

Coiseanna

The Journal of Clane Local History Group

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Front cover: Church of Saint Patrick and Saint Brigid, Clane prior to the restructuring of the forecourt

Back cover: Junction of the Naas Branch with the Grand Canal. The bridge carrying the Dublin-Cork railway over the Naas Branch can be seen in the distance.



The late Jim Malone's Hairdressers Main Street Clane

EDITORIAL

It was a very quiet year for Clane Local History with little events of any note. However in spite of the restrictions imposed by the pandemic, which have seriously curtailed our normal activities, we forged ahead and managed to produce our history journal. It is the tenth edition of Coiseanna which we are very proud of considering that we are a relatively small society. Again this year there has not been the opportunity for a formal launch of Coiseanna. The journal contains a wide variety of excellent articles of local and wider interest contributed by members and friends. Last year we adopted a different approach to distributing Coiseanna by giving it free of charge to members and the public during National Heritage Week. This proved to be a success and we would like to thank the local retailers for their help in making it happen. We plan to do the same this year. The editorial team would like to thank all those who contributed articles and also to extend sincere thanks to all our members for their continuing support over the years.



The Editorial Team; Larry Breen, Brendan Cullen and Jim Heffernan

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THE ARCHITECTURE OF SS PATRICK AND BRIGID, CLANE

Andrew Tierney

The post-famine period saw a boom in Catholic church building across Ireland. County Kildare, as home to Maynooth College (1795; 1845) and Clongowes Wood College (1814), was at the forefront of Catholic religious revival in 19th century Ireland. SS Patrick and Brigid (1876-1884)¹ was one of several churches in the county built by rural congregations in the new Gothic Revival style, such as Donaghstown (1860-63), Allen (1868), Prosperous (1869). As early as the 1860s there had been an idea of building a new chapel in the village, as parishioner Thomas M. Donellan had included in his will of 1866 ‘£200 in trust for the purpose of assisting to build a new chapel at Clane’.² The original Catholic chapel in Clane of 1805³ was of a vernacular type, internally T-shaped in plan, that had been built across Ireland after the relaxing of the penal laws in the late eighteenth century. The construction of the new church, directly behind the site of the old, took place under the stewardship of the Rev. Patrick Turner,⁴ an energetic priest of the parish and a champion of tenant rights. His Latin-inscribed white marble monument, inside the church, records his death just five years after its completion.⁵

The Gothic style of the church contrasts with the almost exactly contemporary Church of Ireland church of St Michael’s and All Angels at Millicent commissioned by Thomas Cooke Trench from architect James Franklin Fuller, which harnessed the Hiberno-Romanesque style, then increasingly seen as Ireland’s ‘national style’.⁶ The Catholic clergy, on the other hand, were still in thrall to the legacy of the English Gothic Revival architect, A.W. N. Pugin, whose inspiration was largely derived from English and French medieval churches. In its form and layout, the new church of SS Patrick and Brigid was firmly in the church style formulated by Pugin in the 1830s. The young Pugin’s fiery printed polemics had castigated the desecrations of the English Protestant

Reformation, attacked the fake Georgian Gothic of his own day, and condemned the pagan classical style commonly employed by his contemporaries.⁷

Like many members of his profession, William Hague, the architect of SS Patrick and Brigid, was a follower of Pugin. A prolific designer of Catholic churches, he was the son of a Cavan builder and spent four years learning his profession in the office of the pre-eminent architect Charles Barry, most famous for his design (with A.W.N Pugin) of the Houses of Parliament in Westminster.⁸ The influence of Pugin was felt strongly in County Kildare due to his design for St Patrick's College Maynooth during the 1840s. Hague (taking over from J. J. McCarthy) ultimately completed the interior of the college chapel there – perhaps the greatest ecclesiastical achievement of the Gothic Revival in Ireland.

SS Patrick and Brigid is of a type that first appeared in Ireland in two churches of Pugin's own design: Tagoat, Co. Wexford, of 1843-48, Barnstown, Co. Wexford, of 1844-1851.⁹ Based on medieval English predecessors their size, dimensions and style formed a popular model for Irish architects to follow. Unlike the rubble and plaster T-plan churches of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, these new parish churches were sturdy, trimmed in cut stone, and had open roofed, aisled interiors. The architectural detailing at Clane is in a style termed by nineteenth-century historians (the first to classify the phases of medieval Gothic architecture) as Early Decorated, prevalent in 14th century churches; more enriched than the very simple Early English of the 12th and 13th centuries, and more restrained than the flamboyant or Perpendicular styles of the fifteenth; it was Pugin's preferred style. It is simplest in the west end and along the aisles where the paired trefoil-headed lancets merge seamlessly with the walls. Whereas the architects of the late Georgian Board of First Fruit churches did not hesitate to construct their window surrounds in timber, for Pugin and his acolytes a return to stone was an imperative part of their mission for truthfulness and structural integrity. The large geometric rose window on the west end comprises a ring

of eight cinque-foiled circles, all set under a pointed relieving arch – an idea borrowed from Rheims Cathedral in France.¹⁰ A more complicated design, in a similar geometric style, features in the east window. Only up-close does one appreciate the difference between the smooth finish of the trim (in one of Ireland’s finest materials: the silvery Edenderry limestone, used on the façade of the central block of Castletown House), where every feature is chamfered to create soft shadows; in contrast the subtle hammer-dressed texture of the snecked walls is in local blue-grey limestone.¹¹ All this is neatly formulated and highly controlled work.



The Exterior of SS Patrick and Brigid

The exterior, covered with slates brought from Bangor, had been completed by 1882 and that September a bazaar was held in the village to raise funds for the interior work.¹² The interior

dimensions are 125 ft in length and 55ft in width, while the height to the apex of the roof is 60ft, the latter thought by the journalist of the *Kildare Observer* (with some satisfaction) to be about 10ft higher than the nave of the average Irish chapel.¹³ The columns of the arcade have bases of bluish/grey limestone (probably local), shafts of bright-toned granite, and richly moulded bell capitals of Edenderry limestone. The job required skilled workmen and the Dublin carpenters, Daniel Toomey and Michael Fanning, may have been brought in to complete the complicated pitch pinerroof.¹⁴ The fine timber pews, of ‘polished pine’ were also designed by Hague. In addition, there was a crypt. ‘The skill of the architect’ remarked the *Kildare Observer* ‘is illustrated by the way in which he took advantage of an incline in the ground by constructing a large crypt adjacent to the high altar, and this will, it may be stated, be utilised as the burying place of the priests of the church¹⁵’.

In describing the quality of the interior, the journalist for the *Kildare Observer* remarked that it would ‘meet with the commendation of such fastidious personages as Oscar Wilde and [Edward] Burne-Jones.’ Wilde had been tutored at Oxford by the great art critic John Ruskin (a champion of the Pre-Raphaelite Burne-Jones)¹⁶, who had in turn been influenced by the writings of Pugin. The reference is hard to square with the austere walls of SS Patrick and Brigid today. It may be that, in common with many other Catholic churches of this period, there was originally some painted scheme of ornamentation that was later swept away.¹⁷ The interior of Maynooth College chapel is the best example of the kind of rich finish Pugin had advocated and which Hague was capable of producing in conjunction with the best craftsmen and artists. The Boys’ Chapel at Clongowes (1905-12) designed by Pugin’s son-in-law, George Ashlin, is another. Luxurious surface finishes had become a hall-mark of the revived Catholic church and Wilde, who appreciated any kind of aesthetic decadence, flirted with the Catholic faith throughout his life. He had once remarked that ‘The Catholic Church is for saints and sinners alone. For respectable people, the Anglican Church will do.’¹⁸



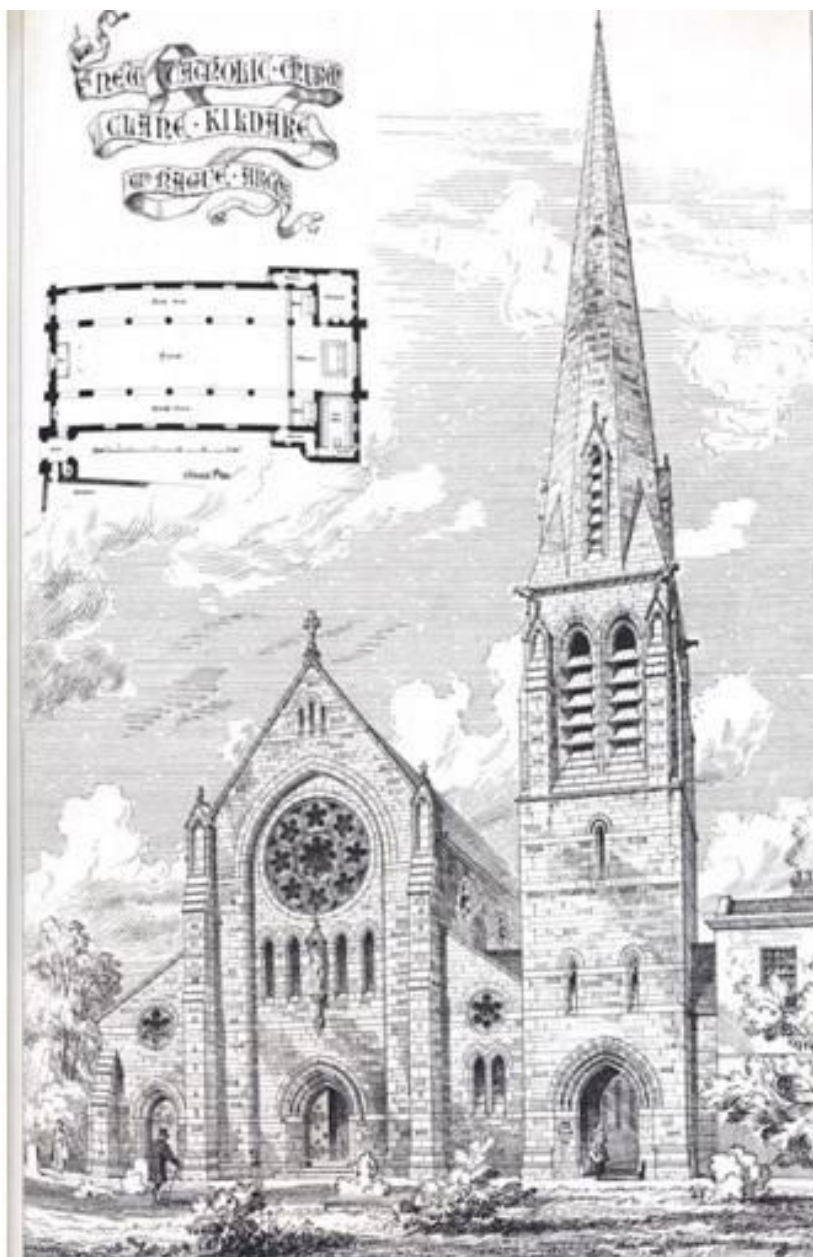
The Interior of the Church

In fact, local Protestant opposition to this kind of style was raised by the construction of the lavishly crafted Church of Ireland church at Millicent by Thomas Cooke Trench. Contemporary with SS Patrick and Brigid, the building was criticised in the Kildare Diocesan Synod as ‘very handsome from a Catholic point of view, but....would give a good deal of annoyance owing to its decorations.’¹⁹ After its completion there were objections to confirmations taking place there as its

rich figurative imagery of saints were said to have broken the second commandment. It was charged that the youth would be led into a ‘sensuous form of adoration’, allowing them become ‘easy prey to the insidious efforts of members of the Church of Rome and their allies...’²⁰

The opening ceremony of SS Patrick and Brigid, on the 24th August 1884, was a big event in the locality and people paid high prices (as much as £1 to reserve a seat in the chancel)²¹ to hear the Bishop of Galway preach.²² When the church was consecrated in 1884, it was still expected that the 160 ft tower and spire would be completed.²³ In the event, this work was never carried out due to cost²⁴ and the southwest corner of the aisle still retains the toothed stonework where the tower was intended to rise, as illustrated in *The Building News* in 1878.²⁵ Funding for such ‘extras’ was often problematic and other church projects by William Hague included unfinished towers (such as Stradbally, Co. Laois (1893-6) and Rathvilly, Co. Carlow (1887)). Although the tower for Hague’s Carmelite Church in Kildare was completed the project ran seriously over budget and the carving on the west end was left uncompleted.²⁶ The idea of an open archway through the ground floor of the tower (projected for Clane) was highly unusual and not found in any of Hague’s other churches. Why was it included in the design? Probably, it was initially conceived as a bridge between the Presentation convent (built 1839) immediately to the south of the church and the choir loft in the west end of the nave, as can be seen in the drawing. In 1884 it was remarked that ‘it is only complete so far as to form a temporary passage for the nuns going to the organ gallery of the chapel’, suggesting that the first stage of the tower may have been built (and later taken down).²⁷

There were some important additions in later years. A raffle was held in January 1888 to raise funds for the altars.²⁸ They have shafts of Cork red limestone and green Connemara serpentine, which became common in post-Famine Irish churches due to the development of the Irish marble industry. The tall shafts of the central canopy in the main reredos are



The Church as Originally Conceived with its Tower and Spire as Published in the Building News of 22 April 1878: Reproduced Courtesy of the Irish Architectural Archive

red granite. The short squat shafts below are probably Kilkenny or Galway black limestone. In 1891 the five-light east window was installed, with the three figures of the holy family flanked by St Patrick and St Brigid. It is by the firm of Lucien-Léopold Lobin of Tours in France, where the cathedral has some of the finest surviving medieval stained glass.

SS Patrick and Brigid remains a fine example of Victorian church building in Ireland. Its snecked stone walls, columnar arcades, and open timber roof, reflect the Victorian passion for high quality materials and structural integrity that would inform new directions in architecture in the following century.

References

¹‘St. Patrick’s and St. Brigid’s Church’, *Freeman’s Journal*, 11 September 1876, p. 6; ‘The New Catholic church at Clane’, *The Kildare Observer*, 05 July 1884, p. 5; Seamus Cullen.net.

https://seamuscullen.net/clane_church.html. Accessed 05 Feb. 2020.

²‘Rolls Court’, *Dublin Evening Post*, 14 July 1870, p. 3.

³ Seamus Cullen, ‘Fr. Turner and the building of the Church of St. Patrick & St. Bridget, Clane’. Seamus Cullen.net.

https://seamuscullen.net/clane_church.html. Accessed 05 Feb. 2020.

⁴Seamus Cullen.net. https://seamuscullen.net/clane_church.html. Accessed 05 Feb. 2020.

⁵Turner had been president of the local branch of Parnell’s National League, founded after the suppression of the Land League, and was a passionate adversary of what he termed ‘felonious landlordism’. He defined this in a letter to William Gladstone as ‘unscrupulous, irresponsible power, inspired, guided, and energized by the worst passions of human nature’. See ‘Clane National League’, *Kildare Observer*, 31 October 1885, p. 5; ‘Death of the Rev. Father Turner, p. p., Clane’ *Kildare Observer*, 16 March 1889, p. 4; ‘The Kilmurry Evictions’, *Kildare Observer*, 17 June 1882, p. 3.

⁶ A term used in a report on its opening. See ‘Consecration of Saint Michael’s Church, Clane.’ *Kildare Observer*, 6th October 1883, p. 3.

⁷ See A. W. N. Pugin, *Contrasts, or, A parallel between the noble edifices of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and similar buildings of the present day etc* (Aldbury: Printed for the author, and published by him at St. Marie’s Grange, 1836); A. W. N. Pugin, *The true principles of pointed or Christian architecture* (London: J. Weale, 1841).

⁸ See Ann Martha Rowan, *Dictionary of Irish Architects 1720-1940*.

<https://www.dia.ie/architects/view/2322/HAGUE%2C+WILLIAM+%5B2%5D>. Accessed 15 January 2021.

- ⁹ For dates, see the entries for these churches in Ann Martha Rowan, *The Dictionary of Irish Architects*. dia.ie.
- ¹⁰ Andrew Tierney, *The Buildings of Ireland: Central Leinster* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press), p. 239.
- ¹¹ Seamus Cullen gives Marmions Quarry as the source of the local stone. http://seamuscullen.net/clane_church.html
- ¹² ‘Bazaar and Fancy Fair in Clane’, *Kildare Observer*, 30 September 1882, p. 5. The bazaar included swings and hobby horses, a shooting gallery, roulette table, brass and string bands, magic lantern shows, fireworks and a ball with dancing until the early hours.
- ¹³ ‘The New Catholic church at Clane’, *The Kildare Observer*, 05 July 1884, p. 5.
- ¹⁴ ‘Assaults by the police’, *Kildare Observer*, 12 April 1884, p. 5.
- ¹⁵ ‘The New Catholic church at Clane’, *The Kildare Observer*, 05 July 1884, p. 5.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 5.
- ¹⁷ Tierney, *Central Leinster*, p. 47.
- ¹⁸ *Constantin-George Sandulescu, Rediscovering Oscar Wilde* (Colin Smythe, 1994), p. 389.
- ¹⁹ ‘Kildare Diocesan Synod’, *Kildare Observer*, 28 October 1882, p. 5.
- ²⁰ ‘The Confirmations’, *Dublin Daily Express*, 29 September 1886, p. 6.
- ²¹ The equivalent of three days wages for a skilled tradesman. See <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency-converter/#currency-result>. Accessed 15 January 2021.
- ²² ‘The Solemn Opening and Dedication of the New Church at Clane’, *Kildare Observer*, 16 August, p. 4.
- ²³ ‘The New Catholic church at Clane’, *The Kildare Observer*, 05 July 1884, p. 5.
- ²⁴ Another £2500 was required. See Seamus Cullen’s article: https://seamuscullen.net/clane_church.html.
- ²⁵ *The Building News*, 26 April 1878.

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THE WEST CROSS, MONASTERBOICE

Brendan Cullen

Monasterboice monastery was founded by St. Buithe mac Bronach, who died in 521 A.D. and seems to have declined, with the death of the last abbot, Fergna mac Echtigern, in 1122 A.D. Today the crowning glory of this Early Christian monastery is unquestionably its two High Crosses viz. Muiredach's Cross (see Coiseanna 2019 page 108) and the West Cross, the subject of this article. This cross, sometimes called The Tall Cross, stands near the Round Tower and the North Church. It is nearly 7m high and consists of four separate sections; a pyramidal base, a shaft, a wheeled head and a house cap. Unfortunately, it is very weathered, especially the shaft and the house cap. The lowest panel on the shaft is extensively damaged with the loss of some of the figured scenes. Both the weathering and the damage make the panels on the shaft difficult to interpret, although the head is in a much better state of preservation. Like Muiredach's Cross the West Cross is completely covered with sculptured scenes from sacred scripture. The biblical panels are normally read upwards from the bottom.

WEST FACE

Shaft

Panel 1. Soldiers at the Tomb.

This panel is weathered and damaged. The body of Christ rests under a huge slab. Some soldiers sit with bowed heads. Above the soldiers are two heads, possibly of Angels.

Panel 2. Resurrection of the Dead.

At left a figure holds a book. Two small figures rise from rectangular graves. Behind them is another figure. In the centre is a large bird, possibly a phoenix which is a symbol of resurrection.

Panel 3. Three Figures.

In this panel are three figures each holding a book. Difficult to interpret.



West face shaft

Panel 4. Traditio Evangelii.

Christ is standing between Peter and Paul. To Peter on his right He gives the keys of the Kingdom and to Paul on His left He gives a book.

Panel 5. Doubting Thomas.

The figure on the left appears to thrust his hand against the side of the central figure. There is a third person on the right of the panel.

Panel 6. The Arrest of Christ.

This panel depicts a central figure between two armed men. Above Panel 6 is very weathered but there appears to be traces of a band of abstract ornament.

Head of Cross



West face head

The Crucifixion.

Christ is shown with His head drooping to one side and is already dead. He wears an elaborate garment with long sleeves. His hands are large and nailed to the cross. The spear bearer (Longinus) on the right pierces Christ's left side. The soldier (Stephaton) on the left raises a cup to Christ's mouth. Beside each soldier is a human head, perhaps representing the two thieves crucified with Christ. Christ's ankles are tied, His feet are nailed and appear to rest on a footrest held up by two soldiers. Near His right hand is a small figure milking a sheep while near His left hand a figure is shearing a sheep.

Right Arm. The Kiss of Judas and Arrest.

Christ is in the centre facing Judas. Behind Christ an armed man grasps His shoulder.

Left Arm. The Mocking of Christ.

Christ is again in the centre His hands crossed and bound. A soldier grips His left arm while on His right another soldier places his hand over Christ's eyes to blind Him.

Top of Shaft.

St. Peter is depicted cutting off the high priest's servant's ear. In the centre is St. Peter with his sword drawn in one hand while in the other he's holding the scabbard. In the background are two figures holding torches.

House Cap

Very weathered and unrecognisable

EAST FACE.

Shaft

Panel 1. David kills the Lion.

This panel is badly damaged. David kneels on the lion's back and pulls its jaws open. In the background are two sheep, a shepherd's crook and a round object not easily identified.

Panel 2. The Sacrifice of Isaac.

On the left, Abraham standing and bearded, has a sword in one hand while with the other he is forcing Isaac's head down on to a block of stone. In the top right corner there is an angel with a ram which was used as a substitute when Abraham's faith wasn't in doubt.

Panel 3. The Worship of the Golden Calf.

On the left is a tall bearded figure with a rod in his right hand. In the centre there is a large horned ox head from whose jaws dangles a small human figure. On the right of the panel are four men with round shields. A fifth figure, who is kneeling, holds out his hands, as if beseeching the tall figure.

Panel 4. The Anointing of David.

On the right David kneels before the prophet Samuel who pours oil from a horn over his head. On the left David has his

sling in his right hand and above in the centre is the bearded head of Goliath.



East face shaft

Panel 5. Goliath Challenges the Army of Israel.
On the left is Goliath with long hair and long beard. He's holding his huge triangular headed spear. Before him are three rows of people representing the army of Israel.

Panel 6.

This panel is heavily weathered and is only half as high as the others. It shows a chariot with two people in it and pulled by a horse. Immediately above this half-panel is another half-panel of interlaced ornament which separates the shaft from the head.

The Head



East face head

Lowest Panel. The Three Children in the Fiery Furnace.

In the centre the three children- Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego are clustered under the protective wings of an angel. At each side is a stoker carrying sticks and blowing a trumpet-shaped mouth bellows.

Right Arm. The Fall of Simon Magus.

This panel depicts SS Peter and Paul each holding a crook-headed staff with which they point to Simon Magus, the magician, who is shown upside-down and falling to the ground.

Left Arm. Temptation of St. Anthony.

The central figure, clothed in a long robe, is surrounded by two monsters with human bodies and animal heads.

Centre. Heretofore, this scene was identified as The Second Coming of Christ to Judgement. However, recent research has interpreted the figure in the centre as the Old Testament figure

of Joshua. He has a sword and a round shield in one hand and a spear in the other. He is surrounded by armed men- five on each side. The event represented here is Joshua with his army crossing the river Jordan on his way to attack the city of Jericho. The destruction of Jericho can be viewed as a symbolic prefiguration of the Last Judgement.

Top of Crosshead. Christ Walking on the Water.

Four disciples are shown in a clinker-built boat with three oars. Peter, who is sinking, is holding out his hands for help. Christ puts out His hands to help him.

House Cap

Is very weathered. It seems to consist of an ox-like animal on the left and on the right a man is seated on a chair. Difficult to interpret.

The north and south sides of the West Cross consist mainly of abstract ornament with some figured scenes which are difficult to interpret.

Both Muiredach's Cross and the West Cross exhibit the major characteristics of Irish High crosses to perfection: they are made of a grey-white sandstone; both have a stone circle or wheel connecting the arms to the shaft; both consist of several blocks of stone, the separate pieces fitting into each other by mortice and tenon joints; both are very tall; Muiredach's Cross is 5.5m high and the West Cross is 6.5m high; both crosses have house-shaped capstones; both have a large pyramidal base consisting of a separate block of stone indented with a deep rectangular hollow into which the shaft of the cross fits; abstract ornament is largely confined to the side-panels and rings of both crosses; both crosses are orientated with their main sides facing east and west.

Irish High Crosses contain many biblical scenes but the number and variety of these scenes on Muiredach's Cross and the West Cross are unsurpassed anywhere in Ireland. The scriptural scenes on both crosses can be divided into a number of subjects:

1. A selection from the Help of God or Deliverance series, i.e. God's power to save the faithful. Several examples will illustrate this theme; The sacrifice of Isaac (West Cross); David overcoming Goliath (both crosses); The three Children in the Fiery Furnace (West Cross); Daniel in the Lions' Den (West Cross).

2. Scenes from the life of David: David's anointing by the prophet Samuel (West Cross); David killing the lion (West Cross); David's victory over Goliath (both crosses); David playing the harp (Muiredach's Cross).

3. Episodes from the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Christ (both crosses); the post Resurrection scene of doubting Thomas appears on Muiredach's Cross.

4. Scenes from the life of Moses: Moses striking the rock (Muiredach's Cross); Worship of the Golden Calf (West Cross).

5. Miscellaneous scenes: Adoration of the Magi (Muiredach's Cross); Temptation of St. Anthony (West Cross); the fall of Simon Magus (West Cross).

Unlike early grave slabs Irish High Crosses don't appear to have a funerary function. Surviving inscriptions indicate their erection by a living person. While it is difficult to know precisely what they were used for we can nevertheless, hazard a guess. They may have been teaching crosses – literally sermons in stone. They may have been used as centres for the recitation of prayers or the making of meditation based on the biblical scenes illustrated. They may have protected the monastery and in some cases may have marked a place of sanctuary. Finally, it's possible they were boundary crosses delimiting certain areas within the monastic enclosure.

THE HISTORY OF CLANE MEN'S SHED

Thaddeus (Ted) Murray

What is a Men's Shed?

The concept of a “Man Cave” has been around for a long time, a place for a man to go that allowed him a little break away from the daily grind and to potter about at a hobby or just to be alone with his thoughts and things. A “Men's Shed” is simply an updated version of that concept. The idea of a communal men's shed came from Australia where it quickly spread within a couple of years. The Australian Government recognized Men's Sheds as a valuable resource for men's health by giving financial supports and helping to form the Australian Men's Sheds Association. A men's shed is a community-based, non-commercial organisation that is open to men. Men's sheds provide a place where men can feel included and safe. The aim of men's sheds is simply to improve the health and wellbeing of their members. John Evoy, a young man and small farmer's son from New Ross, after a spell in Australia, brought the idea to Ireland in 2010 and since then over 450 men's sheds have sprung up catering for about 10,000 men.

Clane Men's Shed

Clane Project Centre as part of their “addressing social needs” agenda saw the need, seized the opportunity and started a men's shed in Clane Business Park in 2010. As this was the first Men's Shed in Co. Kildare, John Evoy, CEO of the fledgling Irish Men's Sheds Association, was one of the first VIP's to visit in 2011. Clane Men's Shed quickly attracted members not only from Clane but from the large rural catchment area of North Kildare. Not all Men's Sheds are the same so there was no template for management of a Shed. A committee was formed to put some structure on the proceedings and plans were made to engage in projects, these projects required organising, financing, planning, management and implementation. The learning curve was constant and the benefits subtle. Men joined the shed not knowing what to expect but quickly finding out that the sharing of knowledge and experiences from men with diverse backgrounds was an

entertaining and educational way to enjoy a morning or afternoon.

“Don’t Mention Health”

The issue of men not talking about health matters is constantly raised by medical people and is blamed for many of men’s problems. It is a fact that men find it a little bit easier to talk to fellow men in a working environment. A motto adopted by the Men’s Sheds Association is that “men won’t talk face to face but they will talk shoulder to shoulder”. This proved to be the case in Clane Men’s Shed and many men went to the doctor because of a symptom brought up in conversation at the tea break in the Men’s Shed. The hidden benefits of the shed as a place to go, a bit of craic, camaraderie, banter and even argument where one can be listened to are well documented. It is difficult to put your finger on one item that could be the core ingredient to how a Men’s Shed helps but the combination of activity and belonging is a key factor when assessing the benefits. The feedback from the families of the members, who experience their “new” men is rewarding and a great measure of the positive effects of the Men’s shed in the wider community.

The Beginning

The first group to meet, under the auspices of Clane Project Centre, to discuss the concept of establishing a Men’s Shed in Clane met in October 2010 in Unit 11, Thompson Enterprise Centre. Present were: Ted Murray, Colm Ryan and Pat Hallissey from Clane Project Centre; Jim Craughwell, Dermot Coonan, Joe Flanagan, Gordon Smith and Peter Kelly from the community with Brendan Curtis as facilitator. In that mix are Kildare; Meath; Dublin; Kerry; Tipperary; Galway; Roscommon and Scotland, Clane was then and still is a cosmopolitan commuter town!

“Build it and they will come”

A public meeting followed and decided to open the Men’s Shed for members in Unit 11, Thompson Enterprise Centre in Clane Business Park as provided by Clane Project Centre.

Members of the group “shanghaied” their friends and neighbours and by February 2011 we had a shed of 20 members with a management committee and a blank canvas. One reluctant man declared that he had no skill or talent to contribute. He quickly discovered his ability to make tea and was appointed Head of Catering! He enjoys that position to this day.

What to Do

Boardgames, darts and cards were purchased but, strangely, didn’t engage the interests of the men. It soon became apparent that woodwork and mechanical projects were needed to grab and hold the attention of the members. After much brainstorming (a new skill) we came up with a number of projects that met our needs and benefitted the community. Horticulture, healthy living, art and the choir are items that grabbed the interest of the majority and indeed some men came to the shed for these specific activities only. Many interesting and worthwhile projects followed providing both a teaching and a learning process for the members.

Major Projects

Boats:- One member expressed a lifelong desire to retire to Mayo and spend his time fishing by the sea. We researched and set about building a Currach in the Shed. He supplied all the materials and played a leading role in the painstaking construction. After two years we were proud to display the results in the Clane St Patrick’s Day Parade. This led in turn to a rowboat being generously donated, refurbished and raffled to raise a substantial sum for the Shed. Two canoes were also constructed during this boat building phase. Clane – a boatbuilding hub miles from the sea!

Barretstown:- We engaged with Barretstown Children’s Centre and undertook many projects for them that used all our skills and talents. Not least of these was the rebuilding of a dump truck from the engine up. A remarkable feat of mechanical engineering providing loads of learning opportunities.

Horticulture:- We engaged with the KWETB and they ran two courses in our shed on basic horticulture. Fifteen of the members were presented with certificates from KWETB and we are grateful to the tutors for their interest and efforts with the shed. Out of this event we graduated to a polytunnel and then to a solar water heating system for growing vegetables. We helped create the Garden of Remembrance at the back of the Church which is well worth a visit.

Exercise:- We developed an interest in golf and more recently pitch and putt and we enjoyed several away outings during the year. A walking group evolved into an exercise session and we teamed up with Age & Opportunity to provide a weekly exercise session geared to suit our age profile. This has progressed to an on-line session exercising our IT skills as well.



Visit to Áras an Uachtaráin 15th April 2019. Presented a double dog-feeder made in Clane Men's Shed from recycled pallets

Culture:- We engaged in recreational activities like: visits to the Titanic Centre; Galway Christmas Markets; Aras an Uachtaráin where we were graciously received by President Michael D Higgins, Patron of Irish Men's Sheds; Kilmainham

Gaol; Lullymore Heritage Park and many local attractions, not least a guided tour of Clongowes and the Pale by our honorary member, Brendan Cullen co-editor of Coiseanna. We have a thriving Choir and an Art group and recently engaged in Archery and Clay Pigeon shooting in Abbeylands Centre on our doorstep. We help with the annual Culture Night organised by Marie Sheehy of CPC and use this as an opportunity to display our many talents.



Ted Brennan, Billy Dunne and Tommy O'Rourke despatching Clane Men's Shed's finest work to become a mobile resource room in a local school.

National Sheds for Life – Pilot Programme

“The purpose of this programme is to engage men to successfully facilitate more open and meaningful discussions around their physical and mental wellbeing while encouraging men to maintain healthier lifestyle choices and increase their awareness in areas such as physical activity, healthy eating and mental wellbeing”. (IMSA)

We were selected to pilot this initiative in 2019 and helped to develop a health programme to be rolled out to all the sheds in the country. This involved partaking in hands-on cookery classes, exercise sessions, mental health, oral health and

physical health lectures over ten weeks and having a “before and after” assessment by the Irish Heart Foundation. This was a very educational and life changing experience and many latent talents were discovered by the participants and their families. This was the best attended endeavour of Clane Men’s Shed and the most beneficial.



This 21ft Currach was completely designed and made for sea fishing in the Atlantic by Clane Men’s Shed.

General

It is said that the most basic tool in a Men’s Shed is the “kettle” and this is certainly true of Clane Men’s Shed. The “cup of tea” is the greatest leveller and ice breaker of all and our catering manager ensures that all callers get refreshments straight away. The atmosphere in the tearoom is like that of a pub where, even without the alcohol, the conversations flow freely and the inhibitions are loosened. It is amazing that so many men who never met before, have so much in common.

Respect -As the membership increased, so the variety of stories and repartee increased, making the extended tea break the most craic of the day. The golden rule in the Shed is “Respect” for each and every person that comes in. We strive for this

objective and that helps to provide an enjoyable space for all. Peace and harmony is the rule of the day and can be achieved through “Respect”. From time to time we have our disagreements, this is natural given the different temperaments, age and backgrounds of the members but with good management we are generally able to restore Respect and park our differences outside the shed.

Fundraising

The shed cannot function without funds and we rely on the generosity of the community to support our flag days and sales of our products on open days. The local community has never been found wanting in support for the Men’s Shed and we thank them most sincerely for adopting us and responding generously to our annual collection and making private donations also. We make our very popular reindeer and other articles from recycled pallets. We are fortunate to have inherited tools of every description from bereaved families as well as our own sheds and attics. We purchase new equipment when we can afford it and maintain a stock of safe working tools.



Reindeer for the Christmas Market 2019

We are occasionally able to donate to other good causes in the community from our funds or help out by supplying volunteers to various community projects.

We thank the people of Clane for their overwhelming support for the Men's Shed over the years.

Finally

We have suspended operations due to the Covid lockdowns in the interest of the health of our members and the community. We look forward to getting back to some sort of normality when this dreadful pandemic is over. We encourage all to stay in contact and use social media to keep in touch. The effect of the Men's Shed movement on the health of the community is the subject of many academic studies over recent years, all of them throwing a positive outcome on a complex subject. We know more about physical, mental and social sciences than we ever did and we love to over-analyse simple ideas. Perhaps this is a simple idea that works and should be valued as such and left at that. A Men's Shed is a place where you will meet and enjoy kindred spirits and maybe leave your insights or pick up a gem of wisdom for as long or as short as you require. Free and easy, no obligation, no commitment. Yours to enjoy. We welcome existing and new members to drop in when we get back to normality. We are based in unit 16 Thompson Enterprise Centre, Clane Business Park.

What about Women?

This is the obvious question following this article and the good news is that Clane Project Centre has facilitated a Ladies' Craft Group or Women's Shed and they operate from our premises at Nexus (beside Hughes Pharmacy) on Monday mornings.

Unfortunately, due to lockdowns, operations are suspended for the time being.

Clane Project Centre CLG are founders and main sponsors of Clane Men's Shed and the author Ted Murray is CEO of CPC and PRO for Clane Men's Shed.

REV. THOMAS KELLY AND THE KELLYITES

Frank Taaffe

The founder of the religious group called the Kellyites Thomas Kelly is best remembered today as a hymn writer some of whose hymns are ranked with the finest hymns in the English language. He was born on 13th July 1769, the only son of High Court Judge Thomas Kelly of Kellyville, just outside of Athy in nearby County Laois. Kelly was educated in a private school in Portarlinton and at Trinity College Dublin from where he entered the Middle Temple in London to train as a lawyer. While in London he fell under the influence of William Romaine, the fearless evangelical preacher who is now accepted as perhaps the strongest figure among 18th century evangelists.

Kelly gave up his legal studies and proceeded to take Holy Orders, being ordained as a clergyman in the Church of Ireland in 1792. Little is known of his early church career but through his friendship with a curate in St. Luke's Dublin he was allowed to preach at that church. We are told that Kelly's evangelical zeal attracted ever increasing audiences but also the attention of the Rector of St. Luke's who objected to his '*Methodist activities*'.

This was a time of strong evangelical Protestantism, a popular movement which touched so many and was influenced by amongst others John and Charles Wesley. The Evangelicals campaigned for the abolition of slavery and sought better social conditions for the working class but by doing so threatened the Irish churches power and privilege.

Within Thomas Kelly's circle of friends and acquaintances were John Walker and John Nelson Darby, two clerics of the Church of Ireland who like Kelly were powerful and popular preachers. It was their misfortune that the Archbishop of Dublin was Robert Fowler who had a particular dislike for evangelicals and dissenters. Thomas Kelly and his colleagues were prohibited by the Archbishop from preaching in any

church in the Dublin Diocese. As a consequence Walker seceded from the Church of Ireland and founded the Walkerites, a Dublin based religious sect which rejected clerical orders and tended to extreme Calvinism. The Walkerites continued long after Walker's death in 1833, and were last noted in Dublin in the 1940s.

For a time, John Walker and Thomas Kelly entertained hopes of a union between the Walkerites and the Kellyites. The extreme Calvinistic views of the Walkerites found little in common with the Kellyites and the refusal of Thomas Kelly to unchurch everybody outside their belief kept both groups apart. The negotiations finally broke down with the refusal of the Kellyites to subscribe to the Walkerites belief *'that John Wesley is in hell'*.



Ruins of Saint Luke's Church Cork Street Dublin

Thomas Kelly and John Nelson Darby discussed the possibility of coming together to form an evangelical movement separate from the Church of Ireland. Eventually Darby left Dublin for

Plymouth where his Sunday Prayer Group evolved into the Plymouth Brethern.

Thomas Kelly, despite Archbishop Fowler's withdrawal of facilities, continued to preach in unconsecrated buildings in Dublin, notably the Bethesda Chapel in Dorset Street, Dublin. Kelly returned to Athy where there was a recently formed Methodist congregation which shared services with the Church of Ireland in the Parish Church in Emily Square. He was allowed to preach in the local church before eventually returning to Blackrock, Co. Dublin. Disillusioned with the Church of Ireland and apparently unable to fit comfortably into the Methodist code he seceded from the Church in which he was ordained and formed his own religious group which were known as Kellyites.

The Kellys of Kellyville were landlords of considerable wealth and influence who despite their adherence to Catholicism, held on to their lands in post Reformation Ireland. The future Judge Kelly, while still a law student at Trinity College Dublin, conformed to the state religion, a matter of no little importance for one with aspirations to hold legal office in 18th century Ireland. He eventually became a Judge of the Common Pleas where he was acknowledged as *“one of the most reasonable and humane judges on the Irish Bench.”*

Rev. Thomas Kelly on succeeding to his father's property at Kellyville, found himself possessed of ample means. He opened Kellyite churches in Athy, Portarlinton, Wexford and Blackrock, Co. Dublin. It was around this time when he married Elizabeth Tighe of Rosanna, Co. Wicklow, whose mother was a friend of John Wesley and whose brother Rev. Thomas Tighe of Dromore Diocese was one of the earliest leaders of the Irish evangelical movement.

The Kellyites were to remain a small yet active group outside the main stream of the Established Church for the next fifty years or so. The Athy Meeting House was located at the rear of No. 5 Duke Street with the entrance approached through the

archway between No. 5 and the adjoining premises. Kelly preached in his Kellyite meeting houses as well as occasionally occupying Church of Ireland pulpits in Athy and St. Mary's, Kilkenny where his friend Rev. Peter Roe was Rector. The Church of Ireland Rector in Athy during part of Thomas Kelly's leadership of the Kellyites was Rev. Frederick Trench, son of the Dean of Kildare. He was married to Helena, daughter of Lord Arden and her brother John Perceval was an associate of John Henry Newman, John Keble and Edward Pusey of the Oxford Movement.

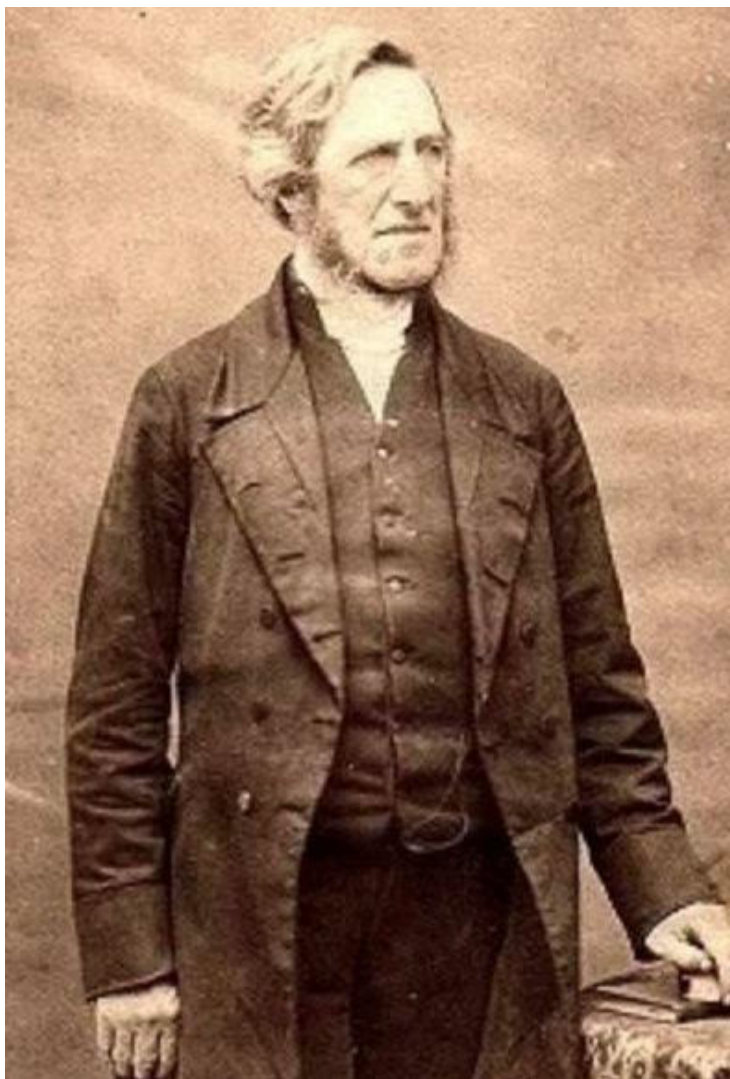
Kelly continued to live in Blackrock until he returned to the family home at Kellyville in Ballintubbert near Athy. Thereafter his visits to the Blackrock meeting house were infrequent and in his absence the Kellyites in Dublin fell away. A letter of 1807 refers to the Blackrock Kellyites "*being divided*" and seven years later the Blackrock meeting house was sold.

In the meantime Thomas Kelly, now living at Kellyville, concentrated his attention on the Athy Kellyites, a church group which continued as a vibrant congregation for several decades. Church returns for 1834 indicate that the Kellyites, numbering 30 or 40, met every Sunday for prayers in their Duke Street Meeting House. The 1844/'45 Parliamentary Gazette shows the Meeting House was still in use. Sirm in his '*Memories of power Le Poer Trench*' wrote of Kelly:-

"Although a leader in the ranks of dissent, and a separatist after a model of his own, yet did he endeavour at all times to maintain an affectionate intercourse with the faithful clergy of the establishment avoiding scrupulously all efforts to unsettle their minds and to withdraw them from her Pale".

Today Thomas Kelly is remembered principally as a hymn writer. He published '*Collection of Psalms and hymns by various authors*' containing 33 hymns in 1802. New editions of his hymns were published in 1806, 1809, 1826 and 1836, all containing hymns written by himself. The last edition of

Thomas Kelly's hymns were published in 1853, two years before his death, and that edition included 765 hymns. After his death the religious Tract Society published a new edition of the hymnals in 1869.



Thomas Kelly

Professor James Moffat, the author of the Handbook to the Church Hymnary claimed in 1935 that '*nearly 140 of Kellys' hymns were still in common use*'. I'm afraid that is not the

position today. However, many of Kelly's hymns are still to be found in the principal hymn books of Britain and America. Thomas Kelly lived in an era of great hymn writers and his best hymnal legacy is to be found in the hymns, *'We sing the praise of him who died'*; *'The Head that once was crowned with thorns'* and *'Look ye Saints the Sight is Glorious'*, which are considered comparable with the best hymns in the English language.

Thomas Kelly was the author of several pamphlets published during his lifetime. His *"History of Andrew Dunn, an Irish Catholic"* was published in several editions. He published *"A letter to the Roman Catholics of Athy occasioned by Mr. Hayes seven sermons"* in 1823. In the pamphlet Kelly set down his arguments against Mr. Hayes sermons in which the latter had put forward his views on the Mass.

Another pamphlet of Kelly's titled *"A plea for primitive Christianity"* in answer to a pamphlet by the Rev. Peter Roe entitled *"The evil of separation from the Church of England"* was published in 1815. Rev. Peter Roe, Rector of St. Mary's, Kilkenny, was one of the leading evangelists in Ireland and a life-long friend of Thomas Kelly.

Perhaps more interesting to us today was a pamphlet printed in Dublin in 1809 by Rev. Kelly entitled *"Some account of James Byrne of Kilberry, in the County of Kildare, addressed principally to the Roman Catholic inhabitants of Athy and its neighbourhood"*. The following extracts give a synopsis of what appears to have been a controversial local conversion to the Kellyites:-

"James Byrne was educated in the profession of the Roman Catholic religion. About two years ago he came to Athy and asked for employment as a weaver, in the workshop, which was built by me some time before and in which boys were taught to weave. His desire was complied with and he began to work with the other weavers. After he had been in the place sometime he happened to meet with some leaves of a scattered

testament which he contrived, though with some difficulty, to read It was soon perceived that James Byrne became uneasy about his everlasting concerns James Byrne was received among us About this time a rumour went abroad that James Byrne had become a Swaddler. His mother came to him and endeavoured to persuade him to return to the church in which he had been brought up Finding that she could not succeed by fair means, she now proceeded to threaten him but she was as unsuccessful in the use of these weapons as she had been with the former.

James' mother, finding that she was unable to prevail either by persuasion or by menaces, was obliged to leave him to himself, lamenting over him, as one who would certainly be damned Soon after this James Byrne at the request of his mother, went to stay some time with her. She thought, no doubt, that if she could get him away from the people who she supposed had seduced him and that he was among, his friends partly from goodwill and partly from fear, he would be persuaded to give up his new notion, as they thought it. In this expectation however she was deceived. Though everything was done to make him return to his former profession, he continued of the same mind on his return to Athy we perceived that he was not well (being) strongly persuaded that he would not recover During his confinement his mother was frequently with him and she can bear witness that there was no hindrance to his having the clergy if he had chosen it. She can testify that no wish of the kind ever escaped his lips we have now accompanied James Byrne to the bed of death Though it is of little consequence where and how the body is interred, yet there are some circumstances attending his funeral, on which I would wish to make a few observations. I believe you will acknowledge that if James Byrne had been hanged for robbery or murder he would not have been without a respectable funeral; what then was the reason, that there was not people enough to convey his body to the grave? Why should some of his friends and nearest relations have nothing to do with his interment? What was it he did that made it criminal to help to convey his inoffensive body to the grave? You will say "He

became a swaddler”. *Yes my friends, I know, that was the unpardonable offence that he committed. But let me describe his crime in other words and it will amount to this, “he read the words of God and dared to think for himself.”*

On his retirement Kelly lived with his son-in-law Rev. William Wingfield in Dun Laoire. An occasional preacher even in old age, he suffered a stroke in 1854. Described by R.S. Brooke as a man *‘with catholic spirit and a love for all good men’*, Rev. Thomas Kelly passed away on 14th May 1855 at the age of 86 years.

The following year the Duke Street premises which had housed the Kellyite meeting place was sold. The small religious group which had remained separate and apart from the Established Church for almost 50 years was no more. With the closure of their Meeting House the various members of the Kellyites joined the Church of Ireland or the Methodist Church.

Thomas Kelly was described 14 years after his death as:

“A man of great and varied learning and an excellent Bible critic possessed also of musical talent and published work that was received with favournaturally of an amiable disposition and thorough in his Christian piety. Mr. Kelly was a friend of good men and the advocate of every worthy, benevolent and religious cause. He was admired alike for his humility and his liberality found ample scope in Ireland, especially during the years of Famine.”

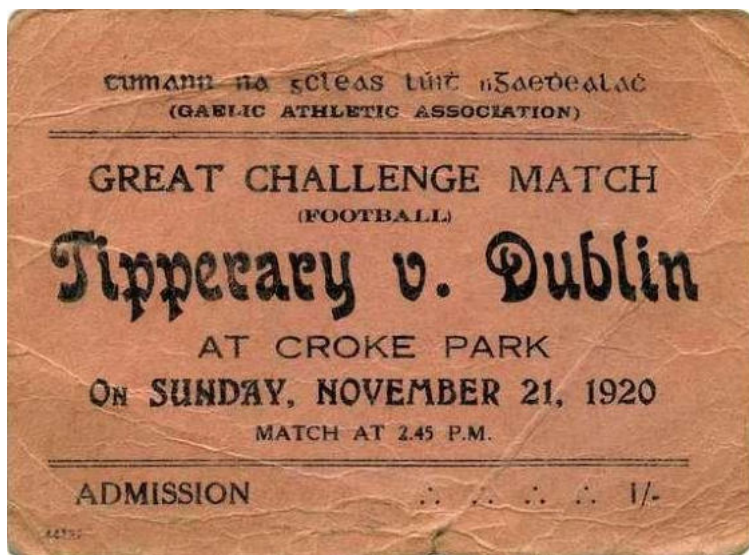
The Kellyites may seem insignificant in terms of Irish church history today but insofar as the history of Athy is concerned they and their founder, Rev. Thomas Kelly, were an important part of the town’s story for over half a century. Their very presence added colour to the dull tapestry of 19th century town life in the south Kildare town. Their founder Thomas Kelly is remembered today not as the leader of a minority religious group, but as the composer of many beautiful hymns of everlasting popularity.

MICK SAMMON (1892-1947)

John Noonan

The War of Independence from 1919 to 1921 was a very violent period in Irish history. One of the most traumatic days was Bloody Sunday, November 21st 1920. That morning a number of British intelligence agents had been assassinated by Michael Collins IRA "Squad"!

That afternoon Dublin was playing Tipperary in a Gaelic football match at Croke Park. The game was a fundraiser for Sinn Fein activities. A group of Auxiliaries invaded the pitch and opened fire indiscriminately on players and spectators alike. As a result twelve people were killed. The dead included the Tipperary team captain, Michael Hogan.



An original ticket for the match

Clane's connection with Bloody Sunday arises from the fact that the referee in Croke Park on that occasion was a Clane man named Mick Sammon. He was born in Loughbollard Commons in 1892 and from his early days was involved in the movement for independence. He came to the notice of the authorities when he was arrested in Kilcock for reading the

Sinn Fein manifesto to a crowd emerging from Sunday Mass. Taken to Naas R.I.C. Barracks, he was tried and sentenced to six months imprisonment.



Mick Sammon

Mick was refereeing the fateful game when the dreadful events of Bloody Sunday occurred. Moments before the shooting started he had been in conversation with the Tipperary captain, the unlucky Michael Hogan. When the firing started Hogan was killed and Mick Sammon survived by diving to the ground and crawling to safety on the sideline.



Team jerseys in the GAA museum Croke Park

Mick was also a prominent Gaelic footballer for his native Clane, but his early appearances on the team were inauspicious and they did little to foretell his later greatness. Local lore has it that he was one of five newcomers to the 1918 Kildare team. His first match against Laois had to be moved from June 23rd to June 30th in that year, because the earlier date clashed with a ceremony at Bodenstown cemetery. In addition to this, it is said that when the game was finally set to start the ball was found to be punctured and attempts to repair it failed. The match was abandoned and admission tickets were refunded. Mick's second match was against Westmeath which also had to be abandoned, this time because of rain. All in all, 1918 proved to be a very unlucky year for Kildare since they were eventually beaten by Louth in a game which saw six Clane players down with influenza.

However, not all Mick's appearances were so ill-fated since he went on to win an All-Ireland football medal at midfield with Kildare in the 1919 final against Galway. Kildare had an overwhelming victory on that occasion, winning with a final score of two goals and five points to one point. Mick Sammon scored one goal and one point of the total. On their way to the All-Ireland, Kildare had previously beaten Dublin in the

Leinster final by one goal and three points to one goal and two points. Football was not the only interest in Mick Sammon's life. He was a member of the Standing Committee of the N.A.C.A. for many years and was a track judge for all the big meetings. He appears in a photograph of the Achilles Club versus Ireland meeting at Croke Park on August 1st 1927.

In later life, when the country had achieved its independence and normal politics had made a welcome return, Mick settled with his family in Celbridge, where he ran a public house, known then as 'the Railway Inn', beside the Liffey Bridge. He died in 1947 and is buried in the Abbey cemetery on the Sallins Road, Clane beside his beloved wife, Elizabeth, née Gill, of Butterstream, Clane.



The Sammon headstone in the Abbey Cemetery

CHILDHOOD YEARS BY THE NAAS CANAL

Seamie Moore

Living in our little cottage by the banks of the Naas Canal, during the years of my childhood, gifted me with some most enchanting and life-long memories of that loving and beautiful area. One of those was hearing, somewhere in the distance, the lively chug-chug-chug of the engine of an unseen canal boat. Unseen, because the water channel was covered by a heavy, low lying fog, limiting the view to a small area. Then suddenly, as if from an unseen world, it would chug-chug-chug into sight, powering its way free from beneath the canopy of the mysterious mist. No matter how many times the exhilarating sight of an on-coming boat was to be seen, the magic moments of seeing one come into view from out of a fog, was always the one to be most remembered. Then, you noticed the man at the tiller, on the engine section of the boat. His gentle tiller-arm movements, left or right, determined the accuracy of the forward movement of his vessel. As we watched we knew the skipper was aware he was approaching the gates of the 4th Lock. Moore's Lock! For many years the 4th Lock was known as Moore's, our house being the nearest family residence of reference. We saw him cut the throttle to slow the boat and allow her to ease forward without full engine power. Once she was within the chamber, the rear gates would be closed, the sluices on the front gates opened and the waters would pour in around her and begin the infilling experience.

Easing the boat's forward movement into the chamber required a very delicate and skilful manoeuvre. Too powerful an engine trust, could see the hull of the boat crash against the solid stone foundation, beneath the front lock gate. A crash against that could damage the steel bulkhead and be detrimental to its watertight resistance and to the safety of the boat. Slowing her speed and berthing her safely, became the priority of both the skipper and the land man, even before the aft gate was closed. This involved the skipper on the boat tossing a strong rope, that lay coiled in loops on the roof of the engine room, upwards to the land man. The other end of the rope was securely fastened

to a metal hitch at the prow of the boat. The land man or ‘bank’ man, would throw a few loops of the rope around a secure timber hitching post and slowly release it as he fought to control the boat’s momentum until it was settled between the two sets of gates. One further lock after that and the boat’s overnight journey from Dublin to Naas, would be complete. There, a safe and welcoming harbour and an off-loading berth were empty and waiting.

Our Moore family were one of the luckier families of the town. We lived by the side of that canal for over twenty years until the nineteen sixties. Nestled forty metres back from the water’s edge and half way between the production plant of Naas Gas Works and the home of Jack Higgins of Kildare and All-Ireland football fame, we enjoyed the luxury of living in the middle of a historic centre. Our house, was one of four between the 4th and 5th locks near the Gas Works. ‘Down de Canal’ in Naas was the modest reference made of our town’s stretch of a beautiful, tree-lined, water world. The canal at that time, meant as much to our locals as The French Riviera did, to the rich people of France. Despite its importance as a commercial highway, dating from its completion in 1789, its amenity value was of huge significance as a socialising venue. It soared in community popularity during the entire period of WW2 and for several years afterwards. A visit to the 150 years old water corridor for townies of Naas, was akin to a trip to the countryside, without ever having to leave the town.

For good measure we were surrounded by the big houses of Oldtown Demesne, Odlums, Keledern, Osberstown House, the historic sites of ‘The Knocks’, The North Moat, Leinster Mills, Tandy’s and Abbey Bridges and the lands and the convent of the Mercy nuns.

We never saw our childhood as being exceptionally lucky with that ‘bubble’ of interesting history before our eyes. To others, we were blessed with so many interesting icons of the town in one beautiful corridor. The small community of families living along Canal Bank, temporarily expanded every year, like a

seasonal holiday resort. That happened when the people of the town took their least costly leisure, that of walking, down to our much coveted amenity area. Of course, many of those years were influenced by the economic deprivations during the years of WW2 when the trappings of life in Naas were very rural. Rationing of foodstuffs and clothes was still in operation. Walking was one of the few things in fashion!

The flow of visitors usually started after the weather improved, when the days lengthened and after the festival of Punchestown Races had been honoured. Due to the then, much rougher condition of the bank on the west side of the canal, most people walked the tar and gravel surfaced road, of the Gas Works side. There was no competition for space in walking the canal way. It was a place of great interest, desire and popularity. There was no power-walking or jogging. People took their time and strolled for leisure, with no interest in fitness-walking whatsoever. There was plenty of time given over to meeting, greeting and conversing. Pleasantries followed the exchanges and curiosities were then satisfied. It was an older and more quaint Ireland, without any exaggerated trimmings to the chat. Many family groupings walked the Canal Road in those blistering summer afternoons. Some people sat around in picnic groups on the grassy areas of the locks. Their laughing, happiness and eating was only ever disrupted by the silent invasion of millions of angry and hungry piss-mires that had also managed to invade their very best sandwiches.

The parish priest too, with his daily requirement to read a section of his breviary, ‘accidentally’ walked the canal route on a Sunday. People stood to one side as he approached in prayer. Young energetic people, giving vent to their early urges of romance and who were then called ‘courting couples’, were on the alert. Being aware of the slow-moving black clad figure, coming towards them, they performed daredevil acts of escapism, by using the ‘running-board’ to quickly cross over the canal at the nearest lock. There, on the downside of the bank slopes, they could hide their activities until he had moved out of the hearing of their laughter and banter. Many nuns,

always in pairs, smiled at everyone, as their leg-long, rosary beads, rattled to the rhythm of their dainty but energetic footsteps.



The 5th Lock, Abbey Bridge with walkers on the canal bank. The solid stone base is visible below lock gates

The real novelty entertainment of the Canal walk, was watching the swimmers. The two most popular places for swimming were Tandy's Bridge and Moore's Lock. Youngsters learned their swimming at Tandy's Bridge. It was the unofficial swimming academy in Naas. Confidences, stamina and courage blended into swimming strokes and culminated with a graduation swim, across the width of the canal to DeBurgh's land on the opposite side. Once swimmers could achieve that they moved to deeper waters beneath the bridge, where any form of a dive and a few strokes achieved a 'wall to wall' crossing. Many then moved to the 3rd and 4th locks. These were not unlike the shapes of the swimming pools of today. Some swimmers would dive to the bottom of the chamber, then full to the top with twenty feet of water and bring up a stone to prove they had gone to the bottom. The swallow, butterfly and multiple local diving variations and acrobatics, kept the crowd of onlookers entertained all

afternoon. It was the same at Tandy's Bridge. People just sat around on the banks, relaxed and enjoyed the water action. There were many young locals who became notable swimmers and divers and their skills and reputations lasted for many years. One old man, a former teacher in a Naas school, used swim on his back for what seemed like hours. He hardly moved and looked like a frozen alligator. All that could be seen were his nose and his toes with a bump or two in between. We called him 'cocky over the water'.

The local Army Apprentice School marched to Moore's Lock every Friday afternoon to practise their Red Cross Life Saving techniques. One swimmer and diver of great skill but noteworthy because of who he was and because he was blonde, young, handsome, good looking and wore a white collar, was Father Larry Newman, a new curate to Naas. People came purposely to see him. Most had never previously seen a priest before the nineteen fifties. swimming with ordinary folk, disrobed of his holy attire and stripped to the skin in a tight swimming trunks. There was an expectation that he should look different. But he didn't!

A strict religious regime of that time ensured that no teenage females participated in canal swimming at those locations. Very young girls swam with the 'splashers' and learners. However, one year an attractive young Naas lady, returning on her, month long holidays from California, decided to show her newly acquired skills, plus her beautiful tanned body, blonde bombshell hair and perfectly shaped pearly white teeth at Tandy's Bridge. The usual male attendance swelled by four hundred per cent and the temperatures went sky high. The gently sloped banks beside Tandy's was also the outdoor location for summer card schools. No money was evident. Match sticks however, were plentiful and the value of the matchsticks could be as high as a priest's collection.

During the winter of 1947, my father was out of work. One mid-morning, he decided it was a suitable time to go into Naas for milk and bread, bringing my brother Sean and myself with

him, by walking on the ice covered canal. I was glad that, seeing the overcrowding with boys from the Moat school on the canal at the Abbey Bridge, he opted to walk the rest of the journey to the harbour, along the snow covered towpath. Walking on water again----no thanks!



1989 photo of one of the last boats to service Naas harbour. The young boys at the front are; the Author (Seamie Moore), Jim Higgins. and Sean Kennedy, all neighbours from the Canal Bank

Boats often only had a crew of two, with the skipper, mechanic and land man, double-jobbing between them. Living near the locks, we built our friendships with the various boat crews. As boys, we were always attracted to the visitor boat by its mere presence, a sense of curiosity and more than a hankering for the life of boatman sailor. We would willingly open or close a lock gate for them. They were delighted with the offers of help. We got our rewards with free trips anywhere within the Osberstown-Naas corridor. We even got our turns to use the tiller and keep the boat in a straight line, in a straight line channel. It wasn't very difficult but for a few minutes we thought we were captains of the seas. The most exciting moments were sitting forward on the gunwale, of the boat

whilst it went through the lock, while the swirling waters from the opened sluice gates, roared its power in around the barge. Cruising through blue coloured waters on a sunny day and watching the fish being pushed away with the current of waves created by the boat, was another.

The Naas Canal wasn't just a recreation amenity. It was completed as a commercial project in 1789 by Naas directors, land owners, merchants and investors, to promote the commerce of the town. During the mid 20th century years and my living alongside of it and for the earlier one hundred and sixty years, it was a hive of transport activity. Initially it serviced the needs of the general trade in Naas, shopkeepers, publicans and the coal and hardware merchants.

In 1890 a new flour mill had been built at the Leinster or 2nd Lock, The mill eventually became Odlums, one of the biggest flour milling companies of its time, famed nationwide for its porridge breakfast, OTO, or Odlum's Triumph Oatmeal. There was a programmed boat service into and out of Naas Harbour every day except Saturdays and Sundays. Timber was delivered and shipped from Lendrum's saw mills. Big loads of flour were delivered for Cunningham's Bakery in Basin St. Huge amounts of beer and whiskey in wooden barrels were delivered to the twenty or so pubs throughout the town. Much of the general merchandise and hardware goods for Naas was shipped in by the canal boat service and then went for distribution from the Canal Stores around the town.

Throughout the summer months, contracted boats brought supplies of coal from the Dublin Docks to the little Gas Works quay, near our house. Each boat could carry a hundred tons of coal in its deep holds and were low in the water as they berthed outside the Gas Works. They would mostly arrive between six and seven o'clock in the morning, having travelled the twenty miles through the night. The first early morning objectives of the skipper was to be berthed tightly against the wharf, have the tarpaulin covers removed from the load and have plank gangways, linking the boat with the quayside area, in position

for the unloading crew. That team of men, hand-picked on a daily basis, would operate, from eight o'clock sharp under the gaze of the gas company works manager. It was a demanding task to empty one boat a day with only shovels and wheel barrows. About two dozen in number, the work gang was divided into three groups. Six to eight men would be shovellers on the boat. They would fill the barrows of the wheelers, who operated as two crews. The wheelers, using large sized barrows and working above the cargo of coal, walked two planks across the width of the boat and a further two from the boat to the jetty. One wheeler crew would take up positions on the boat and when filled would 'barrow off' to an unloading point within the Gas Works compound. Whilst they were gone the second crew would be loaded and be gone before the first crew returned. It was extremely hard manual labour as the shovel and wheeler men worked their way down into the hold. The unloading crew were paid ten shillings for a days labour, to empty the boat. The target time to finish was six o'clock. If it took longer, they had to stay to finish the work. The boat had to leave that evening. Another boat would be unloaded on day two. By the time all boat loads of coal were unloaded over the summer, the pile of coal in the gas yard compound was a small mountain. There it stood until the heavy demand on gas, reduced it down bit by bit through the winter. By early summer on the following year, it would be just about gone.

In Naas, the Gas Works was always linked with The Canal. The canal strategically dictated the location of the building of the Gas Works in 1863. One reason was the coal supply corridor. The other was the topography of the canal area. The selected location was at least the depth of one lock below the lowest streets of Naas. It meant that even when gas supplies were low, whatever amount was available would rise freely through the pipes structure towards the higher ground level.

Inside in the works, my father, a gas stoker, working his turn on the day shift, could be seen, wheeling out what appeared to be barrows full of smoke from the furnace area. He would have used a long metal rake and pulled the red hot coke, the coal

residue with gas extracted, from a long barrel-shaped chamber, called a retort. The coke fell into a metal barrow for wheeling away but before he could get within arm's length of the barrow, he would have to quench some of the terrible heat with several buckets of water.



The Gas Works manager's house is on the left of the photo with the old office and workshop block on the right with the chimney in the background. The Author is standing on the Off-Loading Gas Works Jetty in the Foreground. The single-story building in the centre is on the site of the gateway to the Gas Works Yard.

Stripped to the waist and covered in sweat and grimy coal dust, he would wheel it out to an open yard and unload it, following the trail of the steaming coke. Returning quickly to the furnace area, he would wheel another, specially built barrow containing a specified weight of coal to the front of the now empty retort. With a larger than usual shovel he would infill the coal into the retort, beginning from the back of the furnace. This was to ensure that the new coal would be spread evenly over the full length of the retort. The unloading and reloading actions were demandingly energetic, as the stoker was in a race against time, to prevent the empty retort from cooling below the required furnace temperature. It was the coal burning that kept the

furnace brickwork at its extreme of heat, with a visually, vivid-red appearance. When the retort was filled with the specified amount of coal, he would affix a solid steel door to its front and clamp it tightly by turning a central screw on a horizontal bar. Just before he affixed the steel door he plastered its rim edge with a fire clay substance, sometimes obtained in bulk from the embankment of the nearby canal. There were five other retorts in that bank to be serviced in sequence in exactly the same manner. Another nearby bank of six retorts was operated when gas was in high demand, usually in winter. Each side of that three hours of non-stop herculean work, the stoker would weigh and prepare the coal supply for the next charging of the retorts, ensure that the power pumps, driving the supply of gas through the mains pipes into Naas, were operating at the required pressures and write up various simple records.



Naas Harbour

Towards 1960, the Gas Company business began to yield to the cleaner energy of electricity and bottled gas. It was also the time that transporting goods by canal boat, yielded to road haulage and the simplicity of tip-up lorries. It was also a time for the Moore family to move to better housing accommodation in town centre Naas. The good-byes and partings moulded into a simple acceptance of changing times and the need to move on, with what was termed, ‘progress’.

DAME NINETTE DE VALOIS

Paul Tyrrell

When I first heard the two names Dame Ninette de Valois and Edris Stannus I thought ‘they’ were two different women. To my surprise I discovered “they” were one and the same person. This confusion arose because one of the names is a stage name and the other is a birth name. No marks for guessing which one is which! I explain the origin of the stage name later.



Edris Stannus/Ninette de Valois

So who was Edris Stannus? She was born on 6th June 1898 in the townland of Baltyboys. She was born at home in Baltyboys House, into an Anglo-Irish Protestant family and community. Baltyboys House is a Manor House located two miles (3.2km) west of Blessington village in County Wicklow on the Blessington Lakes.



Baltyboys House

Edris's parents, Thomas Stannus (1870-1917) and Elizabeth Graydon Smith (1873-1960) had long family histories in Ireland. They married in 1895. Thomas was from a military background and participated in the Second Boer War (1899-1902) and WW1 (1914-1917). He achieved the rank of Lieutenant Colonel and was awarded the DSO medal posthumously. Elizabeth Graydon Smith, as the only remaining heir of the Smith family, inherited Baltyboys House and lands in 1874 (approx. 1200 statute acres). Elizabeth was a creative and talented person who was a distinguished glassmaker known as 'Lilith' or 'Lily', and noted amateur opera singer and often written about in newspapers as "Queen of Song".

Edris spent the first seven years of her life from 1898 to 1905 at Baltyboys. These early years, in terms of nature and nurture, are the ones which have a major impact on a child's personality and temperamental development. In the case of Edris this is borne out when you read Ninette de Valois's (Edris

Stannus) memoir *'Come Dance with Me'*. In the memoir she recalls many aspects of her family life in Baltyboys during those seven years.



Elizabeth with her Children in 1904: Thelma (1896-1967), Edris (1898-2001), Trevor (1900-70), Gordon (1902-89). Edris is the child closest to her mother in the photograph.

In the memoir Ninette describes herself as a “*delicate, undersized child....intensely reserved and stubborn as a mule.*” In conjunction with this latter description Ninette goes on to note other characteristics of her personality as a child; *stubborn, feisty, single mindedness, vivid imagination, competitive and creative.* These personal traits mark Edris out as a strong, creative and determined personality. The latter is evident from a young age, as noted by Ninette, where her behaviour could be awkward and temperamental towards family and staff members. Notwithstanding this, in time, these characteristics were the foundation stones of her personal development throughout her teenage years and into adult life. In many respects these were the defining characteristics upon

which she built her career and achieved worldwide success both as ballet dancer and choreographer.

Edris was cocooned within the privileged social class of the Anglo-Irish protestant community. It was, as the memoir states a, “*....quiet country existence we were cut off from all communal interests and school life*” This was a very sheltered existence with her early life experiences confined predominantly to her immediate family surroundings. There was the occasional venture out into the ‘real’ world. The latter consisted of the following; trips to Blessington to attend Sunday service, to collect the English mail, visits to Blessington Fair and occasional trips to Dublin to attend the theatre.

Within the context of her family Edris would have experienced and imbued the tenderness and creativity of her mother, Elizabeth, while been instilled with the focus and discipline of her father, Thomas. Alongside these significant influences was her contact with the domestic staff, in particular Kate Finnigan (sic) the family cook. It was Kate who taught Edris the Irish jig which she performed at a birthday party. This event Ninette, in her memoir, recalled as *‘her first public performance’*, and recounts the *‘inspiration’* and freedom of *‘self-expression’* which she experienced arising from the occasion. This experience had a major bearing on the career path Edris was to follow into her teenage and adult life. This is acknowledged by Ninette in her memoir when she states *“Kate singled me out and taught me to execute an authentic Irish jig on the stone floor of that kitchen. If she had not done so,....., I might never have become a dancer.”* This enthusiasm for dance and performance were fortified further when her mother, on her trips to Dublin, took her to the Gaiety theatre to see a pantomime performance of “Sleeping Beauty.” Arising from these experiences it is more than safe to conclude that the genesis of Edris’s ballet dancing career was nurtured in Baltyboys initially. In fact, on her 100th birthday (June 6th1998) Carolyn Swift of The Irish Times nominated Ninette as the *“Irish woman who became the mother of British ballet”*

The Family locates to England

In the Spring of 1905 the Stannus family departed Baltyboys house with a heavy heart. This is evident from Ninette's memoir when she states that on the day of departure "*There and then, I deliberately tore my heart out and left it, as it were, on the nursery window sill.*" Throughout her life Ireland, its countryside and its people were, and had remained, intrinsic to Ninette's whole being. The circumstances surrounding their departure were linked, primarily, to the economics of running and maintaining a sizeable manor house. A further and significant issue was the changing political, religious and social circumstances pertaining in Ireland at the beginning of the 20th century.

The family moved to England and resided with Elizabeth's mother, Frances (Fanny) Smith in the seaside village of Walmer in Kent. Even with the trauma of the move from Baltyboys, where according to Ninette '*we children lived long happy days*', Edris and her family settled into Walmer with relative ease. Edris's grandmother enrolled her in a local dancing school, which Ninette describes as a "*new found secret happiness.*"

Within her dancing classes Edris's natural talent combined with her propensity for dance and movement flourished and she was singled out by her teachers for particular mention. This was communicated to her mother who took a strong interest in her burgeoning dancing talent, recognising the creative instinct attached to this development.

Lila Field's Academy for Children:

Edris spent three years in Walmer and in 1909 the family moved to London where her mother had secured accommodation. Edris's mother, Elizabeth, enrolled her in *Mrs. Woodworth's Edwardian School of Deportment*. The dance school provided tuition in what was called "Fancy Dancin", this was a combination of recreational ballet, tap & jazz dancing. While attending in this school Edris's focus turned to ballet. This was supported fully by her mother as evidenced by

the fact that she brought Edris to see the prima ballerina Adeline Genee in “Belle of the Ball” and other top ballet performances in London. Her mother, recognising the limitations of *Mrs. Woodworth’s Edwardian School of Deportment*, enrolled Edris in an established professional training school for dancers called, *Lila Field’s Academy for Children* (Edris was 12years of age).

It was in this school that Edris was chosen to specialise in classical ballet. She trained and performed with this academy from 1910-1914. Within the academy she was selected to be a member of a special group called *The Wonder Children*. This ballet group toured extensively throughout England during 1913 performing in variety shows which included many ballet performances. This experience combined with the intensity and discipline of performing on a nightly basis consolidated Edris’s future career path as a classical ballerina. Ninette, in her memoir, recalled *‘having danced on every old pier theatre in England’*.



The dying Swan 1914 aged 16

Notwithstanding the war Edris continued to hone her dancing skills as a classical ballerina by taking lessons from the ballet masters residing in London at that time. Edris further enhanced her ability as a dancer and performer through her appearances in the following; ***opera ballets, pantomimes, musical comedies and music halls***. So by the age of 21 she had acquired a wide

and diverse range of dancing and performance experiences. Arising from these endeavours Edris developed a unique dancing and performing skill set which resulted her been invited to perform as the principal dancer, at the following venues, *Lyceum Theatre, London Palladium, Theatre to Royal Opera House and Convent Garden*. All of this took place in the timeframe of 1914-19.

From the beginning, Edris's mother, with her creative instinct, was a major driving force in her life as a dancer. It was during this period that her mother conceived the idea of changing Edris Stannus's name to a more fitting stage name to enhance her ballet career. She was of the belief, mistakenly, that there was a connection between her ancestors and the French royal house of Valois kings. Arising from this belief she decided to change Edris's name to Ninette de Valois.

Following WW1 Ninette de Valois, toured with English Musical Hall productions and Revues until 1923. Following on these experiences Ninette was invited to join Ballet Russes, in Paris. This was an Avant-Garde dance troupe promoting innovative artistic collaboration between talented choreographers, composers, artists and dancers. The director of this troupe was the great and famous ballet master Sergei Diaghilev. Ninette found this to be an invaluable experience and maintained that everything she knew about running a ballet company she learned from working with Diaghilev.



'Les Biches' 1924: age 26

Ninette, on her return to England from Paris, in 1925, came with a vision for the future of ballet in England. She knew from her own ballet dancing experience, in England, that ballet as an art form was not recognised within the British theatre circles. All of the professional ballets performed in England, at that time, were by visiting Russian companies. It was in the absence of this proper training for English dancers that inspired Ninette to establish in 1926, at the Age of 28 years, a dancing academy named; *The Academy of Choreographic Art*. Within this academy intended to teach the art of ballet and choreography. The academy prospectus contained also courses in folk dance, production in costume design and mime. In entering into the role of a teacher and running of the academy Ninette stepped back, temporarily, from her role as a performer. In doing so she was embracing three realities in her life at that time; her age, undiagnosed polio and the onerous task and responsibility of setting up a new dance school. It was established, late in her life, that Ninette had suffered, unknowingly, from polio since her teenage years.

Lilian Baylis

As the saying goes; “Fortune favours the Brave” and with a touch of serendipity Ninette crossed paths with Lilian Baylis in 1926. Lilian had inherited the Old Vic theatre from her aunt and transformed the theatre into a venue providing opportunities for drama, opera and ballet dancing. She invited Ninette, with her dancing academy, to supply dancers, to teach choreographic movement to her players and create ballet vignettes for her shows. This coming together of Lilian’s entrepreneurship and Ninette’s ballet vision proved to be a momentous event in the future development and success of English ballet. Lilian went on to purchase the derelict Sadler’s Well theatre in Islington. Eventually, emerging from this coming together of individual energies and personalities, the Vic- Wells Theatre came into existence which in turn led to the Sadler’s Wells Ballet Company and from this the Royal Ballet Company at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden. The latter would become the National Theatre on the South Bank. Ninette played a major part in establishing Birmingham Royal Ballet

and The National Ballet of Turkey also. Apart from her genius as a ballet dancer and choreographer she wrote poetry as well.

W.B. Yeates & The Abbey Theatre School of Ballet

The success of Ninette's *Academy of Choreographic Art* resulted in an invitation to perform and choreograph ballet performances at the Festival Theatre, Cambridge in 1926. During her performances at this theatre she encountered W B Yeates who sought to collaborate with her in the Abbey Theatre School of Ballet, in Dublin. The latter came to fruition and Ninette was appointed in 1927, at age 29 years, Choreographic Director of school. Their collaboration lasted from 1927-34. During this period of collaboration with Yeats, producing and performing in his "*Plays for Dancers*", she travelled between London, Cambridge and Dublin. Ninette's final performance as a ballet dancer was at the age of 39 years.



Final Performance 'A Wedding Bouquet' 1937

The Sadler's Wells School

As part of her vision to establish and grow ballet in England she sought to establish a full-time educational school to contain and complement the vocational training which she was engaged in on a daily basis. This long cherished dream came to fruition in 1947 with the opening of *Sadler's Wells School*. Eight years later, in 1955, it moved to White Lodge in Richmond Park and following the granting of a royal charter it became the Royal Ballet School.



The Royal Ballet School, 'White Lodge'

Edris Stannus alias Ninette de Valois died on March 6th 2001 at the astonishing age of 102 years.



Ninette in Later years

GENERAL THOMAS FRANCIS MEAGHER

Jim Heffernan

The Exile

Thomas Francis Meagher arrived in New York in 1852. He was the son of a wealthy Waterford family, his father had been the first Catholic Lord Mayor of Waterford and was a Member of Parliament. Meagher had been sentenced to death by being 'hanged drawn and quartered' for High Treason in 1848 as one of the leaders of the unsuccessful Young Irelander Rebellion of that year. The sentence was commuted to transportation for life and in 1849 he arrived in Van Diemen's Land (now Tasmania). In 1852, although he had been able to live in some comfort in exile in Van Diemen's land and had married Catherine Bennett a local woman, whose father had been transported to Van Diemen's Land as a convict, Meagher escaped in controversial circumstances and made his way to America. He was well educated having attended Jesuit Colleges at Clongowes Wood County Kildare and Stonyhurst in England subsequently studying law at Queen's Inns in Dublin. He made a comfortable living travelling extensively in North and South America on business, lecture tours and law work. Having lived with Meagher for a short time in New York Catherine died in 1854 from complications arising from pregnancy at the Meagher family home in Waterford. In November 1855, despite some opposition to the marriage from her father, he married Elizabeth Townsend, daughter of a prominent New York Protestant family at the residence of his friend Archbishop John Hughes on Madison Avenue; Elizabeth converted to Catholicism.

Outbreak of War

On the 12th of April 1861 the artillery of the South Carolina Militia fired on the Federal garrison of Fort Sumter triggering the war between the Southern slave holding states and the free Northern states. Tensions had been festering for decades all of which related directly or indirectly to the issue of slavery with the slave states frequently threatening secession. The abolition of slavery did not become a Federal war aim until the Emancipation Proclamation on 1st January 1863. For many the

issue of states' rights was at the forefront initially and most Irish identified with the region they lived in. Irishmen fought on both sides: 150,000 for the Union and 20,000 for the Confederacy. With his upper class background Meagher had some empathy with the southern aristocrats whom he had encountered on lecture tours in the South. However, unlike his friend and fellow Young Irelander John Mitchell, who lived in the South, and whose three sons fought for the South, Meagher, did not support slavery and when the Stars and Stripes was fired on at Fort Sumter he was incensed and declared for the Union. Meagher's friend and fellow member of the Fenian Brotherhood Colonel Michael Corcoran was commander of the all-Irish 69th New York Regiment which had been formed from the 69th Irish Militia and Meagher set about raising a company for the regiment. Because of his oratorical skill he was able to enlist volunteers easily and formed a company which he designated the 'Irish Zouaves' after the Algerian Zouaves, soldiers in the French Army famous for their flashy uniforms. Meagher designed flamboyant uniforms for himself and the officers and men of the unit which joined the 69th Regiment as K company. Meagher initially had the rank of captain but was quickly given the acting rank of major.



A Photograph of officers of the 69th New York Regiment before the Battle of Bull Run. Colonel Corcoran is the tall figure with his arms folded. Meagher is next to him, behind the cannon, resting his arms on the cannon.

The 69th joined the Union Army of the Potomac South of Washington which was confronting the Confederate forces in Northern Virginia. The 69th was part of a brigade of volunteer regiments under the command of Brigadier General William Tecumseh Sherman. Meagher and Sherman did not get on, Sherman was a martinet, a strict disciplinarian which the flamboyant Meagher was not!

The Union commander General Irvin McDowell decided to attack General Pierre Beauregard's less numerous Confederate force across Bull Run Creek. Ordered to advance on 21st July 1861 the soldiers of the 69th noted that their regiment of 1,000 men had, unlike other regiments, been provided with no baggage and provision wagons and only one ambulance which already contained a lieutenant who had been wounded by an accidental discharge and ordered to remain with the regiment.

Initially, with the advantage of numbers, the Union army drove the Confederates back, however the Confederates were being constantly reinforced by General Joseph Johnston's troops arriving by train from the Shenandoah Valley. The tide turned with a Union retreat becoming a rout. The 69th performed well attempting to storm a Confederate battery, they were repulsed twice with heavy casualties. They retreated in good order but chaos reigned when, as Colonel Corcoran was forming the regiment into column formation to cross difficult terrain, they were overwhelmed by disorganised Union units breaking through their ranks. In the confusion Corcoran was captured and Meagher, whose horse was shot from under him, only escaped because a trooper of the 2nd United States Dragoons pulled him onto his horse and carried him a few hundred yards out of range of the Confederate artillery. He climbed onto an artillery wagon but was thrown into the water when one of the horses was shot. Struggling out of the water he subsequently rejoined the retreating 69th. In the aftermath Meagher quarrelled with Sherman over his disrespect for the Irish soldiers and he complained to President Lincoln about it when Lincoln visited the army after the battle. Sherman's enmity would haunt Meagher at the end of his life.

There are those damned green flags again!¹

As Corcoran had been taken prisoner in the disaster at Bull Run Meagher became commander of the 69th New York Regiment with the acting rank of Colonel. Meagher conducted further recruitment in New York and formed an Irish Brigade consisting initially of the 69th, 63rd and 88th New York Regiments which he commanded as Brigadier General. Meagher provided each regiment with a green standard which they carried into battle alongside the Stars and Stripes.

On 17 March 1862 the brigade celebrated St Patrick's Day at their camp near Alexandria, Virginia. The festivities were attended by a number of generals from the Army of the Potomac. There were races, weight casting and dancing competitions. Refreshments included draughts of rich wine and spiced whiskey. The brigade chaplain Fr William Corby SJ said Mass as Meagher conducted the 69th's regimental band. Corby noted Meagher's drinking which he regarded as due to "conviviality" rather than love of liquor.²

The newly formed brigade's first action took place during the Peninsula Campaign. The Union strategy was to advance up the Virginia Peninsula to capture the Confederate capital Richmond. In the spring of 1862 the Army of the Potomac was transported in a amphibious operation to Fort Munroe near the foot of the peninsula. General McClellan, commander of the Union Army, overestimated the strength of the Confederate forces on the peninsula and was overcautious allowing the main Confederate forces to reach Richmond before him. The Army of the Potomac halted six miles from Richmond; it would be three years before they were as close again. The Irish Brigade's first major engagement was on 31st May to 1st June

¹ "There are those damned green flags again!". Confederate General Daniel Hill to General Robert E Lee as they watched the Union forces advancing at Fredericksburg.

² Heavy drinking was common amongst officers and men during the Civil War. General Grant, who, as overall commander, won the war for the Union had to briefly resign from the army early in his career due to drunkenness.

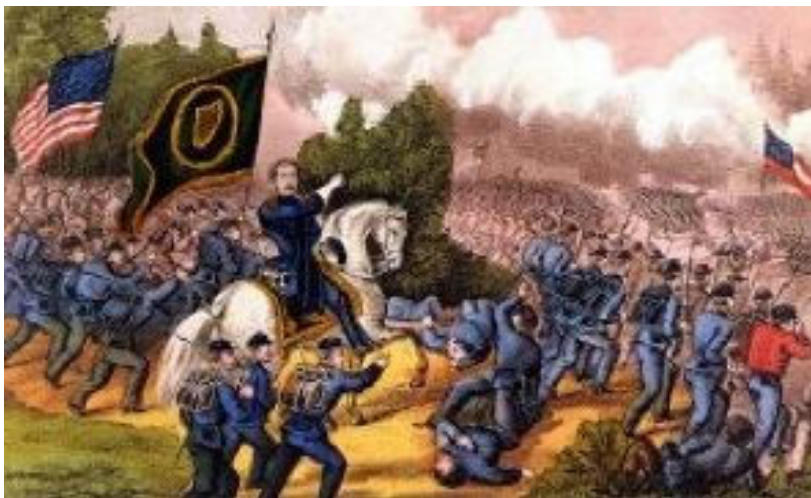
1862 in the Battle of Fair Oaks. The Union army was split in two by the Chickahominy river which was swollen by heavy rain. On 31 May the Confederates attacked the Union forces on the southern side of the river inflicting heavy casualties. The Irish Brigade was ordered to cross the river in support. They advanced across a snake infested swamp until dark stopping to rest at 9.30 pm. They awoke at 4.30 am to find that they were in the midst of dead and dying Union soldiers from the previous days fighting and that Confederate units were close by. Ordered to advance to replace regiments which had been driven back by the Confederates they formed a line of battle and exchanged volleys with the Confederates until they withdrew.



The Peninsula Campaign

Ominously for the Union General Johnston the Confederate commander had been seriously wounded and was replaced by Robert E Lee. Lee's skilled leadership of the Army of North Virginia would hold the Union forces at bay for a further three

years. The brigade had been increased to full strength of 4,000 men after the battle of Fair Oaks when the 29th Massachusetts Regiment (non Irish) was added to 69th, 63rd and 88th. The 29th were later replaced by the all-Irish 28th Massachusetts



Meagher leading a bayonet charge at the Battle of Fair Oaks

In June a Confederate offensive began in which Lee would drive the Union Army from the peninsula. The Irish Brigade enhanced its reputation in the series of battles known as 'the Seven Days' particularly at the Battle of Gaines Mill on 27th June where they and General French's brigade were ordered to cross the Chickahominy to support Union forces which were in difficulty. Arriving at the scene they encountered Union infantry and cavalry fleeing in panic. They turned them back preventing a rout and formed a defensive line to cover the retreat. Meagher and his men were the last to cross the one remaining bridge which was destroyed behind them. Further battles took place at Savage Station, White Oak Field and at Malvern Hill. The brigade was withdrawn from the field on 1st July 1862. The brigade had lost a total of 460 men killed, wounded and missing in the campaign. On 16 July Meagher was sent to New York to recruit men to fill the brigade's depleted ranks but was only partially successful because the mood of the Irish towards the war was changing and he only

recruited 300 men instead of the hoped for 1,000. It was around this time that Meagher, affected by the heavy toll the war was taking on his countrymen, began drinking heavily.

The casualty rate was about to get much worse. On 4th September 1862 Lee led the Army of North Virginia across the Potomac into Maryland invading Northern territory and threatening Washington. Lee's campaign would result in the battle of Antietam, the bloodiest of the war for both sides. The Army of the Potomac marched across Maryland to counter the threat and after some skirmishes the Confederates withdrew towards Virginia taking up positions south of Antietam Creek. The Union forces engaged with the Confederates on 17th September 1862. The Union advance was halted by fierce resistance and the brigades on either side of the Irish Brigade were pushed back. Meagher ordered a number of volleys to be fired, halting the Confederate advance, and attempted a bayonet charge. There were huge casualties on both sides and Meagher's horse was shot from under him. Meagher's conduct and that of the brigade was praised by General Edwin Sumner his corps commander. However Whitelaw Reid of the Cincinnati Herald, who was in Washington far from the battle spread a damaging, unsubstantiated, rumour that Meagher had fallen off his horse because he was drunk. The battle ended as a draw but the result was the withdrawal of the Confederate army into Virginia. The brigade had suffered 512 killed and wounded many of whom subsequently died, the casualties included 75 of Meagher's new recruits.

In December 1862 the Army of the Potomac was on the North bank of the Rappahannock River opposite the town of Fredericksburg. Lee's Army of North Virginia was heavily entrenched on Maryes Heights above the town. On 12th December the Union army crossed the river under heavy artillery fire and entered Fredericksburgh. On 13 December they attempted to storm Maryes Heights. Firstly General French's division went forward and were driven back by heavy musket and artillery fire losing over half of their number. The Irish Brigade was then sent forward up the hill and were almost

wiped out attempting a bayonet charge against the impregnable Confederate defences, only 280 men were fit for duty the following day. In the aftermath Meagher's request that the brigade be permitted to withdraw and recruit to replenish its numbers was refused and critical remarks that he made came to the ear of Edwin Stanton the Secretary of War. In May 1863 after further heavy casualties in the battle of Chancellorsville reduced the numbers still further a further request was refused and Meagher resigned his command in disgust. He would never again command a combat unit.



The Irish Brigade crossing the Rappahannock at Fredericksburg

Aftermath

Initially there was widespread sympathy and support for Meagher in the New York Irish community although a minority blamed him for leading so many to their deaths; however the mood was changing. He contacted President Lincoln directly with an offer to raise 3,000 volunteers; Lincoln accepted but in bypassing Staunton the Secretary of Defence Meagher caused further offence. Meagher's support for Lincoln in the Presidential election campaign of 1864 antagonised the majority of Irish in New York who supported McClellan the candidate for the Peace Democrats³ who wanted a negotiated end to the war. Meagher was unfortunate in that his efforts at recruitment coincided with the introduction of conscription and the ensuing Draft Riots in New York and he

³ Referred to as 'Copperheads' by their opponents after a venomous snake.

failed to get recruits. Subsequently the only military posting he obtained was the temporary command of a corps being transferred to Kentucky for garrison duties. The operation was a logistical shambles and his posting was not made permanent. Meanwhile the Irish Brigade, albeit much reduced in numbers, continued in operation; at the battle of Gettysburg in 1863 it again suffered heavy casualties. Despite his diminished reputation Meagher was still revered by the men of the Brigade and was always warmly welcomed when he visited their camps.

In 1865 Meagher arranged to travel to Montana which had been established as a 'Territory' three years previously. He saw it as a better prospect for Irish settlement than the teeming slums of New York and had organised introductions to Catholic missions in the area to facilitate this. President Johnson appointed him Territorial Secretary of Montana. Meagher arrived in Montana on 23rd September 1865 to take up the post of Territorial Secretary but shortly afterwards the Governor, Sydney Egerton left for his home in Ohio and never returned. Meagher was made Acting Governor and found that Egerton had left him with a mess. The territorial judges and influential legislators were members of the Republican Party which in Montana was dominated by former members of the No Nothing Party⁴ which was anti-immigration anti-Catholic and anti-Irish. There were legal issues over the status of the territorial legislature, vigilantes were hanging numerous people for minor offences, there were corrupt Indian agents and tensions with Native Americans. This latter would unfairly tarnish Meagher's reputation after his death. Unfortunately for Meagher his nemesis General Tecumseh Sherman was the commander of the overstretched Federal Army in the West. Responding to growing public hysteria over exaggerated reports of Settlers being killed by the Blackfeet tribe and fears that the Sioux would get involved, Sherman vacillated on

⁴ Officially the American Party so called because members were directed to say "I know nothing" when queried about membership of secretive nativist fraternities whose membership was confined the native born Protestants.

whether troops would be sent to Montana. Thinking he had Sherman's agreement and support on this issue Meagher raised a militia numbering 500 men. Ultimately the whole affair was seen as an expensive overreaction. At Congressional hearings into the affair which were held in 1872 the witnesses all took advantage of Meagher's death to transfer all the blame for the fiasco onto Meagher.

Meagher's tenure as acting governor ended in 1867 when a replacement governor arrived in Montana; soon afterwards he resigned as Territorial Secretary planning to return to the East . On 1st July 1867 Meagher arrived in Fort Benton with a detachment of a dozen members of the Montana militia en route to collect a consignment of 130 rifles for the militia from Camp Cooke further down the Missouri River. After conducting business with various people during the day he retired to his cabin on the *G A Thompson* one of a number of



A paddle steamer moored on the bank of the Missouri River

paddle steamers moored on the bank of the Missouri. One of the cabin doors opened directly onto the deck where the rail had been damaged by an earlier collision and later that evening witnesses reported seeing a man falling over the side. Meagher's body was never found; it has been speculated that

Meagher was murdered as some of his many enemies were in Fort Benton at the time. However an accident seems most likely as he probably wandered from his cabin at night, possibly in his sleep, and tripped over a damaged rail. It is unclear if he had been drinking as alleged by his enemies.

Sources

Coiseanna 2012, pp17-23 *Thomas Francis Meagher Clongowes Student and Rebel*, Brendan Cullen.

The Irish Brigade in the Civil War; Joseph B Bilby.

The Irish General; Paul R Wylie.

Battle Cry of Freedom, James McPherson.

The Irish in the American Civil War; Damian Shiels.



The standard of the 69th Regiment of the Irish Brigade which was presented by President John F Kennedy to Dáil Eireann. This was the second colour of the regiment having replaced the original which was in tatters after earlier battles. It was never carried in battle; having arrived after the Battle of Fredericksburg in which the 69th was almost wiped out; it was sent for storage in the New York Armory until the regiment was restored to its full strength, this never occurred.

PRESIDENT MICHAEL D HIGGINS LAUNCHES 'HIDDEN GEMS AND FORGOTTEN PEOPLE' PROJECT

Larry Breen

Past events are often remembered for many different reasons. One such event was a unique occasion in October 2015 which still evokes fond memories of some of our dear departed friends and colleagues. The occasion was the official launch of the Hidden Gems and Forgotten People Project jointly organised by the Federation of Local History Societies and the Federation for Ulster Local Studies. It was special for a number



**L-R: John Hulme FULS, Colm Liddy, Ballycar, Co. Clare,
President Higgins, Larry Breen, FLHS, JJ Woods FLHS**

of reasons, the presence of the President of Ireland, Michael D Higgins and the attendance of a group of members from Clane Local History Group. Our group had been very much involved in the project right from the start and had made significant contributions with submissions to the website. We reflect now on the fond memory of sharing the occasion and in fact many others as well with our dear departed friends, Úna Heffernan, Pat Given and John Noonan who were so much a part of the

Clane Local History Group for so many years. May they rest in peace.

We thought it might be nice to share the event with you in remembrance of our dear friends. A large audience of local historians and guests gathered in the National Library of Ireland for the launch of the Hidden Gems & Forgotten people Project. President Higgins and his wife Sabina, were met by the welcoming party comprising Richard Ryan, Chairman FLHS , Johnny Dooher, Chairman FULS and Dr Sandra Collins, Director of the National Library of Ireland. A capacity crowd filled the NLI seminar room to see the President view the exhibition, deliver his address and officially launch the project. The President said and I quote, “ Your two federations constitute an incredible national network that does valuable work in organising local events, lectures and visits as well as joint activities in Ireland and the UK”. Talking about history he remarked what Jane Austin had said through one of her characters in Northanger Abbey, “History, real solemn history I cannot be interested in. Give me rather a more inclusive history that tells the stories of local places and ordinary people – a history that includes the stories of women–in short, a history of the stories of all our lives.“ He felt that this was at the heart of our Hidden Gems & Forgotten People Project. He was well informed on the project commenting on Carrickfergus born Sean Lester, the Kileen in Ballycar, Co. Clare the scene of his childhood and also on the home of Domhnall UaBuachalla the last Governor General. He complimented the simple format approach which he said “would encourage contributions from people other than just academics”. He then acknowledged specifically the contributions by Pat Devlin and John Hulme FULS and Larry Breen FLHS for the key role they played in the development and management of the project. His final words were “I wish you the very best for this wonderful project, which I hope we will see develop and grow, Go raibh míle maith agaibh go léir.”

There then followed a presentation on behalf of the History Federations by Larry Breen of the FLHS to President Higgins.

This was a specially framed copy of a Hidden Gem/Forgotten Person in appreciation of the President's visit . The story behind the presentation was an interesting one as it was about a forgotten person , namely Willie Clune, who had taught the President at the national school in Ballycar, Co. Clare.This teacher was an extraordinary man who is credited with having a significant influence on the President as a boy and for inspiring Michael D Higgins on his crusade for social justice for all. The President was visibly touched by the presentation as was his wife Sabina and was extremely grateful for the nature of the gift.



Clane members at the Launch. L-R: Jim Heffernan, Brian McCabe (Kill HS), Úna Heffernan, Brendan Cullen, John Noonan, Larry Breen. INSET: Pat Given and Anne Breen.

The President then returned to the exhibition and spent considerable time looking at the displays in greater detail sharing his thoughts with those nearby. He then enjoyed a “cuppa” while mixing and socialising with all present. It was then time to say goodbye and wish the President a safe journey. The event demonstrated the importance and significance of both history federations working together in the common cause of promoting local history across the Island of Ireland.

HIDDEN GEMS & FORGOTTEN PEOPLE



WILLIE CLUNE OF BALLYCAR NATIONAL SCHOOL

In 1940 there were 9,771 primary school teachers in Ireland. Some were the type whose ex-pupils would spend the rest of their lives trying to forget. Others the sort with a strategy of endless repetition to drill home the lesson. But there were a few able to truly educate and inspire, who could lift the words from a page, who taught their pupils to think 'Maybe I could...'. One such was Willie Clune, principal of Ballycar N.S., Newmarket-on-Fergus, Co. Clare.

Willie was born in 1889, the son of a carpenter. Of his eight siblings, there was one (Conor) who was executed on Bloody Sunday during the War of Independence. Willie lived in the village of Quin, Co. Clare and cycled 8 miles daily to teach in Ballycar. His wife was Catherine and they had two children, Monica and Fergus. He died in 1965 and is buried just outside the door of Quin Abbey. These are the dry facts of his life but the living of it contained so much more.

"There was not one person who came into his schoolyard from any background, with shoes or without, who wasn't respected. He was a man who loved the wonder of children. He knew the names of plants and bushes in Latin, Irish and English. On sunny days he would take the whole school to the top of the hill to show them the history of the local area. Master Clune had some extraordinary ideas. He delighted the children with his belief that if you tried hard enough, and really used your concentration, you could go back through not only your own memory, but other people's memories to remember, for example, an Irish word."

These are the words of Michael D. Higgins, an ex-pupil who responded to this teacher's inspiration with a crusade for social justice that took him all the way to the Presidency of Ireland. But there were many others for whom he lit a candle in the darkness of rural poverty. Well remembered are his witty observations and clever phrases, his kindness if a child was sick, and the likelihood that if you met him during the school holidays he might just give you a half crown. They remember him too on his bicycle — carrying it when the road was flooded — turning it upside down to fix the freewheel. There was also professional recognition, as he won the Carlyle and Blake Premium, (awarded to the top 16 principals in Ireland) four times.

1. This tiny grainy photo is the best available of Willie Clune. 2. His most famous ex-pupil in 1950. 3. Sample of Willie's handwriting from the school roll. 4. The back wheel of Willie Clune's bicycle. — Contributed by Colm Liddy

*Presented to
President Michael D. Higgins
on the occasion of the launch of the
Hidden Gems and Forgotten People Project
Borealey, October 8, 2015
National Library of Ireland, Dublin
History Federation of Ireland*

A page from the Hidden Gems and Forgotten People Exhibition and Web site. The boy circled in the photograph is the future President Michael D Higgins.

A VISITOR TO CLANE DURING THE GREAT FAMINE

Ciarán Reilly

Elizabeth Grant (later Smith) was born in 1797 in Charlotte Square, Edinburgh, the eldest child of Sir John Peter Grant, baronet, barrister, and laird of Rothiemurchus, Perthshire. Having lost his seat in parliament the financial difficulties which followed forced her father to seek employment in India within the British administration and for a time it was Elizabeth's substantial earnings from published stories and articles which provided the family's only source of income. It was in India where she met and married Colonel Henry Smith (d. 1862) in 1829.



Elizabeth Grant

Some eighteen years older than Elizabeth, Smith was employed in the East India Company's army and when he inherited an estate of 1,200 acres in County Wicklow, the newly wedded couple went to live there in 1830. Residing at Baltyboys House, near Blessington, from 1840 until her death in 1885 Elizabeth Smith kept a diary which outlines not just the family's experiences but also that of the local community and their tenants. In the past historians have quoted extensive passages from Smith's diaries to depict life in Ireland during the Famine and in particular in county Wicklow. Known as the 'Highland Lady', her diaries run to more than a million words.

Of interest to readers of *Coiseanna* is the fact that Smith's diary entries for 21-24 March 1846 provide the following account of Clane and the surrounding areas during the Famine years. In particular, it records her visit to several 'Big Houses' in the locality. The visit included trips to Dollanstown House, near Kilcock (but located in county Meath) then owned by the Gledstones; from there to Lodgepark, Straffan the home of the Henry family who were frequent visitors to Baltyboys with Elizabeth Smith writing in 1840 that 'Anne Henry is to my mind one of the very nicest girls possible'; to the Rynds (Rhind) of Mountarmstrong near Donadea, and finally to their neighbours, the Aylmers at Donadea Castle which impressed her greatly. Smith also visited the Aylmer's 'new house' at Courtown, near Kilcock but the family were not at home.

[21 March 1846] Tuesday- Here we are again with bitter cold weather. It changed in earnest on Tuesday when we had a sharp northeast wind; bad horses from Blesinton [Blessington], very little better from Naas; yet we made out our nineteen Irish miles in something less than four hours. The country after leaving our hills becomes very uninteresting and it increases in ugliness as we get further on in this wide plain for the cabins are dirtier and more wretched-looking, the land wetter and the trees scantier. Still there is an evident improvement since the last time we made the same journey, in the towns particularly, both Clane and Kilcock being much more respectable looking.

Dollandstown is as comfortable as an old patched house surrounded by ditches and placed in a bog can well be; its small grounds are tastefully laid out and very prettily kept and its small rooms are very neatly furnished. The host and hostess as kind as possible. We had therefore a very pleasant visit; no company on any day but the last when we were not improved by the addition of a Mr. and Mrs. Bellingham, new neighbours, and Mr. McCartney, a clergyman, said to be a clever man. Vans is in a delirium of happiness with his approaching marriage; Edward much inclined to fall in love too, if he got any encouragement; Louisa out of humour at being so long unmarried is by no means so agreeable as she might be if she were happier, Mrs. Gledstones seems to be in tolerable health. They have filled their house with pretty things from Italy – casts, prints, pictures frames of the utmost beauty, some of them enclosing very agreeable pictures; and then the large conservatory opening out of the drawing-room makes the effect very good.



Lodge Park

[22 March 1846] Wednesday morning, Mrs. Gledstones, the girls and I were driving by Edward to Lodgepark, which I was

glad to shew the girls, the whole place and house and people being so thoroughly gentlemanlike. Mr. and Mrs. Brooke were there, he really older than Mr. Brownrigg. Charles, the artillery son, had come down for a day or two – a little gentlemanly bit of good-looking emptiness like the rest of them; Anne grown very plain but as attractive as ever; her oil paintings very beautiful, her fancy sketches from the different books she reads show a great deal of genius. Selina, the age of Janey, a handsome girl, looks no older than Annie. Emily, Annie's age, is still a child in a frock and trowsers. Mrs. Henry's insincere manner prevents my caring for her though she is so much liked by those who know her. Mr. Henry has broke down into a complete old man who cannot reckon upon many more days in this world; sadly indeed changed since I last saw him. They are very anxious about their two sons in India, both of whom are with the army in the Sutledj. Dick's last letter gave a miserable account of the sufferings of the soldiers from thirst, exhaustion and unavoidable neglect, the numbers of the slain having been fully doubled from these causes; yet he writes in spirits, anxious for the impending fights; and Jamie has volunteered form a pleasant staff situation in hopes of gaining dear bought laurels among these horrors. The Colonel and Mr. Gledstanes never stirred out; they ate a chicken, drank a bottle of ale, read, talked and slept over a roaring wood fire. Louisa and Vans rode.



The Ruins of Donadea Castle

[23 March 1846] Thursday - Vans drove his two sisters, Annie and me to several places in good heavy showers of sleet – the two old idlers preferring as before the fireside, Janey and Edward choosing a ride and a game at chess first. We courageous ladies went first to see a Mrs. Rhind who though born a Wolfe we did not find anyway interesting except indeed that she played well on a fine pianoforte; next to Donadea where more has been made of a bog by judicious planting than anyone could have believed to be possible who has been set down fifty years ago on so unpromising a plain. The Castle has been modernised into a handsome set of towers and flanks without and very fine apartments within, and the rooms besides being well furnished are so filled with maps, globes, minerals, knickknacks, etc. as give a pleasant impression regarding the habits of Sir Gerald and Lady Aylmer and their only son. Yet Sir Gerald is an oddity; he has surrounded his domain with a high wall commanded at intervals by towers each forming a dwelling-house, the residences of his labourers, all protestants, and regularly drilled every afternoon to be in readiness to defend the Castle at the approaching rebellion. We just looked through the new house at Courtown, the John Aylmers being with their numerous family in Dublin. The reception rooms are very pretty, staircase handsome, bedrooms few and wretched; they have had to build a wing to accommodate their eight children which quite darkens the dining-room. It was a cold drive and but for the cup of hot tea awaiting me in my room I should have been frozen.

[24 March 1846] Friday Yesterday we had some trouble to get away: the ground was covered with snow – the first we have seen this winter, and the bright sun melting it, the roads were heavy. The wretched Naas horses stopped with us in the middle of the long hill from Eadestown, and one of them appearing vicious the Colonel made us get out. We walked on near a couple of miles before by the help of a horse obligingly lend by a farmer they got the carriage on. We were quite wet, so took off our boots inside, I, my stockings also, and with my feet in my muff we came comfortably on.

LOUGH NEAGH MYTHOLOGY

Jimmy Conway



Lough Neagh

Lough Neagh is a unique place. It is the largest lake in these islands and the third largest in all of Europe behind Lake Geneva and Lake Constance. One hundred and fifty three square miles in area it has played a pivotal role historically, socially and commercially in the history and heritage of Ulster. Actually the size has been reduced from a greater area by drainage schemes and an old saying is that “Ulster was in Lough Neagh rather than Lough Neagh is in Ulster”. The Lough borders five of the Six Counties, Armagh, Antrim, Down, Tyrone and Derry only Fermanagh is missing. Abounding in flora, fauna and wild life, it is world famous for its eels which actually journey from the Sargasso Sea , travelling four thousand miles with the gulf stream in the process. I have many fond memories of summer days spent roaming the shore at Castor’s Bay, swimming and invariably being attacked by swarms of midges which frequented the

shores. It is a magical place resonating in myths and legends. I will always remember one story of its origins. The legendary giant, Fionn Mac Cumhaill (Finn Mc Cool) tore up a sod and tossed it after a Scottish rival, the crater became Lough Neagh and the sod landed in the sea forming the Isle of Man. We were all reared with that story.

Most of the Lough Neagh Myths involve eruption stories and the expelling of the people who lived there. The “Neagh” element in the name Lough Neagh is also the origin for Eochaid, Echu, Hoy, Haughey, Haughian and Iveagh and is synonymous with horses or horsemen. Cú Chulainn was said to have had two horses, Liath Macha (the Grey of Macha) and Dubh Sainglend (Black Sainglenn). Both of these horses came out of lakes and were tamed by Cú Chulainn for use in battle, Then of course there is the magnificent horse, Enbarr of the Flowing Mane, associated with the sea and the great Celtic Sea God Manannán mac Lir.



Fionn mac Cumhaill confronting the Scottish Giant

In the case of Lough Neagh, Eochaid is in fact the same god as the Daghdha (“the good god”) who is a version of the sun god and also referred to as Eochaid Ollathair – which incorporates

the element each meaning “a horse” and ollathair “great father” a father-figure, king, and druid. Depicted wearing a hooded cloak, he is associated with fertility, agriculture, manliness and strength, as well as magic, druidry and wisdom. Several tribal groupings saw the Dagda as an ancestor and were named after him, such as the Uí Echach (Haughey) and the Dáirine.

Personality of Lough Neagh

Lough Neagh is said to be “a good servant though a bad master”, being affluent, abundant in sustenance & able to support a large community hence it being the first area settled by the Mesolithic people, our first humans. It is also said that “A North West wind is a sign of good weather, an East wind is the sign of a storm”. John Wesley spent time on Clanrolla Mound & Kinnegoe two ancient sites on the Southern shore of Lough Neagh. And on one of his many trips to the area talked of the magical powers the waters possessed.

Liminal Lough Neagh

A very special ancient liminal place, water has always been spiritual, an example is the Christian baptism with water. The fact that large expanses of water reflect the Sky, Stars, Sun and Moon and can play out animated three dimensional magical scenes of the heavens above would make these Mystical Places. As such a belief in a closeness to the gods and a threshold or thin place Liminal to past generations.

Great eruption stories

The greater amount of Lough Neagh Mythology is of the eruption legends.

In the place called Liathmuine (Lethwhinney), “Grey Thicket” a well named Linnmuine (Linnwhinney) “Pool Thicket”, which had wonderful miraculous powers of healing, but had a special provision that required the cured on leaving, after the cure, to close the wicket-gate that shut in the well. However, fatefully, a woman having forgotten, left the gate open, when instantly the vexed well waters sprang from their source and pursued the offender, who fled in terror before the advancing waves, until

at last she sank down exhausted, when the waters closed over her, and she was seen no more. This formed the great lake Lough Neagh, which is exactly the length the woman ran in her flight from the angry spirit of the lake and of course in Lurgan we still have a place called Toberhewney.

Another more famous version is, “The Telling of Lough Neagh”:

Eochu Mac Mairid, the son of a Munster king named Mairid, who broke a great taboo when he fell in love with his stepmother, Eibhliu. Fleeing the rage of his father, Eochu and Eibhliu journeyed north, along with his brother Riabh and an entourage of followers. They camped at Newgrange on the River Boyne where they were met by Aengus Og. Aengus was aware of the taboo they had broken and killed their pack horses, though after they had begged him, he lent them a horse on condition that when they next stopped the horse would be returned forth with. In due course they were far enough away from Mairid, and stopped to settle in an area known as Liathmuine (Grey thicket) but forgot to send the horse back to Aengus. The horse urinated on the ground forming a magic well which Eochu and his camp covered with a capstone to prevent it overflowing.

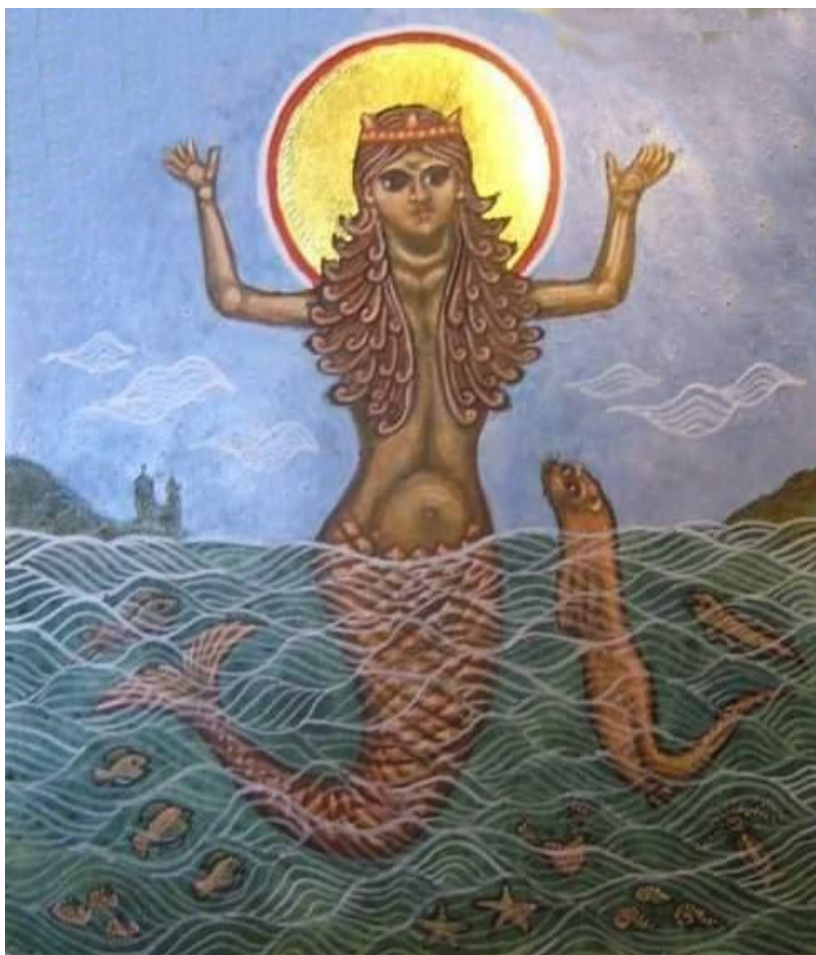
Unfortunately one night by mistake the capstone was not replaced and the well overflowed in an eruption, flooding the whole of Liathmuine and drowning Eochu, Eibhliu, their aides and the entire settlement. Thus Loch nEchach, Lough Neagh was formed. Eochu’s daughter Airiu, along with her prophet and dog were also drowned but unlike Eochu they were buried in cairns on the Eastern shores of Lough Neagh.

Loch nEchach [Pool of Urine] – Loch nEchach burst over Liat Muine during the reign of Lugai Riab Derg, the 87th king of Ireland. (source: Macalister, LGE, Vol. 5, p. 303).

Lí Ban the Lough Neagh Mermaid

Another daughter of Eochu, named Lí Ban, was saved from the overflow eruption by becoming a Muirgheilt or Mermaid

whilst her dog became an otter. Muirchiú the young fisherman was out in the middle of the lough one day hoping to catch eels. He was feeling downhearted, on losing his girl to another man. Suddenly his thoughts were interrupted by a strong pull on his net. He hauled aboard a large fish he thought but in fact it was a beautiful woman, as graceful as an eel with a silvery fishtail from the waist down. To his amazement this fabulous creature could speak. "I am Lí Ban" she announced "I am the daughter of Eochaidh mac Maireadha. I am of royal blood" .



Lí Ban

Muirchiú desperately wanted to keep her, to never let her back into the dark depths. She was able to read his thoughts, Lí Ban said she would stay and talk while the lough remained calm. She told her strange history. She told the saga of the magic well covered with a capstone to prevent it overflowing. She told of the day by mistake the capstone was not replaced and the well overflowed, flooding all the land around, drowning the settlers, all except herself and her dog. She found herself in front of the God Manannán who vowed to protect her. He turned her into a mermaid and her dog into an otter. She has roamed the sea and the rivers and lakes of Ireland for three hundred years. Muirchiú desired to embrace Lí Ban but she resisted him saying, "I am the daughter of a king, you are but a fisherman", however within a short time they found themselves irresistibly drawn into a passionate embrace. As a mere human Muirchiú, was overcome by Lí Ban's otherworldly spell. He was captured in a timeless state that he was unable to describe later when his friends found him back on dry land. They all were relieved that he had survived a terrible storm. "What storm?" asked Muirchiú. "The one that blew up suddenly out of nowhere and then just as suddenly disappeared" he was told. "A storm caused by a singing mermaid" was what local folk called it. Muirchiú never saw Lí Ban again but he looked and listened for her often.

Eochaid's Sister Mis is remembered by the mountain on which St Patrick was a slave, "Slemish". She is also remembered by an early poem which recalls that people would be in the "Pool Plain of Mis". In another version Lí Ban made her way up a river and out to Sea. In her mermaid form, she was spotted by the ship carrying a messenger sent by St. Comgall to Rome. She promised to meet at the seaport inlet of Inbhearn Ollarbha (Larne Lough) in Ireland after one year, and was captured in a fishnet. There she was baptised by Comgall, and given the Christened name **Muirgein** ("sea-born") or **Muirgeilt** ("sea-wander"). She appears canonised as St. Muirgen in genealogies of Irish saints, her feast day assigned to 27 January.

Lí Ban or **Liban'** (from Old Irish *lí*, meaning 'beauty', and *ban*, meaning 'of women')

LOUISA CONOLLY OF CASTLETOWN

Henry Bauress

“I perfectly adore dear Aunt Louisa,” Charlotte Fitzgerald, daughter of Louisa’s sister, Emily, wrote of Louisa Conolly in 1777. It was around this time, wrote Louisa’s biographer, Brian Fitzgerald¹, that Louisa began “to divert herself to the well being of the poor in Celbridge.” When the great granddaughter of King Charles I died in August 1821, she was widely mourned. Louisa (nee Lennox) was in her 79th year when she passed away 200 years ago this year: seated in a tent which she had erected on a lawn in front of Castletown House, Celbridge, County Kildare. Fitzgerald writes in his 1950 biography: “Louisa, it is clear, lived a life of charity and kindness towards all. She was greatly beloved and respected in her wide circle of distinguished friends and relatives.” Her nephew, George Napier, wrote of the final moments of her burial at the family vault at Tea Lane, Celbridge: “A general rush was made to the vault, each striving to get a last look at the coffin which contained the remains of one they almost revered as a saint.”

Louisa did not regard herself as saintly. Before her death she said she “would like to think that all the poor people whom I might have assisted and that in my prosperity I neglected, will be witness to the justice of the punishment I receive and will forgive me.” Louisa Lennox was born on December 5, 1743, daughter of Charles Lennox, 2nd Duke of Richmond, who was a grandson of Charles II by Louise de Kerouaille, one of Charles’s many mistresses. Louisa’s mother was Lady Sarah Cadogan, a daughter of the first Earl of Cadogan. Louisa was the fifth of the couple’s seven children. Her eldest sister, Caroline, married Henry Fox, the politician. Her second sister, Emily, married James, Earl of Kildare, in 1747, and lived at Carton House. Next came two brothers, Charles and George. Her two younger sisters were Sarah, born in 1745, and Cecilia, born 1750. Her early years were spent in England. Sarah and Louisa formed a special bond when very young, and spent time in the company of King George III, who they loved to

watch counting his money every Monday. Louisa was seven when her father died in 1750, at the age of 47. Her mother died the following year. Louisa and Sarah went to live with their sister, Emily, then 20, and her husband, James, at Carton House, Maynooth. At Carton, Louisa helped with Emily's large and growing family and became very close to them.

Louisa was riding a horse near Castletown when she met Tom Conolly, then owner of Castletown House and other lands, which provided him up to £25,000 income from rents (€4.4 million equivalent today). The Conolly's owned their land outright, not leased it, to their considerable advantage. The pair liked each other and married on December 30, 1758. Louisa was 15 and Tom was 20. Tom's mother was Lady Anne Wentworth, eldest daughter of Thomas Wentworth, first Earl of Strafford. Tom's father was William Conolly, a nephew of the Right Hon. William Conolly, long time speaker of the Irish House of Commons and the man who built Castletown House. Tom inherited Castletown in 1754. Louisa never had any children but spent much of her life looking after her siblings and nieces and nephews and the community around her. Castletown flourished under Tom and Louisa. She directed a lot of work around the estate and Castletown became a lively, social spot with many visitors. The letters used by biographers, including Brian Fitzgerald, Stella Tillyard² and others, suggest that Louisa and Tom got on relatively well for a wealthy couple of their time. In 1776, 18 years into marriage, Tom was "a husband one so dearly loves," wrote Louisa. Louisa found out after Tom's death in 1803, from payments in accounts, that he had a mistress but his memory remained dear to her. Louisa's good judgment led to her becoming a trusted confidante to many, helping them out of trouble.

Her sister Sarah, led a relatively controversial and high profile personal life for her time. Sarah eventually married George Napier and moved to live at Oakley Park in Celbridge in 1781 but Sarah was close to being Queen because before he became King George III, the shy Prince of Wales wanted to marry

Sarah, who married and later divorced Sir Charles Bunbury, owner of the first English Derby winning horse.



Louisa Conolly by George Romney

Louisa devoted much of her energy to Castletown as well as minding her wider family, including Emily's son, supporting Lord Edward Fitzgerald, who died in the 1798 Rebellion, an event which was to have a deep effect on Castletown. Tragically, Louisa was amongst the last people to see her favourite nephew before his death in Newgate Gaol, Dublin, in May 1798. Brian Fitzgerald said that while the 1789 revolution in France "foreshadowed the end of civilisation" for many in power in Ireland and Britain, for Louisa's much loved nephew, Edward, it heralded a new dawn. Edward's sister,

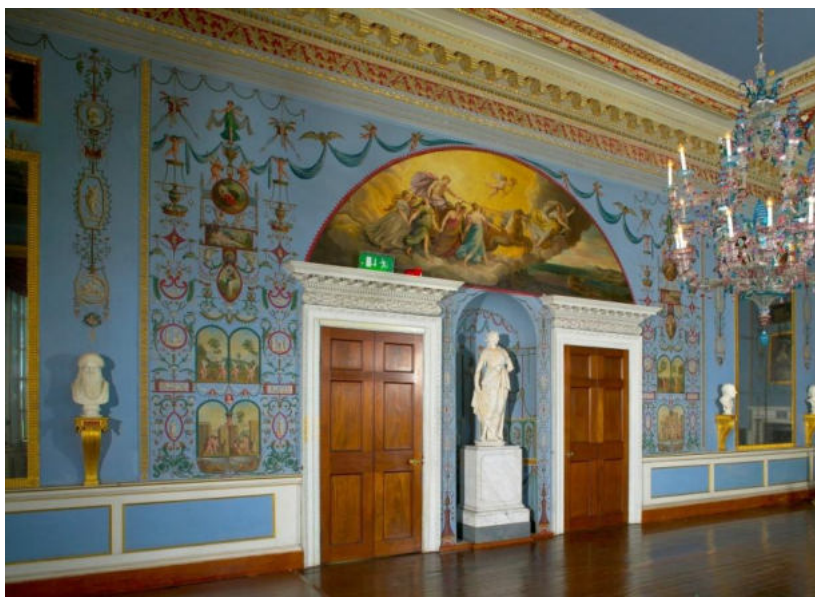
Lucy, was in love with a United Irishman and friend of Edward's, Arthur O'Connor. Louisa found herself worrying about Edward, for whose arrest, the Government had offered £1,000. Twelve servants and footmen at Castletown were dismissed for involvement in the rebellion, an event which disappointed Louisa as she believed she had treated people well. At the same time, Castletown House was searched for arms because of suspicions over Edward's role, but had 18 armed soldiers ready to defend it. Family letters reveal that following the French revolution in 1789, Louisa feared that she could be put to the guillotine and beheaded, as had her great great grandfather, King Charles I. After Edward's death, she wrote to Emily: "God's will be done; and in a happier world, I trust, we shall all meet in. Our beloved child is there; his motives for action flowed from the purest source, though we have to lament that human nature being imperfect, every attempt beyond the ordinary bound of reason must fail, let the object be ever so desirable. But God, who knows the heart, can appreciate the value of the intention....."

The Lennox sisters were well read and open to new ideas about society and politics in the 18th century, including those coming from France. Artists, actors and actresses graced their homes. They were not afraid to think outside the box. Letters suggest strongly that Louisa had strong principles but an understanding heart as she moved diplomatically through life, trying to balance status, principles and justice. But her wider family and its involvement in the military often left her close to opposing sides in the 1798-1803 period. On personal matters, at one point her sister, Emily, gave out to her because an actress, Mrs (Frances) Abington, had attended a ball at which Emily's daughter, Charlotte, then under Louisa's care, was present. Emily was not happy, perhaps because of her perception of the reputation of Frances Abington. Though a top actress, she may have been a prostitute at an earlier stage in life¹⁴. Abington, who is thanked in the preface to a contemporary play (The Times) by Elizabeth Griffith, who later lived at Millicent House near Clane, County Kildare, was defended by Louisa. She found Abington and a friend "both vastly well behaved

and agreeable,” according to Kim Mullaney-Dignam’s book, “Music and dancing at Castletown, County Kildare 1759-1821.” When, following the death of Emily’s husband, Emily secretly married her children’s tutor, William Ogilvie, Louisa wrote to her: “You hurt your rank in the world, in my opinion—that is all you do; and if you make happiness by it, I am sure that you make a good exchange, and it would be very hard indeed if your friends were not satisfied with that. Your brothers and sisters really have no right to act otherwise than kindly to you.” Tillyard wrote that as she grew older Louisa moved towards the opinion that servants were people who offered their services freely for an award not simply as an anonymous class preordained to live in servile dependence upon the rich. Writing to Sarah in 1772, Louisa was sure servants gave their employers more than their employers gave them. Lena Boylan wrote⁷ how in 1820, the year before her death, Louisa wrote to her brother in law George Napier: “I cannot help hoping that with wise heads, I may see the principle established that the Poor ought to be the first care of the Rich. The labouring class are the most populous in all countries; it is through their bodily labours that the productions of the Earth are to be had and justice calls for their receiving that share of them that is necessary for their maintenance and comfort.” She went on to reflect that “the Labouring class have no power but to redress themselves but by violence(the most destructive mode possible for them and their superiors). The Rich ought therefore to be beforehand with them, and consider the justice that is due to them. Justice would soon direct every understanding as to what ought to be done, without the help of the heartfelt pleasures that Religious motives give upon assisting one’s fellow creatures.”

Louisa and Tom were rich by the standards of today. In 1787, £2956 (€517,000 today¹⁰) was the estimated cost of running Castletown and the Conolly’s Dublin house, apart from building expenses and Tom’s personal expenses, mainly horses and gambling. Castletown had 46 servants and over 90 hearths, overseen economically and informally by the (as Musson wrote “famously meticulous”¹²) Louisa and Tom. There was

£656 spent on servants wages (£14 a year on average per person) , £254 on their clothes, £221 on Dublin house bills, and £400 on charities. Louisa's personal expenditure was £321 and sundries (including polishing the banisters and cleaning clocks)



The Long Gallery Castletown

amounted to £107. Marketing and groceries cost £210, country bills (flour, oatmeal, peas butter, candles and letter carriage was £354. Another £202 was spent on barley malt and hops for brewing, £445 on wine and £598 on oxen, cows, sheep and hogs. Then there was £77 on servant travelling expenses, £42 on drugs/physicians and £195 on extraordinaries (building works). She was sure servants gave their employers more than their employers gave them, she wrote to Sarah in 1772. Following Tom's death in 1803, Louisa faced a lot of debt and found herself comparatively badly off. She cut down on Castletown's spending of an earlier era. Sarah described her sister as "a most accurate calculator." If not for her Castletown and Celbridge as we know it, including the grounds so well used by many today, may not exist, notwithstanding the efforts and battles by the late Desmond Guinness and others to preserve the estate in the 20th century.

Today there are about 90 hectares (222 acres) in the Office of Public Works publicly owned portfolio at Castletown which says that all of these lands are accessible to the public¹¹. Amongst Louisa's achievements was the establishment of a school inside the gates of Castletown. She built the non denominational school hoping that Catholic and Protestant children would grow up with "cordiality towards each other." She created the first industrial school in Ireland. It was erected on the site of the kennels in which husband, Tom, kept hounds. A new Protestant church was also erected inside the gates to replace the previous church, which had been destroyed in the 1798 rebellion. She survived her husband by eighteen years and died in August 1821 63 years after she had arrived at Castletown as a married 15 year old.

References:

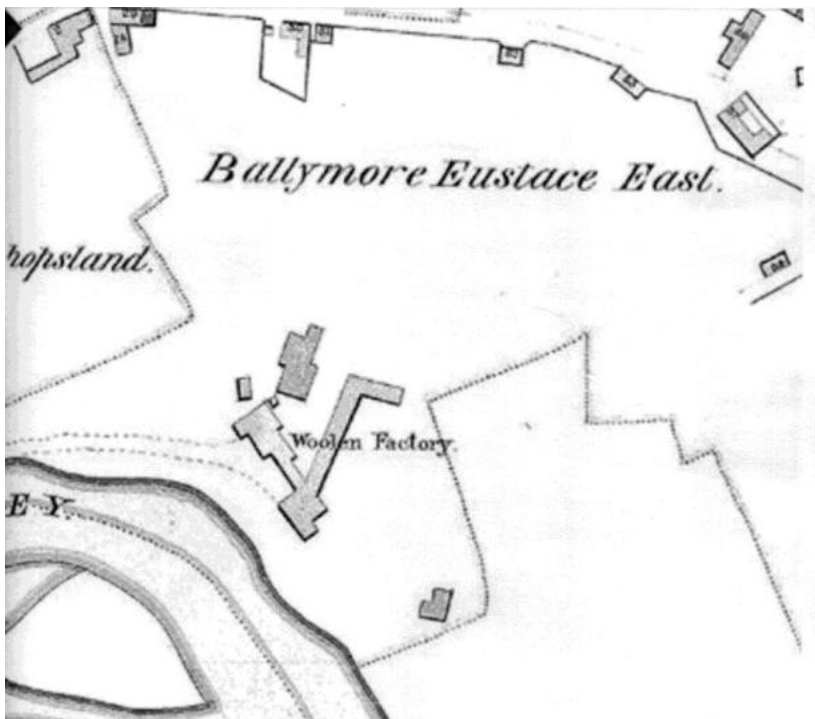
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3. Citizen Lord- Edward Fitzgerald 1763-1798: Stella Tillyard.
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BALLYMORE EUSTACE WOOLLEN MILLS

Larry Breen

Many people would be unaware that Ballymore Eustace, a picturesque village situated in a deep vale in County Kildare and shut out from the rude world by gently sloping hills, was once the home to a large and vibrant woollen industry employing most if not all of the people in the area. .

The story from its very early beginnings as a mill site in medieval times, through its halcyon days of industrial cloth/woollen production to its final demise is both interesting and intriguing.



The Mill in Griffith Valuation Map 1853

Long before the Woollen Mill opened in 1802 the site had a long history of industrial activity being used variously over the years as a corn mill and tuck mill since the middle ages. In

1181, John Comyn, Archbishop of Dublin, was granted lands by Pope Lucius III. References at that time indicate that the already existing mill at Ballymore Eustace was named under his authority, which makes it very probable that the mill predates 1181 and the Norman Invasion of 1169-71. The mill at Ballymore Eustace is named in Archbishop Alen's register (1172-1534) and it is stated that Archbishop Comyn would have an income of £10 from the mill. In 1373, Thomas Fitz Eustace purchased Ballymore Castle and Ballymore Mill from Archbishop Thomas. In 1540 there is reference to the mill in a letter written by a George Browne, Archbishop of Dublin to King Henry VIII, concerning the Constablership of Ballymore, "... you direct us to confirm our right to the Constablership of Ballymore with the mill of the same". The mill may have been destroyed to some extent during the irruption of County Kildare by O'Moore and the sons of Cahir O'Connor. A Civil Survey in 1664 references the mill in its description of Ballymore Eustace. The mill is shown in Keenan's 1752 map of Kildare County and although there is no evidence of the mill race, the mill symbol clearly indicates the site of the mill along the River Liffey. The mill race is shown on Alexander Taylor's map of 1783.

The story of the mill and factory began in 1802 when Christopher Drumgoole, a clothier of the Weaver's Square, Dublin, purchased the "Corn Mill, Tuck Mill and Kiln" together with the privilege of a strip of bog adjoining the same at Ballymore Eustace. The existing corn mill was duly converted to a woollen mill by Mr Drumgoole. The factory built on the site was a very impressive building and machinery was provided to match. The following is a description of the machinery: Tuck Mill - two Jig mills - one brush mill for finishing cloth - one machine for washing, four pair of fallers for milling or thickening cloth. Diameter of wheel twelve feet. Breadth of wheel six foot four inches. Diameter of second wheel fourteen feet. Breadth six foot six inches, depth of shrouding thirteen inches forty buckets - fall thirteen feet. The machinery worked by water is as follows - one willow (or devil) for breaking the wool before it is carded - also three

scribbling machines for same purpose. Four carding machines - one teaser breaking the wool before going to the scribbling machines - There are six scribbling machines, six carding machines, fifty looms and twenty jennies for spinning wool.”



Part of the Old Mill Building

The Topographical Dictionary of Ireland at the time makes reference to the mill in its description of Ballymore Eustace , stating that: “A large manufactory in which every description of cloth is made and when in full work, employs about seven hundred people.” Business was good at first , but after 1815 and the end of the Napoleonic Wars the economy declined , and the factory suffered. On the edge of the river, in a very pretty position sat the buildings of the factory but now it was heading towards a state of decline. The Ordnance Survey map of 1837 still however showed the mill buildings and the mill race , including the head race and tail race. By 1840 however prospects for the mill’s future had improved. Assessment at the time reflected the following situation,” last year the mill was employed eight months, twelve hours per day and the foreman states that the work done in this factory might be averaged at six months, twelve hours per day. He is also of the

opinion that the work will be carried on more extensively soon ,as the machinery is undergoing repairs, and a new wheel has been set up.” The family papers supported the foreman’s optimism at that time.

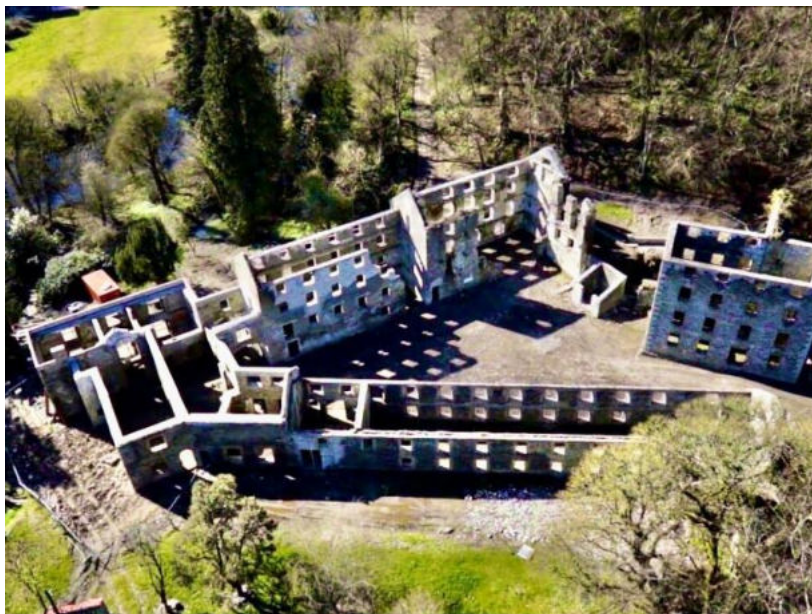
In January 1841, in exchange for substantial annuities for himself, his wife, and remaining children, Christopher Drumgoole transferred the business in its entirety to his third son Peter. The papers further state that Peter Drumgoole worked the factory with much success, and after a few years he erected and fitted up an oatmeal mill adjoining the factory , which proved a profitable concern. He also erected or improved the dwelling house and is stated to have expended upwards of two thousand pounds on the premises. The factory was doing well and out of a total population of two thousand and twenty nine in Ballymore Eustace , one hundred and seven persons were engaged in the clothing trade. But the 1840s were not happy times, particularly for the Drumgoole family. By the winter of 1842 Christopher Drumgoole had passed away. His second son , John , died in April 1845 and then Peter, so lately and assuredly in command , departed this life in May 1848. The Factory was to lie idle for the next nine years. The Griffith Valuation map of 1853 showed the mill buildings . The dwelling building had been erected at this stage and was no longer a square building to the south. The small building that was previously in front of this building in the Ordnance Survey map of 1837 was absent , suggesting that this building was now the grand formal dwelling. As part of the Griffith Valuation , a tenement valuation was undertaken, recording all land, houses, mills, bogs and fisheries with the following observations , “three wheels each about ten horse power for the supply of water and food fall has done no work for a considerable time.” It was not until 1857 before ownership would stabilise sufficiently to allow production to re-commence, when the premises were acquired by one John Copeland, Peter Drumgoole’s cousin. The factory continued to stumble towards its uncertain future when John Copeland failed to return the business to any of its previous success.

John Copeland died in July 1879 and the business was left to his son Henry Lewis Copeland , with the proviso that he should pay his father's debts and provide modest annuities for his mother and brethren. The modest size of the annuities , and the fact that John Copeland died in debt, may indicate that life at the factory was unsure , and perhaps "down at heel" during his time in charge. There appears to have been what is best described as a quiet revival under Henry Lewis. The Irish Exhibition took place in 1882 at the Rotunda Assembly Room, Rutland Square, (Parnell Square) and appears to have been a success for the factory. Business prospered for several years, and Henry Copeland was appointed Peace Commissioner in 1894, an honorary position that implied prominence in local society, and in this case likely success in business. The quality of the goods produced was high and this was exemplified by awards the mill won for its products on many occasions in the 1880s.

By the beginning of the twentieth century however business was not good . The Census of Ireland 1901 for example shows just eight persons, (5 females and 3 males) out of a total population of 978 employed in the woollen industry (Including Ellen Brien Widow Age 72 Lodge -keeper). The rate book of 1905 shows Mary C. Copeland as occupier, and that rateable value was assessed at the full amount. The Factory was still in business and Mary Copeland who was then 71 years of age was coping.

We get a glimpse of the final years in the working life of the mill from two reports in the local newspaper. A report on a meeting of the Board of Guardians at Baltinglass Workhouse contains the following paragraph: " among the tenders and samples received were some from Ballymore Eustace Woollen Mills, We are pleased to see that energetic efforts are being made on the part of the management to revive the woollen industry."On another occasion, the Baltinglass Board of Guardians at their meeting on Saturday night paid high tribute to the quality for the material turned out at the Woollen Mills , Ballymore Eustace. The tender of Mr P. McGrath, manager of

the mills was accepted for the supply of blankets and yarn to the Union notwithstanding that this marked an increase on the former price. The standard of the stuff manufactured at the mills is very superior , the premises being fitted up with the most up to date machinery. Prosperity could not have been substantial or lasted for long. The census for 1911 returned the manager's house, gate lodge, and associated nearby cottages where weavers lived in 1901) as unoccupied . Four persons only , had connections with the mill, John Whittle, age 40, wool weaver; Frances Devoy, age 40, wool carder,: Mary Devoy, age 32, wool spinner and Elizabeth Keogh, age 57, employed in the factory. The factory finally closed its doors in 1914 and the equipment was removed in 1924 , believe it or not, by horse and cart.



Aerial Photo of the Old Mill Building after Conservation

It is good that the story of this unique mill can finish on a positive note. The mill was purchased privately in 2014, conservation work is well advanced and there are plans to seek planning permission for a whiskey distillery on the site. Who knows we might yet see a Ballymore Whiskey on the shelves!

REVISITING THE FORGOTTEN HOLY WELLS OF CLANE

Lorcan Harney and Stephen Morrin

Introduction

Holy Wells have been the focus of Christian devotion since early Christian times. This veneration at wells may have even more ancient origins as we know that the pagan Celts worshipped at natural water-sources, and that many of these sites were often rededicated after early Irish saints (Kelly 2002, 25; Whitfield 2007, 513). Few holy wells were ever substantially altered, but occasionally they are associated with stone crosses, bullauns or stones said to bear the imprints of the saint's knees, hands or foot. The religious persecutions of the



Father Moore's Well in Rathbride between Kildare town and Milltown remains the focus of devotion today

17th and 18th centuries further fostered a Catholic tradition of worship at natural places (wells, springs, rocks, crosses, bullaun stones) as church worship was forbidden. In this period, visits to wells on the feast day or 'pattern' day (from *patrún* or 'patron') involved rounds of them when the water was believed to have particular curative properties, followed by social gatherings that included, trading, dancing, singing, drinking and even faction fighting (Jackson 1979–1980, 137). The institutionalisation of the Catholic church from the mid-19th century signalled the demise of holy wells, with many clerics – trained in modern canon law – disapproving of the social aspects of patterns and their perceived archaic religious

practices. Since then, religious customs at most wells have all but disappeared and we would know little about them, but for the work of 19th century antiquarians.

The Holy Wells of Clane

Seventy-two holy wells have been recorded in Kildare, but unfortunately, most are almost completely forgotten (Jackson 1979–1980, 139, 144). This is sadly the case with the holy wells of Clane, where six wells have been identified within the town environs. Five of these were recorded by McEvoy (1979, 23) and Jackson (1979–1980, 147–48, nos 11–15). A sixth well has also been identified (McEvoy 2014b; 2015; 2017; Harney 2019). Unfortunately, none are ‘in use or in good condition’ (Bradley, Halpin and King 1986, 161, vol. 2) and all are almost completely forgotten and covered over.



Number	Name	Easting	Northing	GPS North	GPS West
1	St Brigid's Well, Capdoo	687874.9	727906.4	53.29417	6.68187
2	St Brigid's Well, Camigeen	687696.1	726789.6	53.28416	6.68486
3	Sunday Well	687708.7	727118.1	53.28711	6.68458
4	Boing Well	687701.6	728665.1	53.30101	6.68426
5	Fr Batty's Well	687501.8	727419.3	53.28985	6.68760
6	Tober na Mona	686863.5	727456.6	53.29029	6.69716

Location of the Holy Wells of Clane

These comprise two Brigid's Wells, Sunday's Well, Fr. Batty's Well, *Tober na Mona*, and the Boiling Well. Sources for this survey included the original first edition 6-inch map (1838-42) and O.S. letters (c.1837), the 25-inch map (1897-1913), the Cassini revised editions of the 6-inch map (later 19th century to first half of 20th century), as well as later 19th century, 20th and early 21st century publications. All maps (with recorded monuments) can be viewed on the online National Monuments Service historic environment viewer (archaeology.ie).

St. Brigid's Well – Capdoo Commons Townland

This well was located on the roadside and named 'St. Brigid's' on the revised 6-inch Cassini map. It is also recorded as a 'spring' on the 25-inch map, but unusually does not feature on our earliest map - the first edition 6-inch map(1838-42). Peter O'Neill has recalled that this well was used for drinking water by the surrounding houses up until about the late 1960s when the houses were then connected to the water mains. He had no recollection of it as a holy well so obviously any religious association of it had long disappeared at this point. In February 1979, this holy well was described as 'in O'Neill's field on Dublin Road, behind Kevin O'Neill's garden (overgrown)' (McEvoy 1979, 23). By this date, this well was 'no longer frequented and very overgrown', and had no surviving oral traditions associated with it (Jackson 1979-1980, 148). The well was visited by archaeologists on 11/11/2003 in advance of the construction of the Oaks apartment complex – they described it as 'a dyke or ditch approximately 0.7m deep running east-west. There was no evidence of standing water or spring activity at that time. There were no remains around the feature although it was quite overgrown. There was no material evidence that this site was archaeological in nature' (Tierney 2004). Fortunately, Tony McEvoy (2015, 3) has provided the following description of it before it was removed and covered over during the construction work.

'It was originally in a field by the Dublin Road, which formed part of the farm attached to Abbeylands House. The field was accessed in those days by a stile to one side of a round stone

pier, a pair of which formed a gateway—which was opposite the point where the Capdoo Lane joined the Dublin Road at McKenna’s old shop. It was located alongside a ditch or small stream which now borders the site of Abbey Wood Apartments to the east. Alternatively it may be described as lying to the rear or west of the Oaks [housing estate]. There were steps down to the well, which was about fifty yards in from the Dublin Road. The water had a slow steady out-flow and was of high quality. The style and steps indicate that the well was regularly visited, most likely as a source of water and probably also on account of its association with St. Brigid. There may even have been pattern days associated with it, perhaps the 1st February. It is no surprise therefore that it has long been a protected site, officially listed in the National Record of Protected Sites and Monuments. At this stage, before you make up your mind to go and see it for yourself, I have to share the sad news that it is no more. It has been closed in and covered over, along with the ditch with which it was associated. An important part of our heritage is no more!’



As expected, a visit to the well revealed that it is gone. The red arrow indicates the site of the former well now located in the grass verge on the north side of The Oaks apartment complex.

St. Brigid's Well – Carrigeen Townland

Carrigeen's St. Brigid's well once existed near a collection of other monuments known as St. Brigid's Chair, Thimble and footprint—all formerly situated on a low hill beside a cul-de-sac lane branching off the Moat Commons Lane connecting the Millicent and Naas roads together (McEvoy 2014b; 2015; 2017; Harney 2019). These monuments were described by Sherlock (1891, 27) as:

'There are few ancient remains in this district. Some forty or fifty years ago there existed what was called St. Brigid's chair and thimble beside a stone said to bear the imprints of her feet, a little way above the head of the millrace at Clane, where there is now a disused quarry; but the stones were quarried a generation ago. I imagine from the description that it may have been an old cromlech. The well which sprung beside the chair, and was known as St. Brigid's well, still sends a tiny flow to the river'

Under the section 'Notes', an anonymous source – possibly Sherlock (1901, 269)— added a further comment.

'a few years ago a man living about a quarter of a mile above Clane, on the north side of the river, and close to the spot where the ancient ford crossed the Liffey, pointed out a spring of water, which he said was called 'St. Brigid's Well'. He also said that some forty or fifty years ago there were two curious stones standing near the well, the larger of which was called 'St. Brigid's Chair', and the other 'St. Brigid's Thimble'. These stones, situated near an outcrop of limestone rock which was quarried for roadmaking, were, he said, both broken up to mend roads with by a man named Tyrrell, who never had any luck afterwards'

Sherlock's description of 'St. Brigid's Chair' as a 'cromlech' is significant as it was an antiquarian term used to describe a Neolithic/Bronze Age megalith, most typically a Portal Tomb. We know nothing more about 'St. Brigid's Thimble stone', but must presume that it was a natural/artificially hewn stone adopting the appearance of a conical-shaped thimble – a small hard cup worn to protect the finger when pushing a sewing needle. Of particular interest here, however, was the stone

bearing the imprints of ‘St. Brigid’s foot’. Such stones are ‘frequently situated near holy wells and early monastic sites and are usually renowned for their healing virtues’ (Zucchelli 2016, 91). In Kildare, we know of St. Patrick’s footprint stones at Lullymore and Knockpatrick (Graney), a stone bearing a footprint/hoof mark from St. Brigid or her horse at Ticknevin and stones bearing knee-prints (St. Brigid) at Riverstown, footprint in Carrigeen, all these stones were associated with holy well sites.



Red Arrow indicating possible location of St. Brigid’s Well and St. Brigid’s Chair (McEvoy 2014b, 12). Red dot indicates location of St. Brigid’s Chair as recorded by National Monuments Service

When these monuments were destroyed is a source of confusion as Sherlock recorded them as quarried away in the mid-to-late 19th century, but the late Móna Noonan and Harrington family of the Millicent road could recall that they still survived into the 1960s when they were bulldozed by Kildare County Council when using the old quarry as a county dump (McEvoy 2014b, 11;2015, 3;2017, 10). While these monuments are not indicated on the more recent 25-inch and Cassini 6-inch maps, Tony notes that the 1838 first edition 6-inch map shows two circular symbols which he views as denoting ‘St. Brigid’s Well’ and the ‘cromlech’. He (2014b, 10) notes that ‘the symbol taken as denoting the well, a minute circle, is frequently used in this way. They are about 45feet apart and the well is in turn about 45 feet back from where the

lane, which originally ran all the way to the weir, is now terminated at a gate’.



The in-filled County Council Dump today on the south side of laneway; this is the probable site of the former monuments Saint Brigid’s Chair and Thimble



A stream can be found on the north side of the embankment extending into the next field before joining the Liffey – Saint Brigid’s Well was somewhere located along this stream.

This holy well was not recorded by Jackson (1979–1980). The National Monuments Service files (KD014-026016) records St Brigid’s Chair and Thimble as a possible ‘Megalithic structure’ and locate them within ‘the disused quarry 85m W of the river Liffey and 100m SW of the head of the mill race of the woollen factory in the village of Clane’, but make no mention of either St. Brigid’s footprint or holy well. Based on the map, Tony’s account, and a conversation with him, the site of the well appears to be in the ditch on the northern side of the laneway roughly across from the site of the council dump. The ditch is well overgrown, but the stream has a continuous flow.

Sunday's Well Carrigeen TD.(KD014-026009)

There are many wells called 'Sunday's Well' in Ireland. These were known as *Tober Rí an Domhnaigh* in Irish or 'Well of the King of Sunday', and may have referred to Jesus Christ in the Tridentine Catholic Church– the counter reformation church that emerged in the 17th century to bolster Catholicism. The name Sunday's Well 'can also mean St. Dominic's Well who was often called St. Sunday in English during the early modern period' (Nugent and Scriven 2015, 19). The origin of this devotion is unclear, but many of these wells were once linked to Patrick. This was the case in Clane where Patrick is reputed to have baptised the local people using the water from this spring beside the ford at the Liffey as he travelled from *Druim Urchaille* (Dunmurrighill in Donadea?) to *Nás na Ríogh*, the seat of the Leinster kings (Shearman 1874–1875, 281–82; Comerford 1883, 106; Cooke-Trench 1900, 109; Cullen 2017, 8). It is interesting that *Nás na Ríogh* is the site of another Sunday's Well (FitzGerald 1896, 158).

Many early churches associated with Patrick, such as Donadea (*Domnach Dhéa*) derive their names from '*Domnach*' – an ancient word for a church site. Shearman (1874–1875, 282) suggested that these *Domnach* were established on Sunday as they may have derived their name from *Domhnaigh* 'Sunday', and that 'it may not be too much to assume, that 'Sunday Well' also indicates some solemn baptism performed by the apostle on a Sunday, the anniversary of which may be preserved in the celebration of the 'Patron'. Similarly, Cooke-Trench (1900, 109) noted that 'in the case of holy wells, it was custom to visit them and perform devotions on particular days of the week' – this applied to wells known as *Tober-righ-an-domhnaigh*, which 'were visited on Sundays, and they are generally called in English, Sunday's Well'.

The well in Clane is recorded as 'Sunday Well' on the 6-inch, 25-inch and Cassini 6-inch maps to the west of the motte (but not in the exact same location), indicating that it was widely recognised place of veneration. The O.S. Letters (c.1837) report that Sunday's Well was 'formerly frequented as a holy

well'. Citing the O.S. Namebook, it mentions this well was 'at edge of moat at north part of Carrigeens townland' (Herity 2002, 42). Writing in the 1870s, J.F. Shearman recalled that 'a 'patron' and 'stations' were held up to about forty years ago' at Sundays Well (Shearman 1874–1875, 282; Jackson 1979–1980, 147), while Comerford (1883, 102) mentioned 'a patron and stations used to be held at it within the memory of some still living'.

Sherlock (1891, 27) noted that 'there is a large moat or tumulus covered with trees, and close to this is a Sunday well'. Cooke-Trench (1900, 109) finally recalled that 'some thirty or forty years ago the bushes about used to be covered with offerings (not, it is true, such as to induce theft) by those who believed that they had derived benefit from drinking the waters'. We must then imagine that devotion at the well had almost completely stopped by the turn of the twentieth century, but Cullen (2017, 9) has found details of a 'well-attended pilgrimage to the well which was led by the curate Fr. M.C. Kelly' in Leinster Leader reports from 1917 (15th June). Memory of this well has now faded, but as late as 1979, McEvoy (p. 15) could recall that 'some older residents can remember an annual religious procession to the well which lasted up to sixty or so years ago'.

This well is situated beside a twelfth century Anglo-Norman motte, but this raised monument was probably reconstructed upon an earlier mound. Indeed, this mound has been recognised in folklore as the burial-place of the late Iron Age Leinster King Mesgegra who was slain by Conall Cernach (a compatriot of the Ulster warrior *Cúchulain*), and has been identified as a potential assembly site known as the *Cruchán Claonta* (translated as 'Slanted hill' or 'Round Hill of Clane') for the Leinster armies in early medieval times (McEvoy 2014a, 10–11; 2019, 6).

This well may have attracted much curiosity in pre-Christian times also as it has been listed as a thermal spring by the Geological Survey and is reputed 'to have never froze, even in



The stone-lined chamber of Sunday's Well (McEvoy 2014b, 12) photo from Herman Geissel, undated)

the most severe frost' (McEvoy 2014a, 10;2019, 6). The Urban Archaeological Survey of County Kildare reported that 'Sundays Well on the west side of the motte still has a stone surround' (Bradley, Halpin and King 1986, 161). McEvoy has also recalled (2014a, 11) that 'the well originally had an enclosing stone-built structure and an outflow into a piped



Figure 8: View of Sunday's Well sometime after the landowner's JCB had removed the extended 'tail' of the sloping hill which ran westwards from the Motte (McEvoy 2014b, 11)

drain. This exited into an open ditch along the northern boundary of the property, and flowed into the Liffey'. During the 1980s or possibly later, the motte was tightly cut back on

all sides by the landowner who apparently removed part of its outer embankment and ditch, a long tapering tail belonging to



Location of Sunday's Well according to the 25-inch map. The exact location of Sunday's Well was not established.

the mound as well as damaging the original stone structure of the Sunday's Well (McEvoy 2014a, 10). Subsequently, the land was sold to developers and the builders of the *Cois Abhainn* apartments (c.2005) 'backfilled 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' (*ibid*). The National Monuments Service files record the holy well circa 3m west of the motte but add little more. Our visit to the site of the holy well revealed no surviving visible evidence for this enigmatic structure.

The Boiling Well – Castlebrown Townland

McEvoy (1979, 23) also recorded a well, described as 'the Boiling Well, on Grace's land in Castlebrown behind Larry Cribbin's house (covered since reclamation) which, constantly agitated with bubbles of natural gas'. No traditions survive for this well and it was described as 'covered by recent reclamation' by Jackson (1979–1980, 147). It is unclear if this was an actual holy well as many traditions indicate that water from holy wells will not boil – this was deemed important as water from holy wells should never be used for profane activities (Jackson 1979–1980, 140–41). The landowner never heard of the name 'Boiling Well' and instead said it was known locally as 'Hanrahan's Well' after a guard who lived in

Sharkey's house on the corner. He described it as having a strong flow, but knew of no traditions associated with it.

There is no record yet of this well in the National Monuments Service files, but a spring is shown on the 25-inch and Cassini 6-inch maps at this location. Google Earth aerial photographs show the route of a below-ground waterway running from the location of the Boiling Well in Grace's land to the Gollymochy river located *circa* 140m to the east – this was confirmed by the landowner who had piped the well to the Gollymochy. A visit to the area in December 2020 revealed no above ground evidence of the well, and the location is at a small rise at the foot of the hill between two ESB poles.



Photograph with arrow showing the 'Boiling Well' location: the route of the below-ground waterway is seen as a dark green line running east from the well to the Gollymochy stream.

Father Batty's Well, Clane Townland

Father Batty's Well once formed part of a stream in the convent field. The line of the stream bed was recorded on the three maps (original 6-inch, 25-inch and 6-inch Cassini edition), extending from the Prosperous Road (opposite the Liffey Lawns entrance today) to the Millicent Bridge. Interestingly, both the late 19th/early 20th century 25-inch and Cassini 6-inch maps show a minute circle to indicate Brigid's Well in Carrigeen on the northern edge of this stream about

70m west of the Millicent bridge – this feature is described as a ‘spring’ on the 25-inch map. McEvoy (1979, 23) described Father Batty’s Well as ‘along the stream in the convent field east of the prefabs (cure for toothache)’. Jackson(1979–1980, 147)



The red arrow indicates the location of Father Batty’s Well

also visited it and whilst ‘rather overgrown’ was still visible. She reported no traditions, other than the power to cure toothache and noted that the well ‘appears to be no longer visited’. Nothing is known about this ‘Fr. Batty’, but he was most likely an early modern figure, just like Fr. Moore of Rathbride. Today, Father Batty’s well has been tarred over to form the car park of the Aldi supermarket and is unfortunately no longer visible – its original location would have been situated on the western side of the car park near the boundary wall with the ‘Yew Tree’ apartments. This well is also not currently recorded as a monument in the National Monuments Service Files.

Tobar na Mona, Clane Townland

Tobar na Mona is located on the Prosperous road. It is recorded on all three maps (first edition 6-inch, 25-inch, Cassini 6-inch) as ‘Tobernamoná’. Again, it is identified as a minute circle on these maps– the 25-inch and Cassini 6-inch map shows this circle on the northern edge of the Prosperous road, but the earliest 6-inch map shows the circle just inside the southern road line. Sherlock (1891, 26) describes ‘Tobernamoná’, translated by him as ‘the well of the little bog’, as ‘half way

from Clane to Firmount cross-roads’, but could it originate from the fact that it is on the road out to the bog? No traditions survive, but McEvoy (1979, 23) reported ‘Tobar na Mona (the boggy well)’ as ‘in roadside ditch in the field acquired for school building. This was obliterated by drainage work but had a big output of red iron oxide’. Jackson (1979–1980, 148) reported no further information, but noted that ‘it was covered by drainage work about one year ago’. This well is not yet recorded as a monument in the National Monuments Service Files. The site was visited in December 2020, but no evidence remains.



The red arrow indicates approximate site of Tobar na Mona on Prosperous Road

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THE LOCAL HISTORY FEDERATION ON TOUR

Larry Breen

It is often said, “All History is Local” and this is no more evident than when we reflect back on the many historical journeys made by the Federation of Local History Societies over the years. Clane like many other towns in Ireland is rich and proud of its history and heritage. The UK whether it be England, Scotland, Wales or even further afield in Europe all have similar towns with their own unique history and heritage. History is all around us but we can often take it for granted. One way of ensuring, lest we forget, the wealth of history that surrounds us is to join a local history group. It offers the opportunity to learn more about our local community, our past and helps us identify who we are while socially engaging with like-minded friends and neighbours in sharing a common interest.

Clane Local History Group is a member of the Federation of Local History Societies and has been for many years. The Federation represents the interests of local history, heritage, archaeological and folk lore societies around the country and County Kildare can be proud of its strong representation on the Federation over the years.

The Federation has over the years, embarked on many historical journeys on the island of Ireland, Great Britain and to mainland Europe. We have made memorable trips to places big and small, well known and not so well known and travelled along well-trodden and not so well-trodden paths.

This article is a trip down memory lane sharing with you just a few of those journeys and in doing so we fondly remember our dear friends, Úna Heffernan, John Noonan and Pat Given who have since passed away but who travelled with us on some of our journeys.

Visit to the battlefields of Europe

The Federation made two memorable trips to visit the European Parliament and the battlefields of Belgium and France, one in 2010 and another in 2016. Members from both the Southern Federation and the Federation for Ulster Local History Studies travelled to the beautiful city of Leuven in Belgium staying at the Irish College, the college was initially established as the Irish Franciscan College of St Francis of Padua in 1607. Organised under the auspices of the European Parliament the trip included a conducted tour of the Parliament Buildings and a presentation on the Parliament's history. Leuven proved a perfect location for exploring the hinterland, particularly West Flanders and the valley of the Somme. There were representatives from thirty historical societies from across fourteen counties. The guided tours of both Brussels and Leuven presented a feast of wonderful sights including examples of flamboyant Gothic architecture , fascinating 17th Century Houses and the famous 13th century “Beguinage”.

We journeyed north to the town of Ypres, scene of some of the bloodiest battles of WW1 and were privileged to be present at the Menin Gate War Memorial for the traditional evening “last post”. The area contained many graveyards from different countries with Tyne Cot being the largest and most impressive war graveyard with its rows of white crosses stretching endlessly into the distance. Nearby, at Messines, was the “Island of Irish Peace Park”, peaceful and tranquil with its landmark Irish Round Tower reaching to the sky. We visited WW1 sights including Sanctuary Hill, Hill 62 and the last remaining WW1 trenches.

During our stay in Belgium we also managed to visit the medieval cities of Bruges, Ghent and Antwerp and were overwhelmed by the diversity and richness of their architecture.

Valley of the Somme awaited and we were not to be disappointed. Our destination was the Thiepval area of the Somme, scene of the largest battle of WW1 on the Western

Front. The Ulster Memorial Tower, which now stands on what was the German front line and dedicated to the Ulster men who died at the Somme was a poignant reminder of the bloody battle that claimed so many lives. We then proceeded to the Beaumont-Hamel Newfoundland Memorial Park, with its Destination Stone, Cemetery, trenches and the famous Caribou Monument. Our guide, Julia, then took us to Guillmont where stands a little Church decorated inside with plaques and outside with a Celtic Cross dedicated to the Irish killed in the Battle of the Somme. Our last port of call was to the Centre d'Accueil de Thiépval Monument , the most imposing structure standing in the Somme valley. A superb meal served in the Ulysses restaurant on our return to the Irish College was a fitting end to a memorable day. Alas our adventures were almost over but on the way to Brussels airport we did have time to stop at Waterloo, visit its fine interactive museum and climb to the top of the Lion's Mound.

Visit to York City and North Yorkshire

The Federation's first visit to the UK was to Yorkshire in 2012. We did stop in Chester on the way and spent some time exploring the city where we managed to see its medieval city walls, its beautiful cathedral and the ruins of a fine Roman Amphitheatre. We took a memorable train journey on the North Yorkshire Moors steam train which took us from Pickering to the seaside town of Whitby.

Whitby

was a most interesting town, boasting an impressive harbour, high cliffs and a path of one hundred and ninety nine steps leading up to the magnificent ruins of Whitby Abbey and St Mary's decorative church. Castle Howard , one of England's finest big houses, was nearby, nestled in the breath-taking Howardian Hills. A magnificent 18th Century House it was designed by Sir John Vanbrugh for the 3rd Earl of Carlisle. The house with its beautiful gardens and surroundings was filled with world renowned collections including frescos, fine furniture and paintings.

We had the opportunity to explore York City and taste its turbulent history from ancient times through Roman, Viking, Anglo-Saxon and Tudor periods to modern times. The city of York is home to “Minster” , the largest Gothic Cathedral in Northern Europe. A magnificent building , it was awe inspiring in its sheer size , the beauty of its stained glass windows and its decorative woodwork. Also while in York let us not forget that within the city walls lies the grave of the famous highwayman , Dick Turpin.

Our next journey was to Haworth and the Bronte country. A guided walking tour by local Bronte expert , Johnny Briggs, took us on a fascinating tour all around the village where we visited the Parsonage and St Michael’s Church. The church is the last resting place of all but one of the sisters , Ann who is buried in Scarborough. It was from the village of Haworth that the Bronte sisters could see the moors which was such a huge influence on them and was to inspire them so much in writing their novels. One enduring memory of our visit was the warmth we received from our hosts Johnny Briggs and Stephen Woods.

The day was not yet ended as we made a final stop to see the model Victorian Village of Saltaire near Bradford. Now an UNESCO World Heritage Site it encapsulated industrial life in Yorkshire over the years through its magnificently restored and preserved Woollen Mills established by Sir Titus Salt. Passing through Wales on our way home we made a stop at the railway station with the longest name in the world.

Laneairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwlllantysiliogogoch

Visit to Scotland

In 2014 we travelled to Scotland by coach and ferry and enjoyed a most picturesque journey up the Ayrshire coast on the last leg to Glasgow. That evening we had a very interesting after dinner talk by two Glasgow local historians outlining the history of Glasgow through the many statues present in George

Square. Our first journey took us north to Sterling Castle, a favoured residence of the Kings and Queens of Scotland. The Castle has been restored to the magnificence of its renaissance period and offered some stunning views of the surrounding countryside. A particular feature was the remarkable sculptures decorating the outside of the palace of James V.



Visit to the Robert Burns Centre

Afterwards we travelled through the beautiful Campsie Hills to reach the quaint Glengoyne Distillery where we paused for a conducted tour of the premises and welcomed a “wee dram” of their best single malt. Loch Lomond was next, where we boarded Sweeney’s boat for a memorable cruise on the loch’s tranquil waters sailing in the early evening sun past stately homes, Ben Lomond – Scotland’s most southerly Munro and view the ruins of Lennox Castle.

We set off for the capital city, Edinburgh, on a somewhat wet morning but with high spirits in spite of the weather. A guided coach with our local guide illustrated the many highlights the city had to offer including the Palace of Holyrood House, the Scottish Parliament , the Museum of Childhood, the National Museum, the Caledonian Hotel and the National Gallery.

Edinburgh Castle was exceptional in its many attractions including the Governor's House, the Scottish National War Memorial, the Great Hall, the Prison Walls and St Margaret's Chapel to name a few. We concluded our day with a visit to Rosslyn Chapel, a must see building and quite exceptional in structure and design. Built in 1446 it houses in its interior a collection of the most extraordinary carvings.

Our adopted city of Glasgow was still to be explored and we were not to be disappointed. A conducted tour of the city with stop offs at all its best known highlights was something special. Stops included St Mungo's Cathedral, the Necropolis – Glasgow's unique graveyard, Glasgow Green, the Riverside Transport Museum, the Kelvin Grove Area, the Exhibition Centre and of course no visit to Glasgow would be complete without a trip down Sauchiehall Street. Our last visit of the day was to the unique Cotton Village of New Lanark. It presented a fascinating story about the industrial and social life in Scotland during the days of the industrial revolution. On our journey back to Cairnryan we managed a stop and pay homage to Scotland's famous bard, Robbie Burns, at his birthplace cottage and enjoy a visit to the museum.

Visit to North Down and South Antrim

We have always had a very close relationship with the Ulster Federation and one of our important events is the annual joint north/south exchange visit. In 2015 this trip took us to counties Antrim and Down. We met at the Somme Heritage Centre near Newtownards and were given a most interesting guided tour of the centre. Our next stop was the beautiful Mount Stewart situated on the inside of the Ards Peninsula. Renowned worldwide for its ornate and beautiful gardens it was resplendent in the afternoon sun. The house was very impressive, full of rooms adorned with fine furniture, paintings, tableware and ceilings embellished with decorative and intricate plaster work. With the gardens in full bloom the walks to the lake and back were stunning.



Carrickfergus Castle

An overnight stay in the Loughshore Hotel in Carrickfergus was the relaxation we needed and we were entertained with an absorbing after dinner talk on historical highlights of Carrickfergus by Shirin Murphy from the Carrickfergus Museum. The following day we had a guided tour of Carrickfergus Castle, one of the best preserved Norman Castles of its kind in Ireland. Built by John De Courcy it proved to be one of the highlights of the weekend. During our visit to the castle we were treated to an unexpected surprise with a spectacular air display by the famous “Red Arrows” in the skies above the castle walls. Carrickfergus is unique in that it has the only remaining Gasworks left in Ireland and in fact one of the very few in Europe. “Flame“ is an industrial heritage gem, manned essentially by voluntary personnel who do a marvellous job in preserving a unique industrial past. It was a real trip down memory lane to see the horizontal retorts, the huge gas storage tank and the array of old gas meters, griddles, cookers, smoothing irons and washing machines from bygone days. To conclude a memorable weekend we enjoyed a walking tour of the town and a visit to the beautiful medieval church of St Nicholas , built in 1193 and associated with John De Courcy.

Visit to North Wales

In 2017 we travelled to North Wales and stayed in Caernarvon as our home base. Disembarking from the ferry at Holyhead we took a circular coach tour of Holy Island, a most interesting area filled with standing stones, burial cairns and religious sites. We made a visit to the old Viking site of Beaumaris with its impressive 13th Century Castle and quaint harbour and also stopped to explore Plas Newydd , the ancestral home of the



With the Mayor of Holyhead and trustees of the Holyhead Museum

Earl's of Anglesey. The following day a coach tour along the north coast of Wales took us through Bangor, Conwy, Llandudno, Colwyn and we enjoyed some spectacular scenery on the way. We stopped at Chester and discovered that the museum in Chester had a collection of silver which originally belonged to the Butler family of Kilkenny. It had arrived in Chester in lieu of some death duties. We returned to Caernarvon through the scenic Horse Shoe Pass and experienced some stunning views of Snowdonia before arriving at the lovely town of Llangollen. The town has a strong Irish connection being famous for its “ladies of Llangollen”, two Irish ladies, Sarah Ponsonby and Eleanor Butler, who were leading socialites in the 18th - 19th century.



Presentation to group by Robat Humpreys of Caernarvon Civic Society(left of Photograph)

A journey on the Ffestiniog Railway steam train took us from Portmadog to Blaenau Ffestiniog at the foothills of Snowdonia. Situated near the Gwllr Woodlands and adjacent to a beautiful sandy beach stood the extraordinary Italian style village of Portmeirion. Built between 1925 -1975 it presented a real slice of Italy in Wales with its fine architecture and many unique buildings. The day ended when we visited the David Lloyd George Museum in his home village of Llanystumdwy and the grave where he lies at rest. A visit to the National Slate Museum in the village of Llanberis was memorable for its many attractions including a slate splitting demonstration and a visit to the old mines where we learned the story of its unique industrial past. Bodnant Gardens were very special and arguably the most impressive gardens we had ever seen. Covering eighty acres of hillside they included formal Italinate Terraces, a Gorge, the Dell, a Waterfall and plants from all over the world. We managed to include a tour of the impressive Conway Castle , one of the finest examples of 13th Century military architecture in Europe. The following morning we bade farewell to Wales after visiting Caernarvon Castle. “Cmyru, rydymyngobeithiododynol” - “Wales we hope to come back .”

WHAT IT SAID IN THE PAPERS FOR CLANE IN 1921

Liam Kenny



A commentary on the accidents, assaults, courts and crafts reported from Clane in the local press a century ago against the background of war and truce ...

A quiet village in a troubled land

One hundred years ago the people of Clane lived in a troubled land. Blood was spilled in streets and on hill sides in distant parts of the country as the forces of the Crown attempted to suppress the advances of the Irish Republican Army in the struggle for Irish independence. Raid and reprisal, arson and ambush, peppered the news of the day. The conflict – known later as the War of Independence – is the dominant narrative of 1921 as far as history as written in textbooks is concerned. But for the residents of a rural village such as Clane located in the relatively quiet county of Kildare, life as recorded in the local press continued with a degree of normality. While the war intruded occasionally, the regular business of courts, councils, farming, and sport remained central to the people and to their local newspapers. To get into the minds of the Clane public of the day a review of the editions of a local newspaper from the summer months of 1921 gives as good a picture as any of how everyday life co-existed with the conflict. Then, as now, court

reports caught the attention of readers keen to see who had been caught by the police for misdemeanors and felonies.

Rathcoffey “found-ons”

A pair of licensing cases were prominent in an edition of the *Kildare Observer* in June 1921.

Mrs Margaret Duffy, proprietor of a licensed premises in Rathcoffey, was summonsed before the magistrate, Col. St. Leger Moore, at Naas court to answer a breach of the Licensing Acts. She had admitted three men to her pub on a Sunday which was a day on which the serving of alcohol was then prohibited. The customers, Thomas Doyle, Michael Dolan, and Michael Delaney were charged with being found on the premises. Sergt. Boyd of the Royal Irish Constabulary painted the picture that confronted him when he knocked on the Rathcoffey premises on a Sunday in May. He saw Doyle with a bottle of stout in front of him, and Dolan with a pint in his hand. Mrs Duffy, in her defence, told the court that her brother had invited Doyle into the house – they had been in Clane together earlier. Michael Dolan was in the habit of buying his groceries there and came in that day to pay her – she had given him a “pint”. Michael Delaney had come in to the house for two ounces of tobacco. In reply to District Inspector Fallon, she said that she did not know it was an offence to sell tobacco on a Sunday. The magistrate convicted her on the charge of keeping open on a Sunday and fined the Rathcoffey woman a stinging one pound but, in a note of clemency, considering her good record, ordered that the conviction was not to be recorded on her licence. He imposed a ten shilling fine on Doyle but the cases against the other two were dismissed.

A second case resulted from a constabulary swoop on the Royal Oak at Mainham where the proprietor Mrs Kate Fennell was charged by District Inspector Fallon with another Sunday breach in the persons of John Mitchell, Joseph Campbell, John Lee, James Duffy, Edward Deegan, and Timothy Slevin.

Sergt. Boyd said he found fifteen men drinking on the premises on a Sunday afternoon. He removed them to the yard and

searched them. Mrs Fennell had invoked the excuse that they were all *bona fide* travellers – a term which was intended to admit only those from over three miles away from being on a licensed premises on a Sunday. She said Lee came from Longtown; Duffy told her he had stayed in Naas the night before; she thought Mitchell had lived in Prosperous; and Campbell and Slevin said they were staying in Sallins; while she was adamant that Deegan had not been in the premises for six months. Deegan argued similarly, accusing Sergt. Boyd of mistaking his identity. He was sufficiently convincing that the District Inspector Fallon withdrew the charge against him.

As regards the other defendants a clearly meticulous Constable Skelly had been busy with his measuring map and said that each of them lived less than two and three-quarters miles of the Royal Oak and thus did not qualify for the *bona fide* exemption. On hearing the evidence, the bench decided to convict Mrs Fennell with a fine of £1, the conviction not to be endorsed on her licence and the “found-ons” were fined sums varying from 10 shillings to 15 shillings each.

Death on an autumn night

Beyond the court cases life in the Clane area seldom made headlines in 1921 until September when locals were shocked by an accident which claimed the life of a brilliant young doctor who had just taken up duty in the locality. Dr Anthony Diver Ward was killed instantly when his motor cycle crashed into the wall of Castlesize estate at the turn-off for Bodenstown on the Sallins to Clane road. He was driving his machine in the autumn dark from Sallins where he had alighted from the evening train. It is believed that he had intended to divert to Ballinafagh on a sick call when, being unfamiliar with the road, he swerved too late to take the turn and crashed into the wall.

A native of Dundalk he had only taken up relief duty in the Clane dispensary district just three weeks previously. Although just 21 years old he had graduated with a first-class degree in medicine and had served with the Royal Flying Corps in France during the war. The inquest into his death was itself an indication of changes afoot in the wider context. A truce in the war between the British Government and the IRA had come

into effect since July and this had the effect of lifting martial law provisions including a ban on civil inquests. Thus, Dr Ward's inquest was the first to be held in north Kildare in that year. The Coroner Dr Cosgrove with Mr. J J Flanagan heard witnesses. The first was Mr. P J Colgan of St Anne's, Clane who said he had been on the same train as the deceased from Dublin which arrived in Sallins at 8.45pm. He had noticed Dr Ward mounting his motorcycle while grappling with a problem with the headlamp. He offered the doctor a lift but the offer was declined. Mr Eric Watkinson gave evidence that he was driving a pony and trap with his wife and baby from Straffan via Bodenstown on the night in question when they came to the Millicent turning about 9.30pm. The witness saw a motor cycle and the body of a man on the ground. He raised the alarm at Colonel Graham's house at Castlesize and the Colonel came with him to the scene and between them they moved the body to the Graham residence. Dr. O'Donnell Browne was summoned from Naas and on examination pronounced that the victim had died from severe impact injuries. The jury found a verdict in accordance with the medical evidence but added a rider calling attention to the dangers of the junction at Bodenstown which had been the scene of previous mishaps.

The curate and the spinning-wheel

There was happier news for Clane people to absorb the following month when the parish was held up as an example for others to follow in reintroducing the spinning-wheel as a part of the domestic economy. In the course of an enthusiastic promotion for the North Kildare County Show the *Kildare Observer* focused on the endeavours of the Clane curate, Fr. Fanning, in promoting the home-spinning of wool. The writer noted that a century previously no farmhouse was complete without its spinning-wheel where the "good house-wife" used to spin the yarn required for her family. However, it was lamented that the spinning-wheel had dropped out of fashion with the good homespun wool yielding place to what was "foreign and shoddy". Warming to the theme the correspondent spoke of how there were sentimental reasons why the spinning-wheel should be revived not least because it was a symbol of

“rural feminine industry and good housewifery”. But in the Ireland of 1921, there were pressing economic reasons also for the encouragement of such a domestic industry. Fr Fanning was praised for offering to organise a demonstration of spinning at the event following on from his success in having the spinning-wheels hum again in the farm-houses of Clane parish for the first time in forty years.

In full cry

The year drew to a close with the hinterland of Clane featuring in the reports of the hunting pursuits beloved of the gentry class. Such was their obsession with the pursuit of Reynard that there was no day sacred on the calendar when hunting would not take place. Thus, on Christmas Eve the Kildare Hunt mustered at Clane. It must have been a stirring sight with red blazers, chestnut horses, the yelp of dogs and the echo of hunting horns. Their hounds got the first scent in Betaghstown bog but the trail ran cold. The hunt hacked on to Mount Armstrong where the outcome was similar but there was better luck at the Cooltrim gorse where a fox bolted and led them in a merry dance to near the demesne wall at Donadea and round via Clonshambo from where the – no doubt terrified creature – took refuge in a shore under Ballagh cross-roads. Only Christmas Day proved an interruption in the frenetic hunting schedule. Many of the Christmas Eve Kildare Hunt riders were no doubt on horseback again when the Naas Harriers convened on St Stephen’s Day, at Digby Bridge with some thirty participants. Two hares were chased – the second giving what was described as a “capital forty minutes” over ideal country – ideal country being, in the hunt definition, field boundaries with no wire. Numerous riders fell off at some of the big ditches with one lady getting a splash of bog water across her complexion. Her browned appearance reminded the hunt correspondent of the “wren bush” boys which he had seen earlier plying their annual trade with blackened faces – an interesting insight into the traditions of the day as practised in the Clane area.

Mainham IRA police confront British soldiers

However, the most shocking news of the last month of the eventful year of 1921 centred around an outrageous assault on a young woman (21) in the Clongowes vicinity. She had been driving her father's cattle home from pastures at Borehole on the Kilcock road when she encountered two men on horseback. She was subjected to rude remarks and then one of the men dismounted and inflicted a serious assault including injuries to her head and face. The shaken woman managed to make her way to her parents' home in Mainham who alerted what was described as the local "volunteer police". This was effectively the local company of the IRA who, since the Truce in July, had been winning the people's trust as a policing service. They were rapidly taking the place of the Royal Irish Constabulary who had policed the country for over a century but who had become prejudicially linked in the public mind with the excesses of the Black and Tans and the repressive intrusions of the Crown forces. The Mainham republican police gave chase and caught up with two men at Blackhall on the Naas road. There was a stand-off but the Mainham volunteers were having none of it and produced their firearms. The pair gave up and despite giving false names were identified as being two British troopers from the Curragh returning in plain clothes from a hunt meet in Donadea. The men were taken to an unoccupied house near Clane and the following day there was an inquiry at which the violated woman gave a statement and identified them. However, justice was to fall victim to the shifting political plates at the time and, after consultation with the IRA truce officer liaising with the British authorities, the men were handed over to the British military and taken from the area. In a telling comment the report declared that the resentment felt in the Clane area arising from this outrageous assault on a local woman by two off-duty English soldiers was somewhat ameliorated by the rapid action of the volunteer police.

Local issues reflect seismic national change

Although an unsatisfactory outcome the incident gives an intriguing insight into how public life was undergoing monumental change. The British government was losing its

grip on the machinery of law and order. Even in a relatively quiet area like Clane, the IRA police and republican courts were becoming the law in the land. It was a local reflection of the seismic changes evolving at national level which were setting in place the tentative foundations of a new independent Irish State. In the same week that the people of Clane were reading about the actions of the republican police, Michael Collins, Arthur Griffith and other delegates had signed the Anglo-Irish Treaty in London having negotiated an unprecedented – if incomplete– measure of independence for the twenty-six counties. In this they had achieved a progress which was of epic proportions in terms of the centuries-long attempts at rising against the British. People who could never have imagined that the British army and police would leave Ireland now could see this happening in a matter of months when the imperial government would be replaced by Irish departments headed by ministers elected by the Irish people and not dictated to from Westminster. However not all leaders of nationalist opinion such as Eamon de Valera were placated by the Treaty of December 1921 and the New Year would be barely weeks old when a rancorous split would fester in Irish nationalism leading to a withering and wasteful Civil War. But as the Clane readers of the *Kildare Observer* and the *Leinster Leader* folded the last editions of their newspapers for 1921 this fraught future was unknown to them – a future that only we who have the luxury of looking back from the vantage of the Year of our Lord 2021 can truly appreciate.

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MISCELLANY

Bloody Sunday

On the morning of 21 November 1920 a number of British intelligence officers were assassinated by Michael Collins' IRA 'Squad'. That afternoon Clane native Mick Sammon was refereeing a challenge match between Dublin and Tipperary at the GAA headquarters, Croke Park, when the match was rudely interrupted. The extract below from the from the Irish Times of 21 November 2020, the Centenary of the Bloody Sunday massacre, outlines the subsequent events.

Bloody Sunday, November 21 1920.

That afternoon, 90 seconds of shooting by a combination of Auxiliaries, RIC and Black and Tans created another sensation. Rather than a calculated, co-ordinated reprisal, the original plan, it seems, was for an officer to enter Croke Park, where a Gaelic football match was being played between Dublin and Tipperary, stop the game and perform searches of the men in attendance. But instead, rage, lust for revenge or just a complete breakdown in discipline took over. Military trucks reached the canal bridge overlooking Croke Park and the men jumped out and headed for the grounds while others positioned themselves on the bridge. Some climbed over the turnstiles and began firing.

Michael Foley notes that 14-year-old John William Scott, who lived across the road from the grounds “was so severely wounded in the chest, questions were asked in the House of Commons the following week about whether he had been bayoneted to death. “Victims were crushed, impaled and shot even as they left the ground. Jane Boyle was shot and trampled, her hand slipping from her fiancé’s she was buried in her wedding dress on the same day she was to be married”. Ten-year-old Jerome O’Leary from Blessington Street was shot dead as he sat on a wall behind the Canal End goal. Fourteen were killed or mortally wounded with about 80 others injured, and later that evening two IRA prisoners were also killed. Dick McKee and Peadar Clancy, along with Conor Clune, a visitor to Dublin from Clare who was simply in the wrong place at the wrong time. The official British report

stated they were shot while trying to escape; in truth, they were tortured and murdered in reprisal for what had happened earlier that day.

Brendan Cullen

The Greatest Sporting Achievement of Dick Radley, N.T.

Due to many delays the 1905 All Ireland Football Final was played in the Agricultural Grounds, Thurles, on June 16th 1907. Fifteen thousand spectators attended the game between Kildare and Kerry. Fifteen special trains ran from Dublin to Thurles stopping at Hazelhatch, Sallins and all other Kildare stations. Others travelled by horse and cart, some cycled and a privileged minority enjoyed the luxury of the motor car. The teams consisted of 17 players on each side. The extra two players made up the four-man centre field. Gaelic games contributed to the release from the drudgery of day-to-day life for the ordinary working class, long days of manual work in factories and farms. The match was played at ferocious intensity, tough tackling and little time on the ball. Kildare won 1-7 to 0-5. The Kildare supporters were overjoyed. Ladies waved their handkerchiefs; men tossed their hats and caps in the air. Liberty Square in Thurles was thronged with the overjoyed supporters. Afterwards, men piled up on every vantage point and shouted themselves hoarse. The tooting of motor cars, the beating of drums made it a truly unforgettable day. The news of the Kildare victory was relayed to Sallins and Naas by telephone. The train bringing the gallant 17 arrived in Sallins later that night. The welcoming crowd cheered loudly; bands led the victory march back into Clane.

The victory was Dick Radley's greatest sporting achievement. The young teacher who had come from Castletownroche, Cork, to teach in Prosperous had completed the job of reviving the G.A.A. in the short grass county. When he arrived in 1900 the G.A.A. was almost dead. In July 1907 the team presented him with a gold watch at a function in the Town Hall, Newbridge. Jack Fitzgerald and Jack Murray paid him glowing tributes that night. "When you revived the G.A.A. in Kildare, military airs, military manners and military customs were the pastimes of the

aristocracy and the people. Today seven years after you began your work of revival, the presence of England's garrisons within the county has not hindered your work. Kildare now is one of Ireland's most Gaelic counties". (The Leinster Leader). The All Ireland Champions of 1905 were presented with the medals on the night of St. Patrick's day 1908. Dick Radley had succeeded beyond all expectations. Kildare had been changed into one of the most Gaelic counties. Yet Dick Radley left Kildare in July 1907 and returned to Castletownroche and remained there until his death in 1923. Dick was born in 1872. He was the son of John Radley N.T. Castletownroche and Hannah Radley. Dick followed in his father's footsteps and qualified as an National Teacher. After returning to Castletownroche he did not get involved in Gaelic games in North Cork.

The year after his death in 1924 the Cork County Board divided the county into eight G.A.A. divisions. Avondhu was the division that included all clubs in North Cork. This was later divided into two divisions in 1933. Duhallow was formed to include all G.A.A. clubs in North West Cork. Avondhu division is the hinterland of the river Blackwater. No organised G.A.A. was possible in North Cork until 1924. The War of Independence and the Civil War made normal life impossible. Daily harassment by Crown Forces, the Gloucestershire and East Lancashire Regiments patrolled and raided properties all over North Cork. Dick Radley must have been aware of the nightly training in the use of weapons by the Volunteers of the North Cork Brigade of the IRA. The Crown Forces were intent on suppressing the Rebel County.

In 1923 Dick Radley died and was interred in St. Mary's cemetery, Castletownroche, in the family plot. Gus Nevin of Prosperous, whom I knew, remembered Dick walking around Prosperous. He regarded him as an unassuming and chatty person. Perhaps an interesting question is why Dick chose to leave Kildare after achieving so much. A huge debt of gratitude is owed to Dick Radley by the Kildare G.A.A. His short time in the county restored the G.A.A. making Kildare one of the top

teams in the country. Gus Nevin who died in 1986 at the age of 103 spoke of the huge impact Dick made on reviving the G.A.A. in Kildare. He never lived to see the revival of Avondhu division in North Cork.

Richard Sullivan

Local Historians Meet Archaeologists at the Pale.

In the summer of 2009 Clongowes Wood College was the scene of some hectic activity with the visit of archaeologists to the college to investigate one of the few remaining parts of the once famous “Pale”. Local historians Seamus Cullen, Brendan Cullen and Larry Breen met with Dr. Michael Potterton, a lecturer in Archaeology in UCD, Niall Murphy who was studying for his Masters in UCD and a colleague of Michael’s, Anne from Washington DC. Niall, whose thesis was on the surviving portions of the Pale, was fascinated by the opportunity to see and explore one of the best preserved examples of this unique feature of the Irish landscape.

The Pale boundary consisted essentially of a fortified double ditch and rampart built around parts of the medieval counties of Louth, Meath, Dublin and Kildare. It was about thirty miles in radius from Dublin and was built by the English settlers to protect themselves from the ‘wild’ Irish outside. The word pale derives from the Latin word palus, meaning stake. It was from this feature that the phrase “beyond the Pale” originated and means something outside the boundary. Also derived from the boundary concept was the idea of a pale as an area within which local laws were valid.

The group were also joined by Sinead Quirke, who was an expert on stone buildings. The archaeologists focused on the section of the Pale south west of the castle that leads to Capdoo and the section north of Clongowes that leads to Moortown. During the visit, Fr Conor Harper from the college joined the group and together with Seamus Cullen and Brendan Cullen entertained the visitors with stories about the history of the castle.

Larry Breen