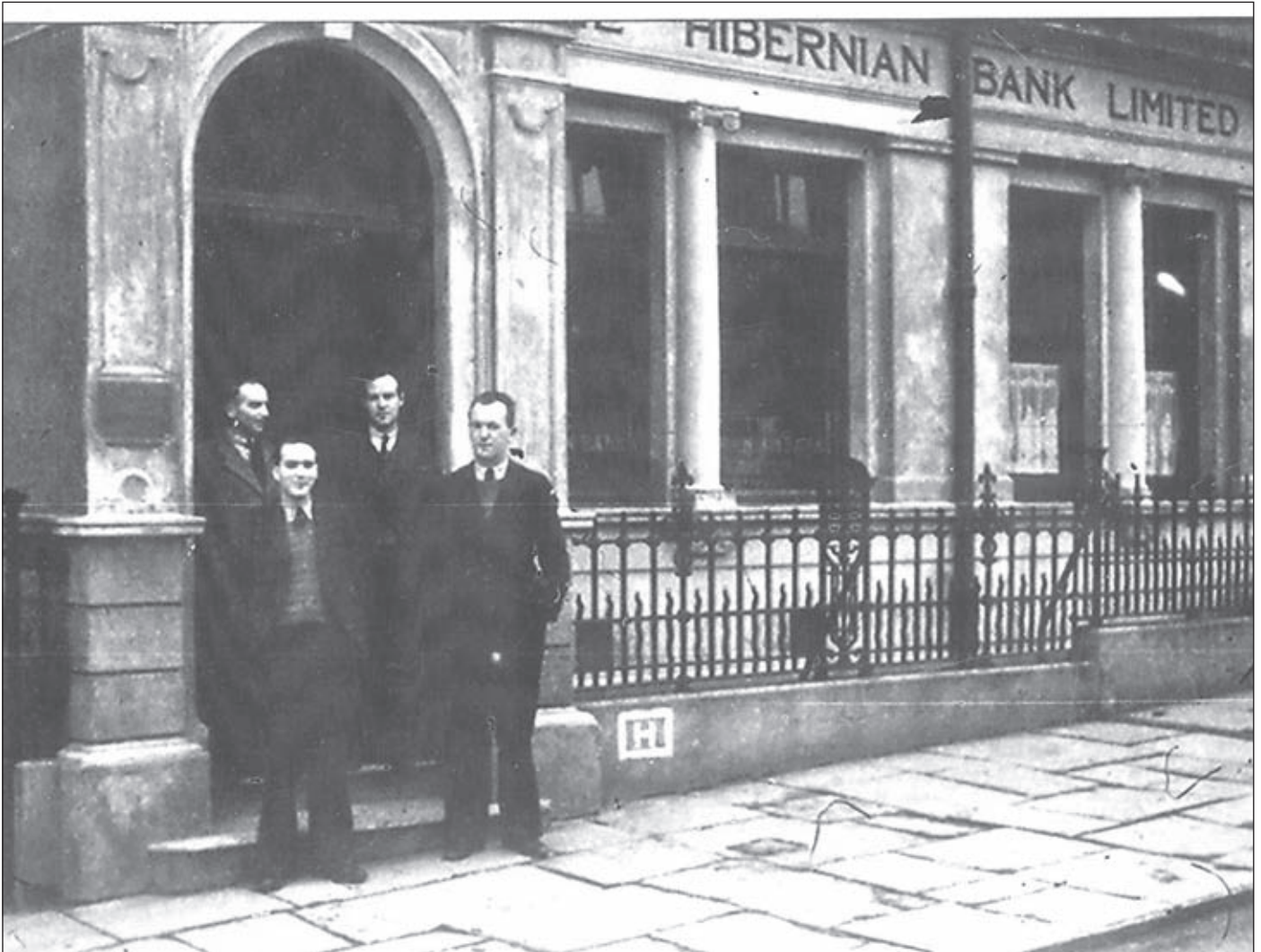
Photographs collected for the Gathering photography exhibition ( For Vanished Shop Fronts - 1 & 2, see The Corran Herald editions 46/47)



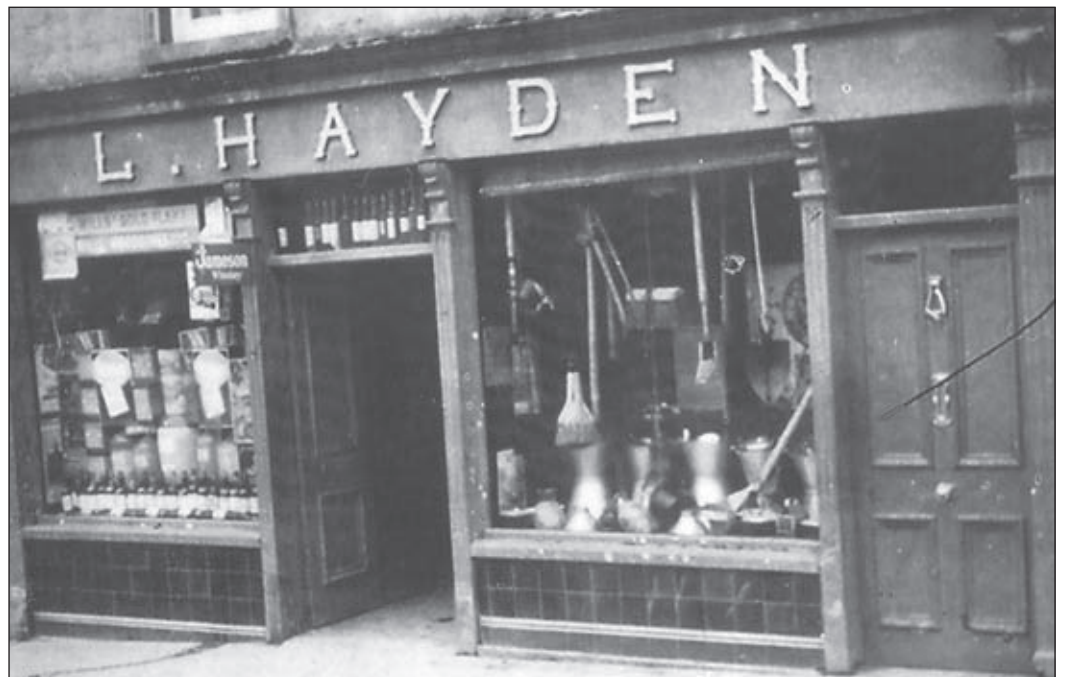
Kanes

# Vanished Shop Fronts - 3

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



**Hibernian Bank**



**Haydens**



O'Dowd's now Cassidy's



Hannan's now Lavin's



Kerrs



# A Sligo Genius in Boston

By John C Ternan

The name Milmoie, also spelled Milmo, is a rare Irish surname. It is met with almost exclusively in County Sligo in the baronies of Corran and Tirerrill where only a handful of families of the name are now to be found. According to John O'Hart, the genealogist, the surname can be traced back to the late 18<sup>th</sup> century.

In the Griffith Valuation survey of the mid 1850s there were ten families of the name in the County, mostly in the parishes of Drumcolumb and Kilmorgan, the ancestors of the distinguished Boston sculptors Joseph and Martin Milmoie, and the brothers Don Patricio Milmo, the Mexican financier, and Daniel Milmo of the Milmo National Bank in Texas. A weather-beaten headstone in the old burial ground at Kilmorgan records the deaths of James Milmoie and his three sons, John, Thomas and Patrick, most likely of the same stock as the subject of this profile.

Martin Milmoie, *alias* Milmore, was born in Sligo in September, 1844. He was the youngest son of Martin Milmoie from Kilmorgan, by his wife, Sarah Hart. Through two maternal lines young Martin was related to the celebrated General Michael Corcoran, to Archibald Hamilton Rowan, the United Irishman, and Dr Patrick Durcan, Bishop of Achonry. His uncle, Dr Patrick Hart, was a professor of languages in Virginia. It was only natural that a man springing from such stock should possess many of the elements of distinction.

The unexpected death of Martin Sr left his widow burdened with the care of a young family of five boys – Charles, Joseph, Patrick, James and Martin. In 1850 Sarah Milmoie and her sons emigrated to America and settled in Boston. Shortly after their arrival the young Milmoies entered the Brimmer School where, it is believed, a staff member, mistakenly or otherwise, altered their names to Milmore.

The door of manipulative art was opened to young Martin at an early



**The Milmoie Tomb**

age by his elder brothers – Charles was apprenticed to a cabinet-maker, and both Patrick and Joseph were learning the wood-carver's art. Joseph subsequently took up marble-cutting and soon became distinguished amongst his colleagues and earned the honourable reputation of being the ablest worker in Boston. In such an environment it was only natural that Martin Milmoie became increasingly familiar with wood-carving and with the marble-carver's art.

It was at the Brimmer School that Martin Milmoie's artistic bent was first discovered, and it was there that he received the necessary direction and encouragement that laid the foundation of his subsequent success. After graduation he experimented for a time with modelling in plaster and the success of these experiments, coupled with the active encouragement of his brothers and an unceasing urge of his own artistic instincts, he decided to become an artist. After a few unsuccessful attempts he eventually succeeded in gaining admission to the studio of Thomas Ball, an eminent Boston sculptor. The subsequent career of Martin Milmoie was a series of artistic successes and in a short time he was widely acknowledged as one of the leading American artists of his age.

In 1862 in Boston he exhibited a bust, entitled *Devotion*, which attracted considerable interest. Among his earliest imaginative works was his very fine figure of *Miranda*

and a remarkable relief of *Phosphor*; two creations that established his reputation as an artist of imagination. Martin Milmoie possessed great ability in all branches of his art, but, indisputably, his genius lay in portrait sculpture. Though so young an artist his busts of Pope Pius IX, Longfellow, Ticknor, Wendell Phillips, Thomas Woodrow Wilson and Cardinal McCloskey, all displayed great maturity and amazing ability and genius.

Some of his finest outdoor sculptures include the *Soldier's Monument* in Forest Hills cemetery; the statue of General S Taylor at West Point, and, in collaboration with his brother Joseph, the great granite *Sphinx* in Mount Auburn cemetery.

Of the many masterpieces he executed in his relatively short career, experts are generally in agreement that his greatest and most ambitious undertaking was the *Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument* which to this day stands on rising ground in the centre of Boston Common.

Martin Milmoie, the most gifted Sligo-born artist of whom we have knowledge, died at his Boston residence on July 21<sup>st</sup> 1883, aged thirty-nine years, and without having reached full maturity as an artist.

Had he lived to old age his artistic skill was such that he would undoubtedly have become one of the greatest sculptors of his age. Despite his premature death he holds a unique place in the annals of American sculpture. His masterpieces on display throughout the United States, and especially in Boston, remind successive generations of Americans of the creative genius of this Irish emigrant of Sligo birth.

The mortal remains of Martin Milmoie rest in the family plot in Forest Hills Cemetery, Roxbury, far from the ancestral burial spot in old Kilmorgan. Over his grave stands Daniel C French's famous work, fittingly entitled *Death and the Young Sculptor*.

# Eighty Years of Changes

By Bernie Doyle

I recently saw an account of the state of affairs in the newly-independent Ireland of 1933 which prompted me to compare conditions in the earlier part of the last century with those of this fifteenth year of the new millennium – eighty years on.

Politically it was a time of change and of cautious optimism. Fianna Fáil, led by Éamonn de Valera, had won their first overall majority in the Dáil. In de Valera's constituency in Clare victory was proclaimed when 77 horsemen with 77 torch-bearers lit 77 bonfires in honour of the number of seats won by the party. The United Ireland movement adopted the name Fine Gael and contested the general election as a political party. The 2011 general election saw a dramatic reversal of roles with Fianna Fáil in a definite minority and Fine Gael with a good return, which allowed them to form a government in an alliance with Labour. The greatest change, however, was the unprecedented number of independent deputies elected all over the country, and Sinn Féin also had an increase in the number of their deputies. 2015 is also a time of cautious optimism after a period of deep depression

The first tentative attempts to connect more directly with the outside world were made in 1933. Experts from the Netherlands and Germany arrived in Galway to inspect the site of the proposed new £3 million airport. In these 80 years airports at Shannon, Dublin and Cork have prospered. Ireland West airport at Knock, Co Mayo, continues to thrive and expand, and a second Irish airline, Ryanair, which caused the reduction of airfares, is expanding and flying to airports worldwide. Sadly, the smaller commuter airports in Donegal, Sligo, Galway and Kerry have been closed to major airlines, but are still used for the Rescue Helicopter Service and for private planes. At the time of writing

the Government, trade unions and shareholders are deliberating over an offer for the sale of the national airline, Aer Lingus, and deciding whether, indeed, it should be sold at all.

In 1933 Ireland emerged from British control and the oath of allegiance to the British crown was dropped. In recent years HM Queen Elizabeth has visited our country and received a royal welcome despite rigorous security precautions. President Michael D Higgins has visited Britain and received royal hospitality in turn. Trade and political relations between the two countries are very healthy. The British-Irish Chamber of Commerce maintains that British foreign direct investment in Ireland is worth €34 billion, and Irish investment in Britain is worth €47 billion. It is by far our largest two-way trading partner – the UK accounts for 16% of our total exports and 34% of our imports. The combined trade supports 400,000 jobs, half of them in Ireland.

In business in 1933, the Sugar Manufacture Act provided for the nationalisation of the sugar beet processing industry to make us self-sufficient. This industry was labour-intensive, but with the upgrade that has taken place in farm machinery the industry could have prospered. Sadly in the intervening years a shortsighted decision was taken to close all four centres in Tuam, Mallow, Carlow and Thurles. So now we import all our sugar. Two years ago in Norfolk I drove by acres and acres of the glossy dark-green leaved beet and learned that there are two sugar beet factories within a hundred miles of each other.

These past few weeks have provided wintery, snowy conditions with intermittent gales which have swept timbers from the Armada vessels ashore in Streedagh, Co Sligo. At Lisadell timbers from a large ship have been found and at Ardtarmon coast a long layer of turf bank has

been exposed. Last Spring's high winds unearthed ancient oak tree stumps along the Connemara coast, and in Mayo acres of land disappeared into the sea. Back in 1933, Ireland had a dreadful winter – four people died in a great snowstorm that gripped the country. In between, in 1947, there was a three-month frost and snow period similar to those experienced in the 1700s.

In the last 30 years our health service has been overhauled resulting in very large hospitals as centres of excellence. The problem is that countrywide (outside of Dublin), these centres of excellence are too few and far between, resulting in long delays in A&E departments and overcrowding in hospital wards and some patients on trolleys waiting for beds. As I write, measures are being taken to reduce the waiting time in A&E departments, waiting lists for beds and improvement in services. There is a two-tier system of patients with health care insurance and those relying on the National HSE.

Back in 1933 Irish hospitals were almost bankrupt – does this sound familiar? Unlike other densely populated countries, Ireland's low population could not raise funds to keep the hospitals going. The Irish Hospital Sweepstakes – a lottery – was started to raise the money, especially as TB (tuberculosis) was claiming so many lives. To the Irish people the Irish Hospital Sweepstakes was a completely legitimate fundraising operation for all the hospitals in the country. What confirmed this opinion was the manner in which the lottery was run. Potentially winning tickets were drawn from a rotating drum by nurses in uniform, occasionally accompanied by Gardaí in uniform. Sometimes they even had blind children drawing the tickets. Each ticket was assigned to a horse running in a famous race, so tickets that drew

the 'favourite' horses had a good chance of winning enormous prizes. In the eyes of the public it had to be a legitimate lottery.

Many Irish people in the UK and US bought smuggled tickets even though lotteries were illegal in these countries. This led to scams, selling counterfeit Sweepstakes tickets with none of the money coming back to Ireland, never mind the hospitals. The big problem was that the Irish Sweepstakes was a privately run lottery (highly illegal today). Some money did filter down to the hospitals but it was only a tenth of the actual profits. This 10% was divided between all the hospitals so that each got a negligible amount. Only the Adelaide Hospital refused to take any of the money because not only did they disagree with the Sweepstake lottery but they smelled a rat.

What happened to the other 90% of the enormous profits? That went into the accounts of the ringleaders of the 'legitimate' scam. Three men behind the Sweepstakes were Dublin bookie Richard Duggan, Welsh-born Captain Spencer Freeman and publican Joe McGrath. The scale of their wealth gathering was so enormous that the Reader's Digest called it 'the greatest

bleeding-heart racket in the world'. How was this allowed to happen? The racketeers paid off TDs and ensured that there were so many loopholes in their legal agreements that they didn't even pay tax on their profits. The hospitals paid 10% tax on what little money filtered to them. The core conmen at the heart of the scandal built business empires in Ireland, like Waterford Glass (now gone), the Glass Bottle Company (gone) and other companies. When decent politicians discovered what was going on and threatened to shut down operations, the core conmen said they would fire thousands of people employed in their spin-off companies, if prosecuted. The honest TDs felt powerless to stop them.

Eventually the house of cards came tumbling down when state-run lotteries became legal in countries such as the US, Canada and Britain, and Ireland developed its own state-run lottery which appealed more to people. The lesson to be learned was to never link charity funding to private business. The National Lottery has been successful in the main, with funds going to different good causes throughout the country. One can only hope that the recent two failures to run

the lottery on time were caused by just technical blips. History does not need to repeat itself. The spate of tribunals that we have endured doesn't bear repetition.

In the intervening years there have been massive changes in transport, businesses and machinery. In health care there have been great improvements in the treatment of what were once fatal diseases. We have not yet conquered cancer but treatments are improving all the time, giving life and hope where formerly there were none. Surgery and the use of prostheses have changed completely. We have developed new tastes in food and clothing and children are conversant with types of technology undreamed of by their ancestors. Yet very few children walk to school and they miss out on the friendships and camaraderie built up on those trips. They also lose out on the exercise. Our grandparents would have been delighted with light and heat and entertainment at the flip of a switch. But as Miss Marple or Hercule Poirot would wisely tell us; 'Human Nature never really changes.'

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Sources: *The Irish Times*, *Old Moore's Almanac*

# A Teenage Crush

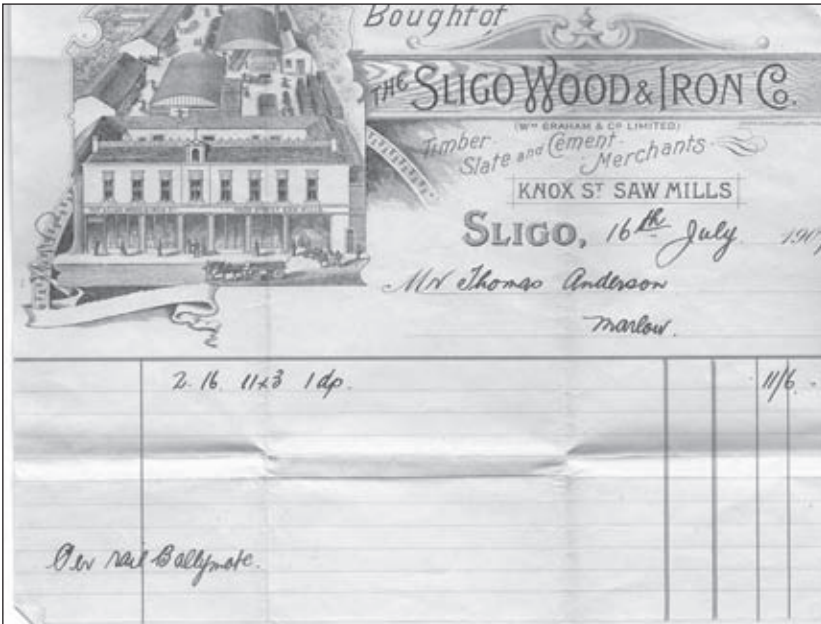
By Mary Kelly-White

Enter Sylvester swinging a watch  
Saying;  
'See what I got, see what I got,  
'The Matron *Blondie* gave it to me,  
'Down in the Refectory after the tea.'  
Up jumped Paddy Finnigan brave and bold;  
Running in front he tried to catch hold,  
'Sylvie she tricked you,' Finnigan cried,  
'Sylvie she fooled you,  
'There's nothing inside  
'You see Paddy Finnigan  
'That's where you're caught,  
'That's where your jealousy

'Wins for you naught';  
*I'll give you the works*, says *Blondie* to me  
*The next time I catch you*  
*Down here after tea.*

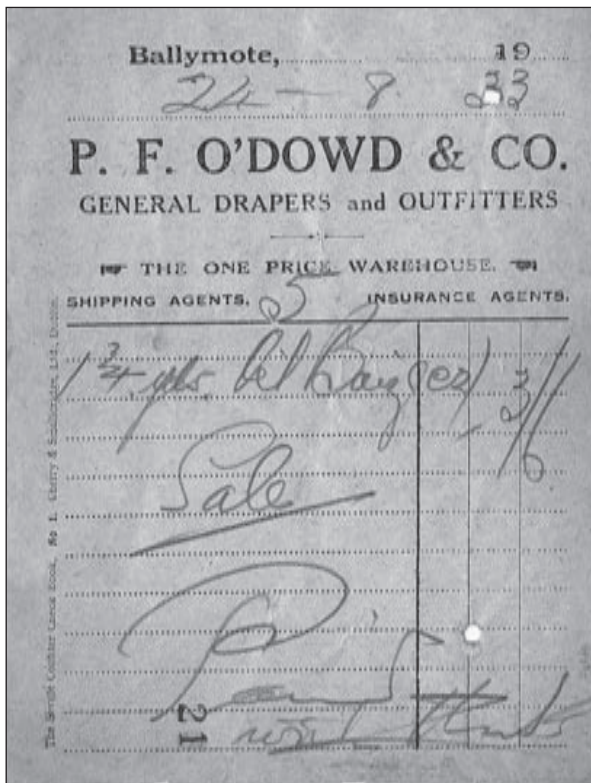
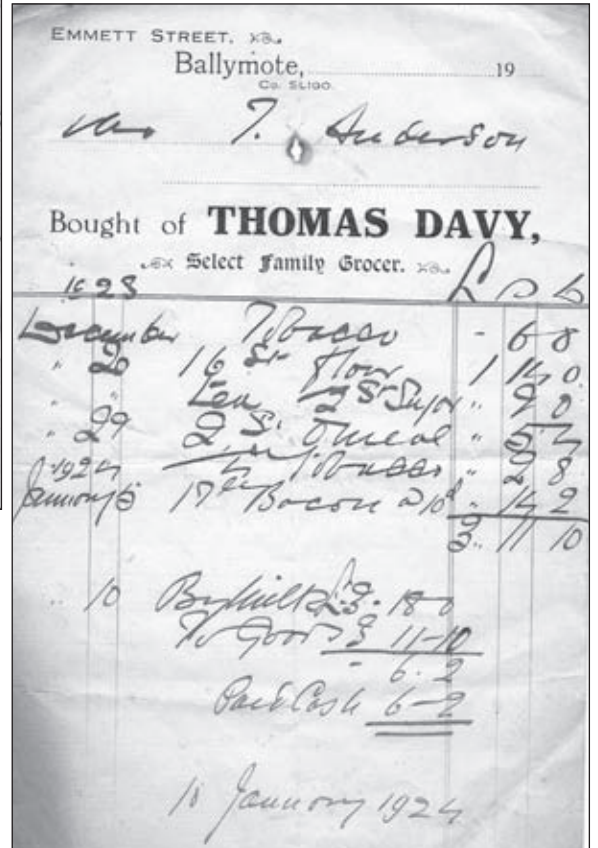
# Glimpses into Business of the Past

From the collection of Tom Wynne, Lisanny

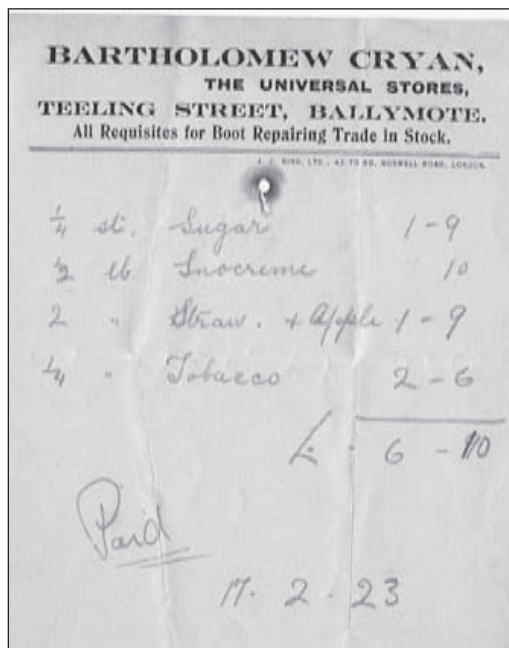


Invoice Sligo Wood and Iron

Invoice Thomas Davy 1983



Invoice B Cryan 1923 and P F O'Dowd 1933



# The GAA in Co Sligo 1884-1888

By Tommy Kilcoyne

The founding of the Gaelic Athletic Association in 1884 must be viewed against the backdrop of the political situation in Ireland at the time. The country was under British rule and there was a feeling among the Nationalist community that all things Gaelic were under threat. This sparked the Gaelic revival. Conradh na Gaeilge was formed to support the Irish language. In a wider context Nationalism was on the rise in Europe as well.

To Michael Cusack must go all the credit for starting the GAA. Without him there would have been no GAA, certainly not in the 1880s. It was he who provided the inspiration and the driving force that led to its foundation. Cusack's place in modern Irish history is secure and rests almost entirely on his role in founding the GAA.

Born of Irish-speaking parents in a humble cottage in Carron in the remote Burren area of Clare in 1847, Cusack became a national school teacher. After teaching in various parts of Ireland he became a professor in Blackrock College, Dublin, in 1874. In October, 1884 the *United Ireland* and *Irishman* newspapers carried letters from Cusack inviting all interested parties to attend a meeting in Thurles on 1 November 1884 for the purpose of starting a new organisation to revive Irish football and hurling under new rules. Cusack stated that the ordinary Irish citizen was largely excluded from sport, the management of which was, to a great extent, in non-national hands.

At three o'clock on Saturday afternoon on the appointed day, Cusack opened the meeting in the Billiard Room of Miss Hayes's Commercial Hotel, Thurles. Probably not more than 13 people, and possibly only seven, were present. The accepted number of founder-members is seven: Michael Cusack, Maurice Davin, John Wyse Power, John McKay, JK

Bracken, Joseph O'Ryan and Thomas St George McCarthy.

The proceedings were brief. Maurice Davin took the chair and Michael Cusack read the convening letter. Davin in a short statement called for a body to draft rules to aid in the revival of Irish sport and to open athletics to the poor. Cusack followed with a longer speech, censuring the press for not reporting Irish sport and reading 60 messages of support. Davin was elected President. Cusack, Wyse Power and McKay were elected secretaries. It was agreed to ask Archbishop Croke of Cashel, Charles Stewart Parnell and Michael Davitt to become patrons. The meeting then adjourned.

At a subsequent meeting of the first Executive it was decided that, where possible, a club should be formed in every parish throughout the land. They laid down the regulations for the formation of such clubs.

The growth of the GAA was phenomenal. Within one year of its formation some 300 units had affiliated. Its advance was even more spectacular the following year, 1886. 'The Association swept the country like a prairie fire,' Cusack would write years later regarding the first two years of the GAA.

Few movements in modern Ireland have taken root so rapidly and so firmly, aided, to a large extent, by influential Nationalists who came together and organised athletic meetings or formed football and hurling clubs. Many supporters of the Association today will be surprised to learn that for the first few years of its life the GAA was much more concerned with athletics than with games. To Cusack the need for nationalists to control Irish athletics and the desire to open athletics to every social class were at this stage more important than the revival of hurling and football. Until 1887 or so hurling and football games

were usually subsidiary events at athletic meetings.

Within three months of its foundation the new association had reached County Sligo. In January 1885, a club was formed in Collooney for the purpose of reviving the numerous Irish sports which were in existence until a quarter of a century previously. Over 50 members enrolled at the first meeting and plans were formulated for the organisation of hurling, football and athletics under GAA rules. The club became known as Collooney Fontenoys. It has the distinction of being one of the first clubs in Connacht, and one of the earliest in the entire country to pledge its allegiance to the infant Association.

The lead given by Collooney was soon followed elsewhere in County Sligo. By July 1885 the Ballyrush O'Mahony's club had affiliated and in August a club was formed in Sligo Town at an enthusiastic and well-attended meeting in the Town Hall. They took the name Sligo Emmets. Significantly, the majority of the officers and committee of this Sligo Town club were Nationalist members of Sligo Corporation, and four were Aldermen.

The first practice match under GAA rules in Sligo Town took place on Sunday, 6 September 1885, in Ward's Field, near the cemetery, which, over 60 years later, was to become Markievicz Park.

As mentioned, like elsewhere in the country until 1887 or so football was usually a subsidiary event at athletics meetings. New clubs formed in 1885 and 1886 included St John's, Carraroe, Ballintogher, Ballymote Round Towers, Riverstown Faughs, Knocknarea Faughs, Ballysadare Invincibles, Curry Liberators and Bunninadden Emmets. They all organised sports meetings which usually took the form of a contest between two neighbouring clubs.

Invariably, the football match was the highlight of the afternoon, and it was this that aroused the interest and drew the crowds. The honour of the parish was always at stake and challenge games were as fiercely contested then as championship encounters in later years.

### First Sligo GAA Convention

The first Sligo GAA County Convention took place in Sligo Town Hall on 27 December 1887, with PA McHugh, the Mayor-elect, presiding. Six clubs were represented at that historic meeting: Sligo, St John's, Knocknarea, Ballintogher, Ballymote and Collooney. The formation of the County Committee received an enthusiastic welcome in a subsequent *Sligo Champion* editorial which saw in the GAA 'an organisation of great national importance' and a means of developing 'manly games and pastimes'. There was a new air of parochial and national pride abroad everywhere. Young men were proud to belong to the GAA and to play peculiarly Irish games for the honour of their town or parish.

### First County Championship

Draws for the first county championship were made at a meeting in Collooney on 12 February 1888. Eighteen clubs affiliated, including newly-founded units in Easkey, Templeboy, Dromore West, Calry and Drumcliffe. The

opening rounds included a grand double-bill at Ballymote on 3 March – Sligo Emmets vs Curry and Ballyrush vs Riverstown. Sir Henry Gore-Booth gave the use of a field at Carrownanty which the local club marked and fenced. The goal and point posts were decorated with green flags. A large crowd attended, said to have been in the region of 4,000, many of whom travelled on an excursion train from Sligo.

The Sligo team in black and blue jerseys proved too strong for the green and white clad Currymen. In the second game Ballyrush had two goals to spare over Riverstown. Amongst the attendance was Canon John McDermot, the local parish priest and brother of the McDermot of Coolavin. A fearless Nationalist, he openly urged every 'true National Teacher' in the country to join the GAA and use their influence amongst the youth to promote its ideals and pastimes.

### First County Final

The first county final was played in Sligo on 16 April 1888. Pitch encroachments by enthusiastic spectators led to the match being abandoned with Sligo Emmets leading Ballintogher by 1-1 to 0-1. A replay was subsequently ordered by the County Committee and took place in Devaney's Field, Kilmacowen, before a huge crowd. This time there was no doubt about the result: Sligo

Emmets 3-3, Ballintogher 0-1. The Emmets received their medals amid great rejoicing at a banquet in the Town Hall a few nights later.

### Sligo's First Connacht Final Appearance

The club was the only real unit in the GAA in the early years and county teams were a thing of the future. The club that won the county championship represented the county in the All-Ireland series. Thus Sligo Emmets representing Sligo went on to contest the Connacht Final against Mayo (Castlebar Mitchels) in Charlestown on 11 November 1888. The game went to extra time and after two hours of football the teams were still level at 0-5 each.

Sadly the replay never took place. The championships of 1888 were never completed; they were abandoned when the Central Council decided to proceed with the so-called 'American Invasion' instead. Thus, a great Sligo team was deprived of another meeting with Mayo and the chance of winning their first provincial crown and, who knows, perhaps the All-Ireland title!

### Sources

*Sligo GAA: A Centenary History*, 1984, edited by John C McTernan  
*The GAA: A History*, by Marcus De Burca  
*The Sligo Champion*

# In Print

By Mary Kelly-White

My name is Mary Kelly White, and I really like to write;  
 I'm a very simple proser don't you see;  
 I heard about the Broadsheet and my ears came to their feet,  
 But the speaker shook his head and looked at me;  
 'It's a poetry Broadsheet, Mary,' the advisor said to me;  
 'No prose! No short stories, only PO – ET – RY'  
 Then I bought the *Sligo Champion*, and I read that Joy  
 and Áine  
 Would assist the budding artists if they called.

So I rang the chosen number, and a kind voice bade me  
 'Come Dear'  
 To a meeting at the Quay Street, Teachers' Centre;  
 It was to be at eightish, but when I got there I was late-  
 ish;  
 So I stood outside and listened, don't you see;  
 Then I stole away in silence, but determined to be  
 published  
 In the Poetry Broadsheet, Mary, wait and see.

# The Cailleach of Sligo

By Michael Roberts

The early people who came to Ireland were hunting, gathering and farming people. They lived in nature and their science was the science of nature. The powers they saw at work in nature were personified and given names reflecting the role they played in the environment. Those who came at the end of Ice Age, 10,000 years ago, saw that winter as a great female force for change with a sharp attitude. They called her the 'Cailleach', the 'woman of tough experience'. They told many stories to explain her role in the world. Here is a Sligo story, set at Keash.

The Cailleach decided to build herself a new house. She liked the view from that new mountain near the sea. She had left that mountain behind when she made the valley of Sligo, the Shelly Place. That valley was greening up nicely and the sandy and shelly shore was a pleasant place to walk when her brother Aengus was settling into the sea in the far west. She had made the valley to have an unrestricted view from the east side to watch him as he passed each day. He needed watching.

Sometimes he would hide behind the clouds for a long time and the valley would freeze, killing all in creation. At other times he would get very stimulated and, in a blaze of excitement, the valley would be burned to a crisp where no creature or plant could live. He had done these things before and he needed watching to prevent him from doing it again. Men! No self control.

The valley was known as Slí na gCaillaig, the way of the Cailleach. She had used a big block of ice to push the mountain of limestone silt into the sea. It had gathered in the estuary of the great river that had flowed from the heartland of Europe behind her. Some lumps of limestone looked so nice that she avoided them. When her bull dozing work was done they looked very well on the horizon

of the new landscape. She liked one hill so much, Dartry, the 'home of the deer', that she built a house on top of it. It gave her a panoramic view of her new valley that was surrounded by mountains and low hills.

The hard rock to the south and east had boiled up when the Earth was shifting its sitting position. They were not so easy to move. She managed to knock some big lumps off the top and sides but the main body would not shift. Being a man it was too stubborn to move even when pushed. It dug in its heels and stayed put. Smart woman that she was, she just gathered up the loose boulders into her apron and used them to make her new home. Nice place to plant some oak trees but that would have to wait.

The boulders left over after her house building project would make a nice summer house by the sea on the other lime-stone lump, Knock na Rea, the 'hill of the moon'. While flying above the valley, her apron full to breaking point, she became distracted by Aengus, her 'only son', making rivers and lakes all over the valley. She liked what he was doing. Suddenly her apron could take the strain no longer. It split and dropped the boulders, strewing them all over the west end of the valley. Annoyed, she began to gather them, but it was getting dark. Aengus was ready for sleep. The rocks would wait for another day. She went to bring her cow home before dark.

The cow was full of milk and sprinkled milk all over the sky, forming the Milky Way. As they came around the limestone hill at the east end of the valley, the cow bolted. The Cailleach had built an underground store-house under the hill, later called Keash, and had left the doors open when she went about her work of clearing the valley. The frisky cow, quick as a wink, headed into the mouth of the largest cave and charged into the black dark.

The Cailleach managed to catch the tail of her cow, but it was too late. The cow was up to speed and on the tear into the bowels of the earth. She held on tight, her arms almost out of their sockets. She held on all night.

Ready to fall with exhaustion she galloped behind the *bó buí* until it emerged again into the light of day. She tumbled and blinked herself back to reality as fast as she could. She knew where she was. It was at the storage pond holding the water leaking from the newly made bogs of Ireland. The later people called it Crúacháin, the 'elevated place' where the chieftains of Connaught held their yearly Hosting.

It was a while before she got back to the Sligo to finish her house on Knock na Rae. When she did get back she had her two sisters with her. They were a strange crew with only one eye between the whole lot of them. Of course they were much older by then, but they were not so busy now as the new people had taken on the job of care of the land's smaller features. The Cailleach and her sisters moved under-ground at Keash, out of sight of the people. They came to the door only after that time, never coming to the full light of day again.

One day they heard the cries of a hunting party chasing a stag near the hill of Keash. The stag, a wily creature, made them work hard. The men, a group of the Fianna, a group dedicated to protecting the land, were just about to fall down, their legs wobbling from the unending run. The three sisters decided not only that the stag would make a fine meal to fill the pot, but that the Fianna would add a nice flavour also. To attract them into the cave, on their way to the cooking pot that was steaming on the fire, the three sisters changed shape into three beautiful young women. They smiled and waved at the passing hunters, hands covering their face in apparent

embarrassment but really to cover the fact that they had only one eye. They had fought each other so much over the years that they were badly deformed.

Fionn, the leader, stopped and the others skidded to a halt behind him. The three sisters smiled. The Fianna smiled, and then fell for the bait. They moved up the hill to meet the three women. Men! How easy to catch them out. That is, all except Goll Mac Morna, Fionn's second in command. He got the name Goll not only from the tears that flowed down his face non stop, but from the fact that he had a leaky bladder. It was a torment to him. And it was giving trouble again. All that running about and not a chance to settle anywhere all morning!

And now when there was some fun in the offing, his bladder made demands on him. How unfair. Goll took off around behind the hill of Keash while the Fianna were being escorted into the depths of the cave. Goll felt cheated.

He was grumbling and grouching as he went about his unintended business. By the time he had finished and returned to the cave things had changed radically. The three gorgeous girls were gone and the three ugly sisters had returned. All the Fianna

were hanging from the roof of the cave above the big steaming pot. They had all their clothes removed and were wrapped in spider web and left to dangle like dolls until the three sisters were ready to share them out, in three equal portions. And that was what delayed them. The three could not agree who would get which of the Fianna. Being warriors there was not a plump one among them. They were a tough, muscular, sinewy lot. What would be left of them after a bit of a boiling?

Goll took in the scene in a flash. He saw that the sister with the eye in her head was nearest to him. One quick swing of his axe and she had neither eye nor head to work with. The two other sisters came to a quick end also and, in jig time, followed her into the big pot. Their cackles stopped in a flurry of bubbles and steam. The Fianna, looking down from their precarious positions, gave a muffled sigh of relief. Good old Goll. He would be a favourite for a long time after with a lot less teasing about the problem with his waterworks. Goll and his little problem had saved the day, and their necks. Sometimes a little problem can be of great advantage.

**On Reflection**

Maybe now we can think about the

real questions being asked. First, the Cailleach herself. She is the tough side of Mother Nature that brings change. She is the alter-ego to the kindly *tSean-mháthair*, the grandmother who takes cares of small children. She is an icon of winter, that force of nature that shaped the world, often in drastic ways. In this narrative the Cailleach represents the ice-sheet, the roaring under-ground torrent. In Ireland she was at the height of her powers during the last ice. The geography of Sligo was laid during that period.

The story explains how the hard igneous granite stones, not native to the limestone area, got to Carrowmore and the Maebh's carn from the Ox Mountains, transported in the Cailleach's apron, the sheet of ice. Perhaps Goll, with his water-works problem, was the force that made the under-ground tunnel from Keash to Crúacháin. Was this what he was doing behind the mountain?

The name, Keash, sometimes called Keash Corrán, has multiple translations: young pig, harp, and hive. Keash may also relate to *kish* or *kishean*, translating as 'basket'. *Corrán* can mean the starting point, bees or tide. There is a sweet-water well at the side of Keash and this too is a possible translation.

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# The crab and Towser

By Bernie Gilbride

While walking Strandhill beach one day,  
A big fat crab in pool there lay,  
He wriggled and squirmed just as we passed  
In jumped 'Towser' on attack real fast.

Under a rock the crab retreated,  
Leaving poor Towser in despair, defeated,  
To his disgust we dragged him away  
That the crab might live to fight another day.

The crab was not at all amused,  
In terror, tried to claw Towser's nose,  
A battle began, Towser barking and jumping  
The crab slithered back, his poor heart thumping.

Towser barked and scratched with his paw  
Out came the crab with another jab at his jaw.  
He missed, Towser just gave a twist



# Ballymote's linen industry in the 18th Century: 1759 - 1770

By John Coleman

*Significant additional detail has emerged on the Ballymote Linen Industry for the period 1759-1770 involving two entrepreneurs Patrick Erving and David Melvill (or Melville)* I have written previously in *The Corran Herald* (No 42 – 2009/2010 and No 46 – 2013/2014) of the significant linen industry established by John Fitzmaurice, Earl of Shelburne in Ballymote in the 1740s, continued by his widow Mary and expanded by his younger son Thomas; finally fading after his death in 1793 in circumstances which saw the country experiencing traumatic change. Recent visits to the Registry of Deeds in Dublin, in hope of unearthing additional material, have proved very fruitful in fleshing out the story for the period 1759-70.

The new information reveals that John, Earl of Shelburne in 1759, entered into an agreement with a Patrick Erving and a David Melvill or Melville, who committed to invest heavily in developing the business. It shows how this arrangement continued under his widow and how their business eventually failed. All of the assets reverted to the dowager countess, after which she made alternative arrangements and the venture was subsequently managed and developed directly by their son Thomas – as set out in my earlier articles.

A lease agreement dated 4 April 1759 is recorded between the Earl of Shelburne and Patrick Erving of the city of Dublin (Book 199/Page 105/ No 131704). The lease was described as involving 'pieces or plots of ground parts of the town and lands of Ballymote situated on the south side



**One of a celebrated set of engravings produced in 1791 by William Hincks showing aspects of linen production in Ireland. This plate is inscribed as illustrating 'the beetling, scutching and hackling of the flax'. Reproduced from the set in the Prints and Drawings Collection of the British Museum, London.**

of the village or town of Ballymote in the whole six acres Plantation measure and one moiety situated on the west side of the New Street called Church Street and other moiety [on the] opposite or east side'. Erving committed to erect 24 houses 'for the habitation of manufactures'.

The lease was for the lifetime of 'David Melvill of Colraine' – it was normal to conclude leases for the life times of named individuals, though it had no implication of their being involved personally in the transaction. One often sees old Irish leases concluded for the lifetime of a member of the Royal Family – it was simply to put time boundaries

on the lease. Despite this general observation the fact that here David Melvill is chosen does have particular significance as he became party to consequent transactions. The lease was at an annual rental of £12 sterling, increasing to £18 after four years.

Consequent to this lease agreement between Erving and Shelburne, a memorial of agreement of 27 June 1759 was recorded between Erving and David Melvill, now 'of Ballymote' – rather than Colraine, declaring that they had 'agreed to enter in partnership for carrying out of the Linnen [sic.] manufacture at Ballymote'. The agreement was set to run for 18 years and both parties

committed to invest £1,500 sterling each in the enterprise creating a 'joint stock' of £3,000 sterling.

Also part of the agreement is a lease for three lives of land in 'the Newtown of Ballymote' with perpetual renewal; this does not seem to reflect the much more limited terms of the underlying lease from Shelburne so possibly there is another document reflecting the longer underlying tenure as the freehold belonged to Shelburne. It was agreed that the capital would be used to build 24 houses – as committed to by Erving under his earlier agreement with Shelburne as well 'buying looms and providing all the necessary utensils for carrying on said manufacture and furnishing a Bleach Green with all kinds of utensils for carrying on the Bleaching business'. Six acres of land 'at Keenaghan' leased to Erving were assigned to Melvill for building and improvements and arrangements for sharing profits or losses were agreed – profits were to be shared equally after discount of expenses. 24 houses were to be built in 'the New Street'.

In 1762 two memorial deeds were registered between 'the Countess Dowager of Shelburne' and 'David Melvill of Ballymote' – the earl now being dead. The first of these dated 6 January 1762 assigned 19 acres, one rood and sixteen perches at Rathnakelega to David Melvill for three lives at a yearly rent of £12 sterling (215/348/142006). Rathnakelega is of course the area later known as Mill Street and now as Grattan Street. Does this suggest that the linen business and a linen mill were not in this part of the town until after 1762 or indeed later, and that earlier operations were centred around Keenaghan since that was the area involved in the 1759 agreements concerned with the continuance and development of the linen business? This would support the evidence that the Mill was constructed by Thomas Fitzmaurice in the 1770s.

The second memorial deed between the Dowager Lady Shelburne and

David Melvill was dated 13 March 1762 (215/348/142007). Here the lease to Melvill was of 'the Corn Mill of Ballymote' at a yearly rent of £36 sterling to be paid half yearly. This throws into question earlier assertions that the ruined Corn Mill was constructed as late as 1795.

It should be noted that even if the later date can be supported by other evidence, this was still well within the period of ownership by the Fitzmaurice family and more than thirty years before the Gore Booth ownership of Ballymote, which commenced in the 1830s when the lands were sold to them by the grandson of Thomas Fitzmaurice. It is possible that the existing ruin is the remains of a building constructed by the Gore Booths after they purchased the estate in 1833 and replacing an earlier mill, but I am not aware of evidence for this.

Unfortunately the Erving/ Melvill venture seems to have run into difficulties and an agreement was registered on 29 January 1765 between the Countess Dowager and Patrick Erving releasing him from his obligations (240/592/153912). Erving's loss of his investment in developing of the bleaching greens was acknowledged and he 'forfeited' his 'utensils' – 'Bossing Mills, Beetling Beams, Bubing boards, Boyler and looms'. There appears to have been already a division of the joint property between Erving and Melvill as the former decided to withdraw from the enterprise and Melvill continued with it. Erving seems to have taken as his part developments on the west side of the 'New Street' and this reverted to Lady Shelburne.

The abstract acknowledged that Erving had failed in the commitment to the Earl in the first agreement to build 24 houses and establish 100 protestant weavers, though it is not clear to what extent he had failed. The surrender of the west side of the 'New Street' by Erving in January 1765 dovetails nicely with the information

in my 2013/2014 article whereby Edward Wakefield had noted in a letter of 29<sup>th</sup> December 1764 that he had concluded an agreement with the countess to take up a lease in one side of a street in Ballymote with 8 or 10 good houses and 3 or 4 more and continue to develop the linen business there.

An agreement of 6 July 1770 finally signalled the winding up of the residual business with the surrender by Melvill to Lady Shelburne of the lease of all land and business assets remaining in his hands - the spelling in this case in the ROD is Melville (266/607/182426). Under the agreement Melville gave up the lease of land on the east side of 'New Street called Church Street' and Keenaghan and his 'interest in lands of Newtown Commons, Knockgrana, Clonenaghan, Stonepark, Rathnakelaga and Coolbuoy'. We also learn something of the extent of investment in utensils and buildings and these reflect the sort of activities that must have been undertaken and what parts of the linen processing business took place in the town. The agreement refers to the existing 'bleach green, passing Mills, Buckhouses, Rubbing Boards, Beetling Beams, Boylers' and to 'houses, sheds, looms and utensils'.

The Erving/Melvill venture had lasted five and a half years (1759-65) and Melvill had continued alone for a further five and a half years (1765-70). Bleaching greens had been developed and investment made in equipment and other structures. Exactly how many houses had been built during the period is not evident, nor do we know the extent to which the town had been settled by qualified Protestant weavers. But we do know something of the extent of the development on the west side of the street surrendered by Erving in 1765 and it might be expected that the development on the other side of the street continued by Melvill until 1770 would have been on a similar or larger scale.

# The Mystery of James O'Connor

By Joe McGowan

The O'Connor Sligo (O Conchobhair Shligigh) were a branch of the O Conchobhair royal family who were Kings of Connacht and descended from the last High King of Ireland, Brian Luighnech O Conchobhair (1181). Occupying a prominent position in the affairs of Sligo, town and county, for over 300 years, the O'Connors were Lords of Carbury and Sligo into the 17th century. The head of this ancient clan then was Donough O'Connor who died in Sligo in August 1609.

'Wheresoever the body shall be the vultures also are gathered together,' O'Rourke remarks in his *History of Sligo* (1898), noting that Donough and Teige O'Connor were dispossessed of their properties which were divided up between Cromwellian adventurers and soldiers following the death of Donough.

'At this date,' O'Rourke says, 'the proud name of O'Connor Sligo drops out of view; nor is there henceforth any written evidence to attest the condition of the family or its genealogical succession, so that history, strictly so called, can give no help towards identifying its present representative... The O'Connors Sligo having fallen from their social status, public documents took no notice of them; and as they had lost all their property, there could be no occasion of wills or deeds, even if the law allowed Catholics to be parties to such instruments, which, as everyone knows, it did not.'

Notwithstanding this the O'Connor clan subsequently gave numbers of prominent sons to Sligo who contributed in great measure to its business and commerce. There were many forces too that could drive a Sligo man to leave his native region and emigrate. In this article readers are asked to help shed further light on

one such emigrant, James O'Connor, as they learn more from the few details sketched here.

O'Rourke's *History of Sligo* (Pg 541, Vol 2) lists James O'Connor's paper *The Sligo Morning Herald* (1793) as the first newspaper started in Sligo town with an address at Market St. O'Connor's paper preceded the *Sligo Journal*, with offices on Castle St, by one year.

What do we know of James O'Connor? His obituary of 1819 provides a scant outline of his life. Here we read that he and his family lived in Sligo Town where he was born in 1759. He learned the printing trade in Dublin and London and then 'returned to his native town, where with the assistance of a friend, he commenced the publication of a paper, coeval with the commencement of the troubles in Ireland. Being inimical to the measures which the government was then prosecuting against his devoted country, he commented on them in such indignant and spirited terms as to draw down upon him the vengeance of the royal party... In those days it was only necessary to point the finger of suspicion in order to insure the immolation of a victim. His printing office was annihilated, and he, together with all his relations in Sligo, were proscribed and compelled to fly from the fangs of despotic power. With a small wreck of his property he procured the means of emigrating to America, and landed in Norfolk some time in the year 1794, nearly destitute of funds.'

Why did he choose Norfolk? The town in Virginia was a thriving seaport of some 3,000 people when James arrived. Perhaps he had learned in Sligo that among Norfolk's citizens were some forty or so fellow exiles, who had found a safe haven and were leading happy lives there? By

the 1790s a John Roarke operated the Exchange Coffee House there, Redmond Bourke owned a grocery shop, and on Main Street, Fen-Church Street, and Market Square there was a boarding house, a leather shop, and Catholic church, all owned by Irish people. There was a watchmaker, a surgeon, a bricklayer, a sail-maker, two sea-captains, a brewer, and a rope manufacturer – all Irish exiles.

Within a few months James became co-owner of the *Norfolk and Portsmouth Herald*, where he was senior editor for 24 years until his death in 1819 at age 60. James O'Connor took the oath of American citizenship in Norfolk in 1804; one Taaffe O'Connor, possibly a brother, had taken the oath the preceding year.

Another few words from his obituary in the *Herald* give a small insight into James's political views: 'The wretched condition of his native Erin caused him many a sigh, and many a melancholy retrospect; but in the land of his adoption he beheld the benefactress of his persecuted countrymen, the kind and affectionate step-mother, whose open arms received them as her natural offspring.'

The songster Tom Moore visited Norfolk in 1804 on his American tour, no doubt full of news about the Risings of 1798 and 1803, and about the heroic legal efforts of John Philpot Curran to defend the insurrectionists in the courts in Ireland. In fact, at our man O'Connor's death, his junior editor published a poem written by Curran called *The Green Spot That Blooms O'er the Desert of Life* as a poignant memorial to O'Connor's life and views.

Of his wife, Eliza O'Connor, we know only of her death in Norfolk in June, 1811, when she was 37 years of age.

There have been local

NEWSPAPERS IN SLIGO

for more than a hundred years. *The Sligo Morning Herald* or *Connaught Advertiser*, and the *Sligo Journal* or *General Advertiser* were the first papers started, and the first named would appear to have been the earliest in the field. Three early numbers of the *Sligo Journal*—116, 157, and 231—and one number of the *Sligo Morning Herald*—184—have fallen under the writer's notice ; and as the number of the *Journal* issued on the 20th December, 1793, is 116, while the number of the *Herald* issued on the same day is 184, it would follow, taking both to have been weekly papers all through, that the first number of the *Morning Herald* preceded the first issue of the *Sligo Journal* by more than a year. Both, however, were bi-weekly occasionally.

The name, motto, and price of *Morning Herald* are thus given in Number 184 :—

"No. 184.	VOX POPULI.	Price 2d.
THE SLIGO OR CONNAUGHT	(A Print of Fame here.)	MORNING HERALD ADVERTISER.
SLIGO MORNING HERALD.		

Friday Morning.

December 20th, 1793.

Sligo: Printed and Published by O'Connor, Market Street, where Advertisements and Articles of Intelligence are received."

In his *History of Irish Periodical Literature*, Dr. Madden mentions a paper called *The Sligo Morning Herald*, "printed by J. O'Connor, Limerick;" but it is pretty certain that "J. O'Connor, Limerick," is a mistake of the Doctor for O'Connor, Market Street.

Such are the few known details about James O'Connor. Readers are asked to forward any other information about him to *The Corran Herald*, to me or to Kevin Donleavy, who lives in Virginia and first advised me of the life of James O'Connor. Kevin presents a monthly radio program of Irish traditional music *Atlantic Weekly Part Two* in Virginia, USA.

**The Green Spot that blooms o'er the Desert of Life**

*O'er the desert of life, where you plainly pursued  
Those phantoms of hope which their promise disowned,*

*Have you ne'er met some spirit divinely endued  
That so kindly could say, You don't suffer alone?  
And however your fate may have smiled or have frowned,  
Will she deign still to share as the friend or the wife?  
Then make her the pulse of your heart, for you've found  
The green spot that blooms o'er the desert of life.*

*Does she love to recall the past moments so dear,  
When the sweet pledge of faith was confidingly given,*

*When the lip spoke the voice of affection sincere,  
And the vow was exchanged and recorded in Heaven?  
Does she wish to rebind what already was bound  
And draw closer the claim of the friend and the wife?  
Then make her the pulse of your heart; for you've found  
The green spot that blooms o'er the desert of life.*

— John Philpot Curran

Published in 1819 in *The Herald* newspaper in Norfolk, Virginia, on the death of its editor, James O'Connor.

# First Holy Communions 2015



## Knockminna

**Back row, L – R:** Mrs. Louise King (Principal), Fr James Mc Donagh, Mr Brian Henry (Class teacher)  
**Middle row, L – R:** Aaron Brennan (Altar server), Ted Mc Garry, Fiachra Duignan, Darragh Mc Donald, Tom Cassidy, James Mullen, Darragh Brehony (Altar server)  
**Front row, L – R:** Amy Brehony, Kayleigh Scanlon, Adam Ferguson, Tara Irwin, Cora Mc Morrow



## Ballymote

**Adults, L- R:** Ms Dolores Taheny, Fr James McDonagh, Mrs Helen Mc Gettrick, Fr Gregory Hannan, Mrs Ann Kearins  
**Children, back row, L- R:** Ciara Love, Jack Gardiner, Adam Scanlon, Jakub Szczygiedski, Leon Muldoon, Sarah Reynolds, Dean Brennan  
**Middle row, L- R:** Rebecca Cunnane, Darragh Byrne, Dónal McHale, Roisín Currid, Dean Mullen, Tommie Keenan, Lee Young  
**Front row, L – R:** Ódhran Fallon, Cathy Finn, Luca Gardiner Kovalenkov, Danny Mc Cormack, Luke Scanlon, Holly McLoughlin, Sarah Jane Loughlin, Abbie McLoughlin, Aoife Golden

