

# **Coiseanna**

**The Journal of Clane Local History Group**

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**Front cover: Moone High Cross; West Face**

**Back cover: The People's Church, Clongowes**

*In memory of*



Úna Heffernan RIP

27<sup>TH</sup> February 2017



John (Jack) Noonan RIP

26<sup>th</sup> April 2016



This edition of *Coiseanna* is fondly dedicated to  
the memory of our two dear colleagues who  
sadly departed this life in the past year

*Requiescant in pace*

## EDITORIAL

The landmark year of 2016, being the centenary of Ireland's national reawakening in 1916, was eagerly anticipated by all Irish citizens interested in our history and heritage. True to our expectations, the pageantry and theatre which commemorated the momentous events of one hundred years ago, has left many well-deserved and enduring memories in the national mind.

However for us on the editorial committee of *Coiseanna*, these great memories of the past year are sadly overshadowed by the experience of suffering the death of two of our most beloved and active members. Our chairman, John Noonan quietly and unexpectedly passed away in April 2016 after a short illness. Less than ten months later and while our grief at John's passing was still raw, the Group again faced the devastating loss of our secretary, the much-loved Úna Heffernan.

These losses were grievously felt by our group but our bereavement, however weighty, must be considered light when placed in the context of the losses felt by the Noonan family and by Jim and all the Heffernan family. On behalf of you, our members, and on behalf of the editorial committee, we extend our sincere and heartfelt sympathy to both families. As a token of this sympathy, we have dedicated this edition of our Journal to the fond memory of both colleagues. It is extended to mark both John and Úna's major and unremitting efforts which have contributed to the success of *Coiseanna* over the years. Again, our sincere sympathy go to our editor, Jim Heffernan and his family and to the family of John (Jack) Noonan. May the souls of John and Úna rest in eternal peace.

*The editorial committee*

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## THE HIGH CROSS AT MOONE

*Brendan Cullen*

The High Cross at Moone displays most of the major characteristics of Irish High Crosses. It has a stone circle or wheel, which connects the arms to the shaft. It consists of several blocks of stone (granite) which fit into each other by mortice and tenon joints. It has a pyramidal base containing a deep depression into which the shaft slots. The cross is orientated in an East-West direction. It contains scenes from scripture and was probably originally painted. The cross dates from the early 9<sup>th</sup> century and is one of the most beautiful of all the High Crosses in Ireland.

This imposing and attractive high cross consists of three pieces of granite which were found on the site in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.



Two sections of the cross were discovered in 1835, buried in the graveyard. These were assembled together in the same year and the cross was displayed in this truncated form until 1893 when a third piece, the shaft of the cross, found in 1873, was inserted between the head and the base. The cross is 17ft high (5.3m) and is composed of a large pyramidal base supporting a slender shaft which is surmounted by a small head complete with stone circle. The carvings on the shaft are mostly of animals and bosses except for the west face of the head which is occupied by a carving of Christ crucified. The base is covered with scripture scenes executed in flat, low relief in which the figures assume strangely attractive geometric shapes. The “Help of God” theme is very prominent on this cross.

## THE WEST FACE



**Upper Panel. The Fall. (*Genesis 3*).** Adam and Eve are depicted under the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. The serpent is entwined around the trunk of the tree. Both Adam and Eve are covering their nakedness with a hand so their original innocence has been lost. This panel is placed back-to-back with the crucifixion panel on the east side. The message here is clear; the crucifixion, i.e. salvation, is a consequence of the Fall. Adam and Eve are also depicted differently from the figures on the other panels by being carved in a slightly more rounded relief.

**Middle Panel. The Sacrifice of Isaac (*Genesis 22*).** Abraham is seated at the right of the panel. He appears to have some kind of implement in his hand, possibly a sword or a knife. At the left of the panel his son Isaac is bent over a small altar. In the top left of the panel is an animal i.e. the ram which Abraham, on the instructions of the Lord's angel, substituted for Isaac. Isaac carrying the wood for his own sacrifice is sometimes regarded as an Old Testament pre-figuration of Christ carrying His cross.

**Bottom Panel. Daniel in the Lions' Den (*Book of Daniel 6*).** This is a very appealing panel showing Daniel surrounded by seven lions (four on the right and three on the left) rather than the more usual two or four lions. The scene refers to the incident in the Old Testament when Daniel was thrown into the lions' den on the orders of King Darius. However, God sent His angel to shut the mouths of the lions and so Daniel, the faithful servant of the Lord, emerged unharmed from the den. Daniel has a square body and has no arms. This depiction of Daniel is similar to the little enamel men decorating the 8<sup>th</sup>

century Irish Hanging Bowls found in Norway in Viking graves and to the representation of St. Matthew in the Book of Durrow (700AD). This panel is one of the classic examples of the Help of God series from the Old Testament that appear on so many of the High Crosses.

## THE EAST FACE



### **Upper Panel. The Crucifixion.**

In this representation of the Crucifixion Christ is only accompanied by the sponge and lance bearers. Christ is clothed in a long garment down to his feet called a colobium. Longinus, the spear bearer is on the left of the panel and is therefore shown piercing the right side of Christ. The sponge bearer Stephaton is on the right side of the panel offering the sponge dipped in vinegar to Christ. Many other High Crosses show Longinus piercing the other side of Christ i.e. the left side. This panel is placed back –to-back with the Fall panel on the West Face

**Bottom Panel. The Twelve Apostles.** This is a delightful carving of the Twelve Apostles divided into three rows of four. The faces are minutely different from each other as are also the bodies. The bodies on the bottom row are square while on the top row they are slightly oblong. All are square shapes like the body of Daniel on the West Face. All are carved in low relief making the flat surface ideal for painting over.



## THE NORTH FACE

### Top Panel. The Three Children in the Fiery Furnace. (*Book of Daniel 3*).



This panel refers to the incident in the Old Testament where King Nebuchadnessar ordered Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego to be tied up and thrown into a blazing furnace because they refused to worship the king's false god i.e. a golden statue. After some time the king noticed four people walking around in the fire; the fourth person looked like an angel. The three children were unscathed because of God's intervention. They are depicted in this panel under an angel whose wings seem to be forming a protective dome over them.

### Middle Panel. The Flight into Egypt. This panel is an example of the Help of God

theme from the New Testament. It describes the occasion when Joseph and Mary smuggled the infant Jesus out of the Holy Land to avoid Him being killed by King Herod. Joseph, on the right of the panel is leading a donkey which is carrying the Virgin and Child. The head of the Child is at an angle which suggests that the Baby's body was originally painted on top of the Virgin's body.

**Bottom Panel The Loaves and Fishes.** This is a simple representation of the miracle of the loaves and fishes when Christ fed 5000 people with only two fishes and five loaves. The two fishes are carved at the top of the panel; the five loaves underneath them. It is hard to know the meaning of the

two eels on each side of the panel. As well as being an example of the Help of God theme from the New Testament this incident can also serve as a figure of the Eucharist.

## THE SOUTH FACE

### Upper Panel. Visit of St. Anthony to St. Paul, the Hermit.



Paul and Anthony were among the first hermits of the Egyptian desert and were venerated by the monks as the founders of the monastic life. This panel depicts a bird bringing a loaf of bread to St. Paul on the occasion of St. Anthony's visit to him. There are two figures in the panel, both of them are seated on chairs. Above the figures is a bird (a raven) and between them is a circular piece of bread. This panel is an extension of the Help of God theme into post-evangelical times.

**Middle Panel. The Temptation of St. Anthony.** In this panel St. Anthony is depicted between two strange monsters one with a goat's head and one with a

cockerel's head. Probably these weird creatures represent the devil.

**Bottom Panel. Monsters.** This panel consists of a six-headed monster and may be part of the temptation scene in the panel above it.

## DATE OF THE CROSS

The Moone Cross probably belongs to the late 8<sup>th</sup> or early 9<sup>th</sup> Century. The style of carving, i.e. geometric-like figures, closely resembles the small square enamel men that adorn the

handles of the 8<sup>th</sup> Century Irish Hanging Bowls found in Norway.

## **CONSERVATION**

In the early nineteen-nineties the cross began to show signs of structural deterioration. Kildare County Council requested the then Office of Public Works to take the cross into its care. In 1993 the OPW became caretakers of the site and cross, and in the following year began a programme of work to repair and preserve the cross. The cross was relocated within the remains of the Medieval Christian church which was provided with a glass roof to shelter the cross from the elements and ensure its preservation.



## MY UNCLE FRANK

*Mario Corrigan*

*In 1941, Thomas Bodkin, Professor of the Barber Institute in Birmingham, published a light-hearted memoir of his days as a child in the company of his uncle in Co. Kildare. 'My Uncle Frank,' is a 'charming' book; a 'gentle pleasure', 'a delightful book of reminiscences', which takes the reader back in time to a county Kildare now gone from memory.*

Thomas Bodkin was born in Dublin on 21 July 1887, the second eldest of six children of Matthias McDonnell Bodkin and Arabella Norman. His father, from Galway, was a well-known journalist, author, barrister and judge. Thomas was educated at Belvedere and Clongowes Wood College (1901-1905). A gay, vivid and friendly boy, he contracted recurrent rheumatic fever in his first year and was taken to Dublin by the Rector who believed he might die on the journey. Bodkin won a debate medal in 1904, at the time, the second youngest boy ever to do so and came to the notice of his peers, being, "...remarkable for his style, which was very good; his arguments, which were well developed; his delivery, which was impressive."



T. BODKIN  
Winner of Debate Medal.

He studied law at the Royal University, graduating in 1908. Around 1916 Bodkin turned from the legal profession to art history. He became Secretary to the Commissioners of Charitable Donations and Bequests in Ireland from 1916-1925, and for a time Registrar of the Co-operative Societies. In 1917 he became a member of the Board of the National Gallery and, in 1920, at thirty three years of age, he published '*Four Irish Landscape Painters*', which according to Dr. Julian Campbell, '...remains a ground-work on which subsequent studies of Irish art have been able to build...'

He became Director of the National Gallery in 1927 and served on the committee on Coinage in 1926 and the Currency Commission in 1927. Bodkin was also a member of the Dept. of Education Inquiry into the National Museum in 1927, the year he published *An Approach to Painting*. Hugh Lane (Bodkin's uncle) died when the Lusitania was torpedoed in 1915. His will charged Bodkin with the task of establishing a modern art gallery and, in 1932, he was commissioned to write *Hugh Lane and his Pictures*. Eventually he witnessed a somewhat successful outcome to the long drawn out legal battle over the paintings in the late 1950s.

Thomas Bodkin left Ireland in 1935 to become Professor of Fine Art at the new Barber Institute in Birmingham until he was succeeded there in 1952. He remained committed to Ireland and his Reports on the Arts in Ireland (1949) saw the establishment of the new Arts Council in 1952.

Thomas married Aileen Cox and they had five daughters. He died in Birmingham on the 24 April 1961, but was buried at Glasnevin Cemetery. His obituary in *The Times* of 1961 (reprinted in *The Clongownian*) asserted '... it is as a personality, in a sense a "character" that his memory is likely to be cherished.' Today he is remembered for his long-running battle to see the Hugh Lane pictures returned to Dublin and for his never ending campaign for the improvement of the visual arts in Ireland. In Kildare, we remember him for, *My Uncle Frank*.



**Bodkin's last public appearance receiving the D. Litt. Honoris Causa at the National University of Ireland in February 1961**

### **Who was 'Uncle Frank?'**

It was 1940, Thomas Bodkin was in Birmingham. He wrote *My Uncle Frank* as a distraction to alleviate the boredom of fire-watching during the Blitz. It was set in the fictional house Beauparc, in the fictional village of Kilcolman, Co. Kildare, around 1900 – it was in fact Newpark House, near Kilmeague, in Co. Kildare. The uncle, identified as Dr. Frank MacMahon in the story, was Francis Joseph McDonagh, M.D., Medical Officer for the Kilmeague and Robertstown District. He was from Portumna in Co. Galway; born 18 June 1844, son of Matthew McDonagh J.P. and Jemima Lynch. Frank married Kate Bodkin, sister to Thomas's father, Matthias McDonnell Bodkin, on 19 March 1865. McDonagh studied medicine late in life and was about 48 years old when appointed medical officer in Kildare in 1892. His predecessor, Dr. Gregory Sale, had lived at Newpark, having been appointed to the post in May 1868. He had married Ada L'Estrange, in 1880. Sale was medical attendee for the Rev. Cotton's Caragh Orphanage and gave evidence when the Orphanage was investigated in 1891. He died on 21 August 1892, aged 47 years, having contracted influenza during the discharge of his duties. Frank McDonagh

bought the house around 1892, and apparently much of the contents from the auction on 20 Sept. 1892, including, 'Jack' the Black gelding, who features in Bodkin's book.

References to Dr. McDonagh appear in the local newspapers, as a lover of horses, Justice of the Peace and as the local medical practitioner, who was sometimes at odds with the administration. Thomas Bodkin visited with his uncle Frank shortly before his admittance to Clongowes Wood and indeed Frank visited him while he was at school there from 1901 to 1905.

At the time of the 1901 Census, Newpark House, was described as a first class house, with 23 rooms. Francis Joseph McDonagh (56) and his wife Kate (53) lived there with their son Francis (22), their son-in-law, Farrell McDonnell and 3 servants. In the 1911 Census, Francis Jos. McDonagh (66) and his wife Kate (64) lived there. They were 46 years married. According to Bodkin in '*My Uncle Frank*,' his wife Kate McDonagh died shortly before her husband. Francis Joseph McDonagh, M.D., died 22 March 1919 at a private nursing home in Dublin. Newpark was offered for sale in March of 1920. It was again on the market in March 1926, and in October 1931. In his article in 1978, Niall Meagher lamented, that "Beauparc House" had entirely disappeared.

### **The Jack Yeats Print**

Thomas Bodkin asked Jack B. Yeats for a sketch of his uncle standing on the lawn in front of his house for a book he was writing. Yeats liked the idea, settling on a different pen, brush and ink drawing in consultation with Bodkin. In a letter of the 15 June he remarked, "*I dislike the idea of any author being out of pocket over a book so pay me £5 or any part of it, that your terms with the publisher make a proper possibility*" Yeats admitted to being familiar with the countryside and his interpretation was joyously received by Bodkin in a letter to the artist of 15 July 1940, "... *It is exactly what I wanted, the old Uncle driving Black Jack, the Hill of Allen in the distance and*

*the swallows wheeling in the evening air. I feel you must have known him too."*



The finished illustration is that of the doctor on his way out of the farmyard in his cart, drawn by the spectacular 'Black Jack.'



The Hill of Allen is in the distance and the swallows at play. Initially I thought it was a characteristic interpretation of the country doctor on his rounds and this was borne out by Dick Robinson and Yeats' biographer Hilary Pyle. But there is a wonderful description of the doctor dressing for his annual visit to the summer race meeting at the Curragh; a meeting he was bringing his nephew Thomas to for the first time.

*'He paid great attention to his own costume on such occasions, wearing a well-brushed bowler, a jerry-hat he called it, a blue-and-white-spotted cravat, new kid gloves a long box-cloth coat and highly polished brown boots and leggings. Black Jack, specially well groomed, was yoked in shining harness to the burnished dog-cart. While my Uncle flourished a tall yellow whip as slender as a fishing rod, I climbed up beside him, the proudest boy living that day in Ireland.'*

You don't see it at first, you are focused on the energy of the horse and the intent of the doctor, and because of course he is a doctor then we assume he must be on his rounds, as if some emergency beckons! But on this occasion he was just an uncle taking his nephew to the Curragh races on a grand July morning in 1899; his nephew, barely discernible on the left-hand side of the doctor almost hidden from view by the magnificence of the arch. *'The proudest boy living that day in Ireland'*, Thomas Bodkin, on an adventure to the Curragh Races with his Uncle Frank. And of course this is what his friend Jack B. Yeats picked up on to immortalise that memory of such a joyous occasion for the young Bodkin.

Frank McDonagh was married to Kate Bodkin, a sister of Mathias Bodkin, the father of Thomas; therefore Frank was Thomas's uncle. One of Thomas's sisters, Emma, was friendly with Jack B. Yeats and she ended up in possession of the drawing. According to Dick Robinson (his mother was her sister Margaret), *"... my Aunt made a will every month or so ... But she left me that drawing of Yeats ... She was my Godmother and I put my eye on the picture,... so she said 'I'll leave it for you,' and she did."*

In 2011, I met with Cecil Potterton and Dick Robinson who donated the original cover illustration by Jack B. Yeats to the people of Co. Kildare. It now hangs proudly though, somewhat unnoticed, as part of the municipal art collection in the foyer of the Riverbank Arts Centre in Newbridge in Co. Kildare.

Kildare Library & Arts Services re-published the long-forgotten memoir by Thomas Bodkin, *My Uncle Frank*. The book is now as much a part of the story of the drawing as the drawing was a part of the story when it was first published in 1941.

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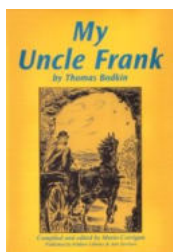
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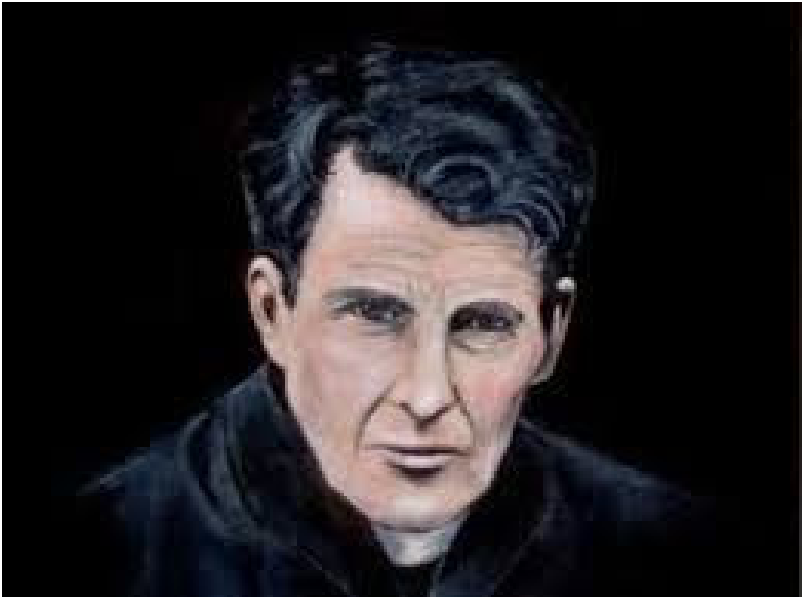
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**FATHER JOHN SULLIVAN S.J.**  
*Fr Conor Harper S.J.*

On 27th April 2016 Pope Francis gave formal approval for the beatification of the Servant of God, Father John Sullivan S.J. The news was welcomed by many in Kildare and throughout Ireland. Across the years, and particularly since his death on 19th February 1933, friends of this Servant of God have anticipated this day. The formal beatification ceremony is due to take place in May 2017 in Dublin.



**Fr. John Sullivan S.J.**

During his time around the Clane-Rathcoffey neighbourhood, Father John's reputation for holiness spread rapidly. From the beginning he was a friend to the poor, the sick and to those in any need. Many of our neighbours have so many stories to tell that are treasured in the family across the generations. Whenever anyone was ill, it was usual to send for Father John to pray with the sick person and to bless them. And in some cases, it was only after Father John's visit that the call would be sent for the doctor!

There are many impressive accounts of healing and peace which were the inevitable result of a visit from this saintly priest.

He was a familiar figure as he walked and cycled the roads around Clane-Rathcoffey on his mission of mercy. He walked with God and the people were convinced that God walked with him.



**Fr. John holding the mooring line for a boatload of fellow Jesuits**

In Clongowes he was a highly respected member of the community. The boys held him in high awe and reverent regard. It was taken for granted that he was a saint. His brilliant knowledge was wasted in the classroom where his academic talent did not reflect itself in any teaching ability. It was said that the boys when preparing for exams had more faith in his prayers than in his teaching ability! And yet they loved him with a deep loyalty. He often accompanied the boys on the walks for a half-days holiday. Schoolboy memories abound of his stories about his travels in Europe and especially Greece which made many a long journey shorter.

He was different to the other priests in the community. His confessional was always in demand – despite the fact that he was not considered to be ‘easy’ in confession!

When not in the classroom or on his many visits to the sick in the surrounding countryside, he was inevitably to be found in the chapel at his prayers. During the night hours, while the rest of the school slept, he kept vigil before the Blessed Sacrament. He seemed to draw energy and strength from his prayer. He already lived in a world apart – already on a road that leads beyond this world. The wonders of the mysteries he discovered on this pilgrim path can only be imagined by us. They remain part of the secret world between himself and God. But there is no doubt that the fruit of his prayer was evident in the way God worked through him.

From the beginning the local people became very attracted by him and quickly learned to turn to him in any trouble. Many of the older generation still testify to the effect Father John had on so many people. Stories of how he was always with them in times of pain and difficulty are treasured from one generation to the next. Such holiness transcends the limits of time because it is rooted in the eternal God at work amongst us.

Fr. Fergal McGrath SJ, in his excellent biography on Father John, records many of the testimonies of those who are convinced that they were cured through the prayers of this Servant of God. While referring the reader to Father McGrath’s book let us note two remarkable happenings that he records:

*In 1928 the cure of Michael Collins, a nephew of his more famous uncle, who was then a child of three years old. His parents Mr and Mrs Sean Collins, were then living close to Celbridge, Co Kildare.<sup>1</sup> On 8<sup>th</sup> October the child was attacked by what appeared to be infantile paralysis, his leg being completely bent up and causing him intense pain. The local doctor and a Dublin specialist took a very serious view of the case. Some workmen advised Mr and Mrs Collins to seek the*

*help of Father Sullivan. Mrs Collins drove to Clongowes and Fr Sullivan promised to say Mass for the child. Next day he was brought to the Mater Hospital and his condition remained unchanged for some days. On Tuesday, October 16<sup>th</sup>, Mrs Collins received a postcard from Father Sullivan saying that he had seen Michael and that he was going home well. She hurried to Dublin and on entering the hospital was told by the nun in charge that the child was completely cured. Father Sullivan had arrived the preceding evening on his bicycle from Clongowes (he was then sixty-one be it noted). He prayed for a long time over the child and touched his leg. When he had gone, the Nun thought the child looked better, took him out of bed and put him into a warm bath. Immediately he kicked out quite normally with the leg which had hereto been useless. The trouble never recurred and the boy grew up strong and well.*

Father Sullivan's self-sacrifice in works of mercy was boundless. In 1929 John Nevin, who lived in Betaghstown, near Clongowes, was dying of cancer of the face. The malady had worked terrible ravages, almost destroying one side of his face. The doctor who attended the case recalled it as one of the worst he had known and found it difficult to approach the patient. During the last five weeks of the man's life, Father Sullivan used to visit him every day, and during the last fortnight twice a day. He used to kneel beside the bed for a considerable time, and the doctor recalled his amazement at seeing Father Sullivan leaning right over the sufferer, with his face almost touching his. A relative added the striking detail that:

*Father Sullivan seemed to have no fear of the cancer and would put his arms around the poor man in his bed.*

When John Nevin's funeral was leaving Clane Church Fr Sullivan walked all the way before the coffin in teeming rain to Mainham grave-yard with no topcoat, and he was the last to leave the grave, praying all the time.

There were instances in which Fr. Sullivan seemed to secure for sick persons the gift of freedom from physical pain or mental suffering, even though a cure did not follow. One account of such an occasion occurred in 1913 or 1914. Father Sullivan was asked by Peter Coonan, a near neighbour of Clongowes and well-known in Kildare farming and racing circles, to visit his Uncle Tom Coonan who was dying of bleeding cancer of the throat at his home, Kilclough, near Staffan. Peter Coonan drove Fr Sullivan over in his gig, and when they got near the house they could hear the sick man moaning and shouting in a most distressing way. Fr Sullivan prayed over him for a considerable time. He then rose to go, and said:

*Goodbye, Tom, and I promise you one thing that you won't suffer any more.*

Tom Coonan died about a fortnight later, and never once suffered pain after Fr Sullivan's visit.

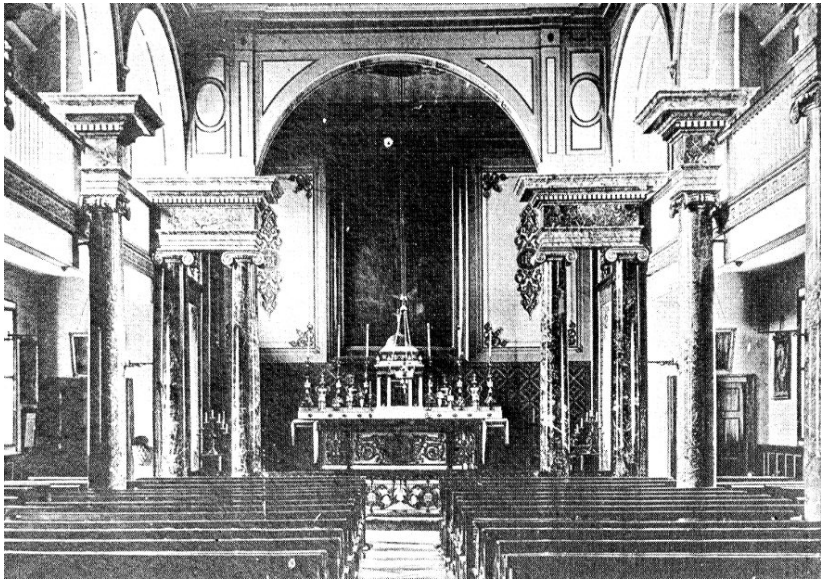
John Sullivan had permission to keep a certain amount of money for alms, and used to run accounts in one or two local shops, for small accounts for tea, sugar and other groceries for which he distributed dockets to the very poor. In his dealings with shopkeepers he never owed any more than four shillings, would pay up promptly and would remark *we are quits now*.

Foremost amongst his clients were the travelling families who were, at that time, very numerous in Co Kildare. On occasions he would order certain provisions in local shops for members of the travelling community. One such order from, 1932 was as follows:

*Please give the bearer a quarter lb. of tea and one lb. of sugar and oblige Father Sullivan.*

The following evidence was given by June O'Haran, of the Royal Oak, Mainham.

*As long as I knew Fr Sullivan, he showed great kindness and priestly charity towards the travelling people, who used to encamp in the neighbourhood of Clongowes. My impression was that many of these people used to come to this neighbourhood because of Fr Sullivan's goodness to them. I know from personal knowledge that he used to visit the travellers in their camps – he told me so, as did the travellers themselves. On the occasion of these visits he used to advise the travellers to go to confession, and he would make an appointment with them for this purpose at Clongowes. Next morning the travellers would be at Mass and Holy Communion at Clongowes and Fr Sullivan would ensure that they got a good breakfast.' The travellers would enquire for him from June in the Royal Oak and would refer to him as 'the holy priest'. Likewise Fr Sullivan would enquire for them when in the Royal Oak.*



**The People's Church where Fr. John said Mass and heard confessions**

Dan Byrne an employee of Clongowes also confirmed Fr Sullivan's kindness to the travellers. As follows: 'I recall that on one occasion I saw lights in the People's Church long after they should be extinguished, and I went to see what was the cause of it. When I opened the door of the church I saw nine or



ten travellers, occupying two benches, awaiting their turn to go to confession to Fr Sullivan, who was in the confession box. The next morning they all went to Holy Communion, administered by Fr Sullivan, who invited them all to breakfast before they left again for the roads’.

Besides the itinerants Fr Sullivan befriended many under-privileged members of the local community. The following episode was described by Frank Smyth, who was in charge of the dairy herd and other livestock at Clongowes.

*I often noticed all the friends Fr Sullivan had, and how he made as much of them if they were poor as if they were rich. There was a poor old man named Michael Brien who had no home and used to live in barns. He had a long beard and the people used to call him Marwood because he was like the English hangman who had that name. He died suddenly in a field near Rathcoffey. He had no one belonging to him so Fr Sullivan got the Police to ring up the Union at Celbridge and ask them to bury him. This was in the days of the Union system and they sent a coffin and three paupers to bury him. I needn't tell you that they were in no hurry to bury poor Marwood, and Fr Sullivan was waiting in the graveyard at Mainham until near eight o'clock. We were living in a cottage near the graveyard then, and I had to bring a lantern for Fr Sullivan to read the funeral service. The scene reminded me of the poem we learned at school 'the Burial of Sir John Moore'. They brought the coffin up in an ass-cart. I thought it strange – there was no one there to bury poor Marwood but three paupers, and there was Fr Sullivan praying for him with as much respect as if he was the greatest landlord in the land. As usual, Fr Sullivan blessed the grave with a great big cup of holy water that my mother brought him. When the funeral was finished, though he was generally very strongly against drink, he put his hand in his pocket and gave the three poor gravediggers some money to get some refreshment.*

According to Mainham burial records Michael Brien died on 15<sup>th</sup> June 1918. This was shortly after the new extension opened

and to date he is the only individual listed with no address in burial records of the cemetery.

Why was this Priest so different to others? A poor woman who knew Father John penetrated his secret.

*Father Sullivan is very hard on himself. You have to be hard on yourself to work miracles. And he does it.'*



**Fr John is a serious figure amongst a group of scholastics**

Father John's life of self-denial and austerity bore fruit in so many different ways. From the beginning of his time at Clongowes he was a constant presence among the sick and afflicted around Clongowes. No call for help was left unanswered – no matter what hour of the day or the night. He walked long distances and also cycled on his infamous rickety old bicycle to Dublin hospitals and elsewhere. He also consoled people by letter. (A large collection of his letters is preserved in the John Sullivan archives in the College). His influence extended throughout Ireland from the confines of his spartan room. And that influence remains with us to the present day.

In spite of the severity of his life, he always seemed to enjoy robust health, but a definite sign of failing showed itself about two years before his death. For over twelve months he had been in the habit of bringing Holy Communion every Saturday and on feast days to Anastasia Smyth, wife of the Clongowes farm-steward, who was an invalid. This involved a walk of some five minutes through the pleasure-ground to the adjoining farm-yard. On one occasion he did not arrive at the accustomed time, and was found wandering around the pleasure-ground suffering, apparently from a sudden loss of memory. He recovered rapidly, but this trouble recurred again on a couple of occasions, once forcing him to abandon his Mass just before the Gospel.

For the boys in Clongowes Father John was a figure who was part of the familiar world of school-life. Many had come to depend on him for reassurance and help. Even the most difficult and rebellious sought his counsel as was evidenced by the numbers who gathered at his room and at his confessional. He had the aura and presence of a saint who lived and walked among them.

His death was a terrible shock to his young charges. The Higher Line Jottings from the school annual, The Clongownian, recorded the reaction to his sudden and unexpected death on 19<sup>th</sup> February 1933 and bore witness to the depth of feeling and emotion which his passing had on the boys.

*Fr. Conor Harper S.J. is the Vice Postulator for the cause of Blessed Elect John Sullivan S.J.*

## CLANE AND MAINHAM COMPANIES IRA 1917-22

*James Durney*

The Irish Volunteers were reorganised in Co. Kildare during the spring of 1917. In or about sixteen small units were formed; each unit was given the status of a company. In May 1917 a Battalion Council was formed and this body continued to function for all the units until mid-summer 1920, when a division of the units took place and a Second Battalion was formed. North Kildare was divided into two Battalions: 1st Kildare Battalion – Maynooth, Kilcock, Leixlip, Cloncurry, Celbridge, Johnstownbridge, Carbury, Mainham, Straffan, Clogherinka and Broadford; 2nd Kildare Battalion – Athgarvan, Ballymore, Kill, Naas, Newbridge, Prosperous, Robertstown, Two-Mile-House, Allen, Allenwood, Clane, Eadestown, Glongorey and Lewistown. (South Kildare was part of Carlow Brigade.) Both Battalions had direct communication with G.H.Q. in Dublin. Battalion and company strength was never numerically correct.

In April 1921 the 1st Eastern Division of the Irish Republican Army was formed under the command of Sean Boylan. Meath was the nucleus of the new division, which replaced the old structures that had existed for the previous 3-4 years. On 11 July 1921, the day the Truce came into effect, six Battalions formed the 7th (Kildare) Brigade, 1st Eastern Division. Clane (L) Company, 2nd (Kildare) Battalion, had 20 members on its rolls. Mainham (F) Company was part of the 4th (Kildare) Battalion, 1st Meath Brigade, 1st Eastern Division, had eleven members – this increased to seventeen by July 1922.

Full lists of company names were not made available when applications were forwarded for IRA service pensions in the 1930s, therefore it is not clear who served with either Clane or Mainham companies. From research compiled for a full biographical dictionary of Co. Kildare activists – to be published in 2019 – I have so far assembled this information. Any help on this matter will be greatly appreciated and

acknowledged in this future publication. The author can be contacted on james.durney@yahoo.ie.

- Campbell, Tommy. Caragh. Captain, OC Clane Company 1921.
- Archer, Fred. Clane. 2 OC Clane Company, pre-Truce.
- Colgan, Denis. Firmount, Clane. Involved in Sinn Féin and the General Election of 1918. Died in 1977.
- Connolly, James. Mainham, Clane. First Lieutenant, Mainham Company, pre-Truce.
- Connor, John. Firmount, Clane. Clane Company, pre-Truce.
- Delaney, James. Mainham, Clane. A member of Mainham Company, pre-Truce.
- Dunne, Patrick. The Forge, Mainham, Clane. He became OC Mainham Company on its formation in 1920; also was OC 4th Battalion, Irish Republican Police.
- Dunne, William. The Forge, Mainham, Clane. Mainham Company, pre-Truce.
- Flanagan, James. Mainham, Clane. Mainham Company, pre-Truce.
- Garvey, Thomas. Mainham, Clane. Mainham Company, pre-Truce.
- Greene, Jack. Loughbollard, Clane. OC Clane Company, pre-Truce.
- Merriman, Bill. Clane. Sinn Féin election candidate.
- Nestor, Patrick. Mainham, Clane. Mainham Company, pre-Truce.
- Reilly, John 'Jack.' Born circa 1902, from Mooretown, Balraheen. Clane and Mainham Company, pre-Truce. He joined the National Army in Trim, Co. Meath, on 10 March 1922.
- Sammon, Michael 'Mick.' Born circa 1895, from Mainham, Clane, he practised as a solicitor in Celbridge. He was arrested in September 1918 after reading the Sinn Féin Manifesto after Mass, in Kilcullen, and was sentenced to one month

imprisonment. An All-Ireland football medal winner with Kildare in the 1919 final, he also played for the Dublin teams, Hibernian Knights and Kickhams. He was the referee at Croke Park on 21 November 1920, Bloody Sunday. Mick Sammon died on 24 April 1947, aged fifty-two, in Peamount Sanatorium, after a short illness, and was buried in the Abbey Cemetery, Clane.

- Short, Peter. Mainham, Clane. Adjutant Mainham Company, pre-Truce.
- Slevin, Edward. Clane. Mainham Company, pre-Truce.
- Slevin, James 'Jim.' Clane. Clane Company, pre-Truce. Naas Company, pre-Truce. Quartermaster, 1st Kildare Battalion, July 1922. Member of 1st Kildare Battalion Column formed in the summer of 1922. First Lieutenant Clane Company. Emigrated to England.
- Slevin, Peter. Clane. Mainham Company, pre-Truce.
- Slevin, Thomas 'Tom.' Clane. Clane Company, pre-Truce and also a member of Naas Company, pre-Truce. Member of 1st Kildare Battalion Column formed in the summer of 1922. First Lieutenant Clane Company.
- Slevin, Timothy. Clane. Clane Company, pre-Truce.
- Walsh, Anthony. Mainham, Clane. Mainham Company, pre-Truce.

There was little activity around Clane during the War of Independence by the local IRA. Mostly republicans concentrated on upholding the law due to the absence of the Royal Irish Constabulary and the crown court system and conducted sporadic raids on the post office for crown forces letters and documents. The two more notable happenings in the area were: the stopping of the Kildare Hunt Club Meet at Betaghstown, Clane, in 1919, led by Tom Harris, in protest at the continued detention of republican prisoners; on the night of 3-4 April 1920 Clane RIC Barracks was burned as part of the IRA's campaign to deny the use of vacated police barracks to the new British recruits filling up positions in the constabulary.



**Pat Dunne**



**Bill Dunne**



**Mick Sammon**



**Bill Merriman**

Clane Barracks was occupied by the wife of the sergeant during the day, although she and her children slept elsewhere at night. Because of the upsurge in republican activity isolated members of the RIC were withdrawn to bigger stations and the sergeant had been transferred to Celbridge Barracks the previous month.

## **ELIZABETH GRIFFITH, ACTRESS, PLAYWRIGHT AND WRITER**

*Jim Heffernan*

Although largely forgotten today Elizabeth Griffith, who died in 1793 at her son's home Millicent House near Clane, was celebrated in her day as an actress, playwright, novelist, translator and letter writer. She was born in Dublin on 11<sup>th</sup> October 1727 to Jane Foxcroft the second wife of Thomas Griffith, actor manager of the Smock Alley Theatre. In an era when women did not have access to the formal literary education available to gentlemen she was educated by her father in polite literature and French poetry and her early career as a professional actress was preparation for her later career as a writer.

### **Elizabeth the Actress**

Elizabeth was left penniless when her father died in 1744 leaving her to live with an elderly aunt in Abbey Street, Dublin. She had strong connections in the Dublin theatrical world and took up acting to support herself. On 11<sup>th</sup> October 1749 she debuted as Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet* in the Smock Alley Theatre opposite the proprietor Thomas Sheridan in the role of a rather elderly Romeo. Over the next two years she appeared as Cordelia in *Lear*, Calista in Nicholas Roe's *Fair Penitent*, Lucinda in Richard Steel's *Conscious Lovers* and Jane in Rowe's Tragedy *Jane Shore*. Elizabeth subsequently enjoyed limited success in London as an actress at Covent Garden performing minor roles from March 1753 to May 1755. However she never progressed to major roles in London probably because she had received her formal training under Thomas Sheridan whose acting style was considered stiff and old-fashioned by contemporary London audiences.

### **Elizabeth the Playwright**

Although her writing covered a wide range Elizabeth regarded herself as primarily a playwright. Her first play *Amana* (1764), based on an Oriental tale by John Hawkesworth is the least typical of her dramatic works. It is the only tragedy and the



only verse drama. In the play the more villainous male characters offer negative characterisations of the female sex which the play then shows are unfair libels on the sex. Perhaps discouraged by the unfavourable critical reception from the critics she turned to comedy writing a number of comedies of which five were performed. These were: *The Platonic Wife* (Drury Lane 1765), *The Double Mistake* (Covent Garden 1766), *The School for Rakes* in collaboration with David Garrick (Drury Lane 1769), and *The Times* (Drury Lane 1769). Her comedies all suggest the late 18<sup>th</sup> century imperial London of conspicuous consumption. They mix conventional comedy with, sentiment, topical satire and explicit advice to women. Domestic issues involving the proper conduct of husbands and wives which frequently appear in Georgian comedies were particularly important to Griffith. All but one of her plays, *The Wife in the Right* being the exception, were adapted from Continental work. As well as adaptation translation was an important part of her literary career. The worldliness of some of the French texts which she translated contrasts strongly with the domestic sentiment of her more original work.

While Griffith's writing is spritely and shows a sure sense of dramatic pace, critical reactions were extremely harsh. *The Platonic Wife* was not well received by the critics. The London theatrical establishment resented the audacity of a woman playwright's claim for respect and admiration and the presentation of women as serious moral beings. If Griffith was to be able to support her children as a playwright she would have to conform to contemporary sexual stereotypes rather than challenge the orthodoxy. A significant change of tone can be detected in Elizabeth's subsequent four plays in which she abandoned her concern for improving the status of intelligent women and created a host of female characters who are the passive and long-suffering companions of errant men. Elizabeth's second comedy *The Double Mistake*, performed at Covent Garden, was more successful. She was encouraged by this to pursue her ambition to work under the tutelage of the celebrated David Garrick playwright, actor and manager of Drury Lane Theatre. However Garrick, although well disposed

to women playwrights, had not liked *The Double Mistake* and his response to Elizabeth's overtures was not warm. She persisted in writing to him and eventually they collaborated in writing *The School for Rakes*. The enterprise proved difficult as the two strong willed artists argued over every detail of the writing and production. However the comedy was very successful running for thirteen nights in its first season and



**Elizabeth Griffith**

being revived for seven years. The difficult relationship between the two continued over the years and Elizabeth did not have another play produced there until *The Times* was produced there after Garrick was succeeded as manager by

Richard Brindley Sheridan son of her old friend Thomas Sheridan of Smock Alley

### **Other Writing**

Griffith wrote a number of novels including *The Delicate Distress* (1769), *The History of Lady Barton* (1771) and *The Story of Lady Juliana Harley* (1776). She published two well regarded non-fiction texts. *The Morality of Shakespeare's Comedy Illustrated* (1775) was a collection of Shakespeare's plays with Griffith's own commentaries about the morality of the plays. This work is considered significant as it is one of the first attempts at literary criticism by a woman. *Essays Addressed to Young Married Women* (1782), published posthumously in the United States as *Letters Addressed to Young Married Women* (1896) was a successful collection of prose collecting Griffith's thoughts on child rearing, wifely duty and financial balance.

As the primary breadwinner Elizabeth earned money for her family by translation work, translating from French into English. Her work included predominantly memoirs and collections of letters by people such as Ninon de L'Enclos, Marie Marguerite Marquise de Caylus and Voltaire. She also translated some French novels, such as *The Princess of Cleves: An Historical Novel* by Marie-Madeline, Comtesse de La Fayette.

### **Henry and Frances**

Although Elizabeth produced an enormous quantity of work her other writings never eclipsed in public eyes the letters of Henry and Frances which had made her and her husband famous.

On 12<sup>th</sup> May 1746 Elizabeth had met Richard Griffith (no relation) an impoverished gentleman living at that time at Maidenhall, County Kilkenny, who was something of a libertine. Thus commenced a correspondence between the couple lasting many years. Richard's father wanted his son to 'marry money' as he himself had done and for five years

Richard attempted to persuade Elizabeth to become his mistress while Elizabeth steadfastly held out for marriage. At one point Elizabeth writes: *I am not so unreasonable to take it ill, that you do not offer what, I know, is not, at present, within your Power and Prudence; but I really have great Reason to resent, that you should attempt to offer me anything short of it.* Ultimately after five years of correspondence alternately affectionate and embittered the couple married secretly in Dublin with Elizabeth prudently choosing her friend Lady Orrery wife of John Boyle 5<sup>th</sup> Earl of Orrery as a witness. As Richard was unable for a time to reveal his marriage to his father the couple initially did not live together and were subsequently living apart at many periods during their marriage and so the voluminous correspondence continued. The couple's financial situation deteriorated when the linen manufactory Richard set up on his farm ran into difficulty and in 1753, a year after the birth of her son Richard, Elizabeth moved to London to earn a living joining the Covent Garden Company. She was forced to quit the stage in 1755 on becoming pregnant with a daughter Catherine and a year later her husband's linen enterprise collapsed leaving him with heavy debts.

In dire financial straits the couple decided to publish their courtship letters under fictional names. The publication of *A Series of Genuine Letters between Henry and Frances* by public subscription in 1757 was a literary sensation. Presented as an unedited collection of the letters written during the couple's five year courtship the letters were probably slightly revised for publication. 'Frances' was beloved by the public for her gentleness and virtue and Elizabeth exploited her reputation by presenting herself publicly as the meek, ladylike 'Frances' while behaving professionally with tenacity and determination. According to Susan Staves the advertised 'genuineness' of the letters encouraged eighteenth-century readers to believe in the possibility of sentiment in everyday life and provided for some women readers a useful model of the intelligent, reflective woman. The young writer Fanny Burney claimed to like the *Genuine Letters* better than *The Vicar of Wakefield* writing in her diary, *Those letters are Doubly pleasing, charming to me,*

*for being genuine-they have increased my relish for minute heartfelt writing, and encouraged me in my attempt to give an opinion of the books I read.* The couple were often separated during their marriage resulting in further correspondence between them which was subsequently published in four additional volumes. Notwithstanding the polite and loving tone of the letters the marriage seems to have been troubled, Elizabeth was becoming a successful author on her own and Richard, a less accomplished author, appears to have been jealous of his wife's growing fame. According to the poet Anna Seward, who had met the couple in 1776 when they visited Richard's brother a military officer who was stationed in Lichfield, Richard had subsequently eloped with an heiress and the couple had separated.

Their son Richard, through the influence of friends of Elizabeth in London, had obtained a highly lucrative position in India with the East India Company. Returning to England in 1780 a very wealthy man Richard purchased Millicent House, Clane. Richard and Elizabeth separately retired to Millicent in the early 1780s. Her persistent lobbying over a period of twelve years for support and the large body of translation work she undertook suggest that she was a hard-bitten professional author. However it must have been a relief to her to spend the last decade of her life at Millicent relieved of the burden of having to support her family. Richard died at Millicent in 1788 and Elizabeth in 1793. Ironically in Richard's obituary in the *Gentleman's Journal and Literary Chronicle* he was named as 'Henry'.

Elizabeth's obituary in the *Gentlemen's Magazine* noted 'her excellent composition intended to reach the heart' and quoted an early feminist poem *The Female Advocate* by Mary Scott to call her 'A second Sappho with a purer flame'.

With few early advantages other than her family's connection with the Dublin theatrical world and beset with financial difficulties throughout her life she preserved her self-respect and made herself a contemporary female literary celebrity.

The obituary for Elizabeth Griffith in *The Bury and Norwich Post* of 23<sup>rd</sup> January 1793. 'Mr Griffith of this city' is her brother Richard.

On the 5th inst. died at Millicent, in Ireland, Mrs. Griffith, relict of the late Richard Griffith, Esq. and sister to Mr. Griffith, of this city. This lady was not more celebrated for the brilliancy and refinement of her genius in the republic of letters, than she was admired and beloved in private life for the vivacity of her wit, and the benignity of her heart. She is regretted by a numerous acquaintance—but she is deeply lamented by those near friends and relations who had a more intimate knowledge of her worth, and who at once admired her talents, and revered her virtues. Mrs. Griffith maintained a very high literary character for several years in England, and was justly stiled in the beautiful poem of *The Female Advocates*, “A second Sappho with a purer flame.” She was authoress of the letters of Frances, in the collection of original letters of Henry and Frances, and of some novels which have obtained considerable celebrity, among others *The Delicate Distress*, *The History of Lady Barton*, &c. &c. Mrs. Griffith was also a very successful dramatic writer, having produced several comedies, which were performed with uncommon applause in the London theatres. One of these, the *School for Rakes*, may be deemed an English classic, being unrivalled in elegance of diction and elevation of sentiment. Her last publication was *Advice addressed to Young Married Women*, which ran through several editions, and thus she closed the honourable career of genius devoted to virtue, whose aim was to refine the manners and to mend the heart.

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## TALES OF THE “GOOD PEOPLE”

*John Noonan*

**The Fairy Path:** in travelling from one of their abodes to another the good people go along regular paths. And if anybody should dare to obstruct a fairy path, he would soon feel the disapproval of its owners. Worst of all was to build a house on a fairy path, for all sorts of ill-fortune plagued the unlucky occupants, from constant and horrible noises in the night to bodily injury to man and beast. The wise man made sure to select the site of his house with this in mind. One method was to go to the site on a windy day and throw one’s hat in the air. Then the good people recognised the honest desire to placate them, and blew the hat along to a site which did not hamper their movements, and there the house was built. Of course, we have all seen the whirlwind, and know that the wind-fairies – the *sidhe gaoithe* – were out on their rambles.

**Moll Anthony:** close to the Hill of Allen there is a lesser slope called the Hill of Grange. A small house clinging to its side was the home of Moll Anthony. One of the many stories told about Moll is about how a boy once met a funeral and as was the custom, turned to walk some of the way behind the coffin, even helping to carry it.

When the funeral came back to the boy’s own gate the pallbearers left down the coffin. The boy ran to tell his mother and when they both came back out the coffin was still there but the mourners were gone. The lid was unscrewed and a young girl stepped from within. She lived with the family taking the mother’s name, Mary. When she and the boy James grew up, they married.

One day the young wife asked James to bring her with him to the fair in Castledermot. During the day an old farmer remarked to James that his bride was ‘the spit’ of his own daughter, who was buried many years before. The old farmer’s wife agreed and quoted the date of their daughter’s death. Mary readily admitted it, for as the old farmer’s wife ordered her to

pull down the top of her dress she said, “it’s all right mother, the raspberry mark is still on my shoulder.” Those who held Moll Anthony to be in league with the ‘good people’ believe her to have been that girl, Mary.

**Lone Bush:** another haunt of the good people is the lone bush. Nearly always a hawthorn bush, it stands alone in the field; the cattle graze around it but do not harm it and the good people dance and play around it all night. And woe betide the foolish man who cuts down a fairy thorn. Sometimes he gets a fair warning; the axe is lifted to strike when he sees his house on fire and off home he runs to find that it is a false alarm. Often the good people are kind enough to give him a second chance and off he runs again to save his house, to find it unharmed. But the third time he ignores them and chops down the bush, and he finds his house and all the byres and sheds lying in ashes when he returns home. Or the axe skids off the tree and makes a horrible gash in his leg. Or he puts a piece of the bush on the fire and it flares up and burns him. Or his crops fail and his livestock dies. And so the lone bushes still stand in many a field today.



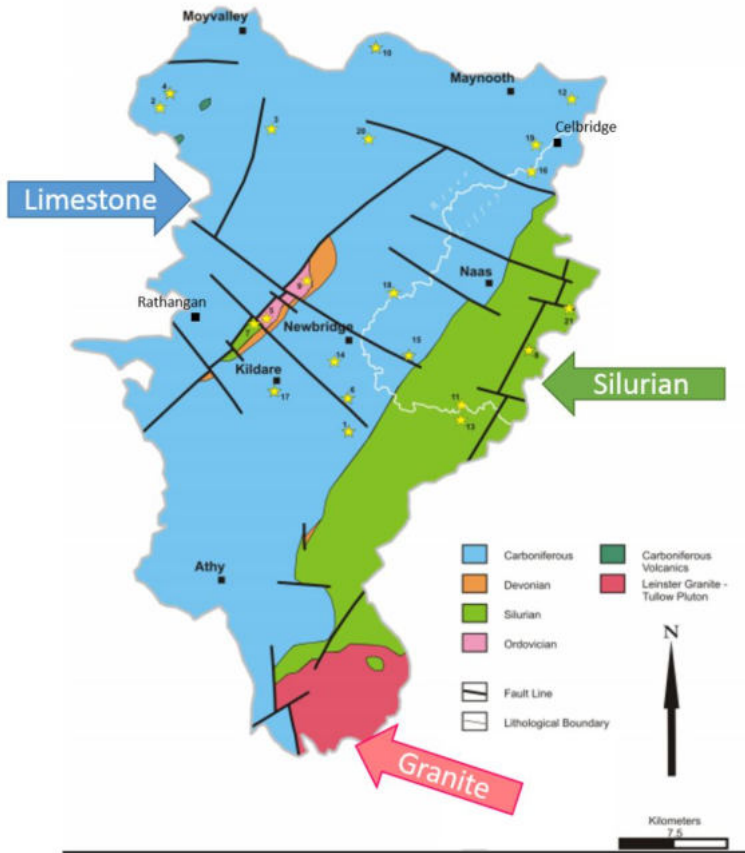
*The above article by the late John Noonan was published in The Kildare Nationalist in December 2010 as part of the ‘Looking Back’ series.*



# THERE'S GOLD IN THEM THAR HILLS

Nick Coy

This often used expression first appeared in Mark Twain's 1892 novel *The American Claimant*. It was already a misquote from its original version which was voiced in an effort to prevent American fortune seekers from heading to California during the gold rush of 1849. It was certainly not written for the attention of Kildare gold prospectors and the low lying hills of their beloved county, but, strange as it might seem, it could have been.



Kildare Geology

Some three years before the publication of Twain's novel, The Royal Geological Society of Ireland produced Volume VIII (1885-1889) of its Journal. The Journal includes a listing of the known mineral resources of Ireland. Under 'County Kildare' it states "the county in general is covered by drift or bog and only in a few places have mineral veins been discovered". One of those places is Dunmurry near Kildare town where copper and iron were discovered in Ordovician rocks in 1786. There is also another reference to lead mining at Wheatfield near Celbridge in 1829. It also states that no gold was found in the county, even though tradition had it that ancient gold placers (gravels) were worked near Ballymore Eustace.

The copper discovered at Dunmurry was first mentioned in an account by a Mr. T J Rawson in 1807. He describes a "copper mine" at Dunmurry Hill (it should probably have read Grange Hill) on the edge of the townland of Cannonstown, north of Kildare Town. The discovery was made on the lands of the Duke of Leinster in 1786, while workmen were involved in digging for gravel. Nothing much seems to have happened there for the next 170 years or so, until 1955 when the Rev. T. Kennedy of Rathangan made representations to the Geological Survey of Ireland, requesting an examination of the site. His request seems to have worked, as geologists from the survey set out to examine the old "mine" dumps which lay on the southern slope of Grange Hill, near the western corner of Cannonstown. There were five small dumps, each accompanied by a shallow depression resembling the possible site of an old shaft or pit. The geologists found some low grade chalcopyrite (copper) mineralisation, but little else. The geological interpretation of the site suggested that the copper mineral was associated with a small fault, of little consequence. Nothing further was done.

The other significant reference by the RGS was at Wheatfield, three miles SSW of Celbridge on the bank of the Grand Canal. A deposit of galena (lead sulphide) with some zinc appears to have been worked about 1828 by the Royal Irish Mining Company. It is reported that the company "had erected

considerable works” but the mine appears to have been worked out by 1845. (Cole 1922) Robert Kane in 1845 stated that there was “a large deposit of pure galena worked in a flooded quarry”. The quarry is shown and marked as a “Lead Mine” on the first series of the OS six inch sheet. The site, which is beside the canal side entrance to Lyons estate, was reclaimed in later years and is now a farm yard.

Other than base metals, the county has a significant range of other extractive natural resources. Rock quarrying, sand and gravel and brick clay extraction took place in a number of areas.

**Clays** of glacial origin provided raw material for two of the more important brick manufacturing industries in the county and indeed in the country as a whole. The Athy Brick Company and the Ballysax Brickworks near Kildare were major providers of bricks up to the 1930s (Mc Ardle 1977) At the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century brick making in Athy was well established and large quantities of bricks were wrought from the clay occurring in the river flats north of the town and transported to Dublin via the Grand Canal. They were used mainly in the Dublin suburbs particularly Rathmines and Rathgar although some facing bricks were also used in the old Theatre Royal. Brick manufacturing in Athy went into decline and finally ceased in the early 1950s. The Ballysax Brick and Tile Company produced red or yellow–white bricks up to the 1930s.

**Rock** extraction also forms a significant part of the county’s natural resource output with Allen Quarry for example producing up to 500,000 tons of rock (Andesite) annually. (Directory of Quarries 1995) It is also of interest to note that a 19<sup>th</sup> century report by the eminent geologist George Kinahan states that at the Hill of Allen “grits were formerly quarried for the manufacture of Millstones.” Similarly, millstones were quarried in a red conglomerate at Red Hill. While one might normally associate granite with counties Dublin, Wicklow and Carlow, it might come as a surprise to learn that a fine-grained

grey granite was quarried at Dairy Farm, south of Castledermot. It was considered of such good quality that it was sent to Dublin for columns. The columns and other stone work in the portico of the Presbyterian Church in Arran Quay are said to have been wrought out of this stone. (Scientific Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy)

**Sand and gravel** has been extracted from pits at Coughlanstown, Hempstown, Walshestown and Punchestown in the east of the county and also at Ballysax and Grangeclare.

**Base metals**, while the earlier mineral discoveries in Kildare are quite modest, one has to consider that our forefathers could only mine or quarry what they could see at surface. As County Kildare is largely “covered by drift or bog”, often up to great depths, what lay below was impossible to see. New mineral exploration methods involving geochemistry and geophysics, which allowed prospectors to “see” below the surface, were developed during the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. After the discovery of Tynagh Mine in the early sixties, mineral exploration expanded across the country, mainly in areas underlain by Carboniferous Limestone. As a consequence County Kildare became an area of great interest to mining companies.

In the late 1960s a major target was discovered at Harberton Bridge, on the Grand Canal, near Robertstown. Drilling started in 1975 and by 1988 four zones of mineralisation had been outlined at depth, one of which contained over 4.5 million tons containing over 8.2% zinc/lead. (Oliver Resources Annual Report 1988) Unfortunately, due to the complex nature of the orebody and its depth from surface, the project was abandoned. Another significant target was discovered at Rickardstown outside Newbridge in 1974. Under soils and gravels which are up to sixty metres in depth in places, zinc/lead mineralisation was discovered, some at depths up to 196 metres below surface. Sufficient tonnage and grade could not be confirmed so this project too was abandoned. However there are a number of other interesting mineral prospects in the county and the search goes on.

**Gold**, which is mentioned in the title, made its first confirmed appearance in the county in the 1990s. A man from Naas was examining an area in the east of the county using a metal detector when he discovered gold nuggets in the overburden. The gold was the most spectacular found in Ireland since the



**Gold-Quartz Nugget**

Wicklow gold rush in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. Further exploration work in that area however failed to find the bedrock source of the gold. It is also significant that the location of the Kildare discovery is not so far removed from that mentioned in the Annals of the Four Masters where it is claimed that gold was smelted in the forests to the east of the River Liffey by Luchadan. It is also not too distant from the site where a set of bronze age goldsmith's tools was discovered on the banks of the Liffey at Bishopland. So for County Kildare, one can absolutely say “there's gold in them thar hills”

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## CLANE'S WW1 MILITARY AUXILIARY HOSPITAL

*Pat Given*

One hundred years ago, during Spring 1917, a British Military Auxiliary Hospital was established in Firmount House, Clane. In the background to this development lies a short but interesting history which deserves recording. Many similar, and now almost-forgotten auxiliary hospitals were operational or in the course of being set-up in many other parts of Ireland at the same time. The story of Clane is recounted here in the hope that it may drive others to uncover and record the history of some of the many such establishments in Ireland.



**Clane's Auxiliary Military Hospital in February 1918**

During the First World War on 4 August 1914, the British Red Cross, acting in collaboration with the Order of St John formed what was known as the Joint War Committee. Working together under the universally recognised symbol of the Red Cross and by combining their resources this new organisation worked to supply medical services to the British army at home and abroad. In particular, the organisation of 'auxiliary

hospitals' was an important part of this work. The objective of these hospitals was to provide convalescent homes for wounded servicemen. In England, at the commencement of hostilities, the Joint War Committee and the British War Office received a huge volume of offers of buildings to be used as such hospitals. The offers included schools, large premises, town halls, and houses in both town and country. Those accepted as suitable were designated as Auxiliary Hospitals and were attached to Central Military hospitals. These latter hospitals directed the logistics of handling the patients and their movements etc. while the servicemen remained under control of the military authorities.

Providing a total of 3,000 beds, these hospitals had a standard organisational structure of a commandant, a quartermaster, a matron, and members of the local VAD organisation. Local women also worked part-time on a volunteer basis although such roles as cook were usually paid. Local doctors regularly volunteered for service in such institutions. The VAD, or Voluntary Aid Detachment, consisted of members of the local Red Cross or Order of St. John who were specially trained for such roles in the period since the start of the war. Women were trained and were considered qualified to act as VADs by passing examinations in subjects such as first aid, hygiene, home nursing while men were trained in roles such as stretcher bearing. Specialist training could include the ability to use X-ray machines for the more talented. VADs served in England, France, Malta, and Egypt from early 1915 and very soon thereafter their roles were extended to include transport orderlies, hospital orderlies, management of Red Cross working parties making supplies such as blankets, swabs, splints etc.

Because of the nature of the World War 1 combat the number of casualties suffered by the British forces was extremely high and this feature was a factor right from the start of hostilities. Soon wounded were arriving home to all parts of the United Kingdom, which then, of course, included all Ireland. The facilities available to the British forces at this time consisted of

a number of distinct hospital types. For instance, many British garrisons already had military hospitals attached to them. The Curragh Camp in Kildare and Portobello barracks in Dublin were amongst a number of military establishments in Ireland which already had military hospitals. Some of these had been in existence since the Crimea days and had subsequently been used in the Boer War. In England, the Territorial Forces set up and operated hospitals sometimes in existing hospitals or alternatively in large buildings which had already been identified in advance of the war. A case in point was the Great Hall in the University of Birmingham. Some had already been used prior to the war as training centres and with the coming of the war they were mobilised for use as hospitals in August 1914. As might be expected, available land adjacent to army bases was sometimes acquired and used as the site for the building of hospitals. In addition, as outlined, numerous public and private buildings such as large private houses, were used as small hospitals. Although termed Convalescent Hospitals their purpose was to reserve available (and scarce) beds in the larger hospitals for the most seriously injured while also having the advantage of simultaneously keeping control on recovering military personnel. Many of the military hospitals were identified as specialist units. These included hospitals which specialised in treating mental disorder resulting from harrowing war experiences and which was then termed 'shell-shock' but is now generally re-categorised as 'post-traumatic stress'. Other specialist hospitals treated limbless men, while others specialised in neurological, orthopaedic, cardiac, typhoid or STD disorders. With regard to the timing of the establishment of the Irish hospitals, the earliest published reference which I have traced is a photograph taken in Blarney, co. Cork in August 1914, showing 'wounded soldiers' undergoing treatment. If the soldiers are victims of WW1, it means that Ireland was accepting wounded military right from the start of hostilities and since the nurse is pictured with the Red Cross emblem, perhaps the men were hospitalised in St. Ann's itself, which was an extensive Victorian Turkish Bath centre in Blarney since the 1840s.





**Injured military in Blarney, co. Cork**

*The Irish Examiner* of 17 Dec. 1914 carried a news item that a deputation had gone to London to meet the War Office to discuss rumours in Dublin that it was proposed to set up a hospital for wounded soldiers in Dublin Castle. The same report also quoted *The Daily Telegraph* as stating that the proposal had already been vetoed. However, on Thursday, 28 Jan 1915 *The Irish Examiner* reported that on the previous afternoon, the inauguration of the Dublin Castle Red Cross Hospital was the occasion of an impressive ceremony in St. Patrick's Hall in the Castle.

During the opening address the Lord Lieutenant, Lord Aberdeen, referred to the controversy regarding the use of the Dublin Castle as a hospital and he remarked that the project was a 'fait accompli' and join in supporting it. He also admired the equipment and facilities and he said that the historic hall in which they were gathered would not form part of the hospital but would be used as a recreation facility for the soldiers.

Dublin Castle Red Cross Hospital went on to become, perhaps one of the better known Auxiliary Military Hospitals in Ireland. *The Belfast Newsletter* of Saturday 3 May 1916 reported that 'there were 67 wounded soldiers from France in Dublin Castle Hospital on Easter Monday when the rebels made their futile

attack upon the Castle'. The report outlined the difficulties of Easter Week in the hospital 'for five days and nights Dr Carew the medical superintendent, had not changed his clothes... Surgeons Stokes and Tobin...the nursing staff...members of the Voluntary Aid Detachment...had little or no rest. One hundred and eighteen soldiers were brought in, in addition thirty-four wounded of the Sinn Fein [sic] party, twenty civilians, and two police constables were treated ... thirty-six deaths occurred. All these and thirty from other hospitals were interred in the garden at the rear of the Castle'. We now know that amongst the wounded was James Connolly who was later executed at Kilmainham.



**Dublin Castle Red Cross Hospital**

By February 1918 Dublin Castle Red Cross Hospital had received a total of 4710 casualties, made up of 563 Officers and 4,147 NCOs and men. As we have outlined, the Dublin Castle Auxiliary Military Hospital was not unique to Ireland. *The Westmeath Examiner* of Monday 26 February 1917 reported that eleven wounded non-commissioned officers and men had arrived at the new Auxiliary Red Cross Hospital at Bloomfield outside Mullingar. A further twenty-five to thirty men were expected during the following week. The newspaper reported that Westmeath was one of the first Irish counties to

start an institution of this kind. Mrs. Locke of the Kilbeggan distilling family was said to be the originator of the idea while Lieutenant Colonel C. Howard Bury of Belvedere ‘promptly offered’ Bloomfield House for the purpose. Mrs. Locke had previous experience having been in charge ‘for the French Government for two years of the present war of the Hospital-du-Casino in France’. The paper also reported that the Red Cross had presented a ‘splendid new motor car to Mrs Locke for use by the hospital. Another Auxiliary Military Hospital which provided valuable services to the wounded of WW1, operated in the Hermitage at Lucan Co. Dublin. This hospital specialised in the care of ‘shell-shocked’ casualties.



**Patients and Staff at the Hermitage Military Hospital, Lucan**

In Kildare, the Military Authorities issued an ‘urgent request’ for the establishment of a ‘convalescent home’ for wounded soldiers of that county. As a result of this request in February 1917 a public meeting was held to discuss the subject. Moorefield in Newbridge was offered free of rent by Miss Moore as suitable accommodation for the new hospital and Craddockstown was also mentioned. Major Henry offered Firmount at a rent of £150 per year ‘for officers’. It was made clear that any accommodation offered should be available within a fortnight and that all three locations be inspected for

availability and suitability before the next meeting. At a subsequent public meeting, held in the Courthouse Naas on 5 March 1917 with the earl of Mayo in the chair, it was announced that Firmount had been chosen as the location for the new facility 'at a rent agreed with Major Henry'. In June 1917, the setting up of a number of 'War Hospitals' was announced and Firmount, affiliated to the Curragh Military Hospital, was the chosen site for county Kildare while Belrath at Kells was the Meath location and, as we have seen, Bloomfield House served the same purpose in county Westmeath. Firmount Auxiliary Military Hospital was formally opened on 19 May 1917 by General Sir Bryan Mahon. 'The house contains eight wards, besides accommodation for the [ten] staff, has an excellent water supply and an acetylene gas plant. It has been connected by the Royal Engineers to the telephone system (No. 12, Naas)'. In total, forty beds for World War I wounded soldiers and a staff of ten were accommodated in Firmount House until the end of the war in November 1918. Dr Donel [sic] Browne, Naas was the Commandant of Firmount and his senior officer was Col. O'Sullivan R.A.M.C who was Senior Medical Officer at the Curragh. Dr. O'Grady of Clane was the visiting physician, while there were two consulting surgeons, Major W.de C. Wheeler F.R.C.S. and Prof. Edward Taylor F.R.C.S. while Major G. Moorhead was the consulting physician.

The hospital was partially funded by local voluntary contributions which included gifts of fruit, vegetables, eggs, milk etc. Notices were inserted in the local papers showing the list of such donations received each month and even included the names of the donors. Fetes, with the band of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers in attendance, tennis tournaments, and sometimes 'cinematograph programmes,' supplemented the finances of the hospital. Local families participated in entertaining the hospital staff and employees:

At Longtown, Sallins, the residence of Mr. and Mrs. Sweetman an enjoyable entertainment was given on New Year's Day to the patients and staff of Firmount Military Auxiliary Hospital

and the employees and their families on the estate at Longtown. In the spacious drawing-room an excellent cinematograph programme was given, interspaced at intervals with songs. During the interval tea was served in the dining-room, everyone partaking of the good things provided for them...

### LIST OF GIFTS FOR NOVEMBER

Mrs. Williams, illustrated papers, vegetables; Canon and Mrs. Craig, illustrated papers, milk, vegetables; Mrs. Lyncaster Penrhyn, illustrated papers; Mrs. Wemyss, illustrated papers; Mrs. Gill, eggs, apples; Mrs. Graham, apples; Mrs. Sweetman, vegetables; potatoes; Colonel and Mrs. St. Leger Moore, vegetables; potatoes; Mrs. Losty, vegetables, potatoes; Baroness de Robeck, vegetables; Countess of Mayo, vegetables, tobacco; Miss Browne, cabbages; Mrs. Hope Johnston, vegetables, papers; Miss Sherlock, fruit, vegetables; Mrs. Mansfield, vegetables; Mr. O'Connor (Mylerstown), potatoes.

The Matron will be most grateful for gifts of turkeys, plum puddings, apples, oranges, crackers, sweets, etc., for Christmas Day. Parcels may be left at Miss Dowling's, 50, South Main street, and Mr. M'Dermott's, North Main street, Naas, or at Sallins Station. (a)

Example of a monthly acknowledgement of donations  
*Kildare Observer* 14 December, 1918

In June 1918 and when speaking at a Fete held in the grounds of the hospital the earl of Mayo provided some interesting facts about Firmount. The hospital had received its first patients on 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1917 when twenty-five patients were sent there from the Curragh hospital—'with which hospital they were affiliated'. The earl reported that since then the hospital had always been full there being an average of thirty-eight patients every day. Firmount served both Garrison forces and members of the Expeditionary Forces while the average stay in the hospital was

three weeks – ‘except in the case of gassing or chronic cases’. In the first year of operation, 390 soldiers were treated without the occurrence of any deaths and of these patients, 152 had been men of the expeditionary forces while 238 were garrison cases. The earl mentioned that ‘the behavior of the men at Firmount had been good and only on one occasion had they ventured to sample their native vintage at Clane’. Amongst those thanked on the occasion was the matron, Miss Carr, the VADs who voluntarily did such onerous work and the Naas Guild who mended clothes etc. It was mentioned that the cook and her helper as well as performing their other duties repaired the men’s socks. The sports events on that June day included a pillow fight, sack race, ‘slash the goose’, cock-fight, hat-trimming and three-legged race. Pensioner Mahony and Trooper Cummins of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Scottish Horse featured as winners in a number of events.

When the Military Auxiliary Hospital at Firmount closed on 15 February 1919 donors of furniture were given the opportunity of having their items returned or auctioned for charity. The published report of a meeting of the Naas Board of Guardians carried in the *Kildare Observer* on 12 April 1919, the Master stated that he had received through Dr D. Browne of Firmount Convalescent Hospital ‘several useful articles for use in the work-house’. The *Kildare Observer* on 3 May 1919 carried an advertisement announcing the ‘clearance sale of high-class antique and modern furniture and appointments’ to be held at Firmount on 14 May 1919. Finally, a meeting of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers Repatriated Prisoners’ of War Committee Mr. A. Jameson (presiding) had a resolution adopted expressing thanks to the Executive Committee of the Firmount Auxiliary Hospital, Kildare, for £469 sent to the committee ‘to be earmarked for Co. Kildare cases’. Firmount’s justifiably proud role as a Military Auxiliary Hospital had well and truly ended, but the important role it played during those difficult times should not be forgotten in this centenary year of the hospital’s establishment in 1917.

## IN THE WILDS OF ARKANSAS – THE SISTERS OF MERCY IN LITTLE ROCK

*Anne Breen*

The story of the Sisters of Mercy in Kildare, their coming to Naas back in 1839 and the huge contribution they have made over the years to the education and welfare of the community is an interesting one. Although their story is well documented and they continue to provide an education to the young people of Naas, less is known of the heroic and pioneering spirit shown by a small group of Mercy Nuns who, in the 1800s, blazed their own personal trail helping the poor and disadvantaged in the wilds of Indian Territory in the state of Arkansas, USA. This all started in 1850 but it is worth looking at the background to the arrival of the Mercy sisters and the establishment of their foundation in Naas.

In 1824 the P.P. of Naas, Fr. Gerald Doyle attempted to establish a convent in Naas but was refused by the then Bishop, Dr. Doyle JKL, due to the fragile financial position of the parish at that time. Fr. Doyle was a man with great determination; he was also a great friend of Catherine McAuley and was not for giving up easily. So in 1835 Fr. Doyle again applied, this time to Dr. Francis Haly, the Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin for the Sisters of Mercy for Naas. This time the bishop referred him to Sr. Francis Warde of Carlow and to Sr. Catherine McAuley. Catherine was delighted to have Carlow send out a new foundation to Naas and when Francis wrote to her in February 1839 about Naas, Catherine was jubilant. Extract from a letter:

*I cannot attempt to describe the joy your letter afforded me. I fear I am in danger of getting a little jealous. Poor Baggot Street is outdone if you make a foundation already.*

Catherine continued to help Francis Warde to prepare for Naas. Another extract from the same letter:

*We hear Naas is beautiful ... the garden laid out in the neatest style and Fr. Doyle will have none but the Sisters of Mercy. I long to hear that it is determined and who is to go.*

Catherine visited Carlow in 1839 when she and Francis Warde completed plans for Naas. As soon as she returned to Baggot Street, she wrote to Francis:

*While the stage horses were changing in Naas we looked in at the sweet little convent from our carriage windows. It is a nice spot. The walks and shrubs so neatly arranged.*

Obviously Fr. Doyle was preparing for the sisters. Although Catherine McAuley could not be present at the opening of Naas she was deeply interested in the first off-shoot from a provincial convent. On a mid afternoon in September 1839 Francis Warde left Carlow for Naas with Sr. Josephine Trenor, the first superior, who had come with her from Baggot Street as a novice and Sr. Agnes Greene, the first postulant from Carlow. Her father was Major General Joe Greene, a liberal Protestant stationed in the barracks in Naas in the British services at the time she entered the convent in 1837. Her name was Rebecca. Sr. Catherine Meagher, the second to enter in Carlow, also came. She was a well to do widow. These three sisters remained in Naas and Sr. Francis Warde and Sr. Angela Johnston stayed with them until the first difficulties were overcome. Dr. Andrew Fitzgerald (President of Carlow College) came with the sisters to Naas in Bishop Haly's own carriage.

The convent was very poor, an old converted school building with a small parlour, a reception room, a kitchen and only five of the bedrooms had windows. On Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> Sept. the feast of Our Lady of Mercy, Fr. Doyle celebrated Mass and blessed the convent with the name of St. Mary's. An old chapel nearby - Moat area - was given to the sisters for a school. Francis began renovating at once. In October 1840 she opened a small school for middle class girls and a total of fifteen students enrolled. Francis stayed in Naas until most of the major



obstacles were overcome. The sisters soon became engaged in teaching poor and middle class children, in instructing adults and caring for the sick, the poor and the prisoners.

Naas had many obstacles to overcome in establishing the Mercy Apostolate. A military barracks in the town created many problems with teenage girls. The growth of the Mercy foundation was slow. "Poor Naas", Catherine McAuley said, "is like the little chicken which belongs to the clutch called creepy crawly. I wish it would take start ..... It has been a little martyrdom for my poor Sr. Josephine." Catherine McAuley kept up a pleasant correspondence with her sisters in Naas. In 1840 Sr. Josephine sent her turkey eggs from Naas and she gratefully acknowledged them. Frs. Doyle and Hume were pastors in Naas at the time. They took a continual interest in the sisters' progress. When either was in Dublin they called to Baggot Street to report on Naas. What happened next is a unique story of how the human spirit can triumph over great adversity, hardship and deprivation.



**The Convent of Mercy Naas**

It was Dr. Andrew Byrne, Bishop of Little Rock Arkansas, who first came to Ireland in search of the Sisters of Mercy to come to Little Rock. Dr. Byrne, an enthusiastic supporter of the Sisters, had volunteered to work in America and after spells in the Carolinas and New York was given the diocese of Little Rock, comprising the state of Arkansas and the Cherokee and Choctaw nations in the 'Indian Territory'. The houses in America were unable to supply any nuns at that time so he repaired to the Island of Saints in search of suitable candidates. Aware that there was a fine working community in Naas, Mother M. Vincent Whitty, one of the most distinguished women of the order made a visit to Naas to encourage the sisters to aid this great work in America. Everyone was willing to brave the dangers of the ocean and the still greater perils of western life. Superiors however, limited the number of missionary sisters to four. Sr. Teresa Farrell, a native of Naas, was chosen as Superior. She had joined the Sisters in 1841 and it is noteworthy that Daniel O'Connell attended her profession in Naas. This may account for Daniel O'Connell's coffee pot being in the Naas community. She was joined by three other Sisters, Sr. Agnes Greene, Sr. de Sales O'Keeffe and Sr. Stanislaus Farrell. The bishop thought the four sisters were not enough for the work he had planned and he succeeded in recruiting eight postulants from the rest of the country.

The courageous band left Naas in November 1850 and sailed from Dublin on 30<sup>th</sup> November on the good ship *John O'Toole*. It was a bright and beautiful winter day, on the feast of St. Andrew, the patron of the Bishop, that the missionary party saw "the last glimpse of Erin". Little did they know the perilous journey that lay ahead. A storm blew up, the vessel tossed and rocked at a fearful rate and was driven by contrary winds to the shores of Scotland and about 800 miles off her direct course. They all feared for their lives as the crew declared they had never passed through such a series of tempests before. Eventually a calm followed and the rest of the journey was pleasant. On Christmas Day 1850 Dr. Byrne said Mass on board. The fervid devotion and respectful demeanour of the sailors and emigrants were truly touching and the sisters

sang “Adeste Fideles” which was never more sweetly and harmoniously rendered than on that rare and solemn occasion of Christmas Day in mid-ocean. They finally reached New Orleans, by happy coincidence, on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 1851 the feast of the Espousals of the Blessed Virgin, a day of special devotion in their order. Whilst in New Orleans they were looked after by the Ursuline Sisters and stayed in their beautiful Ursuline Convent. They then took passage on the steamer “Pontiac”, one of the floating palaces which are now little more than a memory, and continued their journey up the winding Mississippi. On the 6<sup>th</sup> February 1851 the Sisters finally reached their own wild home in Little Rock. It should be remembered that Naas was one of the first Irish Houses to send a colony of Sisters to America.

When they arrived in Little Rock, they were met by Bishop John O’Reilly and crowds of people gathered to join them. There was no convent ready for them when they arrived. The Vicar-General, whose job it was to see that a convent was built, died during Dr. Byrne’s absence and things were at a standstill. Dr. Byrne took the sisters to his own house which was a one story building. The Bishop’s house adjoined the cathedral where the sisters heard Mass and made their spiritual exercises every day. The sisters lost no time in getting on with their works of mercy – the visitation of the sick and the instruction of adults which became duties of almost hourly recurrence. Their religious garb was a source of great amusement to the people, who had never before, seen anything like it. They opened a school in a house opposite the church with thirty five children – mostly non-Catholic. Then a brick edifice, formally a meeting house, was purchased for a school and soon numbers swelled to hundreds. On March 10<sup>th</sup> Margaret Fitzpatrick, an Irish girl, became their first postulant. Her accomplishments and wealth were a great asset to the community. The sisters remained with the bishop until the convent was built in November 1851. The bishop blessed it and it was dedicated to Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception. The fact that so many non-Catholics were attending the school run by the sisters did, initially, arouse the ire of some sectarian clergy but that soon



**St Mary's Convent Arkansas circa 1851**

subsided in the face of the excellent education work being done by the Sisters. So as a general rule the Sisters had little to suffer from bigotry in Arkansas. In 1852 the Sisters opened a house in Fort Smith on the border of "Indian territory". Schools for boys and girls were opened and instruction classes for adults were held. The Convent soon prospered but on December 8<sup>th</sup> 1875 (23 years later), the Convent at Fort Smith was burned to the ground. The following year it was rebuilt with great elegance.

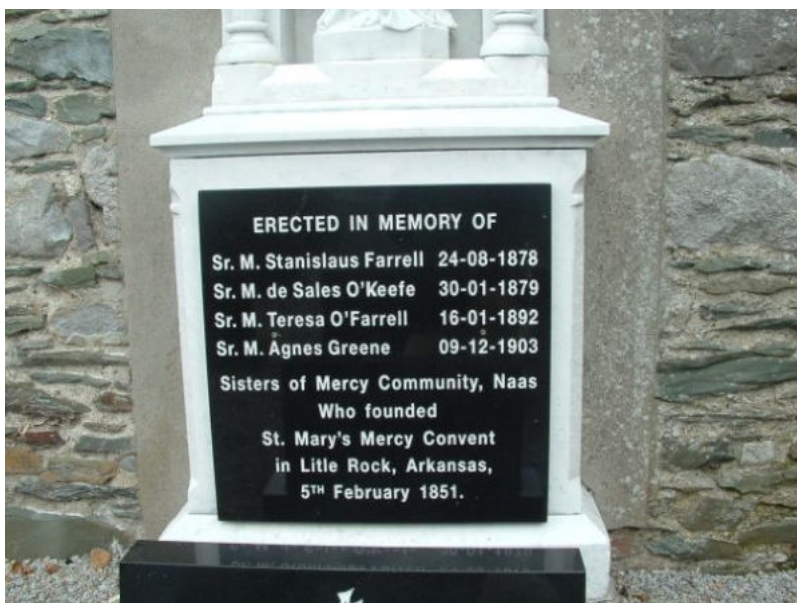
In 1854, (4 years after their arrival in Little Rock), Sister Teresa Farrell and Sister Vincent returned to Ireland to recruit more postulants. They arrived in Ireland in June, visited several convents and returned to Little Rock with five candidates. In January 1858 the Bishop purchased a beautiful residence and grounds at Helena, Philip's County. This was directly on the Mississippi River and very accessible.

The Sisters opened a Boarding School for girls which had to be closed down in 1868 (ten years later) because of the war. All the land and belongings were confiscated and they had to return to Little Rock. In 1876 the Sisters were twenty five years in Little Rock. They celebrated their Silver Jubilee with High Mass and the four sisters from Naas were kneeling in front of the altar. All the people who remembered their first arrival were there to congratulate them and bring them gifts. The Sisters had a concert in their Community Room that night. In

1881, Dr. Byrne died. He left all his books, chalices, vestments and paintings to the sisters.

The four sisters who had left Naas in 1850 to set up the Foundation in Little Rock continued their works of mercy for many years and all lie at rest in America. Sr. M. Stanislaus Farrell died on 24<sup>th</sup> Aug. 1878, Sr. M. de Sales O'Keefe on 30<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1879, Sr. M. Teresa Farrell on 16<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1892 and Sister M. Agnes Greene on 9<sup>th</sup> December 1903.

We should not forget the great humanitarian spirit, the courage and dedication of these nuns who took their beliefs and values to help make a better life for disadvantaged people thousands of miles away in the wilds of America. At home here in Kildare the sole reminder of these unique women is a grave stone to their memory in the Nuns' Burial Ground in St. Mary's School on the Sallins Road, Naas.



## **DOMINIC KELLY; THE BOY WHO SANG FOR JOYCE** *Bruce Bradley SJ*

As the world knows, James Joyce spent more than three years at school in Clongowes, up the road from Clane, between 1888 and 1891. The first chapter of his semi-autobiographical novel, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, first published as a book in New York a hundred years ago in December 1916, contains the real or fictional names of as many as nineteen of his school contemporaries, twelve who appear to have been in class with him and seven who were his seniors. Kevin Sullivan writes in *Joyce Among the Jesuits* of these names ‘set like unobtrusive stones’ throughout the chapter. In general, his reason for masking identities through the use of nicknames or pseudonyms appears to be his negative portrayal of those in question. Those whose real names occur were either his friends or older boys who were prominent in the school and whom Joyce’s fictional counterpart, Stephen Dedalus, like all small boys in such a situation, looked up to.

One of the latter was a boy called Dominic Kelly, more than eight years Joyce’s senior and already two years in the school when Joyce arrived there in 1888. The ‘line’ system in Clongowes, which still to a significant extent continues to operate, meant that boys of different ages had relatively little contact with each other – the youngest, like Joyce, were in the Third Line, those in mid-course were in the Lower Line, and the seniors were in the Higher Line. The arrangement of classrooms, dormitories and playing-fields reflected this division. Dominic Kelly was already in the Lower Line when Joyce came, whereas Joyce himself – 6 ½ or ‘Half-Past Six’, as he proudly proclaimed, on first arrival, and which seems to have become his own nickname for a time – remained in the Third Line throughout his time in the school. Joyce might, therefore, have remained largely unaware of Kelly’s existence, save for one important reason: Kelly was an outstanding singer, something James Joyce hugely respected in others throughout his life and was certain to notice among his fellow-pupils.

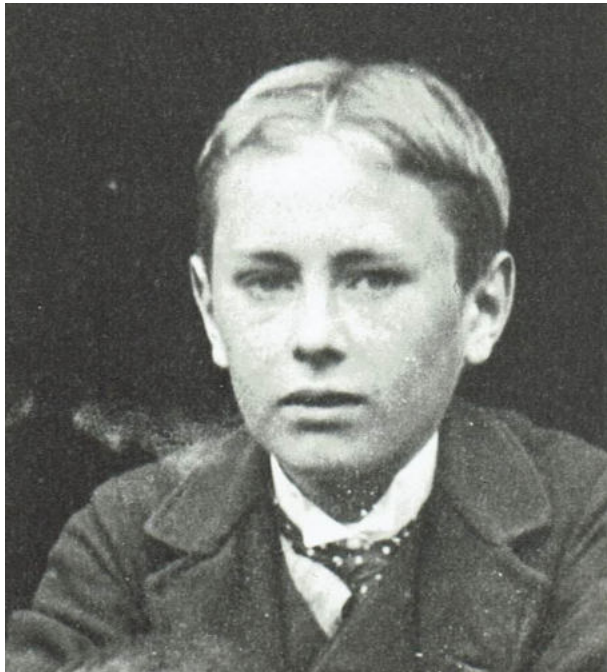
As a very good singer himself, Joyce and Dominic Kelly may well have taken part in the same concert on a couple of occasions, although this is not certain. What seems beyond doubt is that they were in the school choir together from 1888 until 1890, when Dominic Kelly left Clongowes. Although, in a photograph of the choir in 1888-89, Kelly appears but Joyce does not, the prefect of the choir, a Jesuit scholastic called George O'Neill, who sits in the centre of the photograph, along with several members of staff, including two fellow Jesuit scholastics (abundant in those far-off days!), would write ruefully, many years later, of how he had 'introduced to college life a very small boy destined to regrettable celebrity as the author of *Ulysses*, and put a Catholic choir-book into his little hand'. But what unquestionably stood out in the younger boy's memory was the occasions in the chapel 'at benediction when the fellow swung the censer and Dominic Kelly sang the first part by himself in the choir'. Mentioning Kelly by name in this way – he does not otherwise appear in Joyce's works or play any further role in the story – is the author's quiet tribute to a once admired fellow-student.



**The Choir: Kelly is in the middle row 2nd from right of photo**

In fact, Dominic Kelly, though now for the most part long-forgotten, is memorable for a number of reasons. He was born on 4 August 1873 in Tramore, Co. Waterford, one of five

brothers and three sisters, whose mother was widowed by the time he came to Clongowes from Tullabeg in 1886, entering '2<sup>nd</sup> of Grammar' (roughly equivalent to 3<sup>rd</sup> Year in the present system). According to his own testimony, he had been at school with the Christian Brothers in Waterford and Tramore for three years and arrived in Tullabeg (as St Stanislaus' College, Tullamore, another Jesuit boarding-school, was popularly known) as a boarder just six months before it was amalgamated with Clongowes. He reports his mother as having been 'fairly well off', but there is no record of fees having been charged in Clongowes and his brothers do not appear to have attended the school. He was clearly an able student and appears in a photograph of exhibitors in 1888-89, having won a Junior Grade exhibition, worth £20 a year for three years, which he retained in the Middle and Senior Grade, along with a prize of £3 worth of books in M.G. and medals for drawing, successes which were an accurate harbinger of his subsequent academic accomplishments and his distinguished teaching career in two continents.



**Dominic Kelly in 1889**



In the personal testimony just quoted, Kelly adds intriguingly: 'I liked study when working hard at it'. For one reason or another, and despite his obvious success, he may not always have 'worked hard at it' and, in any case, did not always appear as a model boy to the authorities, as three entries in the surviving pages of the Clongowes 'Punishment Book' indicate. On 17 December 1887, when he was 14, he received the harsh punishment of twelve strokes of the pandybat 'for misconduct in dormitory before rising'. A year later, on 7 December 1888, he was given six 'for lending theme' (often the fate of the bright student, prevailed upon by his less able colleagues to help them – illegally! - over the line). And, finally, twelve again 'for chemistry' on 7 May 1889 (James Joyce's name also appears in the book on three occasions).

Unusually, it is possible to gain some insight into how Dominic Kelly – and, no doubt, his school-fellows - felt about this kind of treatment. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, as at other times and in other schools, there was an 'underground press' in Clongowes. The regime of Fr James Daly ('Baldyhead Dolan', in *A Portrait*), prefect of studies (roughly equivalent to principal) at the time, may well have been a particular cause. Corporal punishment, as reflected in the 'Punishment Book', seems to have been in greatly increased use under Fr Daly. One of these 'underground' journals produced by senior boys in the school and circulated away from the eyes of authority, was *The Rhetorician*. It is revealing, not only about the atmosphere in Joyce's time (reflected clearly enough in the experience of Stephen Dedalus in the novel), but also about the mind and spirit of Dominic Kelly, that the issue of 14 December 1889 contained an essay entitled 'The ethics of corporal punishment', anonymous like all such pieces, but with the name 'Kelly' added and clearly his work.

It is a powerfully eloquent, very well argued polemic. Modern civilization, the writer argues, has left most 'barbarous customs' behind, but not this one. The only kind of 'torture' remaining is 'the torture of the whistling cane and resounding

pandy-bat'. The survival of such 'afflictive' punishment is something 'of which we are continually reminded by the ordinary daily sights and sounds around us'. In a sophisticated discussion (he was little more than 16 at this time), Dominic Kelly points out that, among other defects, 'this form of punishment is absolutely irremissible' - there can be no reparation for 'those who may have suffered unjustly'. Moreover, although meant to be 'exemplary', it does not serve this purpose either. Administered in public, 'it serves rather as a delectable amusement and dissipation than as a terror' to the victim's fellow-pupils, but, after private punishment, 'the victim generally declares, when he rejoins his companions, that it "didn't soak a bit"'. In either case, there is little or no deterrent effect. The essay ends with the pious hope that 'the school-boys of the next generation will be free from the constant, unnatural dread, unworthy of a human being, of being beaten like a dog for the most trivial offence'.



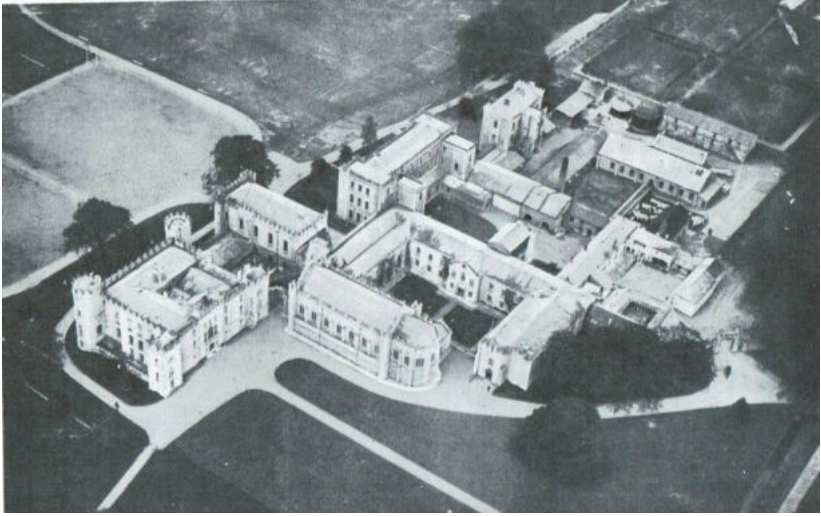
**Clongowes Cyclists**

That someone as academically accomplished as Dominic Kelly could write such a piece tells much about Fr Daly's harsh regime, apparently conducted in aid of improving the standing of Clongowes in the academic league-tables of the time, following the recent establishment of the Intermediate examination system. The piece also clearly reflects something of his intellectual ability and competence in English. His

talents, even at this stage, seem to have extended to another field, that of photography, at a time when that art was still somewhat in its infancy. A print of six Clongownians with their cycles (four bicycles, two ‘penny farthings’), carries his inscription (in Irish!) of the names on the back and is, presumably, his own work. He was a keen cyclist himself, all his life.

He left Clongowes at the age of 17 in the summer of 1890, with what an obituarist described as ‘a distinguished Intermediate course’ behind him - his subjects included ancient classics, modern languages, mathematics, music, physics and drawing (with medals in the last-named at both Junior and Senior Grade). On 6 September he and six of his Clongowes classmates entered the Jesuit novitiate, with eight other aspirants, in Tullabeg, his previous school, effectively suppressed at the time of the 1886 amalgamation and now serving a new purpose. Having made his first profession in 1892, he spent the next five years teaching his fellow-scholastics (or ‘juniors’, as they were known) and preparing himself to take his BA and MA in classics in the old Royal University. In the latter year he went to Valkenburg in Holland, a house belonging to German Jesuits, exiled from their own country by the *Kulturkampf*. He was back in Clongowes as a regent from 1902 and, after a further year’s regency, he went on to study theology in Milltown Park, where he was ordained in 1908. The last stage of his formal Jesuit training, ‘tertianship’ as it is called, was spent in Tronchiennes, Belgium, and here he made his final profession on 2 February 1910.

Later that year he came back to Clongowes, where he was to remain until the summer of 1916. The appointment was to teach classics. ‘But’, as his obituary put it, ‘his brilliant mind was far too active to find complete satisfaction in the Classics, which he had completely mastered – he could quote Horace without any reference to the books – and so he set about seeking new fields to conquer’.



**Aerial View of Clongowes 1914**

One of the fields in question was photography. As noted, he had already been using a camera at school. But in 1914, perhaps to mark the college's centenary year, he took a new step by performing the remarkable feat of putting a camera on a timer in a kite and floating it above the buildings to take the first ever aerial photograph. One further use of his camera during these years should be mentioned here: holiday photographs taken during the community's summer holiday, in which – perhaps for the only time – Fr John Sullivan, his Jesuit colleague during these years, took part.

At the end of 1916, Dominic Kelly's life changed forever. He was transferred to the growing Australian mission, firmly established by the Irish Jesuits from 1865 onwards, on foot of earlier initiatives on a more modest scale by their Austrian brethren in 1848. In those days it was a 'life sentence', as he would never have the opportunity to come back to Ireland again. This clearly went hard with him. One Irish visitor to Australia in 1919, the mother of an Irish fellow-Jesuit, remembered that 'her news of Ireland made him burst into tears'. Another fellow-Jesuit from Ireland asked him if he missed the home country and 'Dom' Kelly, as the Australians knew him, replied that, if told he could go home provided he

walked, he'd have set out at once. Be that as it may, he clearly made the very best he could of his long exile and left a big impression in his adopted country, where he was remembered with real affection and respect by all who knew him.



**Inch 1915: Fr. Dominic Kelly is in the front row second from the left and Fr. John Sullivan is on the right of the front row**

His first posting was to Xavier College, Melbourne, where, displaying his characteristic flexibility and range of competence, he taught not his own original subject, classics, but mathematics and physics. In 1919 he was transferred to the newly opened Newman College in the city, where he was to serve for the next thirty years as a much-valued tutor and spiritual father to university students, as well as – inevitably – prefect of the choir. He took an interest in everything the students were doing. He had played football and cricket in his youth and, apart from following student teams, he continued to play a mean game of tennis until middle age, ‘as many a young Newman blood found out when he went on to the court to “polish off Father Dom” in a couple of sets’. On one occasion, discovering that some of the Newman students liked to relax by playing poker, he wrote an article in the college magazine entitled ‘Poker probabilities’, in which he demonstrated that

‘the probability of a royal flush’ was ‘1 in 649,739’. At the same time, he liked to explore new intellectual territory and, towards the end of his time in Newman, he began to take an interest in botany and ‘classified sea-weeds, gum trees and flowers with his usual success’.



**Newman College Melbourne where Dominic Kelly served for 30 Years**

His obituary in *The Xaverian* spoke of him as ‘the quietest and most popular man in Newman’. In 1948 he was given his last change – to Pymble, north of Sydney, where he taught Jesuit scholastics modern languages and, drawing on his Latin and Greek, lectured on the early Fathers of the Church. When the time came for this move, much as he had come to love Newman, ‘he slipped off to Pymble as quietly as if he were going for one of his bicycle rides’. He died, far from Clongowes, where, man and boy, he had spent a dozen years in that earliest part of his long life, on 7 September 1952. He had just celebrated his 79<sup>th</sup> birthday. For all his personal qualities and the unusual range of his talents, he might by now have faded from memory, had not a certain younger contemporary, dead himself a decade earlier, not included a glancing, appreciative mention of him in one of the great classics of 20<sup>th</sup> century literature as the boy who ‘sang the first part by himself in the choir’.

## A BLUNDELL FAMILY LINK WITH CLANE.

*Pat Given*

Perhaps Clane's most picturesque rural road crosses the nineteenth-century Millicent bridge over the River Liffey and passes by one of Clane's hidden treasures, the Church of St. Michael and All Angels. The two Liffey-side historic homes, Millicent House and Castlesize further complement the many historic features to be found in this sylvan area. But, for those with an eye for the less obvious historic connections in our landscape, interest must be aroused when the impressive entrance to the home of one of Clane's well-known public figures is encountered. The curious will notice that the sweeping curves on either side of the impressive gateway carry engraved plaques which proclaim the name of the property as Blundell House. While the name Blundell is not immediately associated with Clane there were a few local connections with members of that family which might be assumed to have given rise to its use as a house name in scenic Millicent. This article will briefly examine some of these Blundell connections with Clane including the intriguing background to the man and his family whose name is commemorated in this fashion.



**Blundell House entrance, Millicent, Clane**

The road which travels through Millicent contains a number of reminders that this route was always an important thoroughfare. Castlesize (*Casán Soilse*) reminds us of the fact that it derives its name from an ancient Irish law which required a light to be shown at river fords or crossings in order to guide travellers on dark and stormy nights<sup>1</sup>. Upstream of this crossing, the Millicent Bridge bears a noble legacy of much antiquity since the current structure is a “comparatively modern” construction which replaced the original hump-backed structure some centuries ago<sup>2</sup>. While some traffic on this ancient roadway facilitated traffic on its way to Clane and northern Leinster some traffic was undoubtedly bound for the O’Connor territory of *Úl Fáilighe* and western Leinster. This tradition continues with much modern traffic bound for Edenderry and Tullamore availing of the route’s convenient link via the Clane to Prosperous road - part of a futile turnpike built by Mosse from Clane to Ballinagare in the mid-1700s<sup>3</sup>.



**Blundell Castle ruins, Edenderry**

A branch of the Blundell family has had close family connections with Edenderry where many associations with the family still remain. For instance, castle ruins exist in



Edenderry. They are known as Blundell's Castle and are a relic of early family links between the Colleys and the Blundells. In addition, the Grand Canal at Edenderry features Blundell's Aqueduct or "the tunnel" which carries the waterway over the Edenderry to Rathangan road<sup>4</sup>. Consequently, it comes as no surprise that many who observed this Clane house name appear to have assumed that it commemorates some member of this Edenderry family. It is particularly easy to surmise that a long-forgotten link may exist between the Edenderry family of Blundells and this house name-plate since Clane's Millicent road is so much used by Edenderry-bound traffic. However, research on the matter discounts any link between the plaque and the Edenderry Blundell family but in the process, it uncovers a much more interesting story.

In close proximity to Blundell House lies Ireland's Central Veterinary Research Farm which is operated by the Irish government's Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. This property has a long and historic past. Formerly owned by the Dongan family, one of whom bore the noble title Viscount of Clane. After the Williamite wars it was transferred to the Hamilton family in 1709. Over one hundred years later, in 1833-4 the property was leased by the Sweetman family and remained in their ownership until the 1940s when it passed into the ownership of the Byrne family<sup>5</sup>.

*Burke's Landed Gentry of Ireland* provides a short history of the Sweetmans in which the family is traced as far back as 1558 to County Kilkenny<sup>6</sup>. The Sweetman family later entered the Dublin brewing business and has been described as one of Guinness' 'leading competitors'<sup>7</sup>. They first established their business in St. Stephen's Green but later moved to Francis Street. In Clane, they are remembered particularly for their contributions and support in helping the Presentation Sisters to establish their schools here in 1839. This support did so much to lay the solid foundations for the very fine educational facilities which we enjoy today<sup>8</sup>. It may come as a surprise to learn that this benevolent Sweetman family have connections with the Blundell who is commemorated on the nearby

Millicent House plaque while also uncovering a link to a now-forgotten, but once very well-known member of the Sweetman family.



Mary Sweetman (M. E. Francis)

Mary E. Sweetman was daughter of Michael Sweetman and his wife, Mary Margaret (*nee* Powell of Fitzwilliam Square, Dublin). The family home was at Lamberton House, county Laois and Mary was born in 1855, [or 1859 depending on the authority]<sup>8</sup>. Mary's grandfather was Michael Sweetman who resided at the family seat at Longtown, Clane where his son, the next heir to the Sweetman fortune, Patrick also resided. Patrick and Mary's father were step brothers since their father had been married twice. Mary, or "Molly" as she was known to her three sisters and two brothers had the misfortune of experiencing the death of their father while they were still young. From once she learned to read Molly was an insatiable reader -so much so that her mother limited her to one book per week. In such circumstances, it soon became apparent that education was to assume a particularly important role in her life. *Ricorso* states that Mary lived with Walter Sweetman, [her uncle] from the age of 14 to 18 years and that she was educated in Belgium. Many of her summers were also reported to have been spent in Switzerland. Later, this period of her life is

outlined in her obituary in the Irish Jesuit magazine, *The Irish Monthly*:

*Having had a series of unsuccessful governesses, her mother decided to send the three sisters to school, but this experiment not proving a success, as is fully described in Things of a Child, Molly and her sisters were taken away, to resume home education, which they pursued tranquilly. Four years later their mother decided to go to Brussels to give the children the advantages of first-rate masters in every branch of education.*

The visit to Brussels assumed major importance for Mary's future since it was there that the two families of Sweetman and Blundell came to know each other. Mary and her future husband's sister, Josephine Blundell met when both were fellow-pupils at a class for Art studies. The family returned to Ireland when Mary was eighteen years old. One year later she became engaged to Josephine Blundell's brother, Francis second son of Colonel Blundell of Crosby in Lancashire. However, due to issues around the proposed marriage settlement her engagement was broken-up and it was only through the efforts of a curate in Portlaoise, Rev Joseph Farrell that, two years later, it was reinstated. In 1879, in her twenties, and in spite of the two years' resistance from her mother Mary married the Englishman, Francis Nicholas Blundell. Later, in her obituary, G.M.S. stated that the couple lived in Lancashire where they occupied a small house on the Crosby property and Mary was often heard to say 'I am glad we have money difficulties; without them I would be too happy'.

In April 1884, and with the coming of the festivities surrounding Punchestown Races, Mary and her husband Francis together with their two children returned to Ireland, to stay with her [step-] uncle at Longtown outside Clane. On the Sunday after the festivities, the family attended mass in the private chapel in Longtown and later that afternoon, about five o'clock Francis proposed taking a long walk. Mary being in late pregnancy, suggested he proceed alone. *The Leinster Express* describes the events which occurred later that evening:

On Sunday evening, he [Francis Blundell] went for a walk before dinner, and as he did not return, some alarm was excited, and a search was instituted... late in the evening it was ascertained that Mr. Blundell had been found lying dead on the roadside near Millicent and that his body had been brought to a house in the neighbourhood<sup>11</sup>.

On the following Monday 28 April Patrick Sweetman gave evidence at the subsequent inquest that Francis Blundell, about 28 years of age was in good health when he stayed with him at Longtown. He described the search which he organised when he became aware of his guest's disappearance. Four men with lanterns had searched the near-by ditches and 'oncoming to the house of Mr. McDonald at Millicent they were told that the body was there, having been discovered a short time previously on the road'. Dr O'Connor of Clane, the local police sergeant McGiverin and Rev. Fr. Tynan attended the scene. The police sergeant gave evidence that a number of valuable articles were found on the body while Dr O'Connor gave evidence that there were no marks of violence on the body and in his opinion death was due to heart disease. Mary decided to make her future home with her late husband's family who were then living at Windsor, where in the following June her daughter was born.

It was during the following year that Mary took up writing, possibly to ease her sorrow and she adopted the pseudonym 'M. E. Francis' by prefixing the initials of her Christian name to her husband's Christian name. At the request of her friend, Fr. Russell S.J. Mary wrote a series for *The Irish Monthly* which was to awaken her interest in writing. In genealogical reviews the literary talent displayed by so many of the Sweetman family is sometimes overlooked. The aforementioned Fr. Russell, writing in 1904 said of Mary Sweetman that she was:

*...the author of a long series (happily not yet finished) of delightful novels which though they run through The Times or The Cornhill Magazine, and charm the novel-reading public, are yet innocent enough for a convent library. She and her*

sister –Mrs. Egerton Castle, author of many brilliantly successful novels, also, and Miss Elinor Sweetman who has published two exquisite volumes of verse were born in Lamberton Park...<sup>12</sup>

Mary Sweetman, widow of Francis Blundell went on to write a total of forty-nine novels before dying peacefully in 1930. In fact, although she proof-read her final novel *Wood Sanctuary* in the early days of 1930 she did not live to see its publication later that year. The way-side plaque which was later erected on the ancient stone-faced bridge which carries the Millicent roadway over a small stream is to-day covered with ivy. However, it has served its purpose well since directly across the road the name of Francis Blundell is now commemorated in a modern house-plaque. Blundell House shows how research on these and other such road-side signs can often provide very rewarding results.

<sup>1</sup> Peter O’Keeffe, Tom Simington, *Irish Stone Bridges; History and Heritage* (Dublin, 1991), p.24.

<sup>2</sup> Sherlock, ‘Some notes on Fords and Bridges over the River Liffey’ in *Journal of the County Kildare Archaeology Society*, vi, no.4 (July,1910).

<sup>3</sup> David Broderick, *The First Toll-roads; Ireland’s turnpike roads 1729-1858* (Cork, 2000), pp 140-3, p. 261.

<sup>4</sup> David Broderick, *The First Toll-roads; Ireland’s turnpike roads 1729-1858* (Cork, 2000), pp 140-3, p. 261.

<sup>5</sup> Pat Given, ‘Some Clane Residences and their owners’ in *Coiseanna*, no.4 (2015), pp 8-9.

<sup>6</sup> Sir Bernard Burke, *A genealogical and heraldic history of the landed gentry of Ireland* (London, 1899) p.432.

<sup>7</sup> Patrick Lynch, John Vaizey, *Guinness’s brewery in the Irish economy, 1759-1876*.

<sup>8</sup> Michael Clifford, ‘The Presentation Sisters - Clane, 1839-2006’ in Seamus Cullen (ed.), *A history of Christianity in Clane and Rathcoffey* (Clane, 2011), p. 143.

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.ricorso.net/> accessed 23 Feb 2017. This useful website consists of a body of biographical records, bibliographical listings, and textual extracts from primary works and commentaries on Anglo-Irish literature.

<sup>10</sup> G.M.S. ‘M. E. Francis’ *The Irish Monthly*, vol. 58, no. 683 (May, 1930).p

<sup>11</sup> *The Leinster Express*, Saturday, 3 May 1884.

<sup>12</sup> Matthew Russell S.J., ‘The Literature of King’s County’ in *The Irish Monthly*, vol. 32, no. 373 (Jul., 1904) pp 361-7

## RESTORING THE NAAS CANAL CRANE

*Larry Breen*

We are fortunate in County Kildare to have the Grand Canal meandering its way across the county on its journey west to the river Shannon. We are even more fortunate in Naas to have a branch line coming from the Grand Canal at Soldiers' Island near Sallins right into the centre of the town to the canal store harbour. With five locks to negotiate it presents an interesting and challenging journey for any boat and boatman but would have been common practice back in the heyday of canal transportation in the 1800s. The Naas branch line, completed in 1789, initially carried both passengers and commercial freight but the passenger business was not a success and was stopped after a short time in operation. However the commercial trade flourished and the Naas canal branch line proved an important source of trade and employment for the town and its hinterland. The advent of rail and road transport eventually sounded the death knell for the canal's commercial business and the last boat to leave Naas harbour was in 1960. The branch line and the store were neglected and fell into disuse and into a bad state of repair. There was a real possibility they would be lost altogether. A Harbour Action Group was set up in the 1980s and with the help of ANCO together with voluntary involvement and funding from various sources including the National Lottery, Naas Lions Club, Naas UDC, the branch line was cleaned, the locks were repaired and the canal store was renovated and restored. This was all completed in 1989. The Kildare Youth Services took over the store as their premises and headquarters and have continued to maintain the building while providing an invaluable service to young people in the county.

My involvement with the canal store started in 2005 when after taking early retirement I joined the Kildare Youth Services as a part time caretaker on a community employment scheme. Little did I know the story that was to follow and how one event would lead to a unique discovery that would take me on a memorable journey along Ireland's Grand Canal and as far

away as the Maritime Museum in Liverpool's Dockland. That event in question was the discovery of the rusted remains of the old canal store crane half-hidden in green undergrowth on the harbour store jetty. This is the story.

Part of my job was to help maintain the building in good condition and this included the area of the store jetty. One corner of the jetty had become partly overgrown with vegetation and ivy growing on the wall. On inspection I noticed that there appeared to be metal parts in among the vegetation. What could this be? I asked myself. It certainly was not what I expected. On clearing all the ivy and vegetation there appeared to my astonishment an array of metal parts, badly rusted but all intact. One part presented a clue to what we had uncovered and that was a large cast iron, highly ornamented curved arm. Further investigation confirmed that these were parts of the old crane used in the stores during the canal transportation days. It had been forgotten and left to perish with the elements in that lonely spot after the restoration of the store in 1989.

The next big question was, what if anything should we do with this discovery? Did the parts that we had found comprise the crane in its entirety? Were any parts missing? Were they damaged in any way? Could the crane possibly be rebuilt and restored? All these questions went through my mind. So a decision was made to see if we could find the answers to these questions. The inland waterways and the Canal Store were owned by Waterways Ireland so the crane was technically their property and we needed to talk to them before we proceeded any further. We made contact with Waterways Ireland in their maintenance depot at the Canal Harbour in Tullamore. We talked with the engineer, John Lynch, who was very helpful and as luck would have it he introduced us to Sean O'Reilly who just happened to be at the harbour at the time. Sean, a past chairman of the Heritage Boat Association and an expert on the inland waterways was very interested in our story. He volunteered to come to Naas and have a look at what we had found. When Sean arrived we had all the parts laid out on the

jetty floor and I could see a twinkle in his eyes as he viewed the scene before him. Armed with pencil and paper he set about inspection, checking, rechecking and sketching. After many hours Sean produced his hand drawn sketch of the crane, and pronounced to everyone's delight that the majority of the crane had survived and that it would be possible to restore the crane. We had no money, no workforce, no knowledge or expertise to even start looking at how to rebuild the equipment. We went public and asked for voluntary help but to no real avail except that local businessman George Dennison offered to help if we could get enough support and had a plan to move forward. We decided to ask Waterways Ireland if they could help in any way. So it was then back to John Lynch at the Tullamore Harbour depot who passed us on to the Waterways Ireland Dublin office at Ashtown and contact with Jenny Blackford. Jenny came to visit us accompanied by Joe Wynne, an engineering supervisor from the Tullamore depot. This was followed by another visit from Joe Wynne and Mick Hannon when further assessments were carried out. We waited with bated breath for a decision and finally the great news arrived, Waterways Ireland would be prepared to help restore the crane.

A plan was agreed with the Waterways Ireland maintenance team from the Tullamore harbour depot and the project was taken in charge by Joe Wynne who lived in Co. Offaly and who we christened "the Man from Ferbane". Joe proved to be an inspiration and a great leader of his gang affectionally known at the canal store as "Mc Alpine's Fusiliers". There was a big job ahead and the maintenance team started on the long journey of restoration. The parts had to be transported back to the Tullamore depot for some refurbishment, repair, the manufacture of bolts and part assembly of the main section of the crane. These were then returned to the canal store in Naas in readiness for assembly and rebuilding. What happened next was a time of feverous activity when the "fusiliers" worked with their fork lift trucks, lifting gear, and heavy equipment to put together the crane which we had affectionally named, "The Grand Old Lady of the Grand Canal". It was a great source of interest and amazement to those passing by the store each day



to see the crane gradually arise, like the phoenix, from what had been its rusty grave on the store jetty. Finally after a great effort from the engineering team, a few little hiccups, numerous cups of tea, some great chat, stories and camaraderie the “Grand Old Lady” was finally assembled. Great credit must go to the following people, Jenny Blackford, Mick Hannon, John Lynch, Sean O’Reilly, Joe Wynne and his team comprising Martin Fogerty, John Ganly, Tom Farrell, Joe Cassidy, David Dunne, Derek Flaherty and Gerry Leonard. Credit is due also to my two “buddies” at the Canal Store, John Gill and Jimmy Reynolds.

However the job was not yet complete as the “Grand Old Lady” now needed a “new set of clothes”, she needed to be cleaned, primed and painted. Because of the years lying exposed to the elements the crane had rusted badly and needed cleaning professionally. Waterways Ireland engaged a Shot & Sandblasting company called ARAB to do the job. It turned out to be a father and son team, Aiden and Keith Dunne, who completely sand blasted the crane from top to bottom, primed it and gave it a grey undercoat. It again created great interest and amusement to the passers-by as Keith covered from head to toe in protective clothing and looking decidedly like someone straight out of Star-Wars, sand blasted the crane. The Grand Old Lady was still not fully clothed as she needed her overcoat. This would be in black and white, representing the traditional colours of the once mighty Grand Canal Company. In keeping with the project being community based it was decided to let some youths from the Kildare Youth Services Youth Outreach programme give the Old Lady her overcoat. So on a fine sunny day three youths from the KYS outreach programme, Jake O’Reilly, Andy Visna and James O’Neill duly painted the crane in its traditional black and white colours. The paint for the entire job was sponsored by local business man George Dennison of Dennison Trailers Naas. The Grand Old Lady of the Grand Canal was alive and well again.

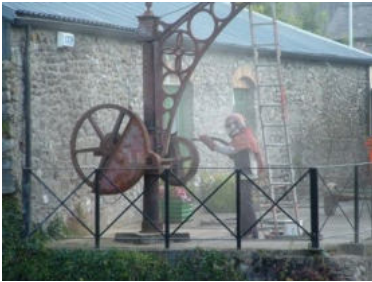
## Restoring the Crane



**Examining rusted components**



**Waterways team assemble crane**



**Sand blasting the crane**



**Priming/painting the crane**



**The restored crane**

It is worth reflecting on what the scene would have been like at the harbour stores during its heyday in the mid 1800s. It would have been a scene of high activity with as much as five thousand tonnes of merchandise passing through the store each year. These materials would have been the life blood of the town and its hinterland. There would have been timber for Lendrum's Mills, coal for the Gasworks, grain for the Mills, barrels of porter for the town's hostelrys and beyond, fresh vegetables for the Market House and much more. A very important piece of equipment for the commercial activity in the harbour would have been the crane. It carried out a vital role in the handling of all sorts of materials. Originally there were two cranes at the store, one outside on the bank and the other inside the building handling material on and off waiting vehicles. Sadly the outside crane was removed in the 1960s and has gone forever but due to a great community effort we still have our Grand Old Lady.

It was now time to celebrate the rebirth of the crane and an official launch was organised especially for the occasion. On 26<sup>th</sup> October 2007 the canal store in Basin Street was the scene of a colourful event celebrating the restoration of an important part of the canal harbour's industrial past. European Commissioner, Charlie McCreevy did the honours by unveiling a special commemoration plaque in the presence of a large crowd who were present. This included Naas Mayor, Cllr. Pat Clear, Councillors Pat McCarthy, Antony Creevey, Seamie Moore, Pat Black (representing Sean Power), Ronnie Kinane, chairperson Naas Local History Group, Mervyrn Hamilton and Jenny Blackford Waterways Ireland, Kildare Youth Services staff, local residents and local historians from all over the country. Commissioner McCreevy, after unveiling the plaque, spoke of his own strong connections with the waterways himself having literally been born and reared on the canal banks. He emphasised how the canal and harbour continued to provide a very special recreational facility for the people of the area. Mervyrn Hamilton said that Waterways Ireland were proud to be a part of the crane restoration and the importance they placed in maintaining and preserving the waterways of

Ireland. High praise and special thanks were extended to Kildare Youth Services regional director, Liz O’Sullivan, for her vision and commitment in supporting the project. Finally Local Poet Mae Leonard recited her poem written about the crane especially for the occasion and the celebrations concluded with some refreshments.

It had been a wonderful journey from start to finish but I cannot complete the story without sharing with you some of my own personal memories. My interest in the Naas crane took me on some memorable journeys in pursuit of information and occasions which I will always remember. I decided to search for any other cranes which might like the Naas Crane have survived the passage of time. This took my wife Anne and I on numerous weekend forays along the banks of the Grand, Royal Canals and the Barrow line searching harbours for any evidence of a canal crane similar to our own Grand Old Lady. We spent many interesting and happy hours in places like, Ringstown, Sallins, Lowtown, Tullamore, Banagher, Shannon Harbour, Shannon Bridge, Ballinasloe, Rathangan, Monasterevan, Portarlinton, Mountmellick, Vicarstown, Athy, Daingean to name a few. We even travelled to the dry harbour at Kilbeggan where we actually found a small crane mounted on the wall of the surviving canal store. We met some wonderful people along the way, people living on boats, people cruising for pleasure, people restoring their boat, people just getting away from it all but all with one thing in common friendship and time to talk to you. We had many cups of coffee, tea, biscuits, pastries, bovril on the colder days and the occasional hot Paddy to really warm the inside. We did find some cranes, in different states of repair, some good, some mediocre and some not so good. Although we were delighted to find them and great that they had survived for posterity to tell their own story, we could find nothing to match the sheer elegance and engineering quality of the Grand Old Lady.

I would like to share another interesting discovery with you in relation to the crane. Having cleaned the crane we found a name embossed on the curvature of the magnificent jib arm and

it read, “Fawcett & Co Liverpool”. I decided to find out more about this company and travelled to Merseyside to visit the maritime museum. They turned out to be a remarkable company. The firm became known in its heyday as Fawcett-Preston Engineering and was founded by George Perry as the Liverpool branch of the Coalbrookdale Foundry at Ironbridge. It then became an independent Liverpool Company. They were in fact a huge maritime engineering company operating between 1758 and as late as 1986. They had built up an international reputation, particularly for sugar machines and were also large manufacturers of ammunition and armaments. They were very important maritime engineers having built the first Mersey Steam Ferry, Etna in 1917 and built the President which was the largest ship in the world in 1840. With all that history and pedigree we were privileged to have such an illustrious supplier. Another little interesting discovery was that the letters ‘CIE’ were still visible on the guard of the main cog wheel which was indicative of the period 1950- 1978 when the canals were owned by CIE. We retained the lettering ‘CIE’ on the guard when she was restored.



I think it can safely be said that there is no other canal crane in Ireland to match the Grand Old Lady. It is a magnificent piece of engineering, with its unique curved jib arm manufactured in cast iron and ornamented with its impressive array of circular designs. I could find nothing like it anywhere in Ireland.

# THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF CLANE FRIARY

*Pat Given*

## **Introduction:**

Clane Local History Group participates annually in Ireland's National Heritage Week. In 2016, the week's theme was centred on 'People and Places' and Clane's contribution consisted of a two-part seminar which took as its subject the local Franciscan Friary. The event, held on the afternoon of Saturday, 20 August 2016 was organized in two parts. The initial part was held in-doors in the Westgrove Hotel when Pat Given presented background material on the Franciscan Friars in Ireland and their role in Clane in particular. This part of the proceedings was deliberately held in-doors in order to plan for the risk of possible inclement weather.

The second part of the day was planned as an outdoor 'walk-about' on the adjacent site of Clane's Franciscan Friary. The objective of the walk, conducted by TII archaeologist Noel Dunne, was to illustrate the possible layout of the original friary establishment resulting from the findings of a recent archaeological survey. In the event, on the afternoon of 20 August last the weather deteriorated to such an extent that it was found necessary to postpone the out-door portion of the seminar. Noel's interpretation of the recently published archaeology was subsequently re-scheduled for 19 October 2016 in the GAA Centre, Clane as part of the Group's normal monthly talks. A summary of that talk is presented here in order to ensure that this important contribution to Clane's heritage reaches as wide an audience as possible.

Noel Dunne is a highly-respected archaeologist, resident in Rathangan and Project Archaeologist with Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII). Noel's local links go back many years when he worked for the late John Bradley on the innovative Urban Archaeological Survey, which was undertaken in conjunction with the OPW. While Noel was not directly involved with the Clane element of the Urban Archaeological Survey (that work was undertaken by Heather

King and Andy Halpin) he has since integrated the results of that survey into the recent archaeological investigations in Clane. Currently he is engaged in the extensive preparatory work in advance of the forthcoming Sallins By-pass.

The history of the Franciscan Friary has been re-counted in the 2016 edition of *Coiseanna* by Fr. Pat Conlan O.F.M. and it has also been the subject of a number of talks by members of the Clane Local History Group<sup>1</sup>. Consequently, only a brief summary of the principal stages in the friary's evolution and subsequent suppression are presented here. In 1258, Gerald Fitzmaurice Fitzgerald invited the Franciscan Order to establish a friary in Clane.



**Example of sedilia and piscina in the interior of a Franciscan church**

Gerald Fitzmaurice Fitzgerald, the 4<sup>th</sup> Baron of Offaly, who died circa 1287, was buried in the friary and a fragment of the effigy, which it is said adorned his tomb, now remains within the ruins. The friary was an important establishment and in 1345 hosted a General Chapter of the Irish Franciscan order. Poor weather, famine and the Black Death ravaged Ireland in the late 14<sup>th</sup> century and consequently the friary fell into disrepair. By 1433, local effort, which was attracted by

the gaining of indulgences, restored and extended the friary and by 1450 it was again flourishing. Parts of that reconstruction may still be identified in the friary's ruins. In 1536, during the aftermath of the Geraldine Rebellion, the friary, with other Fitzgerald foundations, was suppressed and its lands confiscated. By 1540 many of the buildings had been destroyed and some of its stonework was taken to be used in the repair of Maynooth Castle. Clane friars continued to minister clandestinely in the locality until 1647 when it again housed a small community. And despite restrictions on religious orders, Guardians continued to be appointed by the Franciscans until 1872. The Franciscan order's seal of Clane Friary refers to it as '*Hortus Angelorum*' or Garden of Angels.

The history of Clane friary is easily reconstructed from documents which survive in various archives such as those preserved by the Franciscan order, official accounts of the proceeds from the suppression of religious houses, land registers and a multiplicity of other official sources<sup>2</sup>. On the other hand, little work has been carried out on reconstructing the original layout of the local establishment. This is in spite of the fact that Clane was a foundation of the Conventual branch of the Franciscan order and 'typical of a rich friary under Anglo-Irish influence' sited within the Pale. In consequence, it is to be expected that the friary here was quite substantial but possibly because of Clane's proximity to the Geraldine stronghold of Maynooth, it was unfortunate in the extent of the destruction of the establishment after its suppression on 22 Nov 1540.

After the suppression of the friary a court of jurors found that church, chancel and part of the dormitory buildings were destroyed and they recommended that building materials could be salvaged to repair the King's castle at Maynooth. Apart from the remainder of the dormitory, the jurors recommended that all other buildings in proximity to the friary should be confiscated. These consisted of a garden, and close, three acres, two ruined unoccupied messuages not valued, and seventy-three acres, total value was one hundred and three shillings and

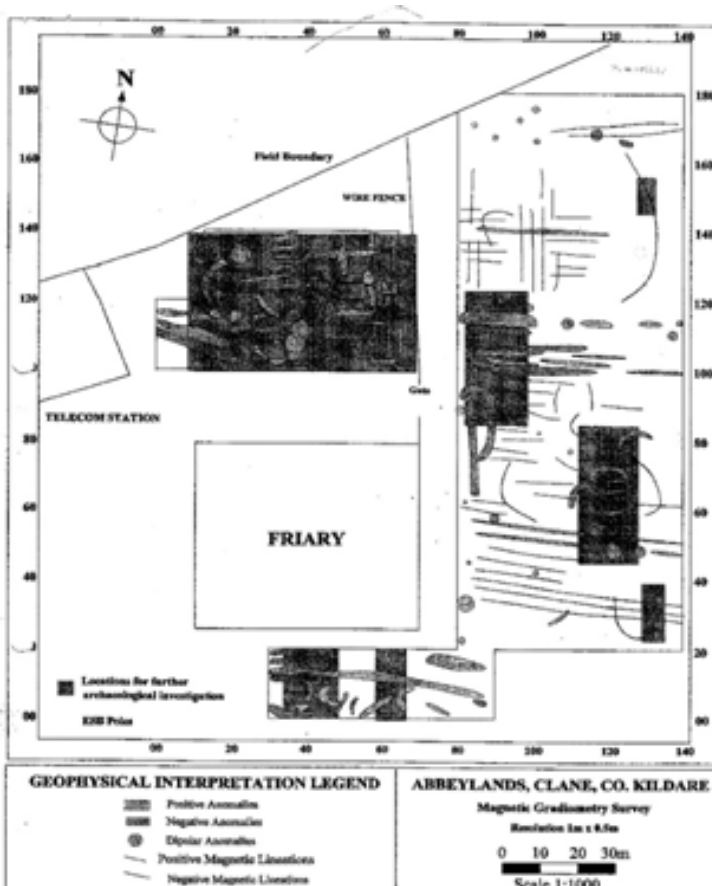


two pence. In many other locations, sufficient ruined walls, foundations and robust features remained to allow a proper appreciation of the original establishment.<sup>3</sup> However, because of the very limited amount of ruins and the paucity of structural remains at Clane, its original layout and the full extent of its buildings has remained somewhat hidden from modern researchers.

In recent years, Clane's friary ruins have become more visible because of the new road layout and other developments in its environs. This development has thrust the remaining ruins into public view and consequently brought more attention to the friary's origins and its role in Clane's history. From our point of view, this development activity has also brought the need for modern archaeological surveys to ensure that any subterranean remains or historical evidence are located and properly protected. Because of commercial development in the immediate vicinity of the friary site, a total of three such surveys have been undertaken and the results professionally evaluated since 1999.

In 1999 a planning application submitted to Kildare County Council planning authority contained a major geophysical survey of the site of the Franciscan friary which had been carried out by GeoArc Ltd.<sup>4</sup> This geophysical survey was carried out by measuring two distinct characteristics of the overall area under study. One survey measured the site's electrical resistivity and another measured variations in the site's magnetic field. The site's electrical resistance is mapped by successively measuring this value in small subunits over the total area of the site. This is achieved by passing an electrical current through two grounded probes and detecting variations in the soil's resistance. The technique is best for detecting the presence of structural or stone features. On the other hand, variations in the local magnetic field may be used to detect ditches, large pits or fired features such as *Fulachtai Fia* the presence of which increase the magnetic signal.

The value of these techniques lies in the fact that they are non-intrusive and having highlighted areas of interest for further study such areas may then be subject to more detailed study such as test-excavation etc. without risking damage to other areas. The interference from more recent human activity in these results must also be discounted when interpreting results. For instance, magnetic variations which were produced in the



**Site layout showing areas (darker blocks) which were suggested for further study after 1999 geophysical survey<sup>5</sup>**

area to the north-east of the friary site showed parallel, linear striations running east west and north south. The authors of the report say that in this case ‘ploughing was obviously carried out in both directions at various times in the past’. In general,

the magnetic element of this survey identified a number of areas for further examination. In particular, the part of the area to the north of the graveyard was found to display both north-south and east-west linear anomalies aligned at right angles to one another but these results were too numerous to interpret. It is interesting to note that the second technique, the resistivity survey, gave a more distinct separation of the features. This latter survey stated that:

*The resistivity survey displays a number of rectangular and sub-rectangular positive anomalies which are undoubtedly produced by the masonry foundations of several buildings... these features appear to continue off the survey area... towards the graveyard and also... towards the fence. These features are more than likely produced by the foundations of the domestic buildings associated with the Friary..*

Following an examination of the results of these geophysical studies, a programme of archaeological test investigations was undertaken by archaeologist Martin Byrne. This involved opening trenches in the locations highlighted by the earlier work and these were opened during July, August, and December 1999. The trenches resulted in identifying locations which gave evidence as being areas of burials, burning, walls or having other miscellaneous features showing signs of potential interest.

Analysis of these results showed that burials were found in three areas, to the south, north and west of the current graveyard wall but were all positioned outside its current boundary wall. The areas of burning did not show any unusual features. The possible wall remnants were examined and all were confirmed as walls on exposure by excavation. From this it could also be inferred that other such unexcavated anomalies represent similar features. A total of eighteen wall-like anomalies were excavated and on examination they appeared to have had differing roles. For instance, the remains of one wall suggests it was the foundations of a strong boundary wall. Another trench excavation showed two walls which appear to

form an extension to the present church at its eastern end. The report states ‘that it is possible that they represent an earlier church wall’. This is interesting in the context that the church remains the nave and chancel are considered to be thirteenth century in date with the south aisle erected as part of the fifteenth century renovation.

In addition, following reports arising from earlier surface-water, pipe-laying in the area the opportunity was taken to excavate in the area of a reported subterranean feature. This was originally reported as a chamber-like structure. The trenching uncovered ‘evidence on the western baulk for walling which appeared to testify to this fact’. A passage 8.5m long was uncovered with a stone arched roof, 850mm high and 1200mm wide at its base. While the purpose of the passage is unclear and it may have originally led to a chamber, Fr. Conlan OFM has suggested that some Franciscan establishments had quite complex service and drainage arrangements.



**Example of Cloister abutting wall of friary as is suggested for Clane**

However, probably the most important finding from this survey is the verification that the area to the north and north west of the friary contains quite complex archaeology.<sup>6</sup> This survey

again came into focus in 2015, when Kildare County Council and Irish Water suggested the area as a site for a new water tank associated with the upgrade of the adjacent Clane pumping station. A further geophysical survey was conducted during 2015 by J. M. Leigh Surveys but, because of the addition of up to one metre of topsoil in the period since the previous survey, the new survey was hindered in effectiveness and little additional information was provided.<sup>7</sup>

By examining the content of these archaeological reports and combining this information with on-site observation of some features of the remaining structures it is possible to hypothesize a layout for the original friary buildings on the site which satisfies the currently available evidence. It is now evident that the area to the north, and north west of the remaining church building on the site assumes importance. Examining the external north wall of the church, extant features suggest that the buildings to the north actually abutted this wall. Using this evidence and data from the geophysical surveys, Noel Dunne suggests that the layout of Clane friary may be visualised by examining the remains of other Irish Franciscan establishments.



**Example of Cloister and surrounding domestic buildings abutting friary wall**

Noel is of the opinion that the cloister area, for instance, was sited to the north of the remaining church building with the other domestic buildings in close proximity to it and around it. Some evidence for the remains of these structures is already evident from the available archaeological surveys carried out before the application of the protective top-soil layer on the green area to the north of the existing friary remains

The re-construction of Clane's Franciscan friary as a result of recent archaeological surveys confirms that the original establishment was an extensive foundation. Its remains lie buried today beneath the top soil of the adjacent green area to the north of the ruins of the original friary church. This church is a very substantial structure and would once have been an impressive building on the approaches to Clane. However, its very size suggests that the infrastructure, personnel and services supporting such a building had to be equally impressive. As a Pale-based Conventual establishment this finding is not surprising and perhaps Clane's closeness in patronage and geographic terms with Geraldine Maynooth combined with its relative wealth may have been the creator of its almost total destruction.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Fr. Pat Conlan, 'The Franciscan's in Clane' in *Coiseanna*, 5, (2016), pp 13-22.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> See for instance the friary remains at Adare, Co. Limerick. Moyne, co. Mayo, Ross, Co. Galway, Kilcrea, Co. Cork, etc. in Patrick Conlan, *Franciscan Ireland* (Mullingar, 1988).

<sup>4</sup> Byrne, M.E. (1999) '*Abbeylands, Clane, County Kildare*' unpublished testing report taken from excavations i.e. Licence 99E0386.

<sup>5</sup> Source: 1999 Abbeylands geophysical survey, GeoArc Ltd. -Kildare county council Planning Dept.

<sup>6</sup> Byrne.

<sup>7</sup> Leigh, J. M., (2015) '*Abbeylands, Clane, Co. Kildare*' unpublished testing report i.e. Licence 15R0045.

*This article is based on a talk presented by Noel Dunne, TH Archaeologist.*

## THE GENERAL

*Dessie Marron*

My Father, Peter Anthony Marron, was born in Shercock, Co. Cavan in 1902. He entered the Garda Síochána in 1922 and was promoted to Sergeant in 1923. His early years in the force were spent in Cliffoney, Co. Sligo. There he met Brigid



O'Connor, who later became his much beloved wife. He was later posted to Newmarket on Fergus, co. Clare, where I was born in 1934. It was a little later that he was transferred to Clane, a village which he came to love and which became so important in his life. Once established here, he soon became very involved with the local community and together with Louis Dalton

they founded Clane's first Local Development Association. Their initiative was the forerunner of the current CLD (Clane Local Development) which was later founded in the 1990s to help promote the establishment of industry and small businesses in Clane. Amongst many achievements, one very visible result of the efforts of that first association may still be seen in those beautiful trees which adorn both sides of our village's main street.

He was a lifetime member of Clane GAA and served as president, selector and trainer of many Clane teams. One initiative, of which he was very proud, was his foresight in seeing that any plans for future development for Clane's GAA pitch, then located at Blackhall, would suffer severe limitations due to constraints around traffic access. He suggested selling the pitch at Blackhall and transferring to the present location on the Prosperous Road. He organised the purchase of twelve acres from Kate Kearney but, although the new site had very

much improved access, it suffered from the fact that the Butterstream flowed through the middle of the property. This stream therefore, required culverting before the site could be developed. In order to do this, my father coordinated a scheme by which the members and townspeople could sponsor the purchase of individual drainage pipes. The scheme was a success and Clane GAA had no trouble getting sufficient sponsors for the provision of the necessary number of drainage pipes. It was through innovative initiatives such as this that Clane obtained its very fine GAA facilities today.



**The late Sean Cribben and J. J. Langan position one of the drainage pipes.: courtesy of the Cribben family.**

My father was proud of the fact that his three sons were later deeply involved in the GAA. Frank and myself wore the famed lily-white jerseys while another brother, the late Jackie Marron played minor and junior for Cavan and but for his untimely death, would obviously have played at senior level as well. Frank just missed out on Leinster Honours as he retired from the game in 1955. His last outing for Kildare coincided with my first county appearance in 1955. It was much to the delight



of my extremely proud Dad that I was a Leinster championship winner in 1956.

Peter Anthony had a very hard life. After the death of his beloved wife Brigid, at the all-too young age of 49, he had to raise his eight children on a sergeant's salary of £4 10 shillings a week. He supplemented his meagre income by renting turf banks, harvesting the turf and selling it locally. Subsequently, he obtained a road-transport licence, or as it was then described 'he bought a haulage plate'. This enabled him to deliver livestock, turf, gravel, cement etc. throughout the entire 26 counties. He often reminded us of his indebtedness to the people of Clane who looked out for him during this time.

In particular, he often spoke of Mrs. (Gaga) Manzor, his great friend, who gave him continuous help and support. In particular, he told of her help during one intensive period of investigations which required an extended period of three months strenuous searching of difficult terrain, including local rivers and bogs. As a result, and although the investigation in question was to become one of his most famous, the doctors were forced to confine my father to bed for three months. On another occasion, he showed his very efficient investigative expertise when Millicent church was burned and he had the culprits apprehended and convicted within a very short period.

My father occasionally liked to reminisce about his career. On one occasion, during his early career in the Sligo division in 1924, he was involved in the largest ever capture of poitín on Inismurray island. One of the men charged, was known as the 'king'. This led to the headline on the Sligo Champion, "Gardaí arrest King"! Before leaving the island, the Gardaí destroyed the greater portion of the poitín and the wash. Locals still say that so large was the quantity of distilled spirit and wash which they dumped, that veritable rivers of both continued to flow into the sea - even long after the Gardaí had departed the island.

My father used to drink with his buddies, Harry Farrell Snr, Ned and Bill Ennis, Tom Parker and Harry Gill. They usually occupied the snug (rarely seen now in modern pubs) in Jones' bar. If they wished others to join them it was their custom to invite people into their group -but woe betide those who tried to barge-in!

One night there was a Garda raid to apprehend those who were on the premises outside legal drinking hours. Customers naturally scurried everywhere, some hiding in toilets and some even hid in Mrs. Jones' bed, while others jumped the back wall to escape! It is said that my father sat quietly smoking and said to Ned Farrell "don't lose your dignity for the sake of a pound"! This was the usual fine for being caught on the premises 'after hours'. On another occasion, a snowy Christmas day, he left his home to go for a pint in Jones' Pub. Since his home was later to become our pharmacy premises and it was nearly directly across the road from his objective - Jones' Pub. However, astute as always, and in case anyone spotted his tracks - he walked backwards in an attempt to suggest that he had already left the premises.

My Dad died in 1977 after a hugely successful career and a life of good deeds. At his funeral, one of the largest ever seen in Clane, a full Guard of Honour was provided by local Gardaí, led by Fergal Lee.

This is a very small portion of the life-story of an efficient, kindly and fun loving man. When he died, his life was remembered in an obituary, written by Fergal Lee. This was suitably entitled "The General is Dead".

## WW1 MILITARY FATALITIES FROM CLANE AND LOCALITY

*Pat Given*

*"In proud and loving memory of my only son"* - these were the starkly poignant words added by Kerryman Maurice De Courcy to the British Army's standard-issue WW1 headstone which today marks his son's final resting place in Plot 1, row M, grave number 9 in the Maroc British Cemetery at the French village of Grenay in the Pas de Calais. The inscription entailed adding a total of thirty-three additional letters to the standard wording allowed on such memorials and the layout of the additional engraving is carefully noted in the documents of, what was then known as the Imperial War Graves Commission. These documents, available on-line, provide a wealth of information on the war dead of the two World Wars, including World War One.

This on-line information lists the names and places of commemoration of the 1.7 million men and women of the Commonwealth forces who died during the two World Wars and also includes details of the 67,000 Commonwealth civilians who died "as a result of enemy action" in the Second World War<sup>1</sup>. Searches of this website produce very valuable primary information on the individuals being researched. The information is accessible in the Grave Registration Reports (GRRs), which are standard forms which detail graves for which the Commission is responsible within a particular burial ground, copies of which may be perused on-line. These registers were produced by the Commission on a cemetery-by-cemetery or memorial-by-memorial basis, and now run to 1,500 volumes. They provide basic details for each war casualty including date of death and the address of the individual's final resting place which includes plot, row and grave order. The information may also include additional information such as next of kin details. In addition, the site allows access to copies of the original headstone documents which detail what was actually inscribed on an individual's headstone. The documents were originally produced with the

purpose of managing the enormous programme of headstone production undertaken by the Commission and their comprehensive content even extends to showing copies of the instructions issued to the memorial engraver. It was from this website that the details concerning the final resting place of Second Lieutenant Henry Joseph De Courcy were obtained. That information, combined with the on-line Irish National Census reports of 1901 and 1911 assisted in compiling the following information on the details of Henry and some other young men from Clane and its environs who gave their lives in World War 1<sup>2</sup>. In this respect, the results of the more recently released 1911 census reports, being recorded only three years before the outbreak of hostilities are particularly helpful. The details which follow are provided in the hope that their publication will assist others engaged in research on establishing the full stories of the more than 49,000 Irish casualties of the Great War.



**Maroc British Cemetery Pas de Calais**

Examination of these and other records suggests that at least seven young men who died in the so-called ‘Great War’ may be traced to Clane. In some cases, their only association with

Clane lies in the single piece of evidence that the deceased's birthplace had been recorded as 'Clane' when enlisting in the British Army. Others may be traced more directly to Clane families. Some of Clane's dead are associated with WW 1's major battles while one died while recuperating from his injuries in Scotland. Another died in England flying the newly developed 'aeroplane' which was then fast becoming a deadly weapon of war. A further burial was carried out on a French battle field, during or immediately after the chaotic conditions of warfare. The earthly remains of one Clane casualty lie in a mass grave, honoured and at rest with his comrades.

Apart from the first year of the hostilities in 1914, all other years of that horrendous war brought sad news to Clane. One died in 1915 while three died in the fateful year 1916, one dying on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> April during that very week when Dublin was experiencing the raw throes of rebellion. The tragic news continued for Clane during 1917 when two of its sons died and again the grim reaper revisited Clane before the final end of hostilities in 1918 when another Clane man was to meet his Maker. Clane men died in all the major theatres of World War1 and in all critical battles of that war. Finally, as in all such research, a number of cases arise, which although not having traceable or direct Clane links are never the less mentioned because of their recorded associations with well-known local families.

The following are pen pictures of those men who died in that conflict. Seven were sufficiently proud of their Clane heritage to record it for posterity as they penned their personal details to enlist in the cause which brought very dark days to Europe in the period 1914 to 1918. Three others, referred to in the following narrative, have associations or family heritage which will make their names familiar to people in Clane and its environs.

**William Morris:** Private William Morris of the First Battalion Royal Dublin Fusiliers was almost as anonymous in life as in death. His entry in *Ireland's Memorial Records 1914-1918*

shows him as having been born in Clane, Co. Kildare<sup>3</sup>. However, this detail is absent from the information provided by the Commonwealth War Commission.<sup>1</sup> William died on 30<sup>th</sup> April 1915 at “V” beach in the Gallipoli campaign as the British tried to force open a supply route through the Dardanelles and the Black Sea to Russia. The cemetery lies on the beach at the bottom of a grassy slope that rises to the cliff edge which formed such an almost impossible barrier to the men’s advance during two ferocious days of fighting. It was during the 25-26<sup>th</sup> April that boats landed the First Royal Dublin Fusiliers at “V” beach and heavy casualties were sustained. Since William died on the 30<sup>th</sup> April it is possible that he later succumbed to the injuries he received during that earlier battle. Buried there are 696 servicemen of whom 480 are unidentified. However, special memorials commemorate 196 officers and men known to be among the men buried there.<sup>1</sup>



**V Beach Cemetery Gallipoli**

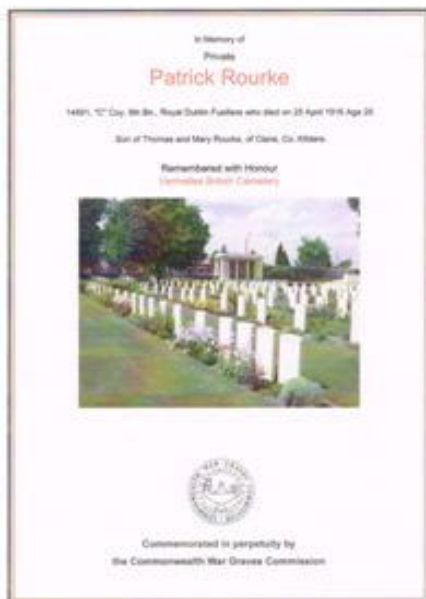
In this cemetery, William Morris is one of this latter group and he is commemorated with a special memorial. A separate and plain tablet notes his supreme sacrifice and the fact that he was

among the soldiers who are believed to be buried in the cemetery but whose grave has not been identified. These tablets carry their regimental numbers, rank, names and initials as well as the name of their regiment and date of death. In William's case his tablet is also inscribed with the simple statement '*Their glory shall not be blotted out*'. Since the associated documents do not carry any information as to next of kin, the identification of William's links to Clane have not been established. In fact, only one William Morris has been traced who might fit the profile of the soldier who lies in this beach-side cemetery. William Alexander Morris was born on 9<sup>th</sup> Jan 1891 to John and Mary Catherine Morris of New Row, Naas, while his father is recorded as being a law clerk.<sup>4</sup> If so, William Morris was 24 years old when he died in far-away Gallipoli in 1915 but was he the WW 1 casualty with Clane connections?

**Patrick Rourke:** On the Tuesday of Easter week, 25 April 1916, as the British forces in Dublin tried to re-establish control around St. Stephen's Green and others sought to re-occupy City Hall, in France at the same time, an Irishman Private Patrick Rourke of Clane died in a further British cause. Aged 25 years when he met his death, Patrick was the youngest child of Thomas and Mary Rourke of Capdoo Commons. When the 1901 census was recorded, Patrick was eleven years old and his father already a widower, his wife Mary having died while their family was still young. The family consisted of three boys and two girls while their father was an agricultural labourer. Ten years later only the three boys remained at home and all are shown as general labourers.

In the cemetery at Vermelles in the Pas de Calais, close to the Belgian border a special cross has been erected in the memory of five soldiers whose actual grave is unknown. Private Patrick Rourke is one of two soldiers of the Eighth Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers whose name appears on that memorial. Of the others, two were attached to the Royal Irish Fusiliers while the fifth was a member of the Royal Scots Fusiliers. An extra 10s 6d was incurred in inscribing the words 'Son of Thomas and

Mary Rourke of Clane Co. Kildare' on the tablet. The sculptor was also instructed to ensure that a cross was engraved on the headstone.



**Certificate from the Commonwealth War Graves Commission**

Patrick Rourke's death may appear to have gone unnoticed to the world at large but to his family and to the community of Clane his apparently quiet and unremarkable life which ended in an unknown grave in Flanders is highly significant. It was through it, in union with the deaths of the countless other men in that war, which made the victory of 1918 possible.

**Patrick Brown:** The earthly remains of Private Patrick Brown of the Ninth Battalion Royal Dublin Fusiliers are interred in the Philosophe British Military Cemetery at Mazingarbe. This burial place was originally taken over by the 16<sup>th</sup> (Irish) Division in 1916 who were then holding the important Loos Salient. The cemetery was required to bury their many front-line casualties at that time. Today, there are 1,996 Commonwealth burials in this cemetery which was designed by Sir Herbert Baker. Patrick Brown died in action on 14<sup>th</sup>



August 1916 and his entry in *Ireland's Memorial Records 1914-1918*, indicates that he was born in Clane, co. Kildare. However, research indicates that Patrick was the son of Thomas Brown and Mary Dunne, both of whom gave their addresses as Timahoe, when they were married in Clane on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sept 1888. By 1911, the pair were living in Timahoe with six of their eight children. Patrick who lived with them, was 11 years of age at that point. Patrick would thus have been 16 years of age when he died in France.

Patrick's mother is listed as his next of kin and she was then living at Haddington Road in Dublin while Patrick's father is not mentioned in the documents concerning his son's death. Research on the occupants of the house in Haddington Road shows that Cornelius Kennedy, a Station Sergeant in Dublin's Metropolitan Police and his wife and their eight children lived there. Further research shows that Cornelius Kennedy was married to Bridget Brown who was born in county Kildare. It appears possible that Mary Brown, mother of Patrick Brown and whose address as next of kin was given as Haddington Road, was living with her husband's relatives at the time of her son's death. By a strange coincidence, Patrick Brown rests in plot 1, row J, grave 5 while in the next grave, plot 1, row J, grave 4 lies the mortal remains of Private John Joseph Farrington, of Cloona House, Johnstown Bridge, Enfield. John Joseph Farrington had been killed in action on 12th Aug 1916, just two days earlier than Private Patrick Brown.

**William Desmond Guthrie Lotan:** Second Lieutenant William Guthrie Lotan of the Royal Flying Corps. was aged 27 when he died on 10 December 1916 at Gosport, England. He had been born in 1888 in Baltinglass Co. Wicklow, to Roscommon -born George Lotan and his Galway-born wife Anna Mary. In 1901 George, a railway Station Master and his wife, both Methodists were living in Sallins with their four children where they also kept a boarder, Robert Berry, a railway clerk and a member of the Church of Ireland. William Guthrie was then 13 years of age. Second in age in his family he had two sisters and one brother. Today the mortal remains

of William Lotan are at rest in the churchyard at the Church of St. Michael and All Angels, Millicent, Clane. Whilst being unique among the Clane victims of the Great War to be buried in his local parish graveyard, William's war grave is not unique in county Kildare. James Durney tells us:

*There are 160 war graves in Co. Kildare of which 103 are in the Curragh Military Cemetery; the rest are scattered over twenty-seven cemeteries and churchyards. There are 158 soldiers and two members of the Royal Air Force buried in the county.*<sup>5</sup>

Although located in Ireland, his grave and other details are nevertheless listed in the returns of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission and his final resting-place is deservedly given the same honour and commemoration as all other war victims.

1917. 11.000 430 1402 P. 1

**GRAVES REGISTRATION REPORT FORM.** Certified that no plan is necessary as there is one in the Vestry. *W. J. de Courcy*

*Laorstat* Command. Officer attached Office of Report Number 161. Schedule Number 1. Category of Graves (4).

Cemetery CLANE (ST. MICHAEL) C-OF-I, CHURCHYARD, Certified Correct and Complete. Office attached CLANE Signature *W. J. de Courcy* OFFICE OF WORKS, DUBLIN.

a	Regd. No.	Name	Rank and Initials	Date of Death	Number or letter of			Type of Memorial	Type of Grave	Remarks
					Plot	Row	Grave			
FIND	—	LOTAN	2/LIEUT. 10.12.16 W.D. CURRIE				30	P. P.	PR.	<i>War Grave (C.I.) 4th - 5th Div. 9 25, Kialla St South Circular Dublin. Auth. - comm</i>

*Return sent on 21/11/17*

**2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. William G Lotan's War Graves Registration Report**

**Henry Joseph de Courcy:** The fifth young man from Clane to die in the disastrous World War 1 held the rank of 2nd Lieutenant in the 3rd Battalion of the Leinster Regiment when

he died in action fighting on the Somme. When he died on 18 January 1917, Henry who had been born in Dublin was just 20 years of age and his regiment in the 'Leinsters' was attached to the 6th Battalion of the Royal Irish Regiment. In the Commonwealth War Graves Commissions documents it is also stated that Henry had been previously 'mentioned in despatches' for bravery.<sup>1</sup> Henry is buried in Maroc British Cemetery at Grenay in the Pas de Calais where there are 1,378 other commonwealth graves. His grave is no. 9, in plot 1, row M. and as has been stated, his father had a special inscription put on his grave-stone: *In proud and loving memory of my only son.*



**Painstown House: source Seamus Cullen**

His parents were Maurice and Frances [nee Nolan] de Courcy of Painstown House, Balraheen in Rathcoffey. Henry's father, Maurice de Courcy, was born in Kerry and was a Land Steward who managed large estates for many Anglo-Irish land-owners. From the 1901 census, it may be established that the family was then living in county Tipperary, outside Cashel, at Ballintemple and Henry was 4 years of age. They lived on a

farm which was being managed by his father for Earl de Montalt. The 1911 census indicates that Henry's mother Frances, her only son Henry and Henry's two sisters then lived in Painstown House. Henry was then 14 years old and still a student. His father is not shown on the form -so he was absent from home on the night of the census. Painstown House was previously home to a branch of the well-known Kildare family - the Aylmers. Another member of the Aylmer family, Gerald Hans Hendrick-Aylmer of Kerdiffstown, Sallins, and also 20 years of age, was to die in action only four months later on 16 April 1917. 'He had joined the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers in July 1915 after passing through Sandhurst'<sup>6</sup>.

**Peter Grogan:** Private Peter Grogan of the 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers is listed in the *Ireland's Memorial Records 1914-1918* as having been born in Clane, co. Kildare. However, his entry in the official registers of the Commonwealth War Commission which provide his burial and other personal details is silent on his birthplace. His remains lie to-day in the La Laiterie Military Cemetery in Flanders. While little is known about the actual circumstances of Peter's death on 19 May 1917, both his burial in Flanders and his date of death suggest that he died in the Ypres Salient when the British forces were preparing for the major offensive now known as the Battle of Messines in early June 1917.

However, research in Ireland's census records of the time produces substantial information on the difficult personal life and times of Peter Grogan and suggests that joining the Dublin Fusiliers may have presented an opportunity for improving his family's circumstances in the austere Dublin environment of that time. Research suggests that Peter Grogan was born in 1879, thus making him 38 when he died. Baptised on the 22 June 1879 in Kilcock his records show that his father was Patrick Grogan and his mother was Mary Owens of Hortland. Peter married Catherine [or Kate, as she was known] Dempsey of Swords on 25 Feb 1900 in St. Mary's Pro-Cathedral in Dublin city.

Peter was described as a 'Labourer' in the census of April 1901, and amid the other residences in the street, which consisted mainly of tenements and public houses, he and Kate shared a six roomed 'private house' with its owner Ester Deering in Sheriff Street. Since there were eleven other 'boarders' who were also recorded in the premises, the house had a total of fourteen inhabitants. Ten years later Peter and Kate lived in one room in Monk's Cottages, still in the North Docks area. By now Kate had given birth to six children, four of whom were living and ranged in age from 9 years to 17 months old while Peter was described as a 'General Labourer'. In such circumstances, and with Dublin's approaching labour struggle, the 1913 'lock-out', and the resulting unemployment and hard times, Peter, aged 35 in 1914 found more than sufficient reason to enlist in the Royal Dublin Fusiliers. His death came on May 19<sup>th</sup> 1917 and the memorial records confirm that he was 'son of Patrick and Mary Grogan; husband of Mrs Catherine Grogan, of Swords, Dublin'.

But was fate any kinder to Catherine after her husband's death? Research shows that Bridget Dempsey, a 52-year-old widow lived on Malahide Road, Swords in 1911 where she occupied a single roomed thatched cottage 'of mud, wood or other perishable construction'. Mrs Catherine [Kate] Grogan, [nee Dempsey of Swords] who is recorded as Peter Grogan's next of kin also had an address at the same 'Malahide Road, Swords' in 1917. After Peter's death, could Bridget Dempsey have shared her house with her namesake and possible relative, the bereaved Kate? The fate of Peter and Kate's two boys and two girls goes unrecorded. To-day, Peter lies in that Flanders's cemetery, which was named after the original dairy farm which had previously stood on the same ground. Lying next to Peter Grogan's simple grave in plot 1, row B, number 30, is that of an 'Unknown British Soldier - known unto God'.

**Patrick Dillon:** The seventh person with direct Clane connections to die in the Great War was Private Patrick Dillon of the Dragoon Guards. Dragoons, at that time described a force of highly mobile mounted infantry equipped with lighter,

faster horses and carrying firearms. This cavalry regiment was also known as the Queen's Bays because of the preference of its soldiers for horses of this colour. Patrick Dillon died of wounds on 19 April 1918 -in the final year of WW 1 aged 31 years of age. He is described as being 'son of Laurence and Ellen Dillon' and as having been 'born in co. Kildare' in the official Commonwealth War Graves Commission documents. However, in *Ireland's Memorial Records 1914-1918* the records clearly state that he was 'born Clane, co. Kildare'. Private Patrick Dillon's birth is recorded in the Registration District of Clane and Timahoe on 7 November 1885 and his mother is shown as Ellen Dillon [nee Coyne] of Ballinafa[gh]. However, this Dillon family also had Clane links since Patrick's father, Laurence Dillon was baptised in Clane Parish Church on February 10<sup>th</sup> 1867. A further connection arises when on 12 Jan. 1910 Laurence Dillon of Ballinafagh, Donadea was fined 6d with 1s costs for 'the use of a cart without a lamp on the outside' while being used at Curryhills, Clane on 5<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1909.

Patrick Dillon was 32 years (sometimes recorded as 31 years) when he died of wounds at Falkirk Infirmary, Stirlingshire in Scotland. He is buried in a 'flat-turfed mown grave' in Camelon Cemetery at Falkirk. His grave in section 11 number 349 is registered with, and maintained by the Commonwealth Graves Commission. His documents give Mrs J. Coombes, of 2, Newfoundland St., Dublin as his next of kin. Research shows that this Mrs Coombes was formerly Julia Dillon daughter of Laurence and Elizabeth Dillon of 'Kildare' who had married Richard Coombes of Tallaght in Rathfarnham on 6 March 1898 and more than likely Patrick Dillon's sister. Julia arranged for the inscription 'Gone but not forgotten' to be inscribed on her brother's memorial tablet which recorded his death in the last major war in which cavalry was employed.

**Private Jeremiah Murphy:** Private Jeremiah Murphy of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Yorkshire Regiment who was killed in action on 10 March 1915 is also recorded as having local connections. Upon his death, the British War Office implemented his final

wishes as outlined in his will and written on 30 Jan 1915. His personal property and effects were delivered to Mrs Julia Murphy, Longtown House, Sallins. This property was then in the possession of the Sweetman family and perhaps Mrs Murphy was in employment there since no other evidence of Private Murphy's links to Clane have emerged.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.cwgc.org/> The site is maintained by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission which was founded by Sir Fabian Ware and officially established by Royal Charter on 21 May 1917 as the Imperial War Graves Commission. It was renamed the Commonwealth War Graves Commission in 1960 and it cares for cemeteries and memorials at 23,000 locations, in 154 countries.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/>

<sup>3</sup> Ireland's WWI memorial records, which provide information on 49,647 Irish soldiers who died in the Great War, have been updated and made available online. Ireland's memorial records were originally compiled by the Committee of the Irish National War Memorial and they are a magnificent record of Ireland's WWI dead. In the early 1920s, £5,000 was allocated from a National War Memorial fund. This was employed in collecting and recording the records of the fallen in that war. The records were published in eight leather-bound volumes in 1923 and were beautifully illustrated by Irish artist Harry Clarke. His work and that of other highly regarded Irish artists were then printed decorated and bound in 100 copies of the final work. These were distributed throughout the principal libraries of the UK. Copies of the work are available in CD form from [www.eneclann.ie](http://www.eneclann.ie) or alternatively they may be searched on-line at

<http://imr.inflandersfields.be/search.html> and

<http://www.cwgc.org/find-war-dead.aspx>.

<sup>4</sup> Registry of Births, Jan-Mar 1891, Naas Registration District, vol. 2, p. 812.

<sup>5</sup> James Durney, *In a time of war, Kildare 1914-1918* (Sallins, 2014), p.170.

<sup>6</sup> *Kildare Observer*, 28 April 1917.

<sup>7</sup> Irish District Courts Registers, Petty Sessions Order Books CSPS 1/10935, <http://findmypast.ie>.

## OBITUARY JOHN (JACK), NOONAN LATE CHAIRMAN OF CLANE HISTORY GROUP

The sudden and unexpected death, on April 26<sup>th</sup> 2016, of John Noonan, Chairman of Clane Local History Group was a tragic loss not only to the Clane Local History Group but also to the wider community of Clane. In the June edition of *Le Cheile* John was accurately described as ‘a gentleman through and through, historian and raconteur who touched the lives of many.’ These words concisely capture the essential John, his life-long interest in local history and genealogy, his affable and open nature and most of all, his genuine eagerness and determination to communicate that knowledge in order to keep alive and enrich our knowledge of Clane’s historic and cultural heritage.



Self-driven, and without any formal training in the sometimes very complex intricacies of historical research, John had been quietly unearthing new facets of Clane’s local history which he then enriched from his own inherited and extensive knowledge. In the sharing and open communication of this blend of freshly acquired facts combined with his own tacit knowledge John has thus bequeathed to the Clane community a renewed and much-enriched inheritance. This legacy is to be found among the notes on his numerous talks, his archives, which include twelve articles written for *Coiseanna* and his very valuable collection of photographs of a Clane long gone. John was an excellent communicator, presenting his thoughts in his own inimitable, but always light-hearted way and he used this gift to great advantage. Of late, he had also taken an interest in recording audio interviews with Clane personalities and in his unique way, he drew from them vivid word-pictures which have opened up for the rest of us many novel aspects of Clane’s history.



John's family always held a special place in his life. This extended to his e-mail address which was chosen to commemorate his parents, jackmonalucky@yahoo.com. His love of family was made apparent to the Group when his first public presentation concerned his grandfather, Jimmy Reddy, who was a well known postman in Clane for many years. It is fitting therefore that to-day John's remains rest in the historic Mainham graveyard where he is interred in his family's plot alongside his beloved father Joe, who died in 1998 and his beloved mother, Mona who died in 2001. On that bright April morning, Clane's rich landscape with its newly renewed verdure formed a poignant setting for John's burial. After the comforting priorities of religion had been attended to, and in the shadow of the family memorial, a tall intricately carved Celtic cross, John's coffin was laid to rest in the warming earth while his nephew, Brian Duffy softly and melodiously sang one of his favourite tunes, 'Caledonia'.



**The Noonan family memorial in Mainham cemetery**

John – or Jack as he was known to his family and long - standing friends, had many areas of interest. He had an avid

interest in sports and this naturally led to his hunger for more awareness of Kildare's and Clane's former great sporting achievements such as Kildare's great football teams of the early 1900s. He researched and published his findings on Clane's links to some early twentieth-century world-acclaimed sporting champions. These included Jack Dempsey and the boxer's links to Mainham or the athlete, Tommy Conneff and his athletic prowess. Other Clane sportsmen, such as Bill and 'Kaiser' Bracken, Mick Sammon or Larry 'Hussey' Cribben frequently formed part of his reminiscences. Of course, as a true Kildare man, John's love of horses and horse-racing was never far from his thoughts and his colleagues were regularly regaled with tales which emanated from his deep love of, and his nostalgia for the week-long Punchestown festivals of his youth. Many of these concerned Clane connections, such as J.D. Whyte, and their proud achievements on the turf. Frequently too, John's stories illustrated his ability to present humorous stories at the expense of a member of his audience. These were always delivered in a sensitive way, certainly not to offend but to entertain and frequently the target was the most amused of all.

Due to the Noonan family's long and close family associations with Clane's historic houses, such as Millicent and Firmount John maintained an active interest in their later history. For instance, he was particularly proud of an original manuscript reference beautifully written in the impressive copper-plate script of the time and provided to a relative, Christopher [Joe] McCormack. Dated 18 February 1914: the reference was occasioned by the reduction in numbers in Major Henry's Firmount House garden staff. As an example of his natural generosity John presented the current owners of the property with a framed copy of this document. Apart from the reference, the framed copy which he presented also included copies of individual portraits of Joe McCormack and two other contemporary Firmount House staff -both of whom were also related to John. These were Neddy Mahoney, who, like Joe was an assistant gardener in Firmount House's two acres of

walled garden, and Mary McCormack, Joe's mother who was also employed in Firmount House.

Apart from Firmount House, there were additional 'Big Houses' locally where other members of John's ancestral family and relatives found employment thus making his interest in these houses' current fortunes very understandable. For instance, he could trace Noonan family employment in Millicent House to the mid-twentieth century period of the Boylan family's occupation. Consequently, with such close family association and simultaneously being a keen supporter of preservation and restoration he took particular pride in visiting and seeing the professional results of the King family's restoration of Millicent House during a Clane Local History outing in May 2010.

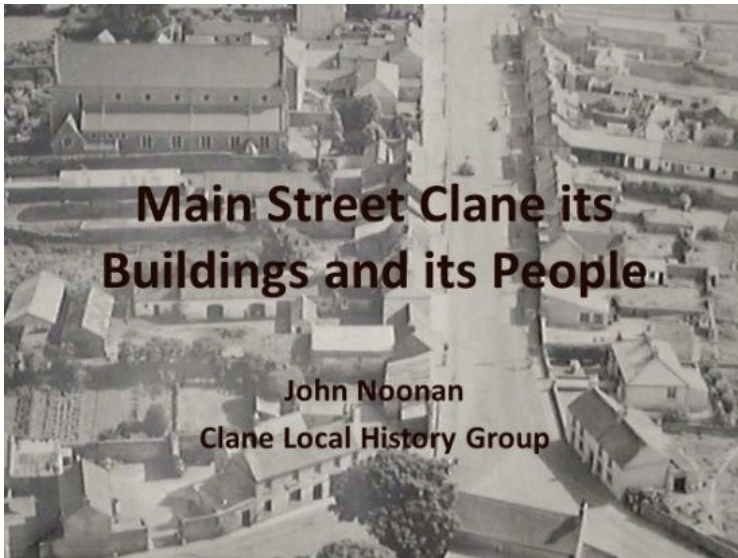
Another of John's interests lay in recording and preserving in his stories and talks, the lives and events of Clane's deceased and sometimes forgotten personalities. In his material, John did not hesitate to include the harmless eccentricities which could sometimes be found in the behaviour of such colourful characters. Perhaps it was these individualities in particular which first awakened John's interest and he was determined to preserve and ensure their faithful onward communication. Whilst many community historians sometimes shy away from association with such characters, John, to his benefit was keenly aware of their essential role in reconstructing an authentic picture of the Clane of yesterday. Other personal attributes caught John's interest. He carefully preserved the naïve poems of Punch McGarr, a local but forgotten poet of Clane while he was particularly interested in Brendan Cullen's account of Andy McCann, another local poet, amateur astronomer and night watchman at Clongowes.

One of John's favourite topics centred around Clane's folklore, traditions and 'strange happenings' and of which he was the custodian of a very substantial archive of material. These stories were deeply rooted in John's nature and heritage. He once wrote that 'all areas in Ireland have their own ghostly

traditions and Clane is no different ... as I grew up on the Millicent Road I remember many ghost stories being told as I sat around the fire with my parents, grandparents, and neighbours'. It became an annual tradition each November for John to present a seasonal talk on topics associated with the folklore, customs and oral heritage of Clane. These November talks became very popular and a much-appreciated feature of our Group's annual calendar of presentations. Consequently, November 2016, for the first time in years, John's humorous and witty talk was sadly missed by all our members.

However, on Wednesday, November 16<sup>th</sup> 2016, and as a small token of remembrance of John's valuable and extensive contribution towards preserving Clane's rich heritage and folklore, an evening dedicated to his remembrance was held in Clane's GAA centre. On that occasion, the members of the Clane Local History Group with the generous support of the Noonan family presented samples of some of the work which John left behind as his precious legacy. Additionally, as an acknowledgement of John's annual contributions to Ireland's National Heritage week, Brendan Cullen in his presentation on 'Clongowes Wood College – the Early Years' and held in August 2016 at Clane's Community Library, graciously dedicated the evening's event to John's memory. This dedication was particularly fitting since it marked John's previous involvement on such occasions while the talk itself formed a major part of Clane's contribution to Ireland's 2016 National Heritage Week.

The photographic archive which John built up remains one of his most important legacies. Using his wide-spread contacts he was able to assemble a major collection of old photographs of people and places from Clane and its surroundings. John was very proud of his achievements in this regard and when he first collected a reasonable assemblage of interesting photos he held a presentation for Group members.



**Initial slide from John Noonan's presentation 21<sup>st</sup> Aug 2012**

Held in Clane Community Library on Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> August 2012 as part of Heritage Week the talk was entitled 'Main Street, Clane – its Buildings and its People'. The presentation may have awakened John's concern for the manner in which the development of Clane was occurring and so, after further research, John in his last public talk to the Clane Local History Group presented 'Main Street Clane – Past and Present' on 18<sup>th</sup> November 2015. In this talk he reviewed the evolution of Clane's streetscape using his photos of premises from the 1900s and compared these with photos of the same premises as they exist currently. To our surprise, and in spite of the absence of modern amenities in the early photographs, comparison between the two series of photos clearly showed the negative impact of modern development on the town. For instance, his presentation vividly illustrated the growing array of plastic signage and some very poor shop front designs which have appeared along Clane's main street in the interim. John was a fearless defender of Clane's traditions and heritage and in his commentary, he very correctly expressed major concerns for this deterioration in standards.

The statement that ‘John’s home was his castle’ fully describes John’s attitude and love for his well-kept family home on Millicent Road.



**John Noonan at home on Millicent Road**

It was a source of great surprise to John to learn that his neat and comfortable home had a long and proud tradition. These pleasant homes dot the landscape around Clane and their origins lie in the difficult days of the Land League. They tell a story of the Irish agricultural workers and their struggle for recognition and rights. This was a fight that complemented the concurrent struggle for tenants’ rights and the two struggles took a roughly parallel course over the same time period. One of the farm-workers’ primary demands was for the provision of acceptable standards of habitation and many of these, ‘Parnell Cottages’ as they are now known find their origins in those circumstances. Although not as ostentatious as the many other architect-designed, stone-built, former landlord residences which share their environs these ‘Parnell Cottages’ possess a precious, but less frequently chronicled history. It is sometimes forgotten that they represent excellent examples of vernacular architecture in the county Kildare landscape while simultaneously acting as memorials of more difficult times. It is no wonder that John’s well-justified pride in his home was

greatly increased when he became aware that homes such as his had such historic relevance.



**Visit of Edenderry History Group to Clane, July 2013**

John's interest in local history was not just confined to Clane. Many neighbouring local history groups will remember with fondness John's generosity in visiting and presenting his stimulating presentations. Naas, Rathcoffey, Edenderry, Timahoe are among the groups who were entertained by his rhetoric and insights. He loved, too, to welcome visitors to Clane and the visit by the Edenderry Group to Clane in July 2013 was very special to him.

Because of the extensive nature of his archive this obituary can only feature a limited review of John's work but the items presented hopefully provide some insight into its richness, variety and extent. John's work will long remain as a fitting memorial to his love and enthusiasm for Clane's rich local heritage.

*Mar a déarfá as Gaeilge, nī bheidh a leithéid ann arís agus a anam dīlis do Dhia*

## OBITUARY ÚNA HEFFERNAN LATE SECRETARY OF CLANE LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

Úna Heffernan née Wilson died peacefully at Tallaght Hospital after a short illness on 27<sup>th</sup> February last. Una, who resided at Millicent Road in Clane, was an extremely popular and well-known figure, participating in and contributing to, many aspects of Kildare life. Her life was dedicated to her loving family but in addition Úna found time for her life-long interests of education and history. As a proud ‘Northerner’ Úna, a native of co. Antrim, never lost her tell-tale accent. Her life-story beautifully spoken by her daughter at Úna’s funeral mass outlined this life of service to the youth of Ireland.



Úna Wilson was born and spent her early years in the mill village of Cogry, before her family moved to the nearby, larger town of Ballyclare, County Antrim. She was the eldest of 10 children, 5 boys, 5 girls and she played a significant role in looking after the “wee ones” through her childhood and teenage years. During her education at St Dominic’s High School, Belfast Úna encountered the Irish language for the first time. She studied it at GCE A Level and in the process developed that deep grá for the Irish language that lasted a lifetime and which she instilled in so many others. Úna had a love of education and was always determined to become a teacher. She moved to England in the 1960s to train at St Paul’s College of Education, Newbold Revel near Coventry. Úna always spoke very fondly of her time at St Dominic’s and St Paul’s. Always loyal to her friends she maintained lifelong friendships from her school and college days. It was during her time at St Paul’s that she met her future husband, Jim Heffernan in 1967 and after their marriage the couple lived in Derby



where Úna taught at St Mary's Primary School, Broadway for five years.

The family moved home to Ireland in 1972, living for a few years in Leixlip until moving to Millicent Road in Clane in 1978. Úna Heffernan taught in Tallaght for a year before finding a position in St Brigid's National School in Celbridge where she was to teach for 30 years. She was held in very high esteem both as a teacher and as a colleague; instilling her love of Irish, Art and Crafts, and History in so many of her pupils. Since Una's retirement in 2005 she has led a very full life. She particularly enjoyed travelling, visiting Australia on a number of occasions, as well as the US, Canada and Europe. Úna also found time in retirement for her beloved education. She mentored and supervised many of the next generation of teachers in training with Marino College, visiting schools to observe trainees in the classroom and pass on her wisdom and advice.



**Staff of St. Brigid's mid 1980s, Úna is seated second from left of picture**

Úna played a very important role in the Clane Local History Group where she had the role of Secretary but, as with everything that Úna did, her contribution and support went far beyond the requirements of that formal role. Although quiet and unassuming, Úna was also a woman of very strong values and work ethic. For instance, it was through her encouragement and ever present support that she ensured that the annual schedule of the Group's monthly presentations was always maintained. The History Group's committee meetings in her ever-available home were an event to be anticipated with pleasure, all were made totally welcome. In particular, Úna gently influenced the annual meeting programmes so that Irish and patriotic topics were featured. The Group's successful night of song and poetry held in February 2016 to commemorate the centenary of 1916 was one shining example of Úna's influence. On that memorable evening of song and poetry in the GAA center, Úna's touching rendition of Padraig Pearse's *Mise Éire* enthralled the audience. As a contributor to the Clane History Group's journal *Coiseanna*, Úna has written on education in Clane in the 1820s.

But most of all, Úna was a loving mother to her three daughters and along with their father, instilled a strong set of values and empowerment in them, mirroring her own work ethic, always encouraging independent thought and that same focus on education. A skilled dressmaker over the years she created many outfits including debs and communion dresses for the three girls. She was so delighted in recent years by the addition of grandchildren to the Heffernan clan; Cormac and Aidan, her grandsons were her pride and joy. Everywhere she travelled she'd find gifts both educational and fun, to collect for the boys to play with on their visits.

We wish Jim and all the Heffernan and Wilson families our sincere condolences on their sad loss. Ardheis Dé go raibh a h-anam dilis.

## MISCELLANEY

Father Maurice Kearney, Parish Priest of Clane and Rathcoffey between 1824 and 1842 according to Thomas Francis Meagher a student in Clongowes Wood College from 1833 to 1839.

*Midway between Clane and Maynooth lived one Fr. Kearney, the parish priest of the united parishes of Clane and Rathcoffey. ....He had nothing to do with the college, but somehow or other , the old gentleman was constantly there. The Jesuits had a gala day once a month. The Jesuits had a choice banquet in one of those frescoed halls I have already described. To this banquet came all the neighbours. .... From this table too Fr. Kearney was never absent. The boys used to say - though his cottage was two miles off - he smelt the dinner and, in dressing himself, timed his toilet by the perfume, which came to him from the chimney top of the college kitchen, across the woods, the fields and the marshy bottoms. For upwards of thirty years Father Kearney, in his short breeches, tight black gaiters, clumsy ruffled cravat, and carrotty scant hair, was at that feast. His cottage was known by the name of Snipe Lodge. It was a thatched cottage, with a clay floor, naked rafters, and four panes of green glass – each of them with an enormous bull’s eye – to let the light through. He had a housekeeper named Biddy, and a butler named Jim. Between Biddy and Jim, it was hard to keep the place clean. The calf was forever opening his Reverence’s door, upsetting the chairs, and the turf in the corner. There was a blackguard parcel of dogs incessantly scampering about, biting the legs of the poor who came with their sores and their crutches for alms, and frightened the hens from their roost.*

*The above excerpt is from 'Meagher of the Sword', edited by Arthur Griffith  
Brendan Cullen.*

### **The Atomic Bomb at Nagasaki.**

The following description of the moment the atomic bomb was dropped on the city of Nagasaki in Japan is taken from a book entitled “A Doctor’s War” written by Dr. Aidan McCarthy a native of Castletownbere, Co. Cork in 1914. He was a student

at Clongowes Wood College between 1923 and 1930. Graduating from Cork Medical School in 1938 he emigrated to England and joined the R.A.F. as a doctor. At the outbreak of WW II he was posted to France but was evacuated from Dunkirk in 1940. Later he served overseas, was captured by the Japanese and was a prisoner in Nagasaki in August 1945 when the atomic bomb was dropped on that city. Subsequently he practised medicine in England until he retired. He died in London on 11th October 1995 and is buried in his native Castletownbere..

*On August 9<sup>th</sup> the day started bright and clear, with only occasional clouds to the north..... At about 10.45 am, .. high above us we saw eight vapour trails showing two separate four engine bombers, heading south. These were B-29 bombers. They had been seen going north earlier that morning. Then they suddenly altered course and came back over Nagasaki. This manoeuvre was enough to send us wildly dashing for the air- raid shelters. .... In the shelters we prayed that there would not be a direct hit. A couple of POWs did not bother to go into the shelters, staying on the surface and crouching on the ground in the shadow of the barrack huts. They were gazing at the sky, watching the approaching vapour trails. One of them shouted to us that three small parachutes had dropped. There then followed a blue flash, accompanied by a very bright magnesium-type flare which blinded them. Then came a frighteningly loud but rather flat explosion which was followed by a blast of hot air.. .... All this was followed by eerie silence. .... Bodies lay everywhere, some horribly mutilated by falling walls, girders and flying glass. ....Those people still on their feet ran round in circles, hands pressed to their blinded eyes or holding the flesh that hung in tatters from their faces or arms. The brick built guardroom had collapsed, and the dead guards lay almost naked in a circle around the unlit stove. .... in contrast to the bright August sunshine that we had left a few minutes earlier, there was now a kind of twilight. We all genuinely thought, for some time, that this was the end of the world.*

**Brendan Cullen.**