

Coiseanna

The Journal of Clane Local History Group

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Front Cover: The motte near Alexandra Bridge

Back Cover: An early engraving of the castle at Clongowes



Plaque on Robben Island commemorating
Richard Wolfe from Baronrath, Clane

EDITORIAL

The year 2019 was both successful and eventful. For a relatively small group we continue to surprise ourselves with our ability to produce such a varied, interesting and wide ranging programme for our members. We are particularly proud of our journal, Coiseanna. Now in its ninth year of publication it continues to ensure the promotion and preservation of the traditions, history and heritage of our local community. The journal reflects a balance between topics of local interest and contributions from outside the parish. While it is important we emphasise all things local, it is important to see local events in the broader historical context.

During the past year we managed to provide a full programme of presentations delivered by excellent speakers on a wide variety of subjects. A highlight of the year was the exhibition we staged, during Heritage Week, on the subject of Hidden Gems & Forgotten People. The exhibition held in Clane Public Library proved to be very popular and was well attended during the week by many local people. The exhibition centred around the group's collection of Hidden Gems and Forgotten people from the locality together with exhibits taken from the Federation of Local History Society archives. Members of the group also presented a separate evening talk on selected exhibits during which there was an interesting and lively discussion. Librarian, Jackie McCabe, commented on the amount of interest it generated locally with people visiting the library. We plan to repeat the exhibition in the future.

The editorial team would like to thank all those who contributed articles for the journal and to extend a sincere thanks to all our members for their loyal support over the past year.

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A SHORT HISTORY OF CLANE

Pat Given

Clane's rich history can be traced continuously from Stone Age to Modern times and in all past epochs the citizens of this quiet pastoral Liffey-side community have actively participated. Visitors to Clane are, perhaps, most starkly made aware of the community's origins when visiting one of the locality's most important historical sites. This special spot is sited between the roundabout and the Alexandra Bridge which crosses the river Liffey on the road from Clane towards Naas. Thanks to the combined work of Clane's Community Council and the Local History Group our community's most impressive Anglo-Norman motte is now well signposted and easily found. However the locality on which the motte stands is much more than a relatively recent Norman antiquity. In this historically-charged site, our early Irish ancestors bequeathed today's generations with folk memories of a much earlier Clane and its origins. Tradition holds that it was in this locality circa two millennia ago, some of Clane's most precious scenes of past glories were enacted.

Clane's importance and also most probably its name, derives from its strategic location. This latter supposition is based on the fact that a settlement of Ireland's pre-Christians, availing themselves of the fruits of the richly endowed river Liffey for their sustenance, had sited themselves at a fording point at the most likely north-south route between Ireland's two important centres of power at the time, Tara and Naas. A place name describing the distinguishing feature of the near-by ford, i.e. *Claon Ádh* i.e. "Crooked or Slanted Ford", could have later provided Clane with its name. Alternatively, this forded site could have been the original *Crocaun Claonta* or the "Rounded Hill of Clane" where, according to the ancient annals, the pre-Christian Leinster men assembled before doing battle? This practice, it is recorded, ensured their subsequent victory. Oral tradition recounts the saga of one such Iron Age inter provincial battle when a hosting at the site had no such effect. In that battle King Mesgegra of Leinster was subsequently

killed at the near-by ford of Clane and his wife Buan, on hearing the news, instantly died from a broken heart. Traditionally Mesgegra's burial place is believed to be part of this Norman motte adjacent to the Liffey and his wife Buan, is said to be at rest in a second, identical, Norman motte some miles away at Mainham. Their original burial places being large mounds of earth were incorporated much later by the Normans into their defensive mottes. Queen Buan's burial place was vividly described in a very old (and long!) Irish poem concerning the battle. Sir Samuel Ferguson's modern English translation of that poem reassures us that what remains today is a memorial to her memory and her fidelity.

*And let the earth-heaped grass-renewing tomb,
A time-long token eloquent remain,
Of pity and of love for all who come
By murmuring Liffey and the banks of Clane*



The motte at Mainham where Queen Buan's remains are said to lie

A number of Stone Age artifacts have been uncovered in the immediate locality proving that Clane's origins may be traced even further back than the Iron Age. These finds include Stone

Age burials with associated pottery, grave goods in Loughbollard, a dolmen or cromlech at Carrigeens and an impressive Stone Age axe, estimated to be over 5,000 years old, was more recently uncovered at Mainham.

Christianity is traditionally believed to have reached Clane in pre-Patrician times when St Patrick's precursor St Ailbe founded his monastery here. While no trace of the Monastery exists today the historic site is still evident on a height overlooking the village green which is now occupied by a former Church of Ireland church. St Ailbe's ancient monastery is recorded as the site, in 1162 AD, of the important Synod of Clane. Attended by the later Saint Laurence O'Toole, Archbishop of Dublin and the King of Leinster Diarmuid Mac Murrough, the Synod, amongst other decrees, agreed to make Armagh the administrative centre of the Irish church. This decision was important since, by its implementation the Irish church began its journey back towards full acceptance of Roman authority.

Soon thereafter Kildare and Clane in particular, saw the arrival of the Anglo-Norman invaders. For the observant, some heritage remains from that period since the strategically conscious Anglo-Norman adventurers recognised that these easily forded and fertile locations on the River Liffey provided important military advantages. Consequently the Liffey valley around Clane was colonised in a most intense manner. As the new arrivals acquired or were granted property in the area, it was their custom to re-name it in such a way as to proclaim its new ownership. Today the extensive influence and memory of Strongbow's men-at-arms and their descendants are still to be found in such places as Kerdiffstown, Johnstown, Bodinstown, Osbertstown, Painstown, Palmerstown, Barberstown, Richardstown - to name just a few locally recurring ones. Just like their motte and bailey structures already referred to, these town names are of Anglo-Norman origin. In defending their new possessions in Dublin and its hinterlands the Normans erected the defences of the Pale whose remnants may still be viewed in the locality. The Norman adventurers also brought

other historical legacies. In particular the ivy-clad ruins of the Franciscan Friary founded through an endowment of the Fitzgeralds in 1258 and the iconic, almost fortress-like church at Mainham which was bestowed on the Knights Hospitallers by the de Herefords. In the fourteenth century, in order to improve the amenities of Clane, the new inhabitants made Clane a Corporate town with a Provost, Bailiffs and Commonality. Thus in March 1391 the town was allowed to levy taxes, for a period of seven years, on goods coming into the village in order to build a new bridge over the river Liffey.



Clane Friary Ruins

All major Irish historical episodes impacted on Clane. The War of the Three Kingdoms in the mid seventeenth century saw the now-demolished Blackhall Castle besieged while later, unfortunately, Cromwell was a familiar figure in the area. The United Irishmen were particularly active in the area in the 1798 Rising. One of the early battles of 1798 occurred at Coiseanna, a site on the outskirts of Clane which later gave its name to a local Ceili band and also to this journal. Of interest also is that many leaders of the United Irishmen resided in Clane or its locality at the time. These included Theobald Wolfe Tone, Archibald Hamilton Rowan and John Esmonde. The location and protection of the grave of Wolfe Tone at Bodenstown owes much to Clane. In appreciation the National Library of Ireland contains a sketch with the caption "Bodenstown County Kildare with the grave of W. Tone beautifully rebuilt by Peter Clory of Clane, Co. Kildare". It is dated September 1874.

THE HILL OF TARA

Brendan Cullen

The story of Tara is a complex one because at Tara myth and legend merge with written history. What we know with certainty is that the disappointing grassy mounds on the hill are the remains of a Celtic settlement. Archaeological evidence suggests that the Celts reached Ireland in the 3rd century B.C. and because they possessed a knowledge of iron-working the Celtic period in Ireland is referred to as the Iron Age which lasted until the coming of Christianity in the 5th century A.D.



Tara from the South, the bottom half of the photograph shows a large hillfort, *Rath na Riogh*, which encloses three other monuments

The principal ruins on the hill are typical Celtic remains: several earthen ringforts, and a huge hillfort. The presence of the latter would suggest that Tara was an important settlement

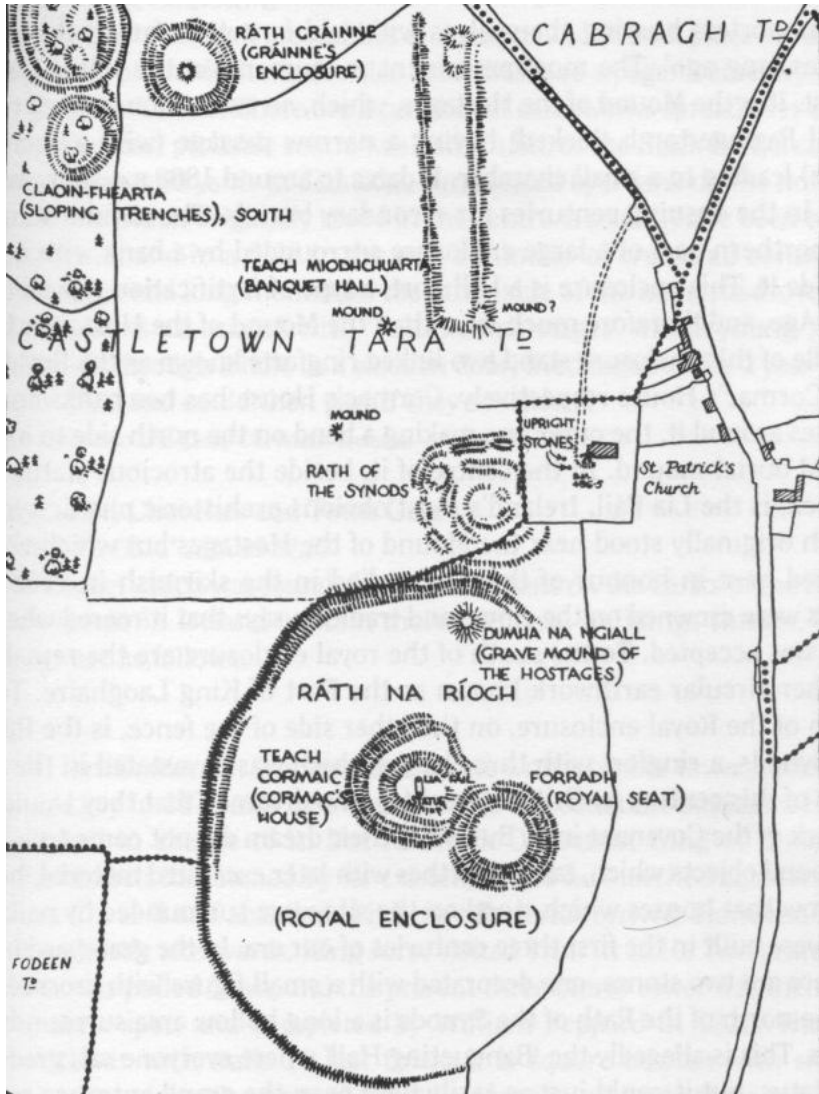
in the Celtic period, perhaps the settlement of the High King of Ireland. Most of the manuscript evidence accords this honour to Tara and is loud in its praise of *Teamhair na Ríogh*; Tara of the Kings. The fact that there is also a Neolithic Passage Tomb i.e. the Mound of the Hostages, on Tara, would suggest that the hill had a sacred character long before the arrival of the Celts. However, it is important to stress that Tara, unlike Newgrange, it is the remains of a dynamic, living community. If the visitor wants to appreciate Tara he must give free rein to his imagination and he must try to visualise a thriving, busy community going about its daily business in a settlement cluster made up of circular ramparts surmounted by wooden palisades and containing wooden houses made of wattle and daub walls with thatched roofs. If he can do this then these neglected grassy mounds will come to life. If he can't he will go away from Tara disappointed and critical of our State agencies for their obvious and dreadful neglect of such a famous and important "Royal" site.

The Banquet Hall

Sometimes called *Teach Míodhchuarta*, the site of the Banquet Hall is on the northern side of the hill and consists of two long parallel banks enclosing a sunken area. The northern end is damaged, probably due to the building of the road which skirts the hill on this side. It is estimated that the roof may have been 45 feet high and was supported by several rows of large wooden posts and many long wooden ridge poles. The roof was made of thatch and the roof timbers, more than likely, rested on wooden walls made of wattle and daub.

Most of the written information about the Banquet Hall and indeed about all the ruins on the hill comes from the *Dinnshenchas*, a 12th century topographical tract written in both verse and prose. In its hey-day the Banquet Hall must have been a spectacular building capable of seating a thousand people at a function. It is reputed to have been built during the golden age of Tara by the great King Cormac MacArt who ruled from 227 to 266 A.D. The Banquet Hall was not only the largest building at Tara but was also an important focal point

around which life at Tara revolved. It was here that meetings to discuss and regulate the day-to-day running of the *tuath* would take place; here the King and Brehons would give judgments in cases brought before them; here laws relating to the locality and to a wider area were enacted. It also housed the religious functions presided over by the Druids.



Map showing the principal sites on the Hill of Tara

Iron Age archaeological remains from other sites would suggest the existence of major ceremonial occasions and ritual practices in Celtic society. There were several major festivals of the Celtic year. At the beginning of May the festival of *Bealtaine* was celebrated in honour of the god Bel. It was on this feast that the cattle were driven to the mountain or summer pasture to graze and were accompanied by the herdsmen who looked after them during the summer months. This seasonal movement of men and animals, called booleying, was an integral and important part of the Celtic pastoral cycle. The festival of *Lughnasa*, in honour of the god Lug took place in early August and marked the beginning of the harvest season. The feast of *Samhain* heralded the end of summer and the beginning of a new Celtic year. The cattle were driven back from the mountain or summer pasture. Many were killed and the meat salted and stored for the winter months. Each of these festivals were accompanied by great merry-making and feasting which took place in the Banquet Hall in the presence of the King.

Perhaps the most famous event in Tara was the Harvest Festival or Feis which occurred every three years and lasted for six days; three days before Samhain and three days after. Here in the Banquet Hall the High King, surrounded by members of the Aos Dána and subordinate kings and their retinues would discuss the affairs of state, assess tributes payable by one king to another and enact new laws. An integral part of the Feis was the sumptuous feasting which lasted well into each night of the festival. The Feis at Tara came to end in the 6th century A.D. Under the year 554A.D. the annalists record, “The last Feis of Tara was held”. Thereafter, the Banquet Hall, abandoned and desolate, fell into disuse and finally into ruin.

The Rath of the Synods.

This rath is in a very poor state of preservation. The main explanation for this is that towards the end of the 19th century, a group of British Israelites came to Tara seeking the Ark of the Covenant and believing it was buried within the Rath of the Synods, proceeded to dig up the site. Needless to say, they

failed to find the Ark but they mutilated and destroyed the rath. They left no written record of their excavation so that today it is very difficult to decipher the jumbled remains. However, despite this, the Rath of the Synods was excavated by Professor Sean O’Riordain in 1952 and 1953.

The site consists of a central area surrounded by three concentric banks and ditches. All the ditches were cut into the underlying rock because the boulder clay covering was very thin. Luckily the boulder clay preserved the post-holes which had held upright wooden poles supporting the roof. Also preserved were trenches which had housed wooden palisades used to protect the inhabitants from man and beast. Evidence uncovered indicated that the site had undergone four distinct phases of construction. Each successive phase enlarged the site by annexing more rock-cut ditches, earthen banks and timber palisades. The central space was occupied by wooden houses with thatched roofs which was enclosed by the inner palisade. In this section were found five inhumed burials.

Among the items found in the excavation were a Roman seal, a Roman lock and some glass fragments which suggest that the inhabitants of Tara were in contact with the Roman world, probably Roman Britain and maybe Gaul. Fragments of Roman pottery, which can be dated, indicate that this rath was inhabited from the first to the third century A.D. Like thousands of other raths throughout the country this site was an ordinary Celtic farmstead although slightly more complex in structure than other examples.

Rath na Riogh

Rath na Riogh is the remains of a huge hillfort which encloses the top of the Hill of Tara. Because it commanded a magnificent view of the surrounding countryside, more than likely, it was a defensive structure. It is a univallate hillfort i.e. it possesses one line of defence, namely, one bank and one ditch. The hillfort is a common Celtic monument; there are about 50 in Ireland. Like *Rath na Riogh* they are usually located on the tops of low rounded hills that overlook rich agricultural land, especially pasture land. The dimensions of *Rath na Riogh* are impressive and bear testimony to its

function as a defensive structure. It is roughly oval in plan and measures 950 feet by 800 feet. Excavation has shown that the bank and ditch were once formidable lines of defence. The ditch was cut into the underlying rock to a depth of eleven feet. The bank, which was built with the material excavated from the ditch must have been correspondingly high. The defensive character of the site was further strengthened by the discovery of the remains of a great wooden palisade on the inside of the ditch. With an unrestricted view of the countryside *Rath na Riogh* was admirably placed and well fortified to repel attacks from any part of the surrounding lowland.

The Mound of the Hostages.

This is the oldest monument on the Hill of Tara and pre-dates the Celtic settlement by some 1500 years. It is a Neolithic passage tomb like Newgrange, though small by comparison. It was used as a burial place over a long period, not just to accommodate Neolithic burials but was also used by Food Vessel people and Cinerary Urn people of the Bronze Age. The mound which was excavated between 1955 and 1959 is 70 feet in diameter and 9 feet high. It was found to be made of a cairn of stones overlain by a layer of clay some 3 feet thick. The chamber was 13 feet long, 4 feet wide and 6 feet high. It was divided into three separate compartments by low sill stones. The original passage tomb cremations were found in the middle compartment. In the innermost compartment were a number of crouched Food Vessel burials from the Bronze Age. It appears that the Food Vessel people had cleaned out the innermost compartment of passage tomb cremations and used the chamber to bury their own dead, which were crouched inhumations.

The outer clay layer of the mound was also used by another group of Bronze Age people as a burial place. In the clay covering there were forty burials discovered – all cremations except one. The burials belonged to the Cinerary Urn people who replaced the Food Vessel people in the eastern half of the country in the middle Bronze Age and who cremated their dead in large cinerary urns which they inverted over the burnt remains.

The one unburnt burial was that of a youth of 15 years of age who had been inhumed in a crouched position and who was wearing an elaborate necklace. The necklace consisted of bronze beads, possibly from Ireland; of amber from Scandanavia; of jet from southern England and of faience possibly from the eastern Mediterranean. The components of the necklace indicate that Ireland's trading links were quite widespread as early as the Middle Bronze Age. Even then, it appears, Ireland although on the periphery, was very much part of Europe.



The author at the Mound of the Hostages

The Mound of the Hostages has been dated by Carbon 14 to around 2000B.C. This places it towards the end of the Neolithic period and at the beginning of the Bronze Age. Perhaps by this time the custom of building huge tombs like Newgrange, Knowth and Dowth had declined and this may explain its small size. The Bronze Age Burials were inserted about 1500 B.C.

Cormac's House.

Teach Cormaic or Cormac's House is near the centre of *Rath na Riogh* and is joined on to another rath called the *Forradh* or the Royal Seat. The Royal Seat is a ringfort surrounded by two banks and a ditch. More than likely this was a simple domestic site like so many ringforts throughout the country. Cormac's House, also a domestic site, is a bit more complex. It is also a ringfort and consists of a raised flat-topped mound surrounded by two banks and two ditches. The building in the centre would have been a wooden house consisting of a thatched roof resting on wattle and daub walls and supported by several large upright timber poles. It is probable that there were wooden palisades on top of both banks.



***Teach Cormaic* and the *Forradh* with the Mound of the Hostages in the background**

Near the centre of Cormac's House is a granite pillar. This marks the site of the Croppies' Grave i.e. the grave of a group of rebels who were killed in the Battle of Tara in the 1798 Rising. The granite pillar is regarded as the *Lia Fáil*, the Stone of Destiny. It is five feet high and is reputed to be the inauguration stone of the High Kings of Ireland. It was originally standing near the Mound of the Hostages and was moved to its present site in 1798 when it was used as a

headstone over the Croppies' Grave. In Celtic Ireland the King had to be of impeccable character and possess the highest physical, moral and intellectual attributes. Tradition has it that when a king was to be crowned he had to stand on the *Lia Fáil* as his final test of suitability for the exalted position of High King. If the king-elect possessed the right qualities for the job the stone would give a great roar of approval. If however, the king-elect lacked the necessary qualities the stone remained silent. With silence came rejection.



The author standing beside the *Lia Fáil*

With the advent of Christianity Tara gradually declined in political and religious importance and was finally abandoned by the High King Maelsheachlainn in 1022 A.D. Since 1991, when the Discovery Programme was initiated there have been several magnetometer surveys carried out on the hill which have identified many new archaeological monuments and features which had remained hidden below ground for centuries. So far there have been no archaeological excavations to unearth these hidden treasures.

CLONGOWES WOOD COLLEGE FARM

John O'Dea

In 1814 the Jesuit Fathers, under the Rectorship of Fr. Peter Kenney, purchased the Castle and 219 acres at the price of £16,000 (about €1.3 million in current money), from Michael Wogan Browne. The monies came from the English Jesuit Province. As expected there was some opposition to the purchase. When Fr. Kenney was challenged about his 'vow of poverty' he replied that his vow 'wasn't a solemn vow'. He was supported in his stance by Daniel O'Connell who had a lot of influence in important places at the time. In time O'Connell sent four of his own sons to study in Clongowes and in fact stayed in the college on occasion.



Dairy Cattle on the front lawn at Clongowes

The farm in those early years got little if any mention. There is no word of James Joyce and his like ever having set foot on the land. In its first years after the purchase we read that the weather was particularly wet-crops such as hay and corn failed. Then the outbreak of typhus, which closed the college for six months in 1819 when 65,000 died in the countryside must have been a very difficult period for the college and farm. The Famine years would have taken its toll on the farm and its workers as it did countrywide. Also the political situation up to

1916 and onwards. The flu epidemic in 1918/19 affected 200 pupils and staff, three students died.

In the later 1930s a Fr. Finucane was in charge of the farm. He established a small top-class pedigree Shorthorn herd. During his time he got some great prices for his animals at sales in the Royal Dublin Society. In 1944 for example he received 60 guineas (€9,500 in current money) for a pedigree bull and he frequently got 60 guineas for young heifers.

Following on from Fr. Finucane's time - as remembered by Denis Dunne - there was a herd of around 50 milking cows of mixed breeds - Shorthorns and Herefords. These were milked by hand by four milkers. They started milking at 6.30 am and at 4.00pm in the evening. Eugene Smyth with his cob and float brought one churn of milk to the Castle for the students and priests and two other churns to the Dairy in the Courtyard near the Castle. There too were the Laundry, Bakery and the Tailor's Shop. Annie Plummer from Rathcoffey was the dairymaid at the time. She skimmed the milk using a separator. She made the butter and cream which was whipped for the college. The skimmed milk was taken back down to the farmyard to feed the pigs. Frank Smyth was the head herdsman and Denis Dunne said he was as good as any vet. The farm also had a flock of sheep which were managed by Paddy Timmons. The pigs (about 20 sows) were managed by Mick Dunne and Frank Cribbin. All the meat for the college was supplied by the farm - bullocks, sheep and pigs. The slaughter house was in the farmyard and the butcher was Jack Cribbin. Again Eugene Smith brought sides of beef, lamb and bacon with his cob and float to the college as required. He then brought the kitchen waste back down to feed the pigs; that was recycling in those days - nothing wasted! Additional animals had to be bought on occasion.

At this time all work was done manually. There were about 14 horses on the farm to do all the heavy work of ploughing and sowing, mowing and bringing in the hay and straw. Jim Noonan and Kit Delaney were the ploughmen. All the horses

were shod in Dunne's forge as well as all the machinery repairs. The forge was situated near to where Denis Dunne now lives near the front entrance to Clongowes. Some fields were sown with cereals as well as potatoes, mangolds and turnips. Local boys got work picking potatoes and thinning turnips. The meadows were cut using horses and mowing machines and the hay was turned using hay forks - all very laborious, especially in very warm weather! I remember it well myself at home as a young lad - it was 'all hands on deck' - no saying you were bored in those days!

The Raheen Wood, down from the Red House, now full of spruce trees was sown by John O'Connor and Jack Cribbin in 1945. Before that it was all native trees of beech, oak and larch. These were cut down during the Second World War to provide firewood for the college as coal could not be imported from the UK at the time. The wood was cut using crosscut saws - no chainsaws in those days! The timber was then split using axes. After the war the farm got its first tractor. It was an 'Allis Chambers' bought from McGees of Ardee - a model to be seen only at vintage shows these days! At this time there were two boys of the McGee family in the college as students. More tractors were acquired as the years went on and, as Denis Dunne remembers, the beautiful horses disappeared one by one. Other locals who worked on the farm in those days were Jack Kinsella, Peter Connolly, Joe Bracken, Paddy Cooney, Tom Browne, Jack McCabe, Jim and Harry Timmons, Tommy and Paddy Brilly, Mick Brilly, Jimmy and Tomas Brilly, Tommy Berns, Johnny Rourke and Kit Tutty. The Jesuit fathers associated with the farm were Fr. Finucane, Fr. Cyril Power, Fr. Kieran Hanley and Fr. Frank Frewen. The Stewards were Mick Duffy, Tom Smyth and Denis Newman.

All the fields in those days had their own name; e.g. The White Field; The Shankloon (Seancluan) behind the Raheen Wood; the Old Gardens adjoining Mainham Cemetery and the Clump around the Red House. The Red House was built in 1907 as an isolation building for the college. There was a sand pit in front of the Red House for a number of years. Other fields were the

Brick Field adjoining Joe Higgins' land and the Skaugh near to Browns, Richardstown. In the mid 1980s approximately five acres were acquired by Kildare County Council. For some years part of the farm was rented out during the winter months to local farmers for sheep grazing. Altogether Clongowes covers some 500 acres in total with 300 plus acres being farmed, the balance includes sports pitches, a golf course, which was opened in 1970/71, and woodland. The college also owned 200 acres around Rathcoffey Castle; this was farmed for grain and dry stock. For some years from 1976 this land was rented to personnel who worked in Farringtons of Rathcoffey. It was then rented to Ray Coyle (Mr. Tayto) for growing potatoes and grain. This land was sold in the early 1980s.



Threshing at Clongowes in the first half of the 20th Century

In the Walled Garden to the right of the college were grown apple trees and various fruit bushes. Some potatoes and vegetables were also grown there for the college kitchen. A Mr. O'Dwyer was gardener way back followed by Jimmy Nestor and his nephew who were gardeners there for over fifty years. They finished in the mid 1970s. Subsequently the work was undertaken by Michael Fox who was there in my early years in Clongowes. In 1977 the garden was expanded into the adjacent Brick Field. Potatoes and vegetables were grown there to supply the college with the surplus going to the Dublin Market. However after a few years it became evident that the

vegetables could be bought cheaper than what the farm and garden could produce them for. A decision was taken to clear most of the garden to provide much needed sites for staff houses and an all-weather pitch; this was followed by a multi-purpose hall and most recently a new swimming pool. Next to the garden was the Gardener's House; its last resident was the one and only Fr. Bob Thompson SJ. He enjoyed his own patch of garden in front of that house too.

The farm was well served over the years from 1976 on by good reliable contractors. These were mostly local including Shay Grace, Tony and Joe Doherty, Peter and Bernard Duffy and Peter O'Shea and Sons. Peter O'Connell supplied sand and gravel etc. Robbie Frayne did most of the veterinary work. In general, thankfully, we were lucky as regards disease control though with the big numbers of animals which the farm had you could hardly expect to escape completely. By the time I took up employment in Clongowes as farm manager in 1976 most of the workers on the farm had reached retirement age. They were followed by Joe Minock who came from the college farm in Rahan, Tullamore. He was the herdsman who looked after the young stock. Over the years we were lucky to have some excellent Agri-students who did their practical with us as well as local part-time workers.

Fr. Frank Frewen SJ came to Clongowes in 1975 from the Jesuit farm in Mungret, County Limerick. He had a good knowledge of farming as well as a legal background, coming as he did from a legal family in County Tipperary. He was involved with the farm until his health began to fail in the early 1990s. He also left his mark on the golf course where he was responsible for much of the tree planting. Fr. Frewer was the last Jesuit who was directly involved with the farm. He accompanied me to many a sale when we were putting the herd together. A task he enjoyed doing, which was a tedious job, was to sketch the newborn calves for pedigree registering. It entailed drawing the colour markings of both sides of the calf plus the head. Nowadays this has been dropped and the calf's

identity is determined by its DNA - which is easily done by using a blood or even a hair sample.

A very important year in Ireland's economic history was 1973 when this country joined the European Economic Community as it was then. Finance from Europe began to come in and Agriculture was a major winner. The College Authorities no doubt realised that there was an opportunity which should not be missed. or ignored. They employed an Agricultural Consultancy firm in 1975. A plan was drawn up which started with employing a farm manager which was myself. I began in Clongowes in the Spring of 1976. It was decided to set up a 200 cow Spring calving herd of mostly pedigree Friesians bought in from herds in Munster and Leinster. All the milk produced would be sold to Avonmore Dairies - nowadays Glanbia. Milk and all dairy products for the college requirements was to be bought in from then on. All the non-dairy stock was sold off as was the farm machinery most of which was old and not fit for purpose anymore. In accordance with the plan many new buildings were constructed. These included a new milking parlour, silage pits, a slurry store, cubicles and calf houses. Fencing was very poor - a bit like in the Curragh or the Phoenix Park; cattle grids at the end of both avenues and little else. Very often the boys ended up chasing sheep out of the golf course before they could have their game of golf. New paddocks were made, farm roadways, water troughs etc. were installed.

In the Spring of 1977 the herd consisted of 120 milking heifers and cows, 10 of which came from the Mungret Jesuit farm's herd. The new milking parlour was a 16 cow unit which began operation in June 1977. Coinciding with this was the arrival of a Dairy Herdsman in the person of Pat Fanning (who was to take over from me as Farm Manager twenty-four years later). The cows were milk-recorded once a month by the Department of Agriculture. The amount per cow and its quality were recorded. In 1981 Glanbia opened a new 'Liquid Milk' plant in South Kildare. They were offering free contracts to herds which wished to change from 'Spring Calving' to 'Liquid Milk'.

With other dairies such as Premier Dairies this would have been a costly process so the decision was made to accept the offer and change. Some of the Spring-calving cows had to be sold on and replaced by autumn calvers. Our yields increased to about 1,900 gallons per cow.

In 1983 the European Union introduced milk quotas based on what a farm produced in the previous year. Clongowes ended up with a quota of 300,000 gallons plus. Because we were producing more than this at the time we had to lease quota to abide by E.U. rules. According to the rules land had to be leased with the quota. The E.U. quota system was abolished in 2015.

Over the years the aim was to improve the quality of the herd. Sometimes we brought in a small number of highly bred animals to this effect. Semen from some of the top Holstein-Friesian bulls was used on the herd. Pat and I trained to do our own A.I. service. The herd was pedigree-registered with the Irish Holstein-Friesian Association (I.H.F.A.) which has its headquarters in Clonakilty, County Cork. All of the heifer calves were kept each year as well as the best-bred bulls. Each calf got its own name as well as the Clongowes prefix. Often we had to get out the baby-naming book to christen some when we ran out of ideas! At the local level the I.H.F.A. is active through its clubs, in our case the Kildare Holstein-Friesian Club which was founded in 1980. It helps its members through meetings, competitions and outings etc. The club works closely with the local Teagasc office in Naas. Each year the I.H.F.A. organises a National Open Day on the farm of one of the top herds. The Clongowes herd was chosen in 2008. Upwards of 2,000 attended despite the wet day. The day always concludes with a sale of stock from that farm. Twenty-eight heifer calves were sold with an average price of €2,400.

Over the years we showed our cattle at dairy shows and took part in herd competitions. We were lucky enough to win many a trophy. The main reason to show was to advertise the herd. It acted as a shop-window to publicise the quality of the herd for

CLONGOWES WOOD COLLEGE FARM,
CLANE, NAAS, CO. KILDARE

***The Clongowes Youngstock
Dispersal Sale - 230 Head***

Selling:

**Entire Group 68 Spring Calving Heifers
Entire Group 68 Bulling Heifers;
Entire Group 43 Maiden Heifers;
40 Deep Pedigreed Bulls & Bull Calves**

Saturday 14th September 2013

@ 11 AM Sharp

for Clongowes Wood College Farm

PAT FANNING (Farm Manager) 087-4193505

TAAFFE AUCTIONS
Tel/Fax: 041-9881288
Milltown, Termonfeckin, Co.Louth

Advertisement for the Dispersal Sale of the Herd

future sales. Each year the farm sold stock both male and female to about €40,000 in value. Stock was purchased countrywide and the Clongowes prefix still appears in shows today. I retired from Clongowes in 2000 to take up a position as a Breed Adviser with the I.H.F.A. Pat Fanning took over as manager of the farm. Pat, being the excellent stockman that he is, continued the breeding and management programme to make the Clongowes herd one of the top herds in the country. A pity to see it dispersed in 2013. The farm is now leased.

ANCIENT TIMES, LONG FORGOTTEN: UNEARTHING THE PREHISTORIC ARCHAEOLOGY OF CLANE

Lorcan Harney

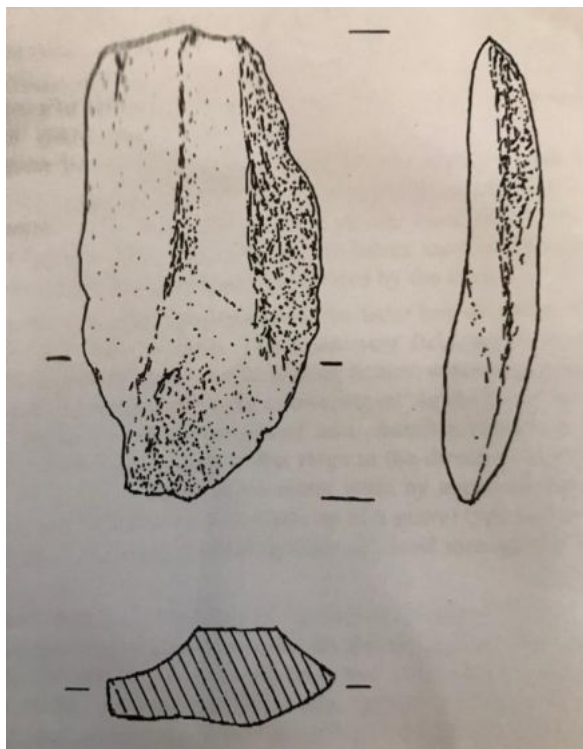
Introduction

The townland of Clane and its surrounding environs boast an amazing collection of archaeological monuments, some of which are of great antiquity predating the introduction of literacy to Ireland in the fifth century A.D. The story of human life in Ireland before the time of literacy (prehistory) can be sub-divided into four main periods: the Mesolithic, Neolithic, Bronze Age and Iron Age. Below, archaeological evidence belonging to each period from Clane and its surrounding townlands are discussed.

Mesolithic Clane (c. 10,000–4,000 B.C.)

The oldest discovery from the Clane area, though not strictly archaeological, is definitely worth mentioning. This story begins around the end of the last Ice Age (c. 10,000 years ago), with the discovery of remains from the Great Irish elk in a low-lying field beneath Rathcoffey Castle. The skeletal remains of these now extinct animals were first discovered in 1896, with more recent finds by a ploughman, James Noonan, in 1947 and by John Behan of Painstown in 1978. The field had formerly been the site of a pond used by Hamilton Rowan, the owner of Rathcoffey Castle at the time of the 1798 Rebellion but had since been dried out due to drainage improvements (McEvoy 1978). These magnificent creatures roamed freely across Ireland until their demise in the millennia after the last Ice Age potentially because of ecological change, disease and the arrival of the first humans to Ireland. These first human settlers were mobile stone-using hunter-gatherers who lived a subsistence lifestyle hunting, fishing and foraging. Today, we describe this period dating from about 10,000 B.C. –4,000 B.C. as the Mesolithic Period (or ‘Middle Stone Age’). Significantly, a relatively rare chert Bann flake was recovered in an excavated Bord Gáis pipeline trench in late 1997 ‘south

of the present village and north of the motte' (Brady 1997:266), next to the Butterstream. Bann flakes, named after the well-known Ulster river, are large butt-trimmed leaf shaped blades, dating from the Late Mesolithic period in Ireland (6000–4000 BC), though some continued to be produced into the fourth millennium B.C. when agriculture was first introduced to Ireland (Brady 1999, p. 21). The discovery of this Bann flake not far from the River Liffey confirms that this river-source was an important artery of communication for these hunter-gatherer communities in a landscape that we must presume was still very thickly forested. The flake from the Butterstream is the earliest known man-made object in Clane.

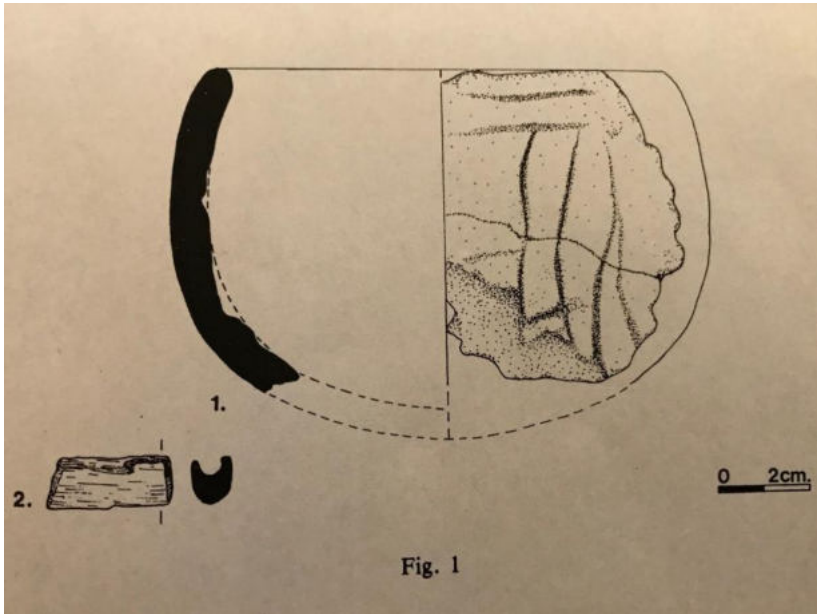


Sketch of the Bann Flake from the Butterstream

Neolithic Clane (c. 4,000–2,500 B.C.)

The Neolithic ('New Stone Age') followed the Mesolithic period and is dated in Ireland to between 4,000 B.C and 2,500 B.C. This final age of stone coincided with the introduction of

agriculture. Large tracts of woodland were cleared and opened up for growing corn and grazing cattle and other animals. Society became more sedentary and socially complex, as illustrated with the construction of large megalithic burial monuments such as passage-, court- and portal-tombs. The renowned passage tomb complex at Newgrange, Knowth and Dowth in Co. Meath and the agricultural field systems at Céide in North Mayo are a product of these first farming communities. No such surviving monuments can be found in Clane, though the late 19th century scholar, the Reverend Canon Sherlock, interestingly alluded in 1891 to a monument complex known locally as St. Brigid's Chair and Thimble on a sloping limestone outcrop above an old quarry at Carrigeen, about a hundred yards from the River Liffey. The monuments, he reported, had been quarried away a generation previously, but it is significant that he described the stone complex as 'an old cromlech', an antiquarian term used to describe Stone Age burial sites, like Portal Tombs – unfortunately, we may now never know for sure the antiquity, character or function of this demolished but most enigmatic stone complex (Sherlock 1891; Sherlock 1901; McEvoy 2014; Harney 2019). Two crouched inhumation pit burials accompanied by sherds of a Neolithic-style round-bottomed pottery bowl and a lignite bracelet were, however, rescued by Tony McEvoy in a gravel pit in 1971 during the development of Loughbollard estate (Ryan 1979-80; Ryan 1980). The remains were subsequently examined by the National Museum – the inhumation from grave 1 returned a radiocarbon date of 3340-3025 B.C, conclusively confirming an early-to mid-Neolithic date for these remains (Brindley and Lanting 1989-90, p. 2). Another inhumation burial was previously destroyed before Tony McEvoy could examine it, indicating that these remains perhaps formed part of a larger Neolithic cemetery. In addition, the National Museum topographical files (Reg: 1975:255) records the discovery of a polished stone axe-head, of probable Neolithic date, in Abbeyland townland. The axe is made from metadolerite, a stone not native to Clane, but found in the Donard area of Co. Wicklow, indicating trade and contact with other regions at this time (Kyle 2008, p. 2 & Appendix 3).



Reconstruction of Neolithic pottery bowl from Loughbollard sherds

Bronze Age Clane (c. 2,500–700 B.C.)

The first evidence for the use of bronze (copper and tin alloyed together) in Ireland dates to around 2,500 B.C. The large megalithic tombs characteristic of the Neolithic period were replaced in the Bronze Age in favour of individual or small groups of cist or pit burials, often placed within various funerary monuments including wedge tombs, mounds, ring-barrows and ring-ditches, whilst ceremonial activity of this time appears to have taken place within large earthen/timber henges and stone circles, such as that of the Piper's Stone complex, in Hollywood, Co. Wicklow. More locally, Hermann Geissel and Tony McEvoy have identified the outline of a large circular enclosure (c. 200m in diameter) at Boherhole on both sides of the Clane-Kilcock road, which they tentatively identified as the remains of a henge monument (Geissel and Horgan 1996, pp. 27-29). The southwest sector of the enclosing element was subsequently excavated by Thaddeus Breen in advance of the realignment of the road – the results were inconclusive, but it was thought 'plausible that the site represents a ditched enclosure, later altered by use as a gravel

pit' (Breen 1998, 95). The fact that the enclosure contains a large inner ditch and a possible external bank may suggest that it had a ritual (prehistoric?) non-defensive purpose, but without further excavation the exact antiquity of this earthwork remains unclear. In relation to local Bronze Age funerary monuments, a small mound or tumulus can be found at Firmount East (22m in base diameter), and it is also believed to date to the Bronze age or earlier or later prehistoric periods. Such small tumuli have often been found to contain Neolithic megalithic chambers while others have revealed Bronze Age cist burials (Healy 1979). What antiquity and function this tumulus once had cannot again be definitively known without excavation.



Firmount East Mound

We are on more confident ground, however, with the identification in the landscape of other Bronze Age earthen funerary monuments such as ring-barrows and ring-ditches. Ring-barrows typically consist of a low mound surrounded by an inner ditch and outer bank. Ring-ditches are similar but typically lack the internal mound (sometimes ploughed out) and often the outer bank. Locally, archaeological field

surveyors have identified potential ring-barrows in the townlands of Ballynagappagh, Firmount Demesne, Littlerath and Richardstown and ring-ditches in the townlands of Ballyhays, Ballynagappagh, Bodenstown, Longtown and Mainham based on their surviving morphology in the landscape (Appendix 1). It must be cautioned, however, that none of these have yet been formally investigated. However, the recent M7 motorway developments at Newhall have definitively revealed an excavated ceremonial ring-ditch (5.1m diameter) of Bronze Age/Iron Age date containing cremated human remains within its enclosing ditch fill (Dunne 2018, p. 94).



Excavation of ringditch at Newhall with contemporary pit in foreground (Noel Dunne of IAC and TH)

Large upright ‘Standing Stones’ are another monument often of prehistoric date. Perhaps the most impressive prehistoric standing stone in Ireland is the ‘Longstone’ at Punchestown. Significantly, a nearby ‘longstone’ at Forenaghts Great revealed a cist containing cremated human remains, pottery and a wristguard dated to the early Bronze Age. More locally, a



Punchestown Longstone

smaller standing stone in the townland of Littlerath, between Ladyhill golf course and the townland of Daars North has been mooted as another possible example of a prehistoric standing stone (Geissel and Horgan 1996, 22). It has, however, again yet to be excavated, though it is significant that it is located in close proximity to a Bronze Age Barrow in Littlerath and two *fulachta fiadh* in Daars North. *Fulachta fiadh* are one of the most commonly excavated archaeological monuments in Ireland that characteristically comprise of a horse-shoe shaped mound of burnt and broken stones with an associated trough and hearth. Early medieval historical sources used the term *fulachta fiadh* to describe temporary cooking place sites associated with bands of roving warriors, and it is likely that this was their primary function with a trough filled with water and stones heated nearby in a fire thrown into it to create a pool of boiling water to cook meat and other foodstuffs. Although a small number of these sites have proved to be early medieval (A.D. 400–1100) in date, radiocarbon studies have conclusively demonstrated that the vast majority are Bronze Age and almost invariably date to between 2,500–700 B.C. The

two examples in Daars North were recorded in field surveys, but excavated examples have been revealed locally in Turnings Upper and also in Sallins, Newhall and Osberstown during road developments (Kavanagh 2003; Dunne 2018, pp. 94-95).



Reconstruction of a Bronze Age Fulacht Fiadh

Finally, in terms of Bronze Age artefacts, the National museum topographical files also note the discovery of a ‘bronze dagger’ in peat bog in an unknown location near Clane and a flanged Bronze axe-head from ‘Raheen’ townland in ‘Naas North Barony’ (Appendix 1; Kyle 2008, Appendix 3; NMI Reg. No. 1891:12). We now only have a record of this bronze dagger, but it is worth considering that it was once an ornate Bronze dirk – an elongated grooved dagger used for stabbing or cutting – that was ritually discarded in this wetland location in Bronze Age times.

Iron Age Clane (700 B.C. – 400 A.D.)

The final period in Irish prehistory is known as the Iron Age. This period witnessed the introduction of iron to Ireland and is generally regarded as dating from the 7th century B.C. to the 5th

century A.D. Unfortunately, there is still relatively little archaeological evidence for this period, both nationally and in Clane, in comparison to the Neolithic and Bronze Age periods, but it is possible that some of the above undated field monuments are of this period. This period is also commonly associated with the coming of the Celts to Ireland, the founding of a number of important Irish royal sites including Tara, Co. Meath, *Emain Macha*, Co. Armagh and *Dun Aillinne*, Kilcullen, Co. Kildare. A series of discontinuous, defensive ditches were also constructed across South Ulster ('Black Pig's Dyke') around the time of Christ and these may have been intended to define the political borders of a kingdom in Ulster. More locally, a large ditch known as the 'Race of the Black Pig' in the Curragh may have also served as some form of defensive boundary or roadway.



Reconstruction of Dun Aillinne Fort

The Late Iron Age in Ireland has also been romantically identified as a pre-Christian heroic era immortalized separately through the tales of the '*Fianna*' and the '*Ulster Cycle*'. In one cycle of Late Iron Age tales, the deeds of Fionn mac Cumhaill and his band of nomadic warriors, the *Fianna*, are recounted. Fionn and his followers were believed to have been militarily based on the Hill of Allen and were said to have often visited the Curragh and surrounding areas for various athletic, military



The Hill of Allen, associated with Fionn and his warrior-band, the Fianna

and hunting contests. The ‘Ulster Sagas’ particularly describe the battles between Ulster and its great rival kingdom in Connacht and the acts of valour of its principal protagonist Cúchulain. His close Ulster friend, Conall Cernach is remembered in local Kildare mythology for killing King Mesgegra of Leinster beside the bullaun stone on the Butterstream, close to the ford of Clane, after which his remains, according to local folklore, were subsequently buried under the motte (The ‘moat’) at Clane. Conall also reportedly buried Mesgegra’s wife, Buan, under the motte at Mainham, who unfortunately perished upon seeing her husband’s severed head in Conall’s chariot as he journeyed back home to Ulster. Such legendary military engagements as that between Conall Cernach and King Mesgegra are frequently described as occurring at fording points in the heroic sagas, and the ford at Clane was certainly one such important river Liffey crossing point in this region that attracted people to first settle here. Significantly, the ford at Clane was strategically situated on the way between Nas na Ri (the seat of the Leinster kings) and Tara, Co. Meath where the high king resided. Unfortunately, however, such oral literary traditions were subject to much exaggeration: the bullaun stone and mottes in Clane can be much more confidently assigned to the medieval periods – the subject of another paper.

Appendix : Prehistoric Monuments and Artefacts in Clane

Townland	Artefact/Monument Type	Source
Abbeyland	Polished stone axe	NMI(1975:255);Kyle 2008
Abbeyland?	'Bann Flake'	Brady 1997:266;Brady 1999
Ballyhays	Ring-ditch	HMV
Ballynagappagh	2 barrows & 1 ring-ditch	HMV
Bodenstown	9 Ring-ditches	HMV
Boherhole	Henge	HMV; Geissel and Horgan; Breen 1998
Carrigeen	Megalithic Structure'St. Brigid's Chair & Thimble'	HMV; Sherlock 1891;1901; McEvoy 2014; Harney 2019
Clane (Loughbollard)	Neolithic Burials	HMV; NMI(1971:928-31);Ryan, M. 1979-80;Brindley and Lanting 1989-9;Kyle 2008
Vicinity of Clane	'Bronze Dagger' found in peat bog near Clane	NMI;Kyle 2008
Daars South	<i>2FulachtaFiadh</i>	HMV
Firmount Demesne	Barrow	HMV
Firmount East	Mound	HMV; Healy 1979;Kyle 2008
Littlerath	Barrow	HMV
Longtown	Ring-ditch	HMV
Mainham	Ring-ditch	HMV
Raheen	Bronze Axe-head	NMI(1891:12);Kyle 2008
Richardstown	3 Barrows	HMV
Turnings Upper	<i>FulachtFiadh</i>	HMV; Kavanagh 2003

The National Monuments Service (NMS) online 'Historic Monuments Viewer' (HMV) (<http://webgis.archaeology.ie/historicenvironment/>) has an online mapping tool that describes the type, form and location of every archaeological monument in Ireland. Townlands consulted here comprised: Carrigeen, Clane, Loughanure, Firmount, Bodenstown, Millicent, Irishtown, Richardstown, Longtown, Ballynagappagh, Blackhall, Mainham, Rathmore, Curryhills, Betaghstown, Ballynaboley, killybegs, Ladycastle, Littlerath, Ballyhays, Ladyhill, Daars, Turnings&Shortwood. Other sources consulted included published secondary material and the National Museum of Ireland (NMI) Topographical Files.

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Thanks to Noel Dunne (TII) and Kildare County Council, National Roads Office for permission to reproduce the unpublished ring-ditch illustration for this paper.

FROM RICHES TO RAGS - THE LIFE AND TIMES OF HORACE DE VERE COLE

Jim Heffernan

Born to wealth and privilege Horace de Vere's life mirrored the decline of the Ascendancy class in the decades around the First World War. His father Major Willy Cole was a British army officer. He was a son of William Henry Cole a man of humble origins who had become very wealthy by cornering the market in quinine and had bought the vast West Woodhay Estate in Berkshire. Horace's mother Mary de Vere Burke had inherited Issercleran (or St Clerans) in County Galway all her Burke uncles having died without issue. One of them Robert O'Hara Burke died of thirst and starvation while leading the Burke/Wills expedition which made the first land crossing of Australia. Horace's premature birth on 5 May 1881 was registered in the Ballincollig registration district County Cork. His mother was visiting her husband, who was stationed in the area; she probably gave birth at Blarney Castle as the owner Sir George Colthurst was a family friend.



Issercleran, Craughwell, County Galway

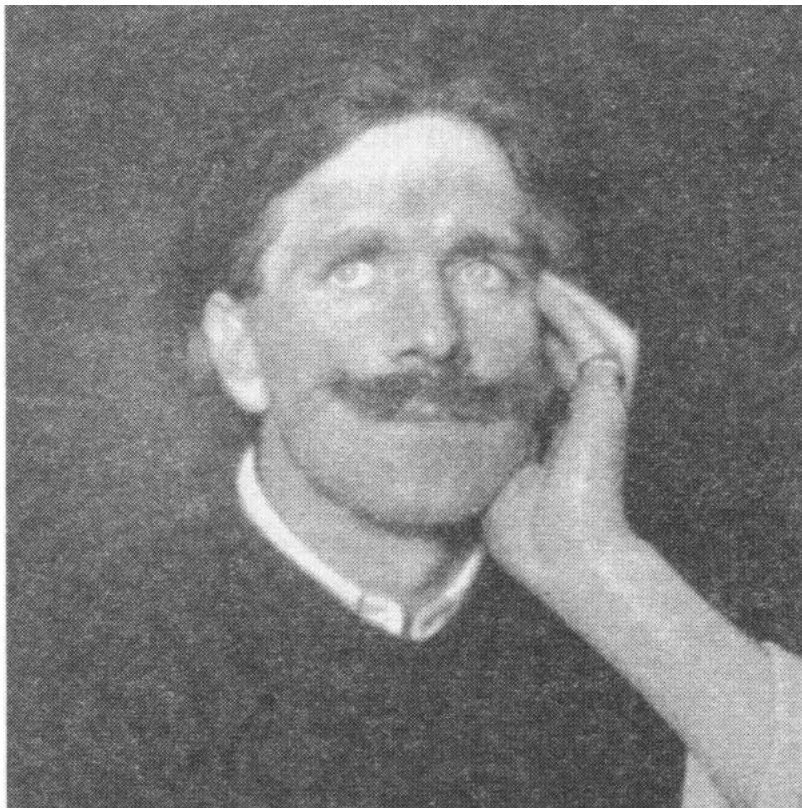
Horace's grandfather Francis Horatio de Vere one of the de Veres of Curraghchase County Limerick, had married Anne Burke of Issercleran. An Army officer he was murdered by a disgruntled soldier on the parade ground at Chatham barracks. The poet Aubrey De Vere and his brother Stephen de Vere, who during the Famine had sailed on one of the coffin ships with some of his tenants and subsequently persuaded Parliament to strengthen maritime regulations, were great uncles.

Horace's father William died of cholera in India in 1892 when he was young and his mother Mary re-married, her new husband Herbert Studd was closer in age to Horace than to Mary herself. Horace's sister Anne Cole married Neville Chamberlain in 1911. He was a son of Joseph Chamberlain Mayor of Birmingham and prominent member of Liberal and Conservative cabinets. Anne's mother Mary was unimpressed by her daughter's marriage into a family of 'mere Birmingham businessmen'. Horace's brother Jim inherited Issercleran when their mother Mary died in 1930. Horace suffered partial deafness after contacting diphtheria in 1891.

As a child Horace exhibited the traits which would make him notorious as a spectacular and often cruel prankster. Participating in amateur dramatics he switched real poison for the prop in the play *Shades of Night* and nearly killed the leading lady. On another occasion he pushed his German governess into a small goods lift which fell to the ground floor. He was an indifferent student at Eaton and was in a lower class. Laurence Oates, who walked out of Scott's tent in the Antarctic, was in the same class.

Horace was caught up in the Jingoistic fervour on the outbreak of the Boer War and in February 1900 left Eaton, aged 18, to join the elitist Duke of Cambridge's Own, a volunteer cavalry company for 'Hooray Henrys', in South Africa. He showed some talent in South Africa and was commissioned in the Yorkshire Hussars in spite of his deafness. His military career was cut short when he was shot and seriously wounded while

escorting a convoy in the Orange Free State. This was a turning point in his life, ending his military career and leading to a life of idleness. After convalescing at West Woodhay he went up to Cambridge in October 1902; as at Eton his academic performance was poor.



Horace de Vere Cole

At Cambridge Horace perpetrated various minor hoaxes. His most spectacular hoax at Cambridge was impersonating an uncle of the Sultan of Zanzibar and his entourage who were visiting England. Horace recruited some college friends including Adrian Stephen who participated in other Horace hoaxes in later years and Robert Bowen-Colthurst brother of Captain John Bowen-Colthurst who murdered Francis Sheehy-Skeffington during the Easter Rising. They engaged the services of a theatrical costumier Willie Clarkson, a master of

disguise. The hoaxers were received by the Mayor of Cambridge and visited their own college, Trinity, where they were feted by the college authorities. Horace subsequently gave the story to the Daily Mail which published it to the embarrassment of the various authorities. Horace didn't sit his exam and left Cambridge without a degree.

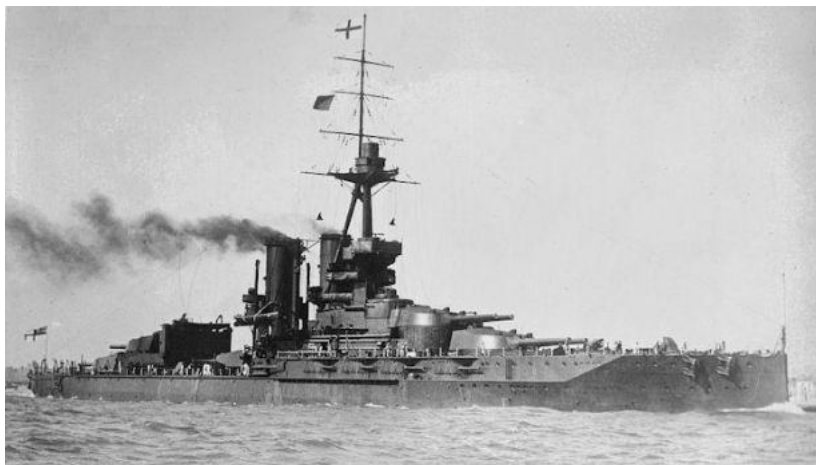
On the death of his paternal grandmother in 1906 Horace inherited West Woodhay in Berkshire. Horace had no interest in running West Woodhay, which was a substantial estate with 2500 acres of land with several associated business enterprises and sold it to his uncle Alfred Cole who had been running the estate and the other businesses. He eventually lost his fortune on residential and commercial buildings in which he invested in Saskatoon Canada, one burned down others were never fully occupied.

Horace was highly promiscuous and throughout his life was involved with numerous women from prostitutes to aristocrats, he was particularly attracted to very young women. One of his earlier dalliances was with Countess Pasolini. Mildred Pasolini Montague, the daughter of a railroad baron from Chattanooga, Tennessee was unhappily married to an impoverished Italian Count Paso Pasolini in Rome. She eloped with Horace to London and then Ireland where Horace rented Derrybawn House in County Wicklow. Horace met Pasolini and bullied him into agreeing to an annulment. The couple went to Washington where they persuaded her father to arrange an annulment. Leaving Mildred in the United States Horace returned to London where he received letters stating that he was not to see Mildred again. She was later married to a wealthy American and her sister to a cousin of Pasolini.

Around 1910 Horace became acquainted with Augustus John, the leading artist of his generation, starting a love hate relationship that would continue for two decades.

Horace became famous when he perpetrated the Dreadnought Hoax in February 1910. The battleship Dreadnought the first of

a revolutionary class of battleships was the flagship of the British Home Fleet. The British Empire was at the peak of its power which was based on the supremacy of its navy. The hoaxers impersonated a cousin of the Emperor of Abyssinia



HMS Dreadnought

and his entourage who were in England to investigate places at Eaton for their sons. The British were anxious to facilitate Abyssinia (now Ethiopia) because of their colonial rivalry with Germany in East Africa. The conspirators included Adrian Stephens and his sister Virginia who subsequently became famous as Virginia Wolfe. On receipt of a telegram purporting to be from the Foreign Office the Navy took the group to the ship by steam launch where the entire ship's company paraded before them. The party were invited to the wardroom, but only Horace, who was posing as a Foreign Office official, accepted as the others were afraid of spoiling their makeup. The story was leaked and appeared in the Daily Express newspaper to the embarrassment of the Navy.

In 1911 there was an incident involving Oliver Locker-Lampson MP an old friend from Eaton. Locker-Lampson had boasted that as an MP he could not be tried for a criminal offence. While dining together one evening Horace slipped his watch into his friend's pocket; as they left he challenged

Locker-Lampson to a race, who ran ahead. Horace ran after him waving his cane shouting "that man has stolen my watch". Locker-Lampson was intercepted by a police man. Both men were arrested and taken to Vine Street police station. Locker-Lampson was released and Horace was fined £5. Winston Churchill defending Locker-Lampson in the House of Commons called Horace "a dangerous man to his friends". There was now a widespread feeling that Horace was becoming a liability; according to one newspaper "Cole's presence in a restaurant causes terror".



The Dreadnought hoaxers. Virginia Stephen, Duncan Grant, Adrian Stephen ('interpreter'), Anthony Buxton, Guy Ridley, Horace de Vere Cole ('Foreign Office Official')

Horace's Hoaxes, spectacular and small, continued unabated. Dressed by Willie Clarkson as navvies Horace and his friends tricked a policeman into directing traffic before digging a trench across Piccadilly. They then adjourned to the nearby Ritz Hotel to observe the resulting confusion. While staying in

Dublin Castle with Robbie Bowen-Colthurst, who was serving as vice-chamberlain to the Viceroy Lord Aberdeen he leaped out from behind a bush piercing the Viceroy's coat tails with his swordstick. Claiming to be testing the Viceroy's security he shouted to the bodyguard who had rushed up "you are 20 seconds too late"; he was sent back to England for his pains.



***Inside the Cafe Royal* by Adrian Allison 1915. Horace was a leading light here in the pre-war years. Horace is portrayed second from the left of the painting; next to him is Iris Tree whom he nearly married; Augustus John (bearded) and his Wife Dorelia are sitting together to the left of the pillar. The woman sitting alone in the foreground is Nancy Cunard heiress to the Cunard shipping line fortune.**

On the outbreak of the First World War many of Horace's friends had joined up and within a year three of the Dreadnought and Cambridge hoaxers were dead. Against this background when hearing that on the introduction of conscription in 1917 the sculptor Jacob Epstein (whom he disliked) had gained an exemption as an 'irreplaceable artist' he successfully campaigned to have the decision reversed making many enemies in the process. Epstein was conscripted but

subsequently discharged on medical grounds following a nervous breakdown.

In 1916 Yeats described John Bowen-Colthurst, a captain in the Irish Rifles murderer of Francis Sheehy-Skeffington and two others as "a friend of Horace Cole the practical joker who is hardly sane, as the mad attract their like one can measure him". He convalesced in Ireland from a lung infection in 1917 and was a regular at the Kildare Street Club.

In 1918 he married Denise Daly a seventeen year old heiress. Mentally unstable she had run away from home to Horace's Aunt Eily, Lady Shaw, at the Shaw's mansion at Bushy Park near Dublin. A surviving twin she was heiress to three estates in Galway, two, Raford and Furbough, from her father Denis Daly, and one Peterburg from her mother Kathleen née Lynch. Her father had died before she was born and her eccentric mother, who took no interest in her, spent her time travelling Europe under the nom de plume 'Daly du Sedruol'. Made a ward of Chancery to protect her fortune Denise could not inherit or marry until she was 21. A week after leaving his current mistress Deborah Webber behind in London he proposed marriage to Denise and the Lord Chancellor was successfully lobbied to free Denise from Chancery. The couple married on 30 September 1918 in a Catholic ceremony in the University Church in Dublin, Horace a Protestant having been given a dispensation. Denise's cousin the Earl of Westmeath boycotted the ceremony believing that Horace at 36 was too old and unreliable to marry a girl half his age and suspecting his financial motives.

Initially things went well, the couple settled into Radford a Georgian mansion near Athenry and Horace appeared to have left his dissolute life behind him, Denise gave birth to a girl, Valerie, within a year. However due to pressures during the Troubles the relationship deteriorated with Denise's mental state worsening and Horace reverting to his old habits. He took up residence in the Shelbourne hotel drinking long into the night with friends such as Joe Hone, James Stephens, Jack

Yeats and Darrell Figgis. Denise took lovers and eventually ran off and hid in Wales with a young waiter. Horace obtained a divorce and got custody of Valerie.

There was only one large scale post-war hoax, the victim was a vain rich Englishman. Taking advantage of the turmoil in the Balkans at the end of the war Horace pretended to clandestinely sell the throne of Croatia. He hired two penniless Russian émigrés to assist in the process, and after a number of clandestine meetings the victim was invited to a house in Eaton square to meet a heavily disguised Horace posing as a Croatian minister. Hinting that an American was also interested Horace negotiated an enormous price received a cheque and arranged for the victim to return to the house at a later date to receive the crown from a delegation of Croatian bishops, generals and statesmen who were on the way to England. Arriving in white tie and tails for his coronation he was greeted by two footmen who threw open the doors of the drawing room to reveal Horace and his friends mocking him.

The income from Horace's Canadian apartments diminished, one had burned down in 1925. Desperate for money and heavily in debt he sold off his paintings, his library and his London house in Cheyne Walk. He was no longer famous in the 1920s a relic of a bygone era "famous for once being famous". He no longer had a house and had resigned membership of his club so he now stayed in hotels. He sent Valerie who had been farmed out between various relations to a school in Cambridge. When Horace's mother died 1930 brother Jim Cole inherited Issercleran.

Horace had first noticed Mabel (Mavis) Wright, then aged 19, in June 1928 in the Cafe Royal. After a difficult childhood in Cambridgeshire she had already worked in a factory printing labels for jam jars, as a scullery maid, and a nanny before getting a job as a waitress at Veeraswamy's Indian restaurant near the Cafe Royal. After an on-off relationship he married Mavis in February 1931 in Chelsea Register Office. Horace's finances deteriorated further and he could no longer afford a

hotel room, heavily in debt he put his remaining belongings into storage and fled to France with Mavis where they could live for a third of the cost.

They settled in the Hotel Etchola in Ascaïn in the Pas Bas where Horace had holidayed as a child. Mavis spoke no French and was unsettled, the situation became worse when they were joined by Valerie whose school fees were hopelessly in arrears. In October 1932 the trio moved to a villa across the road leaving their hotel bills unpaid. By this time the couple slept in separate rooms, there were rumours of Mavis's infidelity and constant arguments. Mavis left for St Ives to visit relatives, with Horace expecting she would be away for a month or so. Horace continued working on his autobiography which he never finished. Horace received no further funds from Bircham his solicitor who had power of attorney as the investment company in Saskatoon was racking up enormous debts.

Mavis returned several months later in 1933 and subsequently Horace had a problem with the French police over her. Two officers called to the house over Mavis's lack of a French identity card. Horace lost his temper and "damned all Frenchmen especially the police". He was immediately arrested and threatened with deportation. Horace's brother Jim who was now based in Galway engaged the assistance of the British consul in Bayonne who sorted out the problem with the police. Jim now took charge of his brother's affairs securing Horace's English debts against Horace's remaining paintings and paying off his French debts at £5 per week. He sent Horace an allowance of £5 per week for his living expenses. On hearing that the publication of his proposed book was unlikely Horace lost heart and destroyed the manuscript.

Mavis left Horace for good at Easter 1934 and he lost contact with her. She began an affair with Augustus John in 1935 and in January 1936 Horace heard from Jim that Mavis, who he had not seen for two years, had had a son. Mavis never revealed who the father was but it was probably August John who had fathered numerous children by various women.

Valerie, who was neglected and in rags, was rescued by the British Consul in Bayonne who placed her in a convent school and got Horace into a bed-sit in Bayonne away from his creditors. With Mavis and Valerie gone Horace's remittance was reduced to £2 per week. Meanwhile his brother-in-law Neville Chamberlain had become British Chancellor of the Exchequer



Horace's sister Annie with her husband Neville Chaimberlain

Horace moved to a cottage at Honfleur in Normandy for a lower rent, it had bare earth floors, no running water, electricity or a fire place. Horace was found dead in his chair on the

morning of 25 February 1936. Neville Chamberlain was the first to be told and he and Annie arranged for Valerie to be brought from the convent at Bayonne and placed in their care at 11 Downing Street. Life improved for her; she was introduced to society coming out as a debutant and being introduced to the King and Queen. She moved with them to Number 10 when Chamberlain became Prime Minister subsequently meeting and marrying a French air force pilot. Horace is buried next to his Uncle Alfred in West Woodhay.



Sketch of Horace de Vere Cole by Augustus John

THE NAME 'CLANE' AND RELATED MATTERS

Tony McEvoy

When Comerford published his History of the Diocese of Kildare and Leighlin in 1883 he made reference to a range of written works, which included the Annals of the Four Masters (1616), and the Annals of Mac Firbis (1643). The latter, which was translated from old Irish and annotated by John O'Donovan in 1860, is quoted at length in relation to the Parish of Allen. With regard to the Parish of Clane Comerford relied heavily on the Four Masters. *"In ancient records the name of this place is given in two forms; Claen-Damh, i.e., "the field of oxen" and Claen-Ath, i.e., "the field of the Ford". See p. 98. (Claen would derive from Cluain but the vowel change is a problem according to experts, the vowel being the least likely part of the word to change.)* The Four Masters are quoted by Comerford on p.100, using the Claen-Ath form, in reference to a battle fought in A.D. 702. On the same page a **third** form Claenadh comes up, without comment from Comerford, when quoting the Four Masters in reference to "Banbhan, Abbot of Claenadh, who died in A.D. 777". The lack of clarity around the origin of the name Clane is clearly acknowledged.

Mac Firbis was from County Clare but by some great coincidence one of the three ancient vellums which he transcribed in 1643 makes mention of Clane. The extract relates to the Battle of Allen, in which 9,000 Leinster-men fought 21,000 Ulster-men in a dispute regarding tribute ('protection money') which the Leinster-men were refusing to hand over. The different annals disagree on the exact year of this battle, ranging between 718 and 722, but the latter is believed to be the true year. It was a bloody battle and the losses were great on both sides. The following is a quote from O'Donovan's 1860 translation of Mac Firbis, with the footnotes included (p. 39). [Those interested in obtaining the source may do so by looking up *Annals of Ireland*, published free of charge on the Internet by Columbia University.]

" - - With respect to the Leinster-men, they repaired to Cruachan Claenta¹, for the Leinster-men would not be defeated

if they should hold their council there, and proceed from thence to battle. They proceeded thence to Dinn-Canainn², and thence to the battle. On the following morning the battalions of both sides met: nine thousand of the Leinster-men, and twenty one thousand of Leth-Chuinn. Vigorously and fiercely was this battle fought on both sides, and all showed equal fight.”

O'Donovan's footnote

“Cruachan Claenta¹ -i.e. the round Hill of Clane, situated about five miles to the north-east of Allen, where this battle was fought. The Leinster-men believed that whenever they could hold their council of war here, they should not be defeated. The origin of this belief is not yet discovered, nor is this superstition noticed in “LeabharnagCeart”, among the Geasa and Urganthae of the Kings of Leinster. Dinn-Canainn² -now Duncannon, nearly midway between Clane and the Hill of Allen”

In O'Donovan's work the original Gaelic and the English translation, including his foot-notes, are given on opposite pages. It is odd that O'Donovan should have changed the spelling from “**Cruachán Claonta**” as it is spelled in the original Irish text on page 38. According to Dinneen's Dictionary a *Cruachán* is a little rick or stack, a small heap; a little hill or mound. (no mention of a 'round hill'), while *claonta* means inclined or sloping. One has to ask the question: should this not have been translated as the *Slanted Hill* rather than the *Round Hill of Clane*? This leads one to ask therefore is it not possible that this hill gave Clane its name rather than the converse, as suggested by O'Donovan? There is no evidence that O'Donovan actually identified the hill in question, unless his use of the term “round Hill” might carry this implication: - perhaps identifying it with the “Motte”. This Norman structure, as identified by the O.S., would have involved considerable reconstruction some 450 or more years later. The “Motte”, which is located close to Alexandra Bridge on the Liffey outside Clane, would be an excellent candidate in any attempt to pin



The Norman motte near Alexandra Bridge

down the location of the ancient rallying point where the Leinster-men were in the practice of assembling before going into battle. The fact that it is recognised as the burial place of Mesgegra, King of Leinster, who was killed there by Conall Cearnach in 33 A.D. while seeking sanctuary, would greatly strengthen the case. O'Donovan's question with regard to the "*origin of this belief ... or superstition*" can now be reasonably answered, as the closely associated well (Sunday's Well) has since been officially listed by the Geological Survey as a Thermal Spring. From the earliest pagan times it would have attracted curiosity and attention for the fact that it never froze, even in the most severe frost; it 'steamed' in the coldest periods of winter; the outflow tidally responded to the phases of the moon, it constantly bubbled and the outflow supported a brilliant green surface of duck-weed both winter and summer.

As is almost invariably the case with thermal springs, they tend to have gravel hills closely associated with them. Good examples are St. Patrick's Well and the Hill of Ardrass, on the road between Celbridge and Barberstown, Brideswell to the north of Kilcock, St. Peter's Well and the once closely associated Motte (now demolished) to the west of the Range in

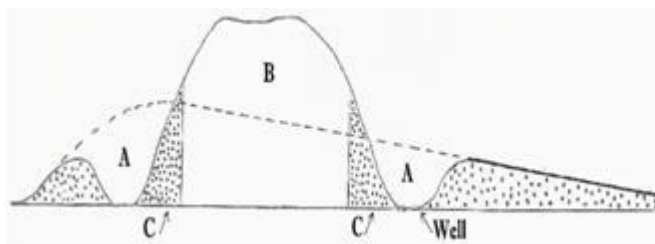
Donadea. The explanation of course lies in the effect the warm waters would have had in locally melting out the gravels from the ice above them during the Ice-age.

During the 1980s I received a phone call from Con Costello one afternoon to say that he was in Waterford for the day but had received a number of calls to inform him that the Motte in Clane was actively being demolished with a JCB and would I go down immediately and intervene. On my arrival at the site, whether by coincidence or otherwise, the work stopped. The land owner indicated to the driver that that would do. He turned to me and remarked: “There we are now -all finished and isn’t it all the better for it?” The Motte had been tightly cut back all around creating vertical sides of maybe 7 feet in height while also removing the surrounding ditch and embankment.



View of the motte from the N.E. after the cropping of the sides by the JCB showing a top-soil layer and a sub-soil layer covering un-disturbed gravels beneath. The exposed soil profile on the east side was up to seven feet above ground level. On the west side it was approximately half this height

The long tapering tail which had extended westwards beyond the circular ditch was also removed together with Sunday's Well. This tail had been about equal in length to the diameter of the Motte. The aim of the exercise had obviously been to extend the area of level ground being used to ring horses. The site remained in this condition for many years until it was sold on for construction of the Cois Abhain apartment complex. During this operation the builders back-filled the base of the Motte all around, covering in the well as they did so. The backfill is less steep than the original Motte, extending to a greater outreach.



The Cruachán Claonta

- A: Excavated by the Norman motte builders**
- B; Materials from A piled on top by motte builders**
- C: Excavated by JCB (all dotted areas)**

The sketch above attempts to relate the original Cruachán Claonta and the Norman Motte which was reconstructed from it, with the thermal spring (Sunday's Well) included. The point has already been made that this pre-Norman structure may well be at the very origin of the word 'Clane'. From the disclosures in the Annals of Mac Firbis, concerning the horrific Cath Almhaine, we see the *Cruachán Claonta* as having been known widely throughout Leinster and having a significance attributed to it which was of a supernatural order. It is interesting that all thermal springs, apart from a small few accidentally discovered during excavation, happen to be also holy wells dedicated to early saints or religious practices. There can be little doubt but that their adoption under Christianity points to the fact that there were equally important pre-Christian traditions attached to them. O'Donovan was and is the acclaimed expert on place

names; however in 1860 when he was writing up his assessment he had before him a round hill fashioned by the



View of Sunday's Well after the JCB had removed the extended tail of the hill. It originally had an extended stone-built structure and an outflow into a piped drain which exited into an open ditch

Normans. Apart from the tail which sloped away at a very low level to the west, he would have seen little evidence of a sloping hill or cruachán claonta. For anyone who had been familiar with the sloping tail and who could see how it fitted into the context of the east and west profiles exposed by the JCB a whole new opportunity presented itself for interpretation. Also, though the well is now covered over, had he known that the Geological Survey would inevitably register it as a thermal spring, he would have seen things in a whole new light, especially if he had made comparisons between this isolated gravel hill and other gravel hills associated with other recorded thermal springs. It is important, however damaged the evidence may be at this stage, that these few surviving facts be passed on to posterity.

‘GET DOWN ON YOUR KNEES...AND PRAY FOR SHACKLETON’

Kevin Kenny, Shackleton Museum, Athy

At the end of the 19th century, the focus of polar exploration shifted south to Antarctica. In the preceding period, the Arctic and the search for the elusive North West Passage dominated. Antarctica was new and extreme, and gave rise to a period of exploration that yielded legendary feats and personalities; the ‘heroic era’ of exploration had begun.

Irish people were to the fore in both hemispheres. Francis Crozier from Banbridge, Co. Down captained HMS Terror on Franklin’s ill-fated expedition, while Leopold McClintock from Dundalk led the search when that expedition disappeared. In 1854, Wexford born Robert McClure was first through the North West Passage, albeit with the final leg overland. In the Antarctic, names such as Patrick Keohane, the McCarthy brothers, Tom Crean and Robert Forde feature as contributors to landmark expeditions. The colossus amongst them was Kildare born Ernest Shackleton who is recognised not only for his expeditions, but for his extraordinary and selfless leadership, decision making and force of personality.

The Shackletons arrived from Yorkshire to Ballitore in the early 1700s. There they established the famed Quaker School, a progressive institution which attracted pupils from as far afield as France, Norway and Jamaica. Graduates included Edmund Burke, Cardinal Paul Cullen, and the United Irishman Napper Tandy.

Ernest Shackleton was born in Kilkea House on Feb 15th 1874. The family was to grow to 8 girls and 2 boys. Apart from Ernest, other family members rose to prominence for a variety of reasons :

- Eleanor was a pioneering paediatric nurse in Winnipeg, Canada. She was recognised by the UN Relief and Rehabilitation Administration for her work during WW2;

- Kathleen established herself as a portrait artist, recording the Inuit of Northern Canada; closer to home, she painted various influential Irish personalities including W.B. Yeats.

In 1880, Henry Shackleton moved his family to Dublin where he enrolled in TCD to study medicine. On qualifying in 1884, the family moved to London, settling in Sydenham. There Henry established a successful medical practice, combining his interests in gardening and herbs with his work. Among his patients was Eleanor Marx, socialist and daughter of Karl Marx.



Ernest Shackleton

Ernest attended the nearby Dulwich College. Aged 16, he expressed a wish to finish school and go to sea. His sceptical parents organised a cadetship in the merchant marine. The first voyage was a baptism of fire, rounding Cape Horn in a storm.

His career as a merchant mariner developed, earning his Master's ticket in 1898. On shore leave, his sisters introduced him to Emily Dorman. Emily's father was a wealthy solicitor and they lived nearby. Ernest and Emily shared an admiration of poetry, particularly that of Robert Browning. They fell in love, exchanging correspondence when he was at sea.

By the late 1800s, the major world powers were increasingly attracted to Antarctica and its valuable resources including coal and minerals. The Southern oceans were teeming with whales and seals, valuable sources of natural oils. Britain's entry to this fray involved the construction of an ice strengthened ship *Discovery* (now on display in Dundee, Scotland). It would be crewed by Royal Navy personnel, with a complement of scientific staff. Robert Falcon Scott was chosen to lead the expedition. John de Robeck (of Gowran Grange, Punchestown) had been proposed as a candidate. That Ernest Shackleton, a merchant mariner, got himself onto the crew illustrates one of his core traits - a combination of charm and tenacity.

Discovery arrived in Antarctica's Ross Sea in 1902. The expedition had a broad brief, including scientific, magnetic and geological work, and to explore the continent internally. In November, Scott, Shackleton and Dr Edward Wilson (who in 1912 would die with Scott on the return from the South Pole) set off hauling their sledges on a journey South. By end December, having travelled about 400 miles, they were physically spent, and showing signs of scurvy. On the way back, Shackleton was extremely weak and at times, unable to haul the sledge. He struggled on with the others to return to the safety of their base hut. Scott remained for another year, despatching Shackleton home on a relief ship with the message that he was unsuited to frozen climates. This was the first of many apparent setbacks to Shackleton's career as a leader and explorer. His return to Britain illustrated another of his enduring characteristics - the ability to turn failure into success, which on this occasion saw him in demand to give talks on his Antarctic experiences, and to advise on rescue strategies for a beleaguered Swedish Antarctic expedition. Ernest married

Emily and began a succession of jobs, eventually becoming Secretary of the Royal Scottish Geographical Society. Meanwhile, he was planning his own attempt on the South Pole.

In 1907, Shackleton returned to Antarctica aboard the ship *Nimrod*. The expedition was privately funded, gaining support from business magnates including the Guinness family. Polar exploration provided an opportunity for investment in the exciting opportunities offered by exploration and the application of new technologies. Among the innovations aboard *Nimrod* was a modified 'Arrol Johnston' motor car for haulage. Ponies were also transported, Shackleton having seen the limitations of man-hauling during the *Discovery* expedition. *Nimrod* arrived in Antarctica via New Zealand end January 1908. Forced by conditions to break an agreement demanded by Scott, Shackleton made landfall at Cape Royds in the vicinity of the old *Discovery* hut. Supplies were landed and the expedition settled in to over-winter and prepare for the forthcoming sledging season which would accompany the improved weather and daylight of the Austral spring. In October 1908, a party of four departed with the objective of reaching the South (Geographic) Pole.

January 9th 1909 dawned crisp and windy. The weary explorers who had covered over 700 miles since leaving their base knew that this was as far South as they could go. The ponies had been shot and left to be picked up on the return. With depleted resources, they couldn't reach the Pole - but they could get within 100 miles of it. They turned around 97 miles from their objective, Shackleton noting in his diary 'Whatever regrets may be, we have done our best'. The return journey was touch and go, but *Nimrod* was reached start of February, and by end March 1909, the expedition was back in New Zealand.

In Britain, Shackleton was hailed as a hero. In Ireland, newspapers ran headlines on the achievement, with the *Dublin Evening Telegraph* celebrating "*South Pole Almost Reached By An Irishman*". Later, Shackleton visited Dublin, lecturing in

what is now the National Concert Hall, and the Rotunda. Proceeds went to local charities.

The following years saw much activity in the Antarctic. Amundsen reached the South Pole in December 1911, followed six weeks later by the ill-fated Robert Falcon Scott. With Scott was Captain Lawrence Oates who had previously been on the Curragh with his regiment. There he had indulged his passion for horses, with appearances at Punchestown as owner, trainer and rider. The Board of Trade Titanic Inquiry of 1912 saw an appearance by Ernest Shackleton as an ‘expert witness’ for ship handling in ice conditions. His evidence displayed a keen understanding of the challenges facing those operating a Blue Riband vessel in pressurised conditions.



Ernest and Emily Shackleton aboard *Endurance*

The departure of the *Endurance* expedition, with its objective to transverse Antarctica coincided with Britain entering WW1. The consensus among the expedition members was to offer ship and stores to the Admiralty. First Sea Lord, Winston Churchill, replied : “Proceed”. *Endurance* sailed south (the ship was renamed *Endurance* after the Shackleton family motto ‘By Endurance we Conquer’). The ship made a resupply visit to the Norwegian Whaling stations on South Georgia before entering the Weddell Sea.

The plan was to land a party on the Antarctic continent. The following Spring, this party would depart with dogs and motorised sledges via the South Pole to the Ross Sea where another ship was waiting. *Endurance* would take advantage of the summer breakup of ice and sail north. Frank Hurley, the expedition photographer, recorded events on glass plate negatives, and moving film. Things had started to go wrong from an early stage; by the end of February 1915, *Endurance* was frozen into the ice and wouldn't again move under her own power. The Antarctic continent was never actually reached. By October 1915, the frozen-in ship had crossed the Weddell Sea, driven by clockwise currents. The crew expected



November 1915, the dogs look on the wrecked *Endurance*.

the impending summer would see the ice breakup and liberate the ship. Instead the frozen expanse exerted massive pressure and *Endurance* was torn apart.

On the 27th Of October as the ‘Wearing of the Green’ (coincidentally, a song about Napper Tandy) played on the ship’s gramophone, Shackleton ordered ‘abandon ship’. The crew went onto the ice, and set up tents. Each man was permitted 2 pounds weight of personal effects; letters and photographs from home were encouraged. The banjo, which Shackleton termed ‘vital mental medicine’, was rescued from the wreck. End November, *Endurance* slipped beneath the ice. It was a surreal scene – 28 men, dogs and stores afloat on an Antarctic ice sheet, lost to a world preoccupied with the horrors of WW1. Shackleton’s summary to the crew was...”Ship and stores are gone, we’re going home”. Most of the crew trusted his extraordinary leadership. Harry McNish, the ship’s carpenter, didn’t, and threatened a mutiny. Shackleton’s handling of the situation was a masterly display of his skills.

The months passed, with new camps established as the ice drifted north and weakened. Shackleton urged patience, calling one camp ‘Patience Camp’ and summarising his thoughts in a pithy ‘Put the boot of action into the stirrup of patience’. The routine was busy - everybody had jobs to do, food was aplenty, with entertainment at night. It was catch-22; they had to keep the three lifeboats with them for when the ice finally broke up, while the heavy boats prevented their marching to the Antarctic landmass.

By April 1916, the situation was precarious. They were forced to take to the boats, enduring horrendous conditions through rough seas and freezing conditions, before landing on the frozen and bleak Elephant Island. It was the first solid land since December 1914. Though the detail was evolving as the elements dictated, Shackleton did have a vision of how they might escape. During the ice drift, McNish had been instructed to strengthen the largest lifeboat, the *James Caird*, and prepare it for a sea voyage.

The Polar winter was approaching and an opportunity remained to make contact with the outside world. This required a voyage of over 800 miles across the roughest oceans on the planet – in a 22 foot wooden boat. Thus was the voyage of the *James Caird*, regarded by many as the greatest seafaring epic. It began from Elephant Island on Easter Monday 1916, and culminated on South Georgia 16 days later. Of the six crew, three were Irish – Ernest Shackleton, Tom Crean and Tim McCarthy. Shackleton, Crean and Worsley then crossed the unmapped interior of South Georgia, stumbling into the whaling station at Stromness on 19th May. Their first question concerned the end of WW1.

On Elephant Island, under the leadership of Frank Wild, 22 crew survived in a hut under two upturned lifeboats. On three occasions, using Norwegian, Uruguayan and Chilean ships, Shackleton attempted unsuccessfully to reach them. Then on 30 August 1916, he made the breakthrough. A ship hove into sight of Elephant Island and within an hour, all were safely aboard the *Yelcho* and heading back to a world in turmoil. After WW1, a stunned public wasn't interested in an Antarctic survival story – Scott's glorious defeat seemed to hold more appeal.

In 1921, Ernest Shackleton departed on his final expedition aboard the *Quest*. The objectives were unclear, possibly to circumnavigate the Antarctic continent. Many of his old comrades from previous expeditions joined. In January 1922, the ship arrived off South Georgia. On the night of 5th January, Shackleton experienced chest pain. Dr Macklin warned him about the demands he was putting on himself. Leonard Hussey played the tunes that were 'vital mental medicine' during the months spent on drifting ice. A short time later, Shackleton was dead from a heart attack.

Responses to his death were worldwide. Amundsen said Shackleton's name would be written in 'letters of fire' across the Antarctic. Emily decided his body should be buried in South Georgia for his heart to rest in the Antarctic. His

comrades respectfully complied, burying him in the Sealers' Cemetery with the grave orientated north/south – so that he could be even closer to the South Pole he never achieved.

Comment on Shackleton's background and character

Shackleton is often labelled as 'Anglo Irish', a term which has connotations in Ireland which don't accurately apply to his origins. Ernest Shackleton's father Henry was the fourth generation of the family born in Ireland. The Shackletons came to Ireland as educators, and over generations members of the family moved into farming and milling. His mother Henrietta's (nee Gavan) lineage was firmly rooted in south west Ireland.

At school in Dulwich, he was teased over his Irish 'brogue', earning him the nickname 'Mikey' (there was already a 'Paddy'). This became his nickname within the family. In the 1901 census, Shackleton recorded his birthplace as 'Ireland, Kildare'. When news broke of his 'furthest South' in January 1909, the Dublin newspapers proudly claimed him as an Irishman. He regularly signed onto ships as 'Irish', and was called an 'Irish Explorer' when he requested *Yelcho* from the Chilean authorities. A definitive record of his contemporaries' opinion came from *Nimrod* geologist, Prof. Edgeworth David who declared "I should say that Lieutenant Shackleton is most essentially, from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot, an Irishman. He has all the best characteristics of the Irish race".

Much is made of his standing for the Liberal Unionist party in Dundee in the 1906 General Election. This was primarily to further his ambitions to organise his own Antarctic expedition and increase his chances of support from the potential sponsors he was meeting through his work with the Royal Scottish Geographical Society. When subsequently approached for the 1910 election, by which time he would have been a celebrity candidate, he refused. He is probably better described as an 'internationalist' and demonstrated a broader view of the advancement of exploration by his unstinting praise for Amundsen's achievement in reaching the South Pole. On the

occasion of Amundsen's visit to the UK, Shackleton was the leading figure on the platform for a Royal Geographical Society event in the Queens Hall which was spurned by many of the big names in British polar exploration. Shackleton moved the vote of thanks and praised Amundsen's preparations and teamwork. Amundsen gave generous mention to Shackleton in his own account 'The South Pole'.

Another powerful illustration of Shackleton's international popularity among his peers was apparent when he appealed for help to rescue his men from Elephant Island; Norway offered *Fram* while the Belgian explorer De Gerlache searched widely for a suitable ship.

As a person, Shackleton's outstanding qualities reflect his Irish Quaker roots. He was charming, well read, and a good conversationalist. He was able to back up his unfailing optimism by constantly creating options, even in hopeless situations. On expeditions, scientists, sailors, even the stowaway were equally respected and expected to work together. Shackleton was not a member of the Royal Navy, unlike many other Irish names who ended up on Polar expeditions. His military involvement comprised a temporary commission during WW1.

His assessment of character was uncanny, similar to his instinctive leadership and decision making. He would quickly surrender personal and expedition goals for new priorities. Loyalty was important to Shackleton, and he took seriously his responsibility to deliver to his crew. He led from the front, empowering others to perform to their best, and shared recognition of achievements with the team. His interest in the development of others outside of expedition work was sincere. For ten years, he served as President of the 'Browning Settlement' in London. This innovative project mixed poor & unemployed with university graduates, and provided support services.



Shackleton's grave in the Sealers' Cemetery, South Georgia

Raymond Priestly, a contemporary of Shackleton, Amundsen and Scott provides probably the best summary of Shackleton's legacy :

**Scott for scientific method,
Amundsen for speed and efficiency
but when disaster strikes and all hope is gone,
get down on your knees and pray for Shackleton.**

This article is a Summary of a presentation to Clane Local History Group on Wednesday 13 November 2019

KILDARE COUNTY COUNCIL AND THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

Liam Kenny

The coming months will mark the mid-point in the centenary reflections of the War of Independence which raged in Ireland from 1919 to 1921. Already there is a full pipeline of publications, seminars and television documentaries looking back on the fraught years of the independence war. Much of the commentary highlights the military conflict between the Irish Republican Army on the one hand and, on the other, the various armed manifestations of the British state - the controversial Royal Irish Constabulary, the notorious Black and Tans and the infamous Auxiliaries.

However less well known than the shooting war was the manner in which Irish nationalists worked to undermine the British government in Ireland by setting up a parallel Irish government and administration under the auspices of the new Dáil Éireann elected in 1919. In the forefront of this effort was the struggle in the Council chambers of the land. The arm-wrestle between, on the one hand, the civil servants of the British-established Local Government Board as they attempted to hold on to their controlling function over local authorities from their Customs House offices, and on the other, the revolutionaries turned administrators of the emerging and subversive Dáil Éireann Government departments is echoed in the records of the local councils. The surviving material shows that the battle to determine the future administration of the country went on in the dusty corridors of county halls as well as on the hillsides where the flying columns marched.

To the public in general the Customs House on Dublin's north quays was one of the main manifestations of British control in Ireland, responsible for directing a wide range of local services, and an important element in the machinery of public taxation. For a time there was something of a political mismatch between the Sinn Féin Dáil and the Home Rule County

Council. The previous elections had been in 1914 when the Councillors who were elected were largely Home Rule in their



The Custom House was a manifestation of British control in 1920

political ambitions. This meant that they aspired to independence for Ireland but saw the country remaining within a context of the British Empire. However the 1916 rebellion injected a militancy in the nationalist campaign which was to reverberate in the following years.

The 1918 parliamentary elections saw Sinn Féin sweep the boards in the southern three-quarters of the country. Two years later the local government elections of 1920 took place against the febrile background of the War of Independence and were certain to bring in a council with a much sharper nationalist thrust. The elections to the city and town local authorities in January 1920 had set the scene on a national basis with Sinn Féin gaining control of seventy-two out of 127 corporations and town councils on the island of Ireland. This trend was maintained in the county council elections of June of that year with Sinn Féin winning the majority on 28 of the 33 county authorities.

The newly constituted councils considered themselves an integral part of the nationalist struggle. According to the First Report of the Sinn Féin Department of Local Government the post-election councils “challenged the authority of the Imperial Parliament by refusing to recognise the control of the Local

Government Board and by making declarations of allegiance to Dáil Eireann.”

The situation in Kildare County Council reflected the national transformation in the balance of power on local government councils outside of Ulster. Out went names associated with the establishment - no matter how benevolently disposed towards Home Rule - such as of Lt. Col. Frederick Fitzgerald of Maynooth, George Wolfe of Furness, and Matthew Minch of Athy. In came activists under the Sinn Féin banner such as Eamonn O'Modhráin of Suncroft and Domhnall Ua Buachalla of Maynooth whose use of the Irish forms of their names signalled the intensity of their political convictions. The new council lost no time in laying down the markers of its political sympathies and of its attitude to the British administration structure. The first business of the first meeting after the local government election was to elect Domhnall Ua Buachalla as the council's chairman - a figure with strong nationalist connections in North Kildare who was later to be appointed by Mr deValera as Ireland's last Governor General.

The second item of business was to admit a deputation from the Gaelic League consisting of Arthur O'Connor, TD; a Dr Grogan, and a Fr. O'Brien. Not alone did the councillors receive the deputation with alacrity but they took on board with enthusiasm its advocacy of the Irish language as a central part of the building of a new and independent Ireland. The pre-eminence given - at least symbolically - to the Irish language was backed up by an explicitly political motion which fired the opening shot in the struggle of transferring the Council's loyalties from the British-established Local Government Board to the Department of Local Government set up under Dáil Eireann. This motion marked the entry of the Council as a full participant in the administrative battle running concurrently with the military conflict then at its most intense.

The Council's motion read: “That this council hereby acknowledges the authority of Dáil Eireann as the duly elected Government of the Irish people and undertakes to give effect to

all decrees duly promulgated by the said Dáil Eireann in so far as same affect this Council.” It is an illustration of the far-reaching network of influence being created by the members of the fledgling Dáil Eireann government that the KCC members felt it possible to give their motion an international airing, resolving that it should be forwarded to “the Republican Minister for Foreign Affairs for transmission to the Governments of Europe and to the President and Chairman of the Senate and the House of Representatives of the USA.” The Council's determination to wield the tools of administration as part of the armoury of the nationalist struggle was emphasised by another motion passed at that same meeting which ordered “that every possible obstacle be placed in the way of the British Government in collecting taxes and otherwise” . . . and specifically instructing the council's officials not to let the lists of ratepayers or the Council's staff records fall into British hands.

The Council's determination that urgent steps be taken to transfer the power of even the most routine aspects of local authority functions is illustrated by a resolution of August 1920 specifying that the operation of the weights & measures inspectorate be taken out of the hands of the RIC. A secondary theme to the nationalist re-orientation of the council's political sympathies and official functions was the increased status given to organised labour. A motion was passed in August 1920 directing that 'only trade union labour be employed' on the Council's direct labour schemes. This preference towards the Trade Union movement was motivated, in the first instance, by a desire to reward the unions for their support of the nationalist struggle as another motion passed by the Council makes clear, 'That we the members of the Kildare County Council in recognition of the good services rendered by Trade Union Labour hereby call on all Republican Employers in Co. Kildare to employ none other than Trade Union Labour’.

Returning to the central issue of the Council's transfer of loyalty to Dáil Eireann the fight back from the Local Government Board was rapid and predictable. In August 1920

a letter was read to a KCC Finance Committee meeting from the Local Government Board backed by a similar communication from the Under Secretary in Dublin Castle threatening to with-hold grants from local authorities who refused to conform with its instructions. The KCC members were defiant the minute recording 'it was decided to take no action in the matter'.

However more than rhetoric was needed if the Council was to make effective its attempts to cut off links with the Customs House. The people who controlled the income and bank holdings of the Council were in a position to control all its activities. It was vital that the Council's resources were not left vulnerable to being seized by the Local Government Board. On 1 September 1920 the Council held a special meeting in which it was resolved to make 'such arrangements as are necessary in connection with the Treasurer-ship for protecting the finances of the Council.' This was backed by another motion depriving the Hibernian Bank (Naas) of the Treasurer role for the Council.

A special committee of the Council set to work immediately on emergency plans for keeping the Council's assets out of British hands making arrangements so secret that they could not be detailed in the official minutes, a timely precaution as will be shown later. The committee ordered that all further payments to the council be directed to Mr. Patrick Field, the Council's Accountant, 'to whom the committee gave private and confidential instructions as to the disposal of the money.'

The contest for control of local administration took other direct forms. The first entry in KCC's ninth Minute book dated 22 November 1920 records the Secretary reporting that "a raid had been carried out by the RIC this morning on the Courthouse and the Council's current minute book and letter book, also the abstracts of Collector's lodgements and correspondence received from Dáil Éireann, had been taken possession of by the raiding party." Raiding the offices of a body regarded as subversive is a common feature of the reaction by government

authorities in order to glean information and frustrate the activities of the organisations which threatens their position. It is significant that among the documents seized were the rate collectors' lodgements which showed the source and destination of the council's main source of income. As 1920 drew to a close Kildare County Council found itself drawn deeper into the independence struggle. Its head office at Naas courthouse had been raided by the RIC and its records confiscated. And some of its elected members were 'on the run' swapping their council seats for firearms in those turbulent months.



Naas Courthouse was raided by the RIC in 1920

Local authorities such as Kildare County Council may not have been in the frontline of the independence struggle but from the local elections of 1920 their political aspect was an extension of the endeavour of the fighting forces of republicanism. The local authorities as organisations in their own right were important actors in the drama of undermining the institutions of one regime and replacing them with those of a new independent government.

THE GEORGIAN CASTLE AT CLONGOWES

Andrew Tierney

The history of the castle at Clongowes is long and complicated, with several phases of reconstruction and expansion.¹ The imposing facades overlook the long avenue to the front, the pleasure grounds to the north and the playing fields to the east. Its architecture is unmistakably that of a great estate, but the significance of its castellated style is entrenched in the country's wider history of religious dissension. Castle Browne, as it was known until its purchase by the Jesuits, is one of a series of late eighteenth-century 'castles' built by old Catholic families of the Pale, which includes Ballinlough, seat of the O'Reilly/Nugent family, Malahide Castle of the Talbots, Killeen Castle of the Plunketts, and Gormanston Castle of the Preston family. Professor Alistair Rowan has suggested that Thomas Wogan Browne, the owner of Castle Browne in the late C18, had a hand in several of these designs as an amateur architect, including that of his own house from 1788.² These represent the earliest phase of the Castle Revival style in Ireland, a fashion for chivalric architecture that forms part of the wider Gothic Revival that influenced both ecclesiastical and domestic architecture in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The revival spread quickly among leading Catholic families, no doubt keen to promulgate the antiquity of their lineages. However the seed of the revival can be found in a source both English and Protestant: the work of James Wyatt at Slane Castle.

In 1773 the 1st Viscount Conyngham hired James Wyatt, one of the youngest and most fashionable London architects (who had just designed the assembly rooms there to great acclaim) to provide designs for a new castellated house. Throughout his career Wyatt moved seamlessly between the Neoclassical and 'Gothick' styles, sometimes employing both in a single work. As at Slane the exterior of Clongowes is firmly Gothic while the interior contains rooms in the more refined Neoclassical idiom, as promoted by the latest antiquarian publications of the day. While the Gothic style referenced the independent-spirited

baronial power of a bygone age, the classical style spoke of cosmopolitanism and connectivity with the fast-paced sophistication of London.

To modern eyes the deceit is transparent – the fake windows placed for effect, conforming strictly to Georgian symmetry, with toy-like arrow loops and a theatrical roofline. If there is a childishness to it, then it might be excused as the inevitable by-product of a movement still taking its first steps. When Clongowes was remodelled in the Castle Style in 1788 there was no academic literature that clearly identified the various stylistic phases of medieval Gothic architecture, which would not be formally identified by antiquarians until 1817. Erecting houses in a Gothic mode was a new adventure and no one knew exactly how to proceed or what grand effects might be produced. James Wyatt himself took the theatricality of the style as far as anyone dared at Fonthill Abbey in Wiltshire, a house of Cathedral-like proportions that came crashing down in 1825.



Fig. 1 View of the west front of the castle

The west front of Clongowes, facing the long avenue, reveals most about the castle's earlier history (**fig. 1**). The narrow window openings are set far enough apart to suggest a fabric of quite early date; perhaps a late medieval structure of similar form to that contained within neighbouring Rathcoffey Castle, which was remodelled in the seventeenth century (like the castle at Donadea). An inscription by the entrance records the restoration of Clongowes by 'S. FitzWilliam Browne' in 1718, and to this time date the slender moulded windowsills, similar to those on the Old Library of Trinity College Dublin with which they are contemporary (the latter designed by the Surveyor General, Thomas Burgh of Oldtown Naas). A view of the castle as it then appeared can be found on Alexander Taylor's map of Kildare of 1783 (**fig. 2**), which shows a house

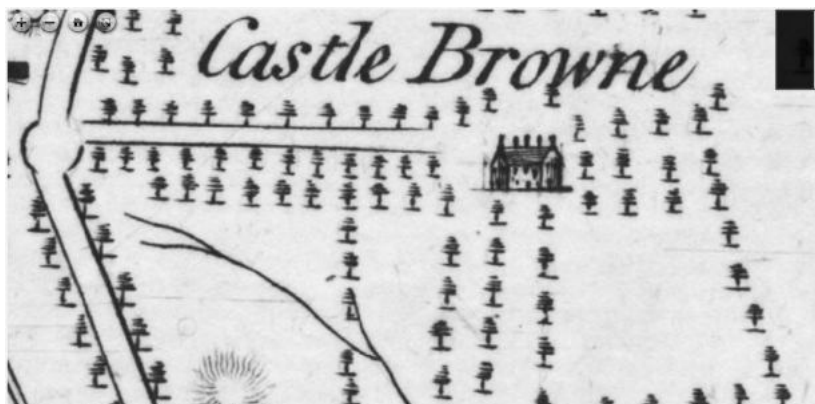


Fig. 2 The castle at Clongowes on Alexander Taylor's 1783 map of Kildare

covered by a steep roof that projected forward in the outer bays, which were then either hipped or gable-fronted. There are also a series of fine tall chimneystacks arranged symmetrically. Its general form was similar to Morrinstown Latten near Naas as it appeared in the late seventeenth century, prior to its nineteenth-century remodelling. Although at this time the building was without crenellations it is still marked as 'Castle Browne', suggesting that this designation was of long-standing. Another important early feature is the straight avenue to the west, with its double line of trees – a formality of approach typical of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries,

elements of which can still be seen at Castletown, Carton and Castlemartin.

Overlaid on the earlier staid and sober shell is Thomas Wogan Browne's Gothic fantasy of 1788. From the west front the architectural effect is at its most naïve. The turreted entrance bay and flanking towers reflect the style of the 14th and 15th centuries, such as found at Bodiam and Herstmonceux in Sussex, but which continued up to the time of Henry VIII at Hampton Court. The use of quatrefoils, both in the outer windows and flanking the door is a typical device of 18th century 'Gothick' architecture, popularised by Horace Walpole at Strawberry Hill in Twickenham between 1749 and 1776. The survival of the delicate web of lead and glazing on those windows flanking the entrance is notable, as they have been altered elsewhere. The trio of large window openings over the door is likely an original feature of the 1780s and is paralleled on the bay window of The Abbey at Celbridge, another notable early experiment in Ireland's Gothic Revival. The glazing was, of course, replaced by Joshua Clarke (father of the more famous Harry) in the early 20th century.

The castle's enlargement and ornamentation by Thomas Wogan Browne in 1788 was undertaken in a period of increasing sympathy towards the plight of Irish Catholics, reflected in Browne's appointment as high sheriff for County Kildare in 1789, two years prior to the Catholic Relief Act of 1791.³ In 1795, we find him a magistrate, dealing with men accused of High Treason for administering oaths of loyalty to the French.⁴ Indeed it may have been deemed wise to appoint a Catholic to such a position in the year of France's bloody revolution to prevent the alienation of the country's Catholic population. Browne was also a member of the Whig Club and an outspoken supporter of Lord Charlemont, the leading 'patriot peer' in the Irish House of Commons who was also an enthusiast for the latest style of Neoclassical architecture.⁵ If there was a model of the collector and patron for Browne to follow, Charlemont was surely it.

The decoration of the main rooms – all on the first floor - is modest by the standards of the time and perhaps it was compromised by want of means. The Round Room, as it is termed, is not round in plan but square (**fig. 3**). The name comes from its remarkable domed roof, ornamented with the light Neoclassical stuccowork typical of the late eighteenth century. Domed rooms were then in fashion – the most notable example being James Gandon’s rotunda at Emo Court. The idea that Browne worked as his own architect is perhaps supported by the failure to resolve the conflicting geometries of walls and ceiling. The standard solution to the problem of

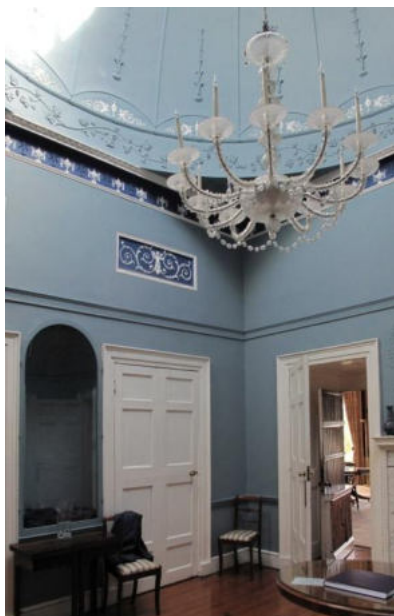


Fig. 3 The Round Room

joining cubic and spherical volumes was the employment of pendentives, which can be seen in structures from the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul (C6) to St Peter’s in Rome and beyond. The omission here of so common a transitional device is puzzling. It is hard to put it down to simple architectural illiteracy. Was Wogan Browne dreaming beyond his means and then having to make hard compromises in the execution of the work?

The principal reception room (now the main dining room) has shallow coffering over a flat plane, without penetrating the surface. The lack of over-painting suggests the coffers are a later addition. Coffering is typically used to model the surface of barrel and domical vaults, inspired by great exemplars such as the Basilica of Maxentius and the Temple of Venus near the Roman Forum, or most famously the Pantheon, working to capture the movement of light across the surface, adding depth and a sense of recession to the space, and of course reducing the structural weight. Here it is used in a purely ornamental

manner to no great effect. What the original ornament might have been is unclear. The Neoclassical schemes Robert Adam and James Wyatt were tailor-made for such expansive flat ceilings, articulated with delicate low relief stuccowork and contrasting pastel shades. But such work required expert craftsmen at high prices. The anthemion frieze and enriched modillion cornice seem to be original. These would have been cast from moulds. The design is repeated to some effect over the central double doorway at the south end of the room and picked up in a more subtle way in the paneling of the window shuttering.



Fig. 4 The former drawing room

More interesting is the drawing room, now the Community Library, which has a segmental-vaulted ceiling and frieze with lyre motif (**fig. 4**). Between the windows of the east wall are a fine series of engravings of Etruscan red-figure vases from William Hamilton's *Antiquités Étrusques, Grecque et Romaines*, a pioneering antiquarian publication of 1766-7. The idea of decorating a room with engravings from published works was already well-established in the eighteenth century,

most famously at nearby Castletown House in Celbridge. Hamilton's black and red figure ornaments are echoed beautifully in the inlaid marble chimneypiece, which must have been specially commissioned for the room. On the N side of the building is the Museum Library, which has an accomplished Doric frieze.

If the architecture of Castle Browne is in the final assessment one of compromise, then it may have been compromise forced upon Thomas Wogan Browne by a want of means. As the architectural commentator Roger North had warned would-be patrons in the previous century, architects were wont 'to practise (*sic*) their own whims at your cost.' Taking on both roles, Browne may literally have been the architect of his own downfall. That Browne had aspirations to be a man of discernment and taste is clear from the scheme of engravings of William Hamilton's antiquities in the former drawing room, which were handsomely extended to the Chimneypiece (surely at great cost), and the commissioning of a double portrait of himself and his wife by George Romney, one of the leading London painters of the day. The portrait was intended to display the scholarly aspirations of the Brownes, showing Mrs Browne seated at a table in the act of drawing, and Mr Browne standing on the left of her, and reaching to a shelf of books.⁶

That Browne over-extended himself during the construction is clear from the fact that he could not afford the full 200 guinea fee for the work, paying only half. As a result Romney refused to finish it and it remained in his studio for some years after his death.⁷ That the family were hard-pressed by the penal laws is suggested by Thomas Wogan Browne's attendance at a meeting of the Catholic landowners of County Kildare, where in a long speech he complained of the fact that his younger brother was forced to live by his sword in a foreign army (fighting allies of the English). The Browne family's occupation of the castle came to a tragic end with Browne's suicide in 1812. According to the *Hibernian Magazine* in 1813, his 'magnificent edifice' had cost some £26,000 to construct, a huge sum which must have thrown him into irredeemable debt.

His younger brother came back from the continent to sort out the estate. The sale of the library took place in January 1813 and included many Italian books, described in the press as ‘the most valuable and extensive collection ever sold in this kingdom, including Cassini’s map of France and 175 plans of cities ‘neatly bound in 15 cases’.⁸ Six months later the General sold off the family’s town house at no. 9, Dawson Street, followed three months later by Clongowes itself.

Notes

¹ For the early history of Clongowes, see Brendan Cullen, *A Short History of Clongowes Wood College*. 2019.

² A. Rowan, 'Georgian Castles in Ireland', *BIGS* 7, no. 1 (Jan-Mar 1964).

³ ‘Dublin’, *Dublin Evening Post*, 31 January 1789, p. 2.

⁴ ‘County Kildare’, *Saunders’s News-Letter*, 5 August 1795, p. 3.

⁵ On Lord Charlement, see James Kelly, ‘Lord Charlemont and learning’, *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* Vol. 106C, 395–407. For Browne’s public support of Charlemont and anti-government stance, see ‘County Kildare Meeting, *Dublin Evening Post*, 10 August 1790, p. 1.

⁶ John Romney, *Memoirs of the Life and Works of George Romney* (London: Baldwin and Cradock, 1830), p. 69.

⁷ *Ibid.* There was also a ‘Mother and Child’ by Romney of 1771 sold by a descendent at Christies in 1880, which may have hung in Castle Browne prior to its sale. Christies, 24th April 1880, lot 185.

⁸ ‘The Castle Browne Library’, *Saunders’s News-Letter*, 1 Jan 1813, p. 3.

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THE THEFT OF THE “IRISH CROWN JEWELS” - A KILDARE CONNECTION?

Jim Heffernan

What were the Irish Crown Jewels?

The Order of St Patrick was established in 1783 but, unlike the English Order of the Garter and the Scottish Order of the Thistle, it had no regalia until 1831. A number of jewels which King George IV had given to two successive mistresses were returned to his brother King William IV by the second mistress after George's death. William's wife, Queen Adelaide, did not want them so he decided to give them to the Order of St Patrick. They were made up into a badge and a star to be worn by the Grand Master of the Order the Viceroy (or Lord Lieutenant). Officially they were "The Insignia of the Grand Master of The Order of St Patrick" but colloquially they were known as "the Irish Crown Jewels".



Clockwise from top left: a member's collar, the Grand Master's badge and his star.

Sir Arthur Vicars, Ulster King of Arms

The official custodian of the jewels was Sir Arthur Vicars, Ulster King of Arms head of the Office of Arms who was

directly appointed by the King. The head of the Office of Arms who was also chief functionary of the Order of St Patrick had been styled 'Ulster' since Tudor times. He was born in England in 1864 of Anglo-Irish Stock, his mother was a Gun-Cunningham from County Wicklow. He was the son of his mother's second marriage to Colonel W H Vicars; his father died when he was five years old and his mother died when he was ten. His mother's first marriage was to Pierce K O'Mahony of Kilmorna Co. Kerry by whom she had two sons. He was educated in England but spent much time in Ireland where he bonded with his half brothers, George and Pierce O'Mahony from his mother's first marriage. Pierce who later became a Nationalist Member of Parliament was to be a staunch supporter of Vicars during his tribulations following the theft of the jewels.

Office of Arms Personnel

Sir Arthur Vicars reported to the King via the Viceroy, Lord Aberdeen whose role was mainly ceremonial. The head of the Irish administration was the Chief Secretary Augustine Birrell who was a member of the British Cabinet and was usually in London. Day-to-day administration was undertaken by the Undersecretary, Sir Anthony McDonnell, who was a civil servant.

In 1905 Vicars revived a number of defunct ceremonial posts: Frank Shackleton, an older brother of the famous Antarctic Explorer, Ernest, who had worked for the Office between military postings was appointed Dublin Herald; Pierce Gun O'Mahoney, son of Vicars' half brother Pierce, was appointed Cork Herald and Francis Bennett Goldney, the Mayor of Canterbury who had no Irish connections was appointed Athlone Pursuivant. The future would not turn out well for any of these appointees, three would die violent deaths, one would be imprisoned for fraud and one for manslaughter.

The office had a small staff all of whose lives would be impacted by the events of 1907. Mary Farrell was the cleaner

who was the first to enter the building each morning, Mary Gibbon was the office typist, Sydney Horlock was Vicars' private secretary, George Burtchaell was the Office of Arms secretary, William Stivey was the Office of Arms messenger and Philips was Vicars' coachman.

The Bedford Tower Dublin Castle

The Office of Arms moved from Bermingham Tower to much superior accommodation in the Bedford Tower on 9 November 1903. It is located beside the main gate immediately opposite the Viceregal Apartments. The Board of Works made major modifications to the interior including a strong room. The location of the Office of Arms moved from Bermingham Tower to superior accommodation in the Bedford Tower on 9 November 1903. It is located beside the main gate immediately opposite the Viceregal Apartments. The Board of Works made



The Bedford Tower with the main gate to the Castle on the right

substantial modifications to the interior including a strong room. The location was reputed to be the most secure in Ireland and Britain. The headquarters of the Dublin Metropolitan Police, the headquarters of the Dublin Detective Force, headquarters of the Royal Irish Constabulary, and the head

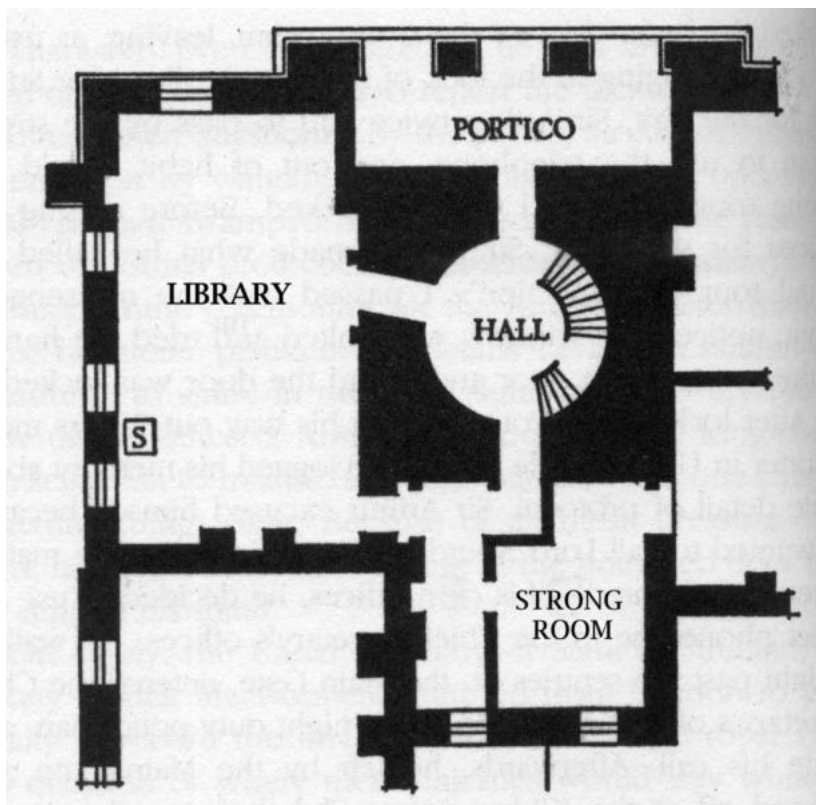
office of the Dublin Military Garrison were all within a fifty yard radius of the office of Arms. Military and police presence throughout all 24 hours with a patrolling policeman checking buildings.



Changing the guard; the rectangular windows on the ground floor of the building are those of the Office of Arms library housing the safe

The jewels had previously been kept in a Dublin jeweller's safe but on the move to the Bedford Tower Vicars decided to keep them in his care and a safe was ordered; however when the safe which was 3 feet wide arrived, it wouldn't fit through the newly-built strong room's door which was 2 feet wide. The situation prompted an angry exchange of letters between Office of Arms and Board of Works in which each blamed the other for the fiasco. The matter was eventually settled when one evening Vicars encountered Sir George Holmes Chairman of Board of Works in the Kildare Street Club and, having had a few drinks, he magnanimously agreed that the safe need not be in the strong room. The safe was placed in the library; regulations drafted by Vicars himself had stipulated that the crown jewels must be kept in the strong room in a safe. He did

not subsequently change the regulations or order a smaller safe; this would come back to haunt him! There were two keys to the safe both of which were kept by Vicars himself, one he kept on his person and one hidden in a desk at his residence. There were four keys to the strong room and seven latchkeys to the front door; less control was exercised over these keys.



Ground Floor Plan of the Bedford Tower

The Robbery

On the 10th of July 1907 King Edward VII was due to arrive in Ireland. His itinerary included attendance at the Leopardstown Races and the initiation of a new member, Lord Castletown, into the Order of St Patrick. The ceremony required the regalia to be worn by the Viceroy in his capacity of Grand Master of the Order. In February or March 1907 Mrs Farrell who was the first to open up in the mornings had found Haddo, the son of

the Viceroy Lord Aberdeen on the premises, he had a latch key. Shackleton was in England from the 7th of June to the 9th of July. The last time the jewels were seen was on the 11th of June when Vicars showed them to his friend J C Hodgeson who was an antiquarian. On starting work on Wednesday 3rd July 1907 Mrs Farrell found the front door unlatched. On Saturday 6th of July Mrs Farrell found the strong room door open. Later that day Vicars sent Stivey the messenger to put a returned collar in the safe, he found it unlocked. Vicars was called and the Jewels were found to be missing. Experts who subsequently examined the safe and strong room door locks found that they had not been picked but had been opened by the original keys or by exact copies requiring possession of an original key for several hours. Vicars seemed to think the jewels might be returned promptly in the post as Lord Haddo had previously played a prank on Vicars. The ribbon of the badge had been removed with care suggesting that the thief had been in no hurry. Inspector Kane of Scotland Yard, who led the investigation, quickly formed the opinion that it was an 'inside job'.

Finding a Scapegoat

Edward VII was angry and blamed Vicars for carelessness; he refused to have him in his presence again and wanted him dismissed. Vicars refused to resign and put up a fight aided by his half brother Pierce O'Mahoney. Shackleton and Goldney resigned when requested, Pierce Gun Mahoney appealed to Aberdeen and was allowed to stay. He remained as Cork Herald until 1910 when he resigned on being called to the bar. He did not live long dying mysteriously in July 1914. While staying at his father's estate, Grange Con, County Wicklow, he had gone to row across a lake to join some friends shooting. Subsequently his body was found floating in reeds with the chest blown away. His shotgun was found nearby near a barbed wire fence with both barrels discharged. The verdict was accidental death.

In the ensuing controversy Vicars was supported by most members of order of St Patrick, members of Kildare Club and various nationalist figures enrolled by his half-brother Pierce O'Mahoney. Ranged against Vicars were the King, the Chief Secretary, the Under Secretary and miscellaneous people such as Lord Walter Fitzgerald of the Kildare Archaeological Society. Vicars could not be dismissed without an inquiry. Vicars' supporters wanted a Royal Commission to hold the enquiry but the king was opposed to this and a Viceregal Commission was set up instead.



King Edward VII was outraged by the theft of the jewels

Fear of Scandal

The Establishment had a problem, Chief Inspector John Kane of Scotland Yard who led the investigation found that a group of homosexuals had been meeting in the Office of Arms for drinking parties with Vicars' consent. Attendees included Vicars, although it is not clear whether he was homosexual,

Lord Haddo (son of the Viceroy Lord Aberdeen), the Duke of Argyll (brother in law of the king), Argyll's uncle Lord Gower, Frank Shackleton, and Shackleton's close friend the disreputable Captain Richard Gorges. Homosexuality was an indictable offence in 1907 and although the Public tolerated sexual misconduct by their aristocratic 'betters' they strongly opposed homosexuality. The King disliked his nephew the German Kaiser and had gloated over the recent Eulenburg scandal. A close friend of the Kaiser Prince Eulenburg and numerous military officers including Kaiser's the two aides de camp were outed as homosexuals and six officers had taken their own lives. Some of the partygoers were prime suspects for the theft and fear of scandal and embarrassment to the King and the Castle Authorities would ensure that the investigation was tightly controlled and focused primarily on proving Vicars' negligence.

The Investigation and Commission of Inquiry

The initial investigation was led by Chief Inspector John Kane of Scotland Yard, his report was not published and copies of it are missing. The Commission sat in closed session with the press and public excluded and it had no power to compel witnesses. Vicars and his legal team withdrew at the opening session when it was confirmed that the sittings were to be private. The Solicitor General Redmond Barry dominated the proceedings leading the questioning of witnesses rather than the Chairman Judge Shaw and the three commission members were effectively confined to asking supplementary questions. Chief Secretary Birrell ensured that the focus was kept on Vicars' presumed negligence.

The Commission found Vicars to be negligent and he was dismissed on 13th January 1908. He refused to hand over the strong room keys and the Board of Works had to demolish part of the wall to gain entry. He was replaced as Ulster King of Arms by Sir Neville Wilkinson and the Office of Arms continued until his death in April 1943 when the Irish state took over with its functions transferred to the Genealogical Office under a Chief Herald of Ireland.

Francis William (Frank) Shackleton

Born Kilkea, County Kildare in 1876 he was the older brother of the famous Antarctic Explorer Ernest Shackleton. The Shackleton family moved to England when he was young. He had an interest in genealogy and befriended Vicars who appointed him Dublin Herald. At the time of his appointment he was financially well off with successful business interests. Mainly based in England he required accommodation in Ireland and shared 7 St James's Terrace, Clonskeagh (now 14 Clonskeagh Rd) with Vicars. His friend Richard Gorges occasionally visited him there until Vicars objected.



Frank Shackleton (with umbrella) and detectives enters Bow St. Court

By 1907 Shackleton was in financial difficulty mainly through speculative investment in the Mexican Land and Timber Company which collapsed. Desperate for money he defrauded Lord Gower, his adopted son Frank Hird and a Miss Brown, for whom he had power of attorney, leaving them penniless. He was declared bankrupt and fled to Portuguese West Africa (present day Angola). A warrant was issued for his arrest and he was extradited to England where he appeared at Bow Street Magistrates' court in January 1913. In October 1913 he was

sentenced to 15 months imprisonment for fraud. He subsequently operated an antique shop in Chichester under his mother's maiden name of Mellor. He died in 1941.

Captain Richard Howard Gorges

Captain Richard Howard Gorges was an intimate friend of Frank Shackleton. He was born in Boyle, County Roscommon in 1876. The Gorges family had gone to England with William the Conqueror and a branch arrived in Ireland with Cromwell. He went to South Africa where he had relations. He served in the Second Matabele War in 1896 during which he suffered severe sunstroke which appears to have affected his personality, he became unstable, unpredictable and violent. He served for a time in the Cape Police Force which had a reputation for brutality and later served in the Boer War ultimately receiving a dishonourable discharge. Returning to Ireland he joined 3rd Battalion Royal Irish Regiment. He became the regiment's Musketry Training Officer and regularly had cause to be in Dublin Castle where he was a familiar figure. He served in the Great War but was discharged 1914. In 1915 he shot dead Detective Young, a policeman who had called to his lodgings in England following information that Shackleton had revolvers in his possession. Charged with murder he was convicted of manslaughter. He was sentenced to 12 years imprisonment and released in 1925. In January 1944 he was killed by a train at Edgware Road Underground Station, London; the circumstances were unclear and an open verdict was recorded.

Whodunit?

The Crown Jewels were never recovered and their disappearance remains a mystery. Over the years much has been written about the affair and various theories advanced as to the culprits. A Nationalist plot to discredit the Castle Establishment? A Unionist plot to embarrass the Viceroy who was sympathetic to Home Rule? There was speculation that the Jewels were taken for ransom; even suggestions that they were secretly bought back by the British Royal Family. After

Goldney's death in a car accident in 1918 it transpired that he was something of a magpie regarding historical artefacts and a number of items he had pilfered from Canterbury museum were found in his collection in his home; however nothing relating to the Crown Jewels was found in his home and he had no other Irish contacts as potential accomplices.

None of the above theories explain how anyone other than Shackleton could have taken one of Vicars' safe keys for long enough for a perfect copy to be made. Shackleton was desperate and unscrupulous enough but was in England for the entire period from the time the jewels were last seen to the discovery of the theft and would have needed an accomplice. Vicars who afterwards lived in the old O'Mahoney family home Kilmorna House, Co Kerry until he was shot by the IRA in April 1921, suspected Shackleton and he named Shackleton as the thief in his will. Bulmer Hobson accused Shackleton and Gorges in a *Gaelic American* article published by John Devoy on 4th July 1908. Gorges was reputed to have boasted to a cellmate that he had taken the jewels and was named in Parliament under Privilege as the thief in 1918.

Myles Dungan puts forward a convincing case in his book *the Stealing of the Irish Crown Jewels*. Shackleton living with Vicars was best placed to take the safe key and retain it for a period. The motive was profit not political and the items would have been broken up and the jewels sold in Europe. Gorges who was a regular and familiar visitor to the Castle and would have not aroused suspicion, actually took the jewels. The mysterious unlocking of the safe and strong room was to ensure that the theft was discovered before Shackleton's return to Ireland for the King's visit thus safeguarding his alibi.

As to the Most Illustrious Order of St Patrick it ceased to exist when the last knight of the Order, the Duke of Gloucester, died in 1974!

A CLANE CONNECTION WITH ROB BEN ISLAND, SOUTH AFRICA

Ciarán Reilly

For eighteen of his twenty-seven years in prison, Nelson Mandela was incarcerated on Robben Island, off the coast of Cape Town, South Africa. Now a UNESCO World Heritage site, every year, thousands of people take the boat trip across to the island to see the cell where prisoner ‘46664’ was imprisoned. Visiting Robben Island one is immediately struck by the harsh landscape of this small island, which has a total area of less than two miles.



Robben Island with Table Mountain in the background

While the recent history of Robben Island is closely associated with the imprisonment of Mandela and other members of the African National Congress (ANC), there are a number of Irish connections to the island. The Irish cemetery reflects the work of missionaries who tended to the leper community who had been sent there from the middle of the nineteenth century onwards. In the early part of the twentieth century, the lighthouse keeper on Robben Island was a man called Hurley who hailed from Skibbereen in west Cork. His son, Denis,

would become one of the most important South African Catholic bishops of the twentieth century and played an integral role in the anti-apartheid struggle. However, perhaps the most important Irish connection to the island is that of Richard Thomas Wolfe (1794-1855) of Baronrath, Clane, who was appointed British Commandant of Robben Island in 1834.

Wolfe is responsible for the construction of what is known as the Garrison Church between 1841 and 1842. An Anglican Church in the Cape gothic style, it was built using convict labour. Described as ‘ornament for a wedding cake’, an inscription over the entrance door bears his name. From about 1834 to 1847 Wolfe was the central figure on Robben Island overseeing the detention of almost 600 convicts during this period. A member of the 98th Regiment of Foot, Wolfe was quite at home on Robben Island and employed Thomas Bowler



The Garrison Church

the artist as a tutor for his children. Bowler left the post in 1838 to set up as an artist in Cape Town and a decade later would paint the famous water colour of the ‘Anti-Convict Protest’ in the city which opposed the arrival of 300 Irish convicts.

Wolfe also oversaw the building of a small hospital on the island but his job as superintendent of the convicts took up

most of his time. He is recorded as being strict with discipline on the island, in particular with regard to work in the quarry where over seventy men were engaged on a daily basis. More than 130 years later Nelson Mandela and his colleagues would be put to work in the same quarries. However, Wolfe is also noted as showing great compassion to the convicts, purchasing extra clothing for them owing to the fact that they were often left exposed to the Cape winds.



Wolfe Headstone Wynberg Capetown

When a British government report in the 1840s suggested that Robben Island would be suitable for lepers, Wolfe began to make plans for a move to the mainland fearing that the island would be used as a dumping ground for the unwanted. From 1847 he was resident magistrate of Wynberg in Cape Town, the year in which he was also promoted to the rank of major in the army. By 1854 he had been appointed acting judge of the police in the city. Major Richard Thomas Wolfe died on 13 May 1855 and is buried in St John's Anglican Cemetery, Wynberg, Cape Town.

THE HISTORY OF POLO IN CO. KILDARE

Kim Mullahey and Eoghan Corry

Two decades ago polo filled the pages of the back section of the Irish Field, with pictures in full colour and stories of the teams, the trophies and the outcome. When the venerable equine newspaper celebrated its sesquicentennial for the year 2020, polo was almost entirely absent from a back section filled with little else besides pony club competitions and local gymkhanas. While Irish polo exists, as it has officially since 1873 with the founding of the All-Ireland Polo Club, the sport has fallen a long way since the days when competitions involved up to 12 teams at the grounds in Phoenix Park, Dublin and up to half as many again in the county clubs.

Polo evolved rapidly in Parnellite Ireland, with an English military bridle. James Davidson from Drumaness, Co Down,

then managing a tea plantation, was among the founding members of the first polo club in Silchar in India. Valentine Irwin, an Indian Civil Service commissioner who had played polo in Manipur, and apparently experimented with the game when he returned to his native Roscommon on holiday. English regiments such as the Eighth Hussars, returned from the 1857 Indian War of Independence, played local horsemen in early matches at Rathbane in Limerick, on Gormanstown strand and against the Carlow county club, which had been founded by Horace Rochfort, from



Horace Rochfort

Coolgrenane. County clubs, evolving throughout Ireland from the 1820s, saw an opportunity to offer their landed gentry membership of a horseback sport to dovetail the winter hunting season. County polo teams pursued an existence parallel to, but intriguingly separate from army teams. Between six and usually eight cavalry regiments were stationed in Ireland at one time, making up 3,000 of the British army's conventional strength in Ireland of 22,000.

Rochfort, serial founder of Carlow clubs for rowing, cricket and rugby, included polo in the Carlow county club programme in 1871. He then founded the All Ireland Polo Club in 1872, securing an invaluable lease on the nine acres in the Phoenix Park, located providentially close to the main railway terminus to the south and west and Dublin's pastime-hungry urban population. Rochfort and his committee, James Jameson, Frederick Fetherstonhaugh, William Gore Lambarde, Percy O'Reilly, Austin Rotheram and Samuel Watt, started an Irish Open championship in 1877, dominated by military teams, but intermittently won by the locals. Crucially, Rochfort organised a deal with the railway companies that expenses would be defrayed for one pony for each player, on journeys from the provinces.



Richard St Leger Moore

Following Carlow's lead, the County Kildare Club, founded in 1871, was formed "for the promotion of cricket, football, archery, pigeon shooting, lawn tennis and, if possible, polo. The ambition was premature by 19 years. In 1880, club chair John Henry Fock, Baron de Robeck, was proposing polo as a remedy for falling receipts. The foundation of the new Irish polo union in 1890 prompted Richard St Leger Moore from Killashee, who had participated in the

origin-myth first polo match in England in his cavalry days (alongside another Irish horseman Bill Beresford), to propose "that a club be started, to be called the County Kildare Polo Club". Kildare almost won the first inter-county championship in 1890. Tom Ritchie from Oughterard in Ardclough scored the first goal in a final, but Kildare lost 3-2 to Fermanagh. They were to lose four finals before they won the first of three.

POLO IN COUNTY KILDARE

A meeting of gentlemen in Kildare interested in polo was held in Naas, on Saturday, for the purpose of taking necessary steps to establish a county polo club. The chair was occupied by Major R. St. Leger Moore (Master of the Kildare Hounds). The following resolutions were passed unanimously :—

1. Resolved—"That a club be started, to be called the County Kildare Polo Club."

2. "That the subscriptions for members be £1 annually.

3. "That the colours of the club be white shirts, caps and girdles white and red."

4. "That the rules be the same as the Hurlingham and All Ireland Polo Club rules."

5. "That Tuesdays and Fridays be practice days."

Mr de Burgh D.L., kindly offered the field adjoining the County Kildare Club grounds to the new club, free of expense, for the first year under certain conditions, which offer was thankfully accepted

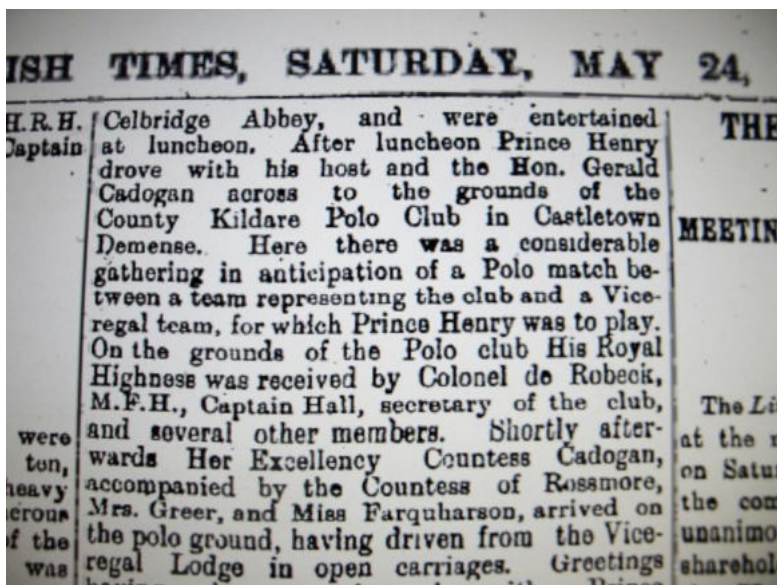
Mr Thomas Ritchie, of Newtown, Straffan, was requested and consented to act as hon. sec., and those wishing to become members will please forward their names and subscriptions to him.

County Kildare Polo Club was founded on 18th April 1890

In 1902 the Kildare polo club departed their Halverstown home and moved to Edward Conolly's homestead in Castletown, near the estate's current entrance to the M4. New grounds at Castletown were laid out by William Dease. At 300 by 200 yards, the Castletown pitch was regarded as too wide, but nevertheless was highly regarded for its boarded pitch and

annual hunting tournament. It was here that Germany's Prince Henry played on his visit to Kildare in May 1902.

Attendances at matches in the 1890s were astonishingly large, estimated, in the absence of turnstiles, at up to 20,000. This compares with the then record for Gaelic football of 10,000 at Dublin v Tipperary, for hurling of 6,000 at Tipperary v Galway, for rugby of 15,000 at Ireland v Scotland and for soccer of 15,000 at Ireland v England.



Visit of German Prince Henry in May 1902

Crowds were even bigger when a county team played the English military regiments. When All-Ireland Champions Kildare played William Bass's Woodpeckers in the final in the Irish Open in 1910, the attendance was estimated at 40,000. The inter-county roll of honour gives an indication of how personality driven was this golden age of Irish polo, three wins by Anthony Maude's Fermanagh 1890-2, one by John Watson's Meath 1893, two by Charles O'Hara's Sligo 1894-5, two by Marshall Murray's Westmeath 1896-7, five more by Sligo 1898-1902, three by North Westmeath 1903-5, Jack

McCann's Dublin in 1906, John Hardress Lloyd's Offaly in 1907, two by Dublin 1908-9, Kildare in 1910, Westmeath in 1911, Offaly in 1912, Kildare in 1913 and the last ever by Kildare in 1920.

In theory at least, Ireland once ranked second in the world. Two Westmeath players Auston Rotherham and Percy O'Reilly of Coolamber, Offaly player John Hardress Lloyd from Shinrone and Dubliner Jack (John Paul) McCann from the AIPC won silver medals on the Irish team at the 1908 Olympics. Ireland lost that Olympic final, but beat England five times in an annual international series, named the "patriotic cup." John Watson from Meath played in the polo equivalent of the Ryder cup team. John Traill from Dublin and Charles and Aidan Roark from Carlow, based in Argentina and the US respectively, went on to become ten goal players, the highest accolade in polo.



Polo in the Phoenix Park

By then, however, Ireland had become a polo backwater, The first world war brought the sport to a halt in Ireland and shattered the playing base of cavalry officers and landed

colonial equestrian enthusiasts. Just three county clubs revived after the first world war. Even before independence, the British cavalry regiments that filled the fixture list were being disbanded and mechanised. The All Ireland Open Cup staggered on until 1921. The other competitions died like dominoes. Although occasional matches could draw crowds of 5,000 up to the 1930s, spectating at polo matches in Phoenix Park today is confined to close friends and connections.

Following two world wars and the onset of mechanisation, the All-Ireland Polo Club revived in the post-war era as before, but on a greatly reduced scale. Names that are remembered as responsible for the 1960s renaissance of Irish polo include the late John de la Poer Beresford (Lord Waterford), Renata Coleman, Michael Eamonn Herbst and the late Major Hugh Dawnay, the ‘father’ of modern Irish polo.

The renaissance would continue until the economic crash of 2008, although dark clouds were already looming on the horizon: ‘patronage’ of corporations extending financial support to teams and exceptional players went into sharp decline after the boom period of the 1990s. As in the horseracing sector, there has been a silver lining mixed with the dark clouds that remain. Irish polo players, mostly young and looking ahead to a future in professional polo, began to arrive, filling out the diminished ranks and mixing with skilled senior players who had been in the sport long before the economic boom happened. The problem facing all these young people who entered the sport was that senior players were just that: skilled, but ageing. Some of the greatest have since died. Nearly all of the rest have given up the sport because of injuries or failing health.

Following the end of World War II, and particularly when the English Royal Family took an interest in polo during the 1960s, England began to churn out professional polo players, many from Argentina. The same cannot be said for Ireland. While young Argentinian paid professionals were here in their droves in the 1990s, they were forced to follow the strict patronage

rule. The patron, or financial backer of the team, made the plays, win or lose.

When the professional players went ahead anyway and did their duty to win, with or without the rest of the team, it spelled the end of their polo careers in Ireland for almost every single one. There are exceptions. The Kilkenny based Juan Ahearne, affectionately known as Johnny, is in demand well into his 40s. He makes an excellent coach on and off the field. The greatest example of success by far, however, is in Alejo Aita Tagle. The son-in-law of Ballymore-Eustace horse trainer Paddy and wife Éilís Quinlan, and husband of Wendy, Alejo set up a polo ground and school more than 10 years ago at the family farm. He keeps horses from beginner level to highly skilled and is active in the ‘Racehorse to Polo Pony’ programme, supported by Aidan O’Brien among others. In the last five years his ponies, and his polo skills, have been highly in demand.

Young Irish players who set their sights on a professional polo career are forced to join the Irish diaspora. Evan Power turned professional at 19 in May 2019. He is currently training horses for Coolmore Stud while he searches for multiple sponsors. Richard Le Poer, the eldest son of the current Lord Waterford has been a professional player for 10 years. Tommy Aita Tagle, at 11 years old has already set his sights on a career in polo. His focus on the game is phenomenal, while off the field he keeps a close eye on every match played. One of those tournament teams will likely be his opponent.

A major split in Irish polo occurred in 2019, dividing the sport for the first time in history. Amidst a Brexit-ready plan to unify all Irish polo clubs under one banner, the decision to wave the Hurlingham flag proved divisive. The All Ireland Polo Club, Polo Wicklow, Ballindenisk and Tyrella Polo Club on the Down coast, all continued as before under Hurlingham Polo Association rules. Bishopsland Polo Club near Ballymore-Eustace, County Kildare has become the headquarters of the ICP or Irish Country Polo, modelled after the county clubs that thrived in the 19th century and up until World War I. In 2019

66 new players joined ICP and based themselves between clubs at Bishopsland, Waterford and Bunclody. The summer league ran from May to August. Four women from Bunclody, Wexford won the inaugural Starters League. The fledgling ICP; Bishopsland, Bunclody and Waterford saved Irish polo from an event that would have had devastating, possibly even fatal, consequences to the future of Irish polo.

Since the split in spring of 2019, Hurlingham (HPA) affiliated polo has declined while the ICP continues at speed. Bishopsland is running a successful school and polo schedule supported by ICP member clubs. Hunt clubs in Kildare, Wicklow and Dublin and the Kildare Pony Club are to be found at the coal face of polo's survival while Hurlingham affiliated polo languishes with a slapped together beginners' tournament, if there is time, at the main events.

Trapped, as polo is, between the past and present, the future of the sport in Ireland is uncertain. Jimmy Keane, former master of horse for Major Hugh Dawnay and grandfather of Evan Power, has said that Irish polo is dying and the young people who want to make a career of it are asking why? He says the fault lies in its establishment past, an unwillingness to let go of the glory days of wealth and supremacy when landowners ruled the country. The future, he has said, is in supporting young players through an accurate assessment system rather than in the current, comfortable hack around the field filled with the favouritism occupied by remaining senior players. Without the support of senior Irish players and Irish business, Irish polo is unlikely to survive this split that has cast club against club, created redundant leadership and divided the island. It is most certainly no longer worthy, as it once was, until so recently, of national attention. In a sport we once came close to dominating, Ireland does not even compete at international level. The upshot of all this is that Kildare have remained uncontested All Ireland champions for 110 years.

WEAK TEA, BREAD, BAD SPUDS AND BOG WORKERS

Henry Bauress

Accounts of the emergency fuel scheme in Ireland during the Second World War point to its relative success. But while the Kildare turf camp scheme was ultimately successful in its purpose, official records show that the scheme came very close to failing because bog workers in the camps complained of poor conditions. State records from the early 1940s reveal intense discussion within Government over conditions in the camps, particularly over food and wages to recruitment labour. Turf was needed because of reduced coal supplies from the UK and labour to produce turf was in short supply partly because of Irish emigration to the UK.



Turf was an essential replacement for coal in the early 1940s

April of 1940 will be remembered as the start of the Great Turf Rush. According to C.S. (Todd) Andrews it was Cork man, Hugo V. Flynn, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance, who ran the emergency turf campaign, appointing a turf executive. Flynn proposed opening the Bog of Allen to produce hand-won turf to supply Dublin and the East Coast. Andrews and others listed numerous problems but Flynn was “quite undismayed by this litany” and assured Andrews that the Department of Finance would provide the money.

By 1941, a survey of Kildare bogs had been done and a development plan drawn up. Preparation work, buying and drainage of 24,000 acres and the building of a road network was compressed into a period of 18 months. The Kildare scheme, with 14 camps (each with a capacity of 500 men) was created to do that. Most of the labour came from outside the Kildare/Dublin area. A report of June 4, 1940 said that the estimated cost of camp buildings and equipment for 100 bog workers elsewhere, at Clonsast, was £9,000. The first five Kildare camps, originally built by the OPW for the Special Employment Schemes, opened in 1942.

The camp plan did not run smoothly. Andrews said *“problems were compounded by our own ignorance and inexperience.”* Catering was inadequate with the Turf Executive trying to provide 12,000 meals daily, *“without any knowledge of what this involved.”* The camps were reduced to conditions, *“more typical of refugee camps.”* Recruitment was hindered by many Irish going to the UK for higher wages and better conditions than were available in Ireland. Con Houlihan wrote: *“The bulk of those who built Britain’s airfields in the Second World War were southern Irish”*.

State Papers show that the Government juggled the demands of agriculture’s need for labour with the need to drain and cut turf for fuel by trying not to raise turf worker wages over farm labourers’ wages. Food became a key issue at camps. On June 3 1942, Taoiseach, Eamon de Valera, received a note from one of his officials. He was told that *“immediate action is necessary if the camp scheme is not to end in early failure.”* He was told that it would be very difficult for the inspectors recruiting men to migrate from the west to Kildare if poor conditions continued. The recruiters did not want to be associated with *“failure”* and *“a form of deception.”* The cabinet were told that the *“food allowance”* was *“totally inadequate”* for men engaged on bog work. *“It is inadequate even if good potatoes were supplied but if 64% of it is bad then no wonder men are quitting.”* The note continued: *“It looks as if the camp plan is going to be a failure unless some drastic improvement is made*

at once. If the men now employed return to their homes with the same story as carried by the Donegal men, the thing is finished.”

Days earlier, on May 27, 1942, another official, the writer, Peadar O’Donnell, had written to an official, J.C. Gamble, to say that the “possibility of any large scale recruitment in Donegal hinges now on the possibility of a representative group of the men in Kildare being in the mood to make a statement on the food conditions and the earnings. If they will say that the food which scattered the camp has been much improved, and if the earnings are reasonably good, there would be favourable, and considerable reactions.”

O’Donnell advised that “the threat of cutting off the dole (to potential bog workers) is a futile business.” O’Donnell said it was a disservice to the local recruiting officer identifying them with an unpopular recruiting drive. “Men who use to look on Glynn, Curley (both recruiters) etc. as good friends now see them as a sort of process servers threatening them with Kildare or no dole.”

What was the problem with food? On May 27 1942, notes of an enquiry into complaints made by the Rev. M. Killian, PP (Catholic Parish Priest), and George O’Connell, both from Edenderry, sent to Flynn on May 20, indicated that most complaints related to shortage of food at the Edenderry camps. On May 30, Flynn reported on this to de Valera. One complaint was “*weak tea*.” The tea ration at Edenderry was one ounce per man per week and the western men (Galway and Mayo) were accustomed to strong tea. They also wanted a late meal before bedtime. “The demand here is for a cup of tea (of coffee or cocoa) with some bread and butter around about 9.30pm and of course it cannot be met within the present ration allowance. The men are not prepared to save any portion of their breakfast or lunch, bread or tea allowances for consumption at this proposed evening meal.” They said: “The daily bread ration is not sufficient to enable the men to stand up to the arduous work on the bog .The demand is for extra bread in the morning, and at lunch; for some bread with dinner and

for a slice of bread, with butter, at a proposed late meal before bed time.” The note continued: *“The matter was discussed with Mr (Bill) Stapleton and Mr Michael Finnegan (the engineer in charge at the camp) and it is clear that the bread ration is the main source of discontent at the camp. As an indication of this Mr Stapleton mentioned that when an extra compensatory allowance of bread was given to the men one morning when the breakfast potato ration was not available, a completely different spirit prevailed in the camp.”* But, the report continued, *“it has been pointed out repeatedly to the men that the bread ration is a generous one by comparison with any standard in the country at the present time and that it is, for example, superior to Army Bread ration. Nevertheless, the men hold firmly to their point that it is not sufficient for bog workers. As to the comparison with the army ration they say that the work on the bog takes far more out of a man than does the heaviest task normally performed by any army man.”*

Lunch was *“regarded as unsatisfactory”* because the bread is *“inadequate to enable a man working hard in the bog air to subsist for the 10-11 hours between breakfast and dinner.”* The hard boiled eggs were *“unpopular”* as the men were not used to it and *“do not like the discoloration of the yolk, which, it seems, results inevitably when a lot of eggs have to be hard boiled together.”* It was suggested that the eggs *“might be fried hard and used to make a sandwich.”* The response was that this *“might help”* but *“would not relieve the demand for more bread.”* Also, *“the morning potatoes, too, were not regarded with too much enthusiasm.”*

Officials replied that the *“bread and flour position in the west (of Ireland) was not, now, what it was before the war and that the authorised camp ration must be superior to the present average individual allowance in the home areas.”* But the response was that at home men found a way to have a snack at odd times during the day and did not work so hard at home. They could leave a job for a break, come back fortified. Working conditions were *“less onerous than when working under a ganger on a scheme like that at Edenderry.”* The note,

from the Special Employment Schemes (SES) Office, did say though: "*The living conditions at the camp were all that could be desired and nothing but courtesy and fair treatment was experienced from all the Camp Officers, from the Chief Superintendent down.*" Costs remained an issue for the authorities. "Any alternations of this kind, even though carried out within the limits of the existing ration, may possibly involve an increase in the catering costs."

Food wise, the situation at the Newbridge camp was not much better. An official note of June 3 1942, "*Camp Labour, Recruitment from the West,*" sent to E.J. McLaughlin, Director, Special Employment Schemes, Branch, OPW, quoted the SES inspector in Galway, Mr Hepple, as saying that "the position is very serious and it is entirely owing to the scanty rations." Hepple "states that the story being circulated by the men who returned to Galway last Saturday is one of (a) starvation (b) broken weather during which the men can earn very little." An official had visited the Newbridge Camp the previous night and found the Galway and Mayo men "*very dissatisfied with their conditions.*" A considerable number wanted to return home as soon as they received their pay. "*Their grievances are inadequate food and bad potatoes. They don't want fancy food but a sufficient supply of good plain food ... With regard to the complaints about bad potatoes, I spoke to Mr Stapleton, Chief Camp Superintendent, about this and he said that the potatoes supplied for the men are bad. The ration consists of about 11oz meat, 18 ozs bread, 7 ozs vegetables, 64 ozs potatoes. If you take away the potatoes the remainder of the daily ration constitutes about one good meal for a bog worker*". According to the statements of the men, in some cases, all the potatoes supplied for dinner were unfit for food and , therefore, after a hard day's work in the bog, these men had for their evening meal 6 ozs of boiled or steamed ham, 7 ozs of cabbage and a cup of tea. In other cases the men stated that only parts of two or three potatoes supplied for their dinner were fit to eat. Before reaching Newbridge workers "*were full of pep and anxious to give a good account of themselves*" but after a week at Newbridge they were "discontented and unhappy." The

officials did not agree the men did not want to work and were “*making the food question an excuse for not doing so.*”

Of Donegal workers, it was reported: “These young men said that they have to cycle in the morning six miles from the Camp to the bog and six miles back again to the Camp at night with only one small mid-day meal on the bog to keep them going for twelve hours. They told me that they were anxious to make good money on the piece rates but, due to insufficient food, they were not able for the heavy work this involved. They admitted getting an increased ration of potatoes but said most of these were bad and that some of the men actually became sick after eating them.” They also said that most of their pay was spent on buying extra food to supplement their ration. The “*majority of the men were splendid bog workers*” and the percentage of those not genuine was “*very low.*” Officials questioned if further expense should be incurred bringing another batch of men from the west to the camps, if the situation did not improve as “*they will probably return as soon as they get their first pay.*”

Such was the concern about recruitment that on May 16, the Taoiseach was advised that army personnel should be made ready to work if insufficient civilian labour could not be found. Flynn’s department told the Department of Defence that they needed 3,500 workers for the Kildare camp scheme but had got just 200 - with a promise of 400 - the previous month, on a voluntary basis. They had required people by June 1, the latest for starting the season operation of turf cutting. There was camp accommodation for 1,600, of which around 600 were hired or likely to be hired, leaving accommodation vacant for around 1,000.

Conditions and recruitment did improve. By May 1944, says Clarke, the number of men working reached a peak of 4,200. These included 80 German internees at the Curragh, who worked in the Killinthomas area. Clarke says that, Bill Stapleton, who was appointed to the Turf Development Board in February 1942, radically reorganised the camps. It

was not until September 1943 that the TDB took charge of catering. Rations were almost doubled and trained cooks and kitchen staff were hired.

Views differ on the period and the treatment of men who drained the bogs and produced turf in the emergency scheme. Writing generally of conditions for the population, C.S. Andrews, said: “*At the end of the day, no one died of cold during the Emergency or had to eat uncooked food.*” Con Houlihan concluded: “*All in all, the individual turf miners did well - the public bodies performed disgracefully.*” Mick Young said that despite some suggestions that conditions in Edenderry and Mucklon were very bad; he felt that especially in the latter years most of the people in the camps had good conditions. Frank O’Neill said of the initial period on the Kildare scheme: “In the early days conditions were so bad on the bogs and elsewhere: wettings, leaking boots, no shelters, small wages, no proper drying facilities etc, men left daily.”

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FOLKLORE AND HOLY WELLS IN Co. KILDARE

Stan J. O' Reilly

The Banshee

She is known by many names including the 'Scaldcrow, the 'Messenger of Death, 'Badbh,' 'Bean Chaointe,' and 'Bean Si' or in anglicised form, Banshee. In Kildare she is mainly known as 'Badbh,' pronounced bow, as she is in Arklow on the east coast. To older residents of Wicklow Town who would not, or who feared to call her by name, she was known as 'Herself.' The Banshee is a female spirit whose designation according to folklorist Dr. Daithi O' Hogain is 'otherworld woman.' The Banshee arrives from the dark side to announce the soon to be departed. Her method is to cry or by keening as was traditional at funerals in the Ireland of past years. The cry does not sound animal or human like, but, once heard it is never forgotten and is guaranteed to make the small hairs on the back of the neck stand up. In the literary tradition she was known to favour the poets and bring prosperity to the ancient Gaelic Chieftains. She follows certain families with an 'O' or 'Mac' in their names. In folklore she is the 'death messenger' and a harbinger of doom.

She is the most feared female spirit on the island of Ireland. There are other more localised female spirits and sprites to be feared around Co. Kildare, none more terrifying as the Banshee, though the Banshee-like 'White Lady' of Kildare comes close. She is a sprite to be avoided at all costs. There are different colours associated with the Banshee, mainly white in most tales and her hair is described as white for the most part, but at times black or red and the colour green also pops up. Colours associated with the Banshee can be significant in some areas. Black denotes death, green carries a warning and red indicates fury. She is sometimes seen as a solid figure and at times shimmering and transparent. She is described as a fearful sight, an old hag or as a young woman and at times with an almost skeletal face, and long fingernails. She is seen to glide or drift across the ground in many of the stories. The Banshee is equally at home in fields, historical grounds, housing estates

and on main roads as well as putting in appearances in graveyards. She is not the only female spirit of the graveyards.

In Co. Kildare there are tales such as that of gardener Tom Daly who was plagued with hearing her on many occasions. A man named Farrell also heard her one night and fled from the scene. He later found out that his cousin in Australia had died the same night. Her most treasured possession is her comb, in some tales she holds it and in others she is brushing her hair, striking a classic pose with the only item of luggage she brings with her from the dark side.



She is sometimes seen as an old hag, sometimes as a young woman

She kills with her comb as in the Kildare tale of the comb stolen from her and she went looking for it. She found it in a house and demanded it to be returned to her, the frightened resident used a fireplace tongs to return it out the window to her. In a similar Wicklow tale the tongs were retrieved but a knot had been tied in them. She has been seen and heard hurtling through the town and the countryside around Kildare. Her cry is eerie, unearthly and terrifying in the extreme. The Banshee is many things to many people. She is a woman

cursed by the evil deeds she committed while in the land of the living, she is a guardian angel and a fairy woman. She is also a mythological maiden and the daughter of a chief Druid.

Around the county of Kildare she is a very real and frightening figure to those who have heard, seen or experienced her visitations to various areas. A man's son died and later that night he heard an eerie keening which stood the hair up on the back of his neck. He rushed outside and was confronted by the Banshee sitting on his window, combing her hair. Becoming enraged and knowing who she was, he rushed inside and grabbed the tongs from the fireplace. He returned to attack her with them. In this tale the Banshee fled from his onslaught but suddenly stopped and delivered a warning to him to stop his attack and go home. He did so. His other son died the next week and he had bad luck for the rest of his days. No attack on the Banshee goes unpunished, it is rare to hear otherwise.

The Holy Wells

There are some Holy Wells scattered across the County of Kildare, numbering about a dozen which are known. Many holy wells elsewhere have almost been forgotten about due it was said to 'the death of residents and dearth of information possessed by their successors.' Many of the older people kept the traditions and superstitions of various wells alive, they looked after and cared for the wells and they maintained them to a high degree. The general location or sites of such wells were forgotten, some are still known about but specific information about them, in terms of customs and traditions has been lost to the mists of time. Holy Wells are and were natural springs, but, previously they were of much greater importance to the pagan peoples of Co. Kildare, as they were much further afield and further back in time. Everything changes yet nothing really changes. Today, we take water for granted as we wash, cook and drink it. It is now a commodity that we think little about in our daily lives. The strong belief in the power of sacred water sites was long established before the first Christian monks and nuns arrived. For the pre-Christian peoples of Co. Kildare and those inhabiting sites elsewhere,

water had a mythical, magical and mystical importance. It was a life giving force. Water was life and as much a part of their psyche as their connection to the land, as much a part of them as their very hearts and souls. The ancient pre-Christian people of what became known as Ireland had a very sacred respect for water, be it the rivers, streams, lakes, ponds or the sea itself. Water was a gift from the gods and it was inhabited by monsters. They were the places of sacred rituals and practices.



St. Brigid's Well, Kildare

To these places, protected by spirits, entities and the gods, they would bring votive offerings, important possessions, pots, jewellery, and even weapons, these they would throw into the water as a means of appeasing the gods and seeking favours from them. They were important gifts from the ancient people of Kildare, to the gods, and they hoped the gods in return, would realise this and grant them boons and rewards. They had great respect for the gods. Weapons were broken and rent asunder to ensure that they were put beyond use and could never be used again by human hands, ritual pilgrimages undertaken and votive offerings left behind, in effect.

It is little wonder that many such sacred pagan springs would become religious locations of ritualistic importance to the early Christian Church in Ireland when the myriad gods were replaced by the one true God. Without a doubt the strongest of traditions and beliefs surround the curative powers of holy water. The tradition of dancing at such important sites was held on to, stations were introduced, marked by timber or stones placed around the well. The Christians crawled around the wells on their hands and knees three or nine times according to tradition. Just as the pagans had erected their sacred stone circles in uneven numbers also, five and nine. The path followed in the crawling ritual traditionally followed the sun, reflecting the sun worshipping traditions of the pagan peoples. Those who suffered a variety of illnesses and diseases would immerse their afflicted body parts in the holy well and drink the curative waters thereby gaining much relief for their pain and suffering. Should a tree, usually ash or a white thorn bush, grow in the location of the sacred well, they too were included in the ritual of the sacred and votive offerings would hang from the branches and bushes. These would be composed of coloured strips of cloth, mostly red and handkerchiefs in later years.

There was a huge superstition surrounding such votive offerings and no one would dare remove them. The trees and bushes themselves would also carry a superstitious importance. A man who tried to cut a bush at the holy site of St. Colmcille's Well, in the Parish of Moyne, Ballinacore, hacked at it but could not penetrate the bark. Suddenly out of the blue a voice called out, he turned his head and it stayed turned for the rest of his days. Just as with Rath's, you do not interfere with Holy Well sites. People in Kildare then believed that by drinking the water they would be engaging in a spiritual ritualistic practice which carried curative benefits for them. They venerated the sites and the wells, the saint and the curative powers of the water which then reinforced their faith. Miracles would be worked at the sites of the holy wells and cures would be claimed for various ailments. The believers then spread the good news and the fame of various wells grew

and attracted visitors and the afflicted from outside the area. Sceptics however decried such powers as nothing more than peasant superstition, but such traditions, superstitions and beliefs were as strong in Kildare as at other sites around the country.



Father Moore's Well beside the R415 between Milltown and Kildare

Holy Wells in Kildare and their general locations are known about but some observances, customs, cures and superstitions have been all but forgotten; pilgrimages and patrons sprang up after the death of the early holy man or woman and the date of death would become a feast day. The appearance and sighting of a fish in a holy well is a good omen and brings good fortune, the fish being a symbol of Christianity. St. Brigid's curative

Holy Well in Kildare is the most famed well in the county as is Fr. Moore's Well outside Milltown, which is of 18th century vintage which has curative powers for badness of the limbs. Tradition states three visits take place on Friday and Sunday. A decade of the Rosary is required followed by the application of the water and this to be accompanied by three Hail Marys. Others include Earl's Well, St. Patrick's Well at Barretstown, a restored well with a modern patronage. The Feast Day is March 17th. This well was restored by local people in 2004. There is a holy well on Carbury Hill, Tobar na Trionoide, which originally forbade women attending, Trinity Well being the recorded source of the Boyne. St. Brigid's wells at Ballymore Eustace, Tully, and Ballybracken. All wells attributed to her carry curative powers. There is Toberara at Athy and at Old Kilcullen can be found St. John's Well which cured skin diseases of many types. This well is still visited at times by believers. An Act of Queen Ann in 1703 listed severe penalties on those who took part as pilgrims in a Patron to a Holy Well. In Kildare, as elsewhere, this act was partially successful as Fr. Shearman pointed out: 'it consigned to oblivion 'Patrons,' Stations,' etc., of lesser note.' The aftermath of the 1798 rebellion also continued this.

The Demise of Holy Wells

Dictates from the English Crown, the aftermath of the 1798 rebellion, church prohibition due to what was regarded as unholy superstitions and faction fights, and the passage of time, all combined to ensure many holy wells fell into disuse and then led to their being lost to posterity, except what was recorded about them and that which remained in folk memory.

Sources

Courtesy of the Archivist, Department of Folklore, UCD, Belfield, Dublin.

Courtesy of the Director of the National Library of Ireland, Kildare Street, Dublin.

Courtesy of the County Librarian, Boghall Road, Bray, Co. Wicklow.

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www.duchas.ie

MISCELLANY

The First Clane Bus

This bus, built on the chassis of a Crossley Tender, linked Clane, via Celbridge, to the Dublin trams at Lucan c.1915.



The Church of St. Patrick and St. Brigid

The Catholic Church was built in Clane mainly through the efforts of Fr. Patrick Turner and his parishioners and was officially opened and dedicated on the 24th August 1884. The site chosen was a flat area behind the small Parish Chapel which was built in 1805 and which was to be demolished when the new church was constructed. However, the small chapel remained roofless until 1895 and access to the new church was through its ruins. In 1837 Lewis in his 'Topographical Dictionary' referred to the chapel as "a plain cruciform building in good repair" Thomas Francis Meagher called it "a low sized most modest, low roofed, little Catholic chapel back from the road a few yards".

Preparation work was commenced on the site of the new church in 1874 and the foundation stone was laid in 1876.

Times were hard, people were poor and it was difficult to raise sufficient money to complete the building. At one stage, when local funds were exhausted, an appeal was made to neighbouring parishes for financial assistance. At the time of the opening £7,000 had been spent and £2,500 was outstanding. The architect, Mr. W. Hague, had included specifications for a very tall spire which was never built because of the extra cost of £1000 which the parish couldn't afford. However, a number of keystones were left open on the right hand corner as one faces the church, in case the building of the spire should occur at some later time. A pedestal intended for a statue of St. Patrick was left vacant above the main door but was never subsequently occupied.

Brendan Cullen

Returning to school 1940

Niall McAllister was a student in Clongowes during the war years 1939-45. He lived in Somerset in S.W. England and had to make his way home to Somerset for the school holidays and back again to Clongowes for the beginning of term. In this extract he writes about some of the hazards he encountered on his way back to school in January 1940.

In January 1940, on the way back to school after the Christmas holidays, the train approached Lime St. Station in Liverpool, about 9 o'clock in the evening, window-blinds drawn, the blackout in force. As we clackety-clacked through the suburbs of the darkened city, suddenly the train screeches to a halt. The lights go out. We hear sirens. In the dark we raise the blinds and see the thin, blue streaks of the searchlights fingering the night sky. Then we hear it – the slow, steady “dun,dun,dun” of the Bofors anti-aircraft guns, their futile fire echoing across the city. And then the scream of bombs and the distant sound of aircraft engines. “*They’re bombing the city and the Mersey docks!*” Someone tells us to leave the train and head for the station’s air-raid shelters. I remember scrambling, suitcase in hand, after the other passengers, and running along the tracks in the darkness towards the platforms. The explosions got nearer, in “sticks” of five, bracketing the city centre and the docks. Having reached the platform, I headed for the nearest

phone-booth. I could barely hear my Mum's voice at the other end of the line. She wasn't to worry, I said. We were being bombed. The B & I sailing had been cancelled. I was going to try and get to Holyhead. I told her not to try and answer, as I couldn't hear too well. "*Not to worry Mum – I'll be alright!*" Afterwards this mother of seven, who had once carried guns for the Republicans during the pogroms in the North of Ireland, would tell me how little she had been reassured by her twelve-year-old son on the telephone from Liverpool that night!

The above extract is from the Clongownian 1996

Brendan Cullen

Teaching practice

The following extract is from "Far From the Oil Lamp's Glow" an autobiography by the noted Northern Ireland historian, Art P. O'Dalaigh. In it he prepares for teaching practice in his old school in Blackwatertown by writing a letter to the Principal Mr. Frank McAvinchey.

A few weeks before the term started I had one of the strokes of good fortune, which have occurred from time to time during my lifetime. For some reason I decided to write to Mr McAvinchey and explain that for a whole term I would be giving him lots of bother and thanking him for agreeing to have me in the school. It was a very unusual thing to do as students took it for granted that arrangements made by the college authorities were sufficient notice and all they had to do was appear at the start of the term. I got a surprise when I discovered Frank's attitude to this in the first couple of days. "*I must say I'm glad to have you in the school for one very good reason*", he said. "*You had the courtesy to write and ask my permission and the sense to realise that you are somewhat of a burden on me and not a gift sent by God. I have heard of lots of your fellow students who never bother to inform the principal of the school to which they are going, that he is going to have an intruder. And some of them have the arrogance to think that they might even be an asset during their stay. If you had not written such a courteous letter I might well have refused to have you at all. As it is I will do my very best to help you and to see that you do as well as is humanly possible*". "*Thank you very much, Mr. McAvinchey*", I replied, completely

surprised by his attitude and thankful that I had had the good fortune to write to him. It was a timely warning that I would have to be careful to take any advice he might give me and to follow his commands without question.

Brendan Cullen

Motor Fatality 1930

Young Meath man killed. Shocking occurrence near Clane

On Thursday evening when returning from the Curragh races on a motor cycle, Mr. Thomas Shortt, junior, son of Mr. T. Shortt, the Stores, Dunsany, was killed instantly in a collision with another motor cyclist near the village of Clane, Co. Kildare. The other motor cyclist, an employee of Clongowes Wood College, named Smullen, was severely injured. There was no actual witness of the occurrence and Smullen has not recovered consciousness It appears that the two men were riding motor cycles solo, and the accident occurred close to a sharp bend on the road at a place called Richardstown. Smullen was travelling from Dublin and the other cyclist, passed through Clane, travelling slowly, ten minutes before his dead body was found on the road. No one saw what happened, but the occupant of a cottage, Travers, heard a noise which brought him to the road where he saw the men lying beside their machines. The remains of deceased were identified by letters found in his pocket. He was subsequently identified by an uncle and first cousin who live in the locality. The sad occurrence has aroused widespread sympathy in Meath where the Shortt family are very highly respected.

The Inquest

“Accidental death” was the verdict of the Inquest held by Doctor O’Neill, Kildare, Coroner, on Thomas Shortt, Dunsany. Mr. Thomas Shortt, deceased’s father, said his son, who had gone to the Curragh races, was very temperate and a competent motor cyclist. James Smullen (24), employee of Clongowes Wood College, another motor cyclist, who was seriously injured in the same accident, and whose leg has been amputated, was exonerated by the jury. There was no witness to the accident.

The above extract is from The Meath Chronicle of 1930.

Brendan Cullen

Voices Of The Night; Andy McGann, Part 2 (For Part 1 see Coiseanna 2015 page 64.)

Andy McGann was the night watchman in Clongowes Wood College in the second part of the 19th century. During his nightly rounds he visited the Infirmary and entertained the students by reciting endless verses of his eccentric doggerel (poetry) to them. His poetry was published in a small booklet called “Voices of the Night” in 1897. The two poems presented here are from that booklet. The text has not been edited to preserve authenticity. However, some words are difficult to recognise so the following small key should help:

ere - air; thies – these; hie – he; the – they

Father Dunne and His Dog

Father Dunn he has a doge so pretty for so sea
And any doge to equill him I rely do not see.
This little doge is turribred
As you may planely see
And if the prize it dos come round
He will shurely gane the day.
This little doge he shows so much of nowledge as I see
That if the case it would be so hid tell the thime of day.
Little Tiney has too spots so pretty for to see
And any thing to equel then I rely do not sea.
This little doge would measure you
And measure it so strait
And if the case it wuld be so
Hed rely want no tape.
This little doge he runs about showing now such game
That if the prise it does come round
We will give him a grate name.
His obedence now to father Dunn I rely there did see
And when the coach man tuck him up
His obedence there did pay.
So now my thime is ended I cannot now delay
I will defer my subject until some futur day.

Tour to the O'Connell Centenary

When the sixt of August it come on
I now relate what then went on.
To Dublin sity I did go
To see some thousans as you know.
The Jesuets fathers now I say
The kinly freed me there that day
I went to Milltown there to see
This fathers now so kind to me
But how can I but now declare
The kindness of the brothers there
I took the tram to nelson's peere
It being the hundred of O'Connels years
When nations now Aloud did cheer
Thousands came across the sea
To see the meeting there that day
The cabs and cars was all put up
And every man his horse he tuk
The walked along now drest in green
And every banner now that came
The past by here O'Connels school
And every one their native tune.
The passed up along sack full street
Where maney nations now Doth mete.
The were conducted now so grand
And every one through strict Command.
Each Commander walked along
Strictly viewing as they past on.
Now the lord Mare he does come on
With hurray hurray as he past on
The cullers now I do declare
The were hist up now in the Ere.
The doft there hats and cheered him on
With other nobels lucking on
His kind address I now here say
It apierd to me like the fowers of May
After thies great scenes I made my start
I then went back to Mill town park.

Brendan Cullen