

# Coiseanna

The Journal of Clane Local History Group

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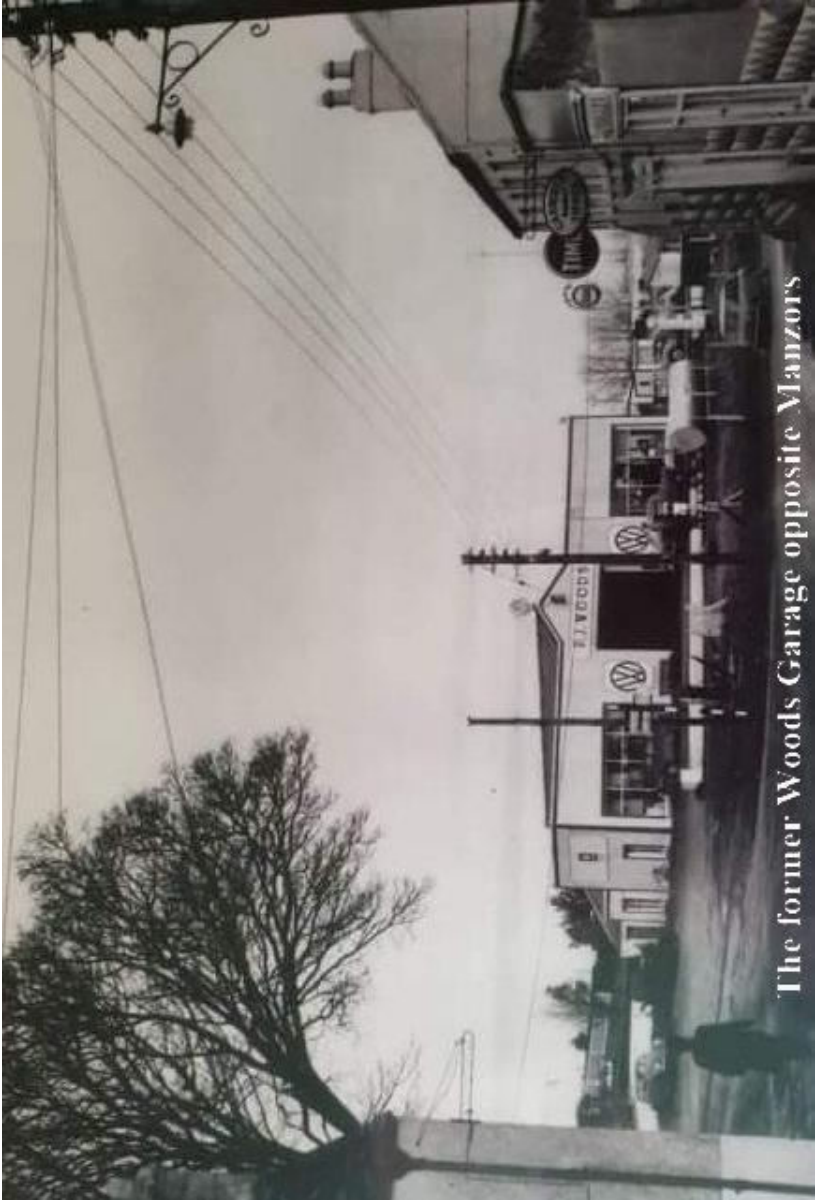
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**Front cover:** The 'Bird Bath' .in front of the Church of St Patrick and St Brigid. Formerly the baptism font in the Aylmer chapel at Donadea it was brought to Clane by Father Keogh. The base dates from 1625

**Back cover:** Father Keogh's headstone in the Abbey Cemetery where he had asked to be buried 'facing his people'.



The former Woods Garage opposite Manzors

## EDITORIAL

The second year of Covid once again seriously curtailed our normal activities but we are still alive and well and looking forward to returning to normality this year. With the easing of Covid restrictions we will be in a much better position to offer our members the chance to, once again engage in enjoying and promoting the local history of Clane and beyond. Sharing and socialising are very much part of what we do, as a local history group and 2022 promises to offer us the opportunity to do so again.

We have managed to publish this, the eleventh edition of Coiseanna, which is full of interesting and informative articles from a wide range of contributors. This edition runs to 140 pages, is our biggest journal to date and contains a variety of articles on notable people such as Fr. Keogh, Josef Locke and Jim Canning and places like Abbeylands House, Killashee House etc.

This year we intend to hold a Photographic Exhibition in the Clane Library in August during Heritage Week. The exhibition is entitled “Hidden Gems and Forgotten People of Clane”. We hope to have our lecture programme up and running in September and we would encourage our members to volunteer to give history talks to the group. The editorial team would like to thank all those who contributed articles to this Coiseanna and also to extend a sincere thanks to all our members for their continued support over the years and for their patience during Covid. We hope you will enjoy this edition of Coiseanna and we would welcome suitable articles for future editions.

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# A VIRTUAL HISTORY TOUR OF CLANE

*Brendan Cullen*

*This article is the extended script of my virtual history tour of Clane which was broadcast on Kfm Radio on March 16<sup>th</sup> as part of the Clem Ryan show.*

Our starting point is the bridge which spans the River Liffey at the entrance to the Village on the Sallins road.

The present bridge, called Alexandra Bridge, is a fine masonry structure which was built in 1864 and replaced a medieval stone bridge which was constructed in 1391. The ancient bridge was familiar to Thomas Francis Meagher who was a student in Clongowes from 1833-1839. He described it as “the quaintest, queerest, crookedest, most broken-backed bridge ever”.



**Alexandra Bridge**

It was decided by the Grand Jury in February 1864 to rebuild this older bridge at a cost of £2,100. An examination of the

stone work of the present bridge indicates that only 3 arches and 2 piers were constructed in 1864 and that parts of the older bridge were integrated into the new structure. The County Surveyor overseeing the work was John Yeats from Sligo, a grand-uncle of W.B. Yeats. The building of the bridge was fast- it was completed in November 1864. The bridge is a strong well-built limestone structure and consists of 3 main arches resting on sturdy footings and a small flood arch. It was named after Princess Alexandra of Denmark who married Edward, Prince of Wales, in 1863. In 2014 the bridge celebrated its 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary. In close proximity to the bridge is the remains of an ivy-covered, derelict building which was once the dye house for McCracken's Woollen Mills.

Leaving the bridge behind we enter the nearby housing estate, Cois Abhainn, and here we come across Cash's Motte or Moat.



**Cash's Motte**

In early Celtic times the way to cross a river was at a shallow place called a ford (Ath), where a traveller could cross with the water below his knees or on horseback. So the fords became important routes of trade, commerce and communications. The ford at Clane was an important route for those on a journey from south Leinster to the royal site of Tara in Co. Meath. Such fords developed an important military purpose because of the number of people crossing and for this reason local chieftains sometimes built motes or duns or forts in the shape of a large mound near the crossing point. At Clane a huge mound of earth was erected to command the route across the river. The ford at Clane was the scene of a major battle in 33AD between the forces of Mesgegra, King of Leinster, and those of Conall Cearnach from Ulster, who was on his way from Howth to Tara. After a fierce duel Conall defeated Mesgegra, severed his head at the bullaun stone and then placed it in the bowl-shaped hollow. It is believed that Mesgegra's torso was buried under the large Moat (i.e. Cash's Motte) near the bridge and that his head was buried along with his wife Queen Buan (who died of shock at the sad news) under the large mound at Mainham.

We now emerge on to the main road again and make our way down through the roundabout, to the Franciscan Friary and the Abbey Cemetery.

Although the Celtic and later the early Christian periods were important times in the history of Clane it is with the arrival of the Normans in 1170 and the establishment here of a Norman settlement that the origin of the modern Clane is to be sought. The Normans extended and enlarged the Mesgegra mound and created a motte and bailey castle on top of it, which overlooked the ford and protected the river crossing. Thus began the medieval Barony of Clane. Having settled in the locality the Normans soon invited the Franciscan Order to establish a friary in Clane. The friary was founded in 1258 by Gerald Fitzmaurice Fitzgerald, 4<sup>th</sup> Baron of Offaly, who died in 1287. Unfortunately, in 1536 the friary was suppressed by Henry VIII and the land confiscated. Nestling in a recess at the base of the



south wall is the remains of a limestone effigy. Most historians are of the opinion that the figure is the remains of the effigy of Gerald Fitzmaurice Fitzgerald, who founded the friary.



**The Abbey Cemetery and Clane Friary**

Surrounding the friary is the Abbey Cemetery, in use as a burial ground from around 1915. The renowned G.A.A. referee Mick Sammon who died in 1947 is buried here. Mick refereed the football match between Dublin and Tipperary in Croke Park on Bloody Sunday, November 21<sup>st</sup> 1920.

Just across the road from the cemetery is a well-known relic of ancient times called the Bullaun Stone. Located in the retaining wall of the Butterstream the bullaun stone consists of a large rectangular block of limestone with a deep bowl-shaped depression, hollowed out of its upper side. It is believed locally to be of pre-Christian origin and is probably the oldest man-made artifact extant in Clane. It is intimately connected with the legend of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century King Mesgegra and his untimely death at the ford of Clane.



**The Bullaun Stone**

On leaving the Bullaun Stone we make our way to the Main Street to what is now called the Community Centre. This area is reputed to be the site of the first Christian monastery in Clane.

The monastery was founded by St. Ailbe in 520 AD and although there is no visible trace of the original settlement, it was more than likely, located on the present site of the Community Centre. This location has many of the characteristics associated with a monastic site. It's an elevated site overlooking the surrounding green on the southern end of the Main Street. Because of its height it provides a dry-point for settlement giving it protection from periodic flooding. The monastery flourished but in 1035 AD the Vikings attacked and plundered it. However, it recovered and hosted a Church Synod in 1162 AD. More than likely, the old monastery faded out of existence with the building of the Franciscan Friary in the 13<sup>th</sup> Century. After the Reformation a Church of Ireland church occupied the site until 1883 when the Church of St. Michael and All Angels was built at Millicent. The old church ruin was renovated and converted into the Community Centre

in 1985. Just outside the Centre is the very impressive memorial to Blessed John Sullivan.



**The Community Centre and the John Sullivan Monument**

John Sullivan was born in Eccles St. Dublin in 1861. He was a child of a mixed marriage and in accordance with the agreement made between his parents he was to be raised a protestant. John was received into the Catholic Church in 1896 and on July 28<sup>th</sup> 1907 he was ordained a Jesuit priest. Soon afterwards he was appointed to the teaching staff of Clongowes Wood College, where he was to spend most of the rest of his life. He lived an austere and holy life in Clongowes and was renowned for his great spirituality and charity throughout the surrounding area. He died on February 19<sup>th</sup> 1933 and was buried in the Community cemetery at Clongowes. In 1960 his remains were transferred from Clongowes to St. Xavier's Church, Gardiner St. Dublin. John was beatified in this church on the 13<sup>th</sup> May 2017 and is now referred to as Blessed John Sullivan.

We now proceed up the east side of the Main Street where we pass Marron's Chemist, that was once the R.I.C. barracks which was burned down in 1920.

Just up from the chemist is the Parish Office which was the local Court House. In the War of Independence the building was the site of the Sinn Fein courts and was later converted to form part of the local school.

The next building is the Old Girls' Primary School run by the Presentation Nuns from 1839 until 1982 when it moved to the Prosperous Road.

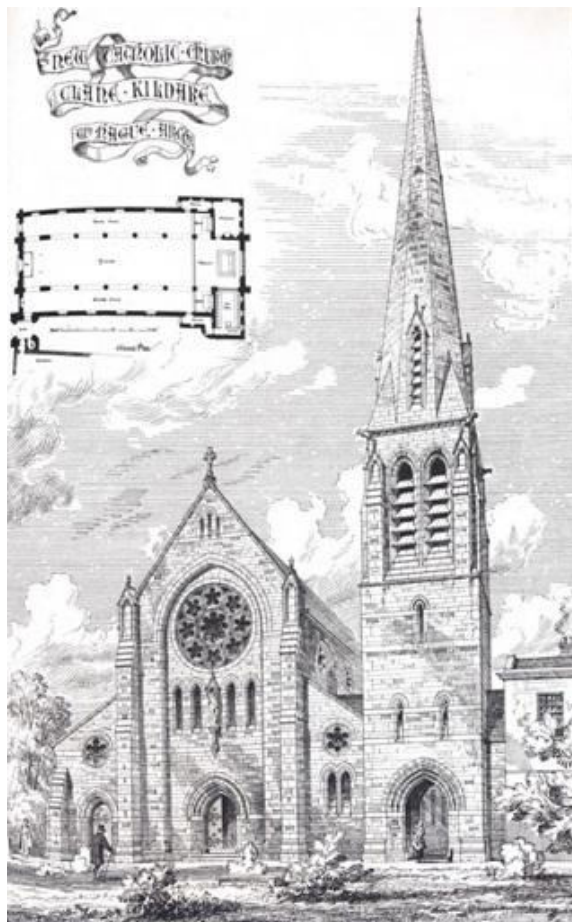


**Plaque on the Wall of the Old Girls' Primary School**

We soon arrive at the imposing and attractive Church of St. Patrick and St. Brigid built in the Gothic Revival Style of the great architect A.W.N. Pugin. The church was constructed mainly through the efforts of Fr. Patrick Turner and his parishioners and was officially opened and dedicated on 24<sup>th</sup> August 1884.

Times were hard, people were poor and it was difficult to raise sufficient money to complete the building. At one stage when local funds were exhausted, an appeal was made to neighbouring parishes for financial assistance. At the time of the opening £7,000 had been spent and £2,500 was outstanding. The architect, Mr. W. Hague, a follower of Pugin, had included specifications for a very tall spire which was never built because of the extra cost involved. A pedestal

intended for a statue of St. Patrick and St. Brigid was left vacant above the main door and was never subsequently occupied.



**The church as originally envisaged;  
the tower and spire were never built**

Just past the church, on the opposite side of the street is the barber's shop which was used as the Garda barracks from 1923 until the early 1970s. The building was also the home of the paternal family of Blessed Columba Marmion who was beatified on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2000 by Pope John Paul II.



*The building which housed the former Garda barracks*

Thomas Francis Meagher was a pupil in Clongowes from 1833 to 1839 and was very familiar with the Village. According to him “Clane was one street. The street numbered a hundred houses, more or less. Every second one was a shebeen, or tavern, dedicated to the entertainment of man and beast. I recollect that on one sign-board, next to the Post Office, the Cat and the Bagpipes rampantly figured; whilst on another, a red coffin, with three long clay pipes crossed upon the lid, and a foaming pot of porter pressing down the pipes at the point of intersection, gave the public to understand that the wakes of the neighbourhood would be “conveniently” supplied. There was a police-barrack of course, with a policeman perpetually chewing a straw outside on the doorstep, rubbing his shoulder against the whitewash of the door post, and winking and spitting all the day long. There was a Protestant church, right opposite the police barrack, with its angular dimensions, fat tower in front, sheet iron spire, and gilt weathercock on top. There was a low-sized, most modest, low-roofed, little Catholic chapel, back from the street a few yards, with a convent, sheltering three Sisters of Mercy (sic), on the right hand side coming down from Dublin, and on towards the south.

Clane village is steeped in history and is a great place to live

## **FATHER LAURENCE KEOGH (1870-1948)**

*Michael Clifford*

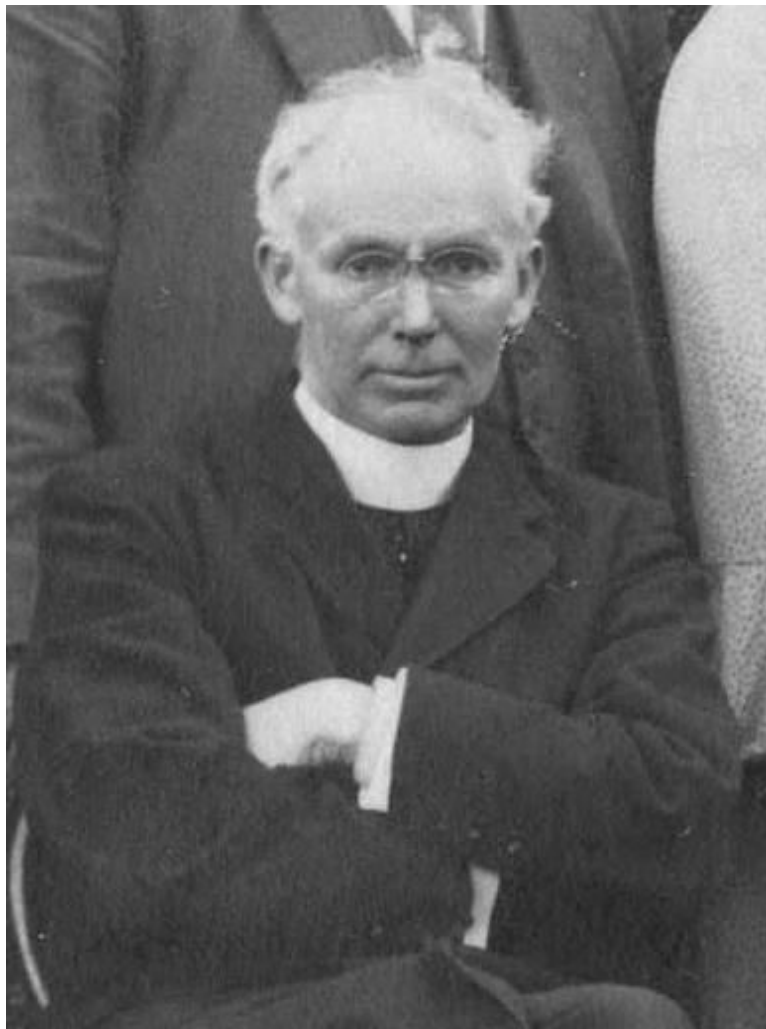
Following the death of Fr. James Colgan in April 1926, Fr. Laurence Keogh was appointed as the Parish Priest of the Parish of Clane, Rathcoffey and Staplestown. He was born about 1870 in Tullow, County Kildare. On completion of his early education in the Monastery in Tullow, he began his studies for the priesthood in St. Patrick's College in Carlow. After his ordination on the 13<sup>th</sup> of June 1897, he was appointed Bursar of the College. He remained as Bursar until his appointment as curate in Rath in 1913. In 1919 he was appointed curate in Portarlinton. He also served as the curate in the parish of Ballybrittas in County Laois.

Fr. Keogh was a man of great spirituality and deep faith. He was very concerned about every aspect of the lives of the parishioners in Clane. He attended to the spiritual needs of the people with great devotion and at the same time he worked ceaselessly on their behalf as they struggled to cope with the challenges of daily life. He performed baptisms and weddings. Many of these were recorded in the local papers. Life was a daily struggle during these times and continued to be in the years leading up to WW2. He left no stone unturned in his efforts to improve the parishioners' conditions.

On his appointment Fr. Keogh decided to paint the Church which had not been painted in about 40 years. This was completed in 1927. Next, he turned to building of a new school in Rathcoffey in 1930. The school was named after St. Mochua, the patron saint of the locality. He also oversaw the renovation of Rathcoffey Church in 1935.

The roads in many parts of the parish were in very poor condition and Fr Keogh continually lobbied Kildare County Council for improvements. The main street in Clane left a lot to be desired. As Fr. Keogh put it, the main street in Clane had "not yet felt the pressure of the steamroller". He approached the local TD, Mr.D. Buckley, who was very supportive and

took it upon himself to visit Clane to see the perilous state of the street. Progress was rather slow. He also approached the Board of Health to give favourable consideration to the establishment of road communications between Derry and Staplestown Church and the schools.



**Fr Laurence Keogh**

In 1935 a local delegation including himself and Dr. Holland approached the Kildare Health Board regarding the Clane waterworks and sewerage schemes. Health Board members had



visited Clane a number of times and they were very aware that the locals wanted the schemes to press ahead as quickly as possible. A sum of £4,082 was available to finance the schemes. However a member of the Health Board objected, and this stalled the work. Further Board visits followed but the Clane sewerage scheme was only completed in 1960.



**Clane Main Street had “not yet felt the pressure of the steamroller”**

By 1940 things had improved enormously for the parishioners. This is very evident from a sermon which was given at Confirmation in the Parish Church on Tuesday the 2<sup>nd</sup> of April 1940. The High Mass was sung by Right Rev. Monsignor Murphy, the PP of Maryborough, County Laois. The sermon was preached by Very Rev. Dr. Carr of Maynooth College. Dr. Carr was later appointed Archbishop of Melbourne. In his sermon, Dr. Carr congratulated the children, their parents and their teachers. He congratulated Fr. Keogh on the splendid condition of the churches in the parish. He also congratulated him on the impressive condition of the schools in the parish and the other parochial buildings. All these were now completely free of debt. He spoke passionately about the decline of the rural community in Clane and in other parishes in the diocese.

There was a very active Clane District Nursing Association. Many of their meetings were held in the Boys Primary School. At their 8<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting which was held in July 1940, votes of thanks were passed to Fr. Keogh by the members for his great support and encouragement in their work. It was at this meeting that Fr. Keogh proposed a vote of thanks on behalf of the members for the most interesting talk given to the members by Ms. Colburn “who had kindly motored down from Dublin” to address the members. Illness and sickness was quite prevalent in the country and the county in the 1930s and 1940s. The ravages of TB were all too common in so many parts of the country and county. In February 1934 the Sanatorium at Firmount was opened, one of the first in the country. Speaking at the opening of the Sanatorium, Fr. Keogh said “Kildare Board of Health had always stood for everything that concerned the health of the people.”

Fr. Keogh was tireless in his work of helping the community to develop and progress. To this end, he called a meeting in early March 1940 for the purpose of setting up a Parish Council. At the meeting, he explained what he had in mind, what the functions of this Council would be. Following the meeting, the following officers and council members were elected: Chairman: Fr. L. Keogh,PP, Vice Chairman: Mr. Francis Pigot, Secretary: Dr. J. J. Holland. M.A.

Committee: (Farmers) Messrs. J. Ennis, S, Hemingway, E. Coonan, F. Pigot.

(Farm workers) Messrs, W. O'Brien, W. Bracken, J. Fitzgerald, W. Merriman.

(Shopkeepers) Mrs. J. Jones, Miss. Marion Healy, Messrs. A. O'Neill, M.Geoghan and J. Cooney.

Fr. Keogh was unafraid to speak his mind and he could be quite intolerant at times when matters which he regarded as important were not acted upon with the urgency he felt was required. There were times when he was quite critical of the local authorities. He was well known to the members of the

Kildare Health Board due to his frequent visits. In July 1940, he called into the Board to enquire as to what they had been doing regarding the drainage from the school and the Church. He was “puzzled”, to use his own words as to what they had been doing as he had been asking, not for the first time, that something would be done. The locals were getting more and more annoyed, he stressed, at the perceived lack of urgency within the Board. The locals had dubbed the Board “A Mutual Admiration Society”, such was the local frustration with the Board. Fr. Keogh wanted to know “Why don’t the officials of the Board do their work and get a move on? This had been going on for five years. The school children are affected by this”.

At this same meeting, Fr. Keogh, who was making enquiries on behalf of a parishioner, wanted to know why the building of a cottage had been stopped. He explained that this matter had been dragging on for nine years. One of the members of the Board pointed out that in some matters, the Board were not their own bosses. Fr. Keogh did not let the Board member get away with that answer. He quipped “You should remember that when you start throwing bouquets at one another.” This reply did not go down too well with some members of the Board and the meeting got very heated. Now Fr. Keogh was on a roll and there was no stopping him and he raised more and more issues. What was being done in relation to the pump in Timahoe, and what about the cottages on the Prosperous Road? Then there was the matter of the cottage on the Dublin Road which was occupied by an elderly lady. This elderly lady was married to the brother of Sir William Lecky, the famous historian who passed away in 1903. He reminded the Board members that they had visited these places and yet nothing had been done. He requested that the medical officer visit all these places as soon as possible. Then he left. Fr. Keogh's comments were not well received by the Board members.

Despite his efforts, the matter of drainage around sections of Clane continued to remain a burning issue as far as he was concerned. He was back to the Board many times and in

March 1942, he pointed out that he had worn a path into the Board over the previous 12 to 13 years. "He had been for the past 12 or 13 years trying to get something done to remedy the very bad drainage in this portion of his parish". He pointed out that he did not like to be continually making these complaints. He said he felt that he was being treated with contempt as when reports were being made about the locality, he was not being presented with a copy. As he often did, he pointed out that "I am interested in the poor. They may not have the same qualifications according to modern standards of patriotism". He also requested details about the demolition orders which had been passed regarding some houses in Clane. He was informed that the Board has to proceed cautiously. Fr. Keogh was quick to remind the members that "You are proceeding cautiously for the last fourteen years". Fr. Keogh had led a delegation to the Health Board in relation to the drainage in Clane as far back as 1932 when he said that "As things stand at the present there is great danger of an epidemic".

Fr. Keogh saw the value in organising a branch of the Red Cross in Clane. Accordingly, a meeting was organised with a view to setting up a branch in Clane. The meeting was held on the 29<sup>th</sup> of July 1940. This meeting was attended by more than fifty ladies. The meeting started with a lecture given by Dr. Paul Blake. This was followed by a demonstration of bandaging which was done by Mrs. Frances Boylan from Millicent and her daughter Mrs Diana Page. Officers elected were; Chairman Fr. Keogh; Treasurer: Mrs. J.J. Holland Secretary: Dr. J.J. Holland, M.A.

The plight of many families in the locality was very difficult and especially so in the early 1940s; many were dependent on the cutting and sale of turf. The turf was brought to Dublin and sold to households. Over one hundred and fifty families were dependent on this way of earning an income. Quite often they sold single sods to households in Dublin and did not sell it by weight. A Department of Supplies headed by Sean Lemass had been established to cope with the effects of WW2 and a regulation was made requiring that in Dublin turf must be sold

by weight at a fixed price. Fr. Keogh, who was a member of the Kildare Vocational Committee, felt that this regulation was causing hardship for his parishioners and decided to raise this matter at one of their meetings. He pointed out that the production of turf by the locals had been going on for over 200 years. The poor people in his parish were selling the turf to support themselves and their families. They were honest, hardworking and industrious and did not sell their turf by weight. Fr. Keogh proposed a motion which was adopted requesting the Minister for Supplies to reconsider his decision.

In May 1942 Lemass, who would become Taoiseach in 1959 wrote to Fr. Keogh. He stated that there were no restrictions upon the movement of turf into Dublin by horse-drawn vehicles. In Dublin, however, the existing regulations required the sale of turf by weight only and the maximum price fixed was 64 shillings per ton with corresponding prices for smaller quantities. He had decided to permit the sale of turf by the dozen sods under certain conditions. The price would be 3pence per dozen sods, which price corresponded to the current fixed maximum price per ton. He was not prepared under any circumstances to agree to an increase in this price. The maximum quantity which may be sold to any single customer by these traders would be four stone and each customer would have the right to require that the price charged him would be determined by weight rather than by count. The concession to sell turf by count would be extended to all traders and not confined to the Clane turf men and it would operate throughout the non-turf area. He appreciated that this did not meet in full the demands of the Clane turf-men. It narrowed down the points of difference, however, to the single one of price and concerning this no concession was possible.

Fr. Keogh was very interested in antiquities and local history and became a very active member of the Kildare Archaeological Society in 1922. He was elected to the Council of the Society in 1932. He recorded some local history events such as the origins of Rathcoffey Church which dates from 1710 and the burning of Staplestown Chapel in 1798. He

attended many of the Society's meetings and regularly went on their Annual outing. In the early 1940s the Society was experiencing some financial difficulties. Fr. Keogh suggested leaving some copies of their journal in the local shops for sale. To this end a Publications Committee was established. Articles written by Fr. Keogh was published in the Leinster Leader on the following dates: 10<sup>th</sup> March 1934, 16<sup>th</sup> May 1936, 15<sup>th</sup> April 1939 and the 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1939.

The Leinster Leader reported that Clane was en fete on Sunday June 15<sup>th</sup> 1947 to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of the ordination of the Very Rev. Laurence Keogh, the beloved pastor of the parish. His health had been failing of late. He was very much confined to the Parochial House. The Church was packed for the 12:00 noon Mass which was celebrated to mark his Golden Jubilee. People from outside the parish came to attend this Mass which was celebrated in the local church. The celebrant was Rev. J. Mooney, the curate. The deacon was Rev. Fr. Shiels, S.J. and the sub-deacon was Rev. Fr. McGlade, S.J. Rev. M. Gleeson was the Master of Ceremonies. The Mass was followed by benediction and the singing of the Te Deum. The choir was directed by Fr. Lawson, S.J. On the following day, a delegation which represented the Parish visited Fr. Keogh in the Parochial House. They extended to him the good wishes of all the parishioners. The deputation consisted of Messrs Henry Farrell, C. O'Neill, P. McDermott, Jas Cooney, Mr. Doorley, Mr. Crosbie, P.J. Frayne, County Councillor and Mr. Sean O'Farrell, N.T. Mr. Frayne introduced the members of the deputation and said he wished to extend to Fr. Keogh the heartiest congratulations of all the parishioners on this auspicious occasion, the Golden Jubilee of his ordination. They said they also wished to thank him for his untiring work, his dedication and commitment to the parish over the last twenty one years.

All the parishioners were very conscious of his unfailing work and his drive to improve their conditions. They felt that it was most appropriate to mark this occasion and say thanks by making a presentation which was contributed to by every

member of the parish. The presentation was made by Mr. H. Farrell who also expressed the hope that Fr. Keogh would soon be restored to his full health and that he would be with them for many more years. In reply, Fr. Keogh thanked the visiting group and all his parishioners for their gift and their good wishes. He said that his work was a labour of love, he wished to thank all the parishioners for all their support over the years since he arrived in Clane. He expressed “his appreciation for the very practical help he had always received from his parishioners”. He had received so much co-operation and was always made so welcome and it was a pleasure to be able to celebrate so many important events in the lives of all his parishioners.

Fr. Keogh’s health had been failing slowly over the past few years, even before the celebration of his Golden Jubilee. Despite his failing health, “in his zeal to carry out the duties of his sacred office, strove to overcome the handicap of advancing years and ill-health until fairly recently”. He passed away in the Parochial House where he had been confined to bed because of his illness on the 20<sup>th</sup> of July 1948. He was noted for his wonderful priestly and saintly qualities. He was a priest who looked after the spiritual needs of his parish with great dignity. He also looked out for their temporal needs. He was a great friend of the poor and also those who were in trouble or suffering from ill-health. Like Blessed John Sullivan who passed away on the 19<sup>th</sup> of February 1933, he never tired of consoling the sick and lonely.

His funeral Mass which was celebrated by Very Rev. A.G. Byrne, was presided over by Most Rev. Dr. Keogh, Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin. All the businesses in the village closed for the interment. The funeral was attended by a huge crowd with many travelling from outside the parish to be present for the Mass. Practically every priest in the diocese and some from the neighbouring dioceses were present. His wish was to be buried in the Abbey Cemetery among the people he had served for many years rather than in the vault in the church. He is buried facing his “congregation”.

# **BITES OF LIFE: GROWING UP IN CLANE**

*Karen Sullivan*

It's quite the privilege to be asked to contribute to this wonderful edition of Coiseanna. I am not your typical history buff but, like a lot of people, I am sentimental about the village I grew up in. This village which helped shape my childhood in such a gentle, easy way. I think with absolute fondness of my carefree youth and the friends I had back then, many of whom are still friends to this day. During the last two years between the relentless onset of Covid and the dreaded rolling lockdowns some people became more and more isolated in their homes. Some were but a few metres from their loved ones and friends but many others were thousands of kilometres and stranded half a world away. We were all desperate to keep in touch and although we had to stay physically apart for long spells of time we had the advantage of technology being at our fingertips and the virtual world of zoom and WhatsApp became the most unique of guests in our midst.

I had in the past thought about starting a group on Facebook where people could share stories, old pictures, memorabilia and tales about Clane. In April 2021 someone posed a question about the whereabouts of a previous Clane resident and there ensued a nostalgic conversation back and forth. Following on from that I bit the bullet and that is how the group Clane Down Memory Lane began. I invited a few friends and they invited more and now we have nearly two thousand members! It has in the past months been a great source of entertainment, chats and laughs and it has rekindled long forgotten friendships and unearthed some magical precious photos and footage from times long gone. The rich tapestry of our collective memories has come to life in a modern day medium. Initially I was hoping it would serve as another way for people to interact at a time when they couldn't be physically together. In a matter of a few short weeks it grew to be an invaluable source of memories, articles and photographs dating back to the early 1900s. A beautiful collection of treasures detailing friendships,



couples, achievements, sporting highlights and school days. Video footage and photographs which had been lying in drawers for years were dug out, some never having been seen previously by their loved ones and have been regarded in delight by everyone. For the newer members of our Community it has given them a renewed sense of their surroundings and an appreciation of all that has happened before. For those far away it has I hope served as a direct link to home and is a reassuring presence in somewhat uncertain times. For my own part I grew up in Loughbollard on 'Millionaires Row' as it's fondly referred to or so I'm told! Much of my time was spent playing marbles or conkers, roller-skating up and down the paths or alternatively we were in the field across from my house where now stands Hillview Heights. The thrill of this was always the threat of being caught by 'The Farmer', I never did know who he was but I apologise profusely for the randomly flattened patches of hay where the den had been set up for the day. Thankfully we never did meet him although I'm sure he was a good guy.

When Hillview Heights was in construction many years later I managed to sleep peacefully through an ear blasting explosion only metres from my room! Fire Brigades, fracas and general mayhem ensued all the while I was blissfully unaware of the near miss. Having spent years looking for adventure with the gang I managed to sleep through the biggest news in years directly across from my house! Loughbollard in those days was a hub of activity with major skateboarding displays happening in tandem with the latest soccer playoffs and of course the endless games of Rounders on the big green. The leather clad bikers could be found occasionally surveying the proceedings while hanging out at the bottom of the green, generally just being their cool selves but probably secretly wanting to join in the fun!

Across the road at the end of Loughbollard was the quarry where hours of fun could be had hanging off the back at the roots of the tall trees and skidding down at high speed to almost certain demise only to clamber back up and do it all

over again. In the Winter after a snowfall every available plastic turf sack would be sought to career down the hillside at breakneck speed, there's even a rumour circulating that a car bonnet was the means of one brave soul one year.

Encircling all of this activity was 'The Orchard' as it was and still is fondly referred to. The lush green band that encircles Loughbollard with a comforting hug. Here you could hang out (quite literally) with your friends over the main road from one of the various ancient trees. Counting the cars, keeping a watchful eye for any suspicious activity so your gang could be the ones to solve the latest crime. Then off home for dinner thus passing the baton to the next gang who would take up their treetop positions.



**The author and her older brother Jason Drennan sitting on the lock gate at Digby Bridge circa 1978**

I've often heard it said that the days are long but the years fly by and oh how truer words have never been spoken. Those wonderful 'daze' went by in a heartbeat. I guess what has been compounded for me in this past year is that Clane is still that special place of my childhood just much bigger and indeed it has a lot of hidden gems dwelling within its domain. Maybe

not the precious stones kind of gems but the people kind. There are characters worth their weight in gold hidden all around Clane. Recently while out walking through that very same field of my childhood I happened upon an envelope pinned to a tree - 'Take Me' was written on the outside. I looked around, shrugged my shoulders and stuck it in my pocket. When I got home I opened the envelope and to my surprise was a ticket for the next lotto draw and a handwritten note from the anonymous gifter, who wrote to say that indeed this was not the first envelope they had left for a stranger to find randomly and for no other reason than to spread happiness. Needless to say I didn't win any money but it lifted my spirits and put a smile on my face and sure where else would you find these random acts of kindness only in our own precious Clane! There are people who are still willing to connect and maintain a growing community, to go the extra mile, to volunteer when needed, to weave the ancient history with the more recent. And above all else there are people who still care about how important it is to keep those history embers glowing and the village spirit alight! They are the story keepers, the modern day seanachais, the locals!!

The following is an excerpt from one of the articles, written about one of Clane's many beloved characters, Mr. Jim Canning. Come join us on Clane Down Memory Lane if you would like to see more. Don't be shy we promise we don't bite!

### **Jim Canning**

Time spent in Jim Canning's company is time well spent. If you ever have the opportunity to have a chat about anything other than the ordinary, then Jim is your man. In his 88th year now, Jim is a jovial, clever character with a razor-sharp mind and a continued zest for learning and life. In order to understand how Jim came to live in Clane, we need to go back to the late 1950s and across the world to the Beryllium Mines of Karoi, in modern day Zimbabwe. Jim had followed his dream and left his native Dublin to ease his adventurous soul. Born in Donabate Railway Cottage on a rain-filled stormy night to the

Station Master and his wife in 1933, he had a largely happy, carefree childhood spending some time in Portarlinton with his Grandparents in order to be safe from the bombings while his father was away at war. Describing it as an enviable, idyllic childhood having fun with his siblings, fishing and 'foraging' for orchard apples in the countryside.

Not for Jim the boat trip to England or the red eye to America, Jim longed for more, he wanted something different -Africa beckoned. While at the mining camp he and his fellow workmates one Irish the other Tasmanian were struck one day with the idea that they would write to 'Irelands Own' in search



Jim Canning

of some pen pals. Some weeks later the postal truck complete with perplexed driver at the helm arrived at the camp with sacks full of letters and correspondence from various parts of the world. The lads were thrilled and decided to split the letters by country, Jim had the Irish letters. He whittled down the various stories and photos to just one in particular which was from 'Ronnie Marron of Clane'. Her musings were

always interesting and chock full of tales about life in Clane on their land and they struck a chord with Jim, so they became regular pen pals writing back and forth. Jim was now working on the future lake area of the now well-known Kariba Dam, located in the Kariba Gorge of the Zambezi River basin between Zambia and Zimbabwe. Working with huge earthmoving equipment, Jim also found himself occasionally aiding the local authorities amidst heightened civil unrest in the Special Police force. Malaria had struck him for a third time and he decided it was time to head for home in 1960.

Shortly upon his return, after telling his Clare Mammy the story of the letters, she politely encouraged him to go get his woman!! He dusted off his red MG car, plate LPN432, donned his leather bomber jacket with all of Ronnie's letters safely in the inside pocket, consulted his map and headed for Clane! Upon arrival he was greeted by two locals, Patti Buckley and her sister who directed him to where Peter Marron's shop and petrol station were. There he found Ronnie, up a ladder whitewashing the walls. He introduced himself as her long-time pen pal from Africa. They made a date to meet in the Black Swan, Palmerstown for the next evening and thus began their 5-month courtship along with continued letters. Jim spent a short time in England until again he succumbed to a fourth bout of Malaria, he came back to Ireland and proposed marriage to Ronnie. Over a whiskey he asked her father the then retired Garda Sergeant Marron for her hand in marriage! On Easter Monday 23rd April 1962 they were married and from that day forth Jim became known as 'Ronnie Marron's husband'! A title he is very happy with to this day he says chuckling. When talking about Ronnie Jim's face gets even more animated and his eyes dance with the memories of her. 'We weren't only husband and wife' he says proudly, 'we were best friends! We never had a cross word in all our time together. If I occasionally got a little bit animated about something that was bothering me Ronnie would say "Come on now Jim we've had enough of that, let's get on with it" and that would be the end of it!' They travelled Europe together including England, Austria and Germany, Jim worked on the pipelines and they both became German speakers. Eventually the call of home brought them back to Clane and they built the 'Red House' on the Dublin Rd circa 1980. This house was a hub of activity and fun and where they happily reared their family until eventually it became too big for their needs and they migrated to the Prosperous Road. Jim describes Ronnie as a warm, approachable, pragmatic and perceptive person- the perfect balance to his fearless streak. Born up the Millicent Road in Stewart's cottage 1939, the second youngest of eight, she attended boarding school in Mountrath not far from where Jim spent some of his childhood. She loved antiques and was

something of an authority on porcelain. At this time Jim was driving a taxi, but always the clever businesswoman at heart Ronnie proposed that they sell the taxi licence in order to launch two new businesses. So heralded the beginning of 'Clane School of Motoring' and 'Ronnie's Relics'. Ronnie ran her business out of her old childhood bedroom above the pharmacy & Jim (nerves of steel) proceeded to teach



**Jim and Ronnie Canning**

many of us around Clane how to drive. He told me he once did the numbers and reckons he taught well over a thousand students until he sold the business in 2003! Ronnie meanwhile had also taken a stall in Fairyhouse Market and was attending Antique fairs, making a couple of appearances on RTE with the Antique Roadshow and featuring on the front of the Leinster Leader. Health issues forced her eventually to close her beloved shop. They enjoyed their retirement together until Ronnie's passing in 2013. She rests now in the old Cemetery in the heart of the community. Jim loves horses but can't horse ride anymore due to a grievous back injury. He does however write poetry and short stories for fun, some of which have been published in our local Le Cheile over the years. When I left him he was getting ready to ask his granddaughter how to download Spotify so he could listen to his music. Jim is always curious, always imaginative, always busy! Thanks for the fantastic memories Jim (and also for my driving licence!).

## CLANE 1922

*Liam Kenny*

A century ago the people of Clane and its environs faced into a period of uncertainty and adversity as law and order broke down while the country transitioned from imperial rule to an imperfect independence.

The Anglo-Irish Treaty signed in December 1921 had secured for Ireland – or at least the southern twenty-six counties - a substantial measure of independence from British rule. The Treaty had two main consequences. Firstly, it provided for the withdrawal of British forces and the winding down of the apparatus of imperial government in Ireland. This meant that Army barracks would be vacated, police stations closed, and the well-established machinery of the Crown courts would lose their means of enforcing law-and-order. Thus a power vacuum would evolve which had to be filled by the new Irish State. Before the new government could ramp up the establishment of forces of law and order the gap was filled by improvised courts and police units operating under republican auspices.

A second consequence of the Treaty was a fracturing of the Irish body politic. For many the Treaty was a realistic step on the road towards full sovereignty for Ireland - not to mention offering a respite from the conflict which had ravaged the country since 1919. For others the Treaty was a betrayal of the Republic proclaimed by the patriots of 1916 and recommitted to by the members of the first Dáil in 1919. It was anathema to them that the Treaty retained the English king as head of state which was inimical to their concept of a republic.

Political tension heightened in the Spring of 1922, with the divergent sides represented by the likes of Arthur Griffith and Michal Collins on the pro-Treaty campaign, and Eamon de Valera and Cathal Brugha of the anti-Treaty faction. In April 1922 anti-Treaty forces took possession of the Four Courts in Dublin provoking the new Irish Free State into action and triggering the conflict which became known as the “Civil

War” even if it was anything but civil in the adversity visited on sections of the population.



**The shelling of the Four Courts starts the Civil War**

Both of these dynamics – the power vacuum in the early months of 1922 as the country transitioned from British to Irish rule and the later Civil War–were to manifest themselves in various incidents and events in the Clane area during the year. While, no doubt, many people went about their domestic and farming business with little need to heed the seismic political shifts underway, the readers of the local papers such as the “Kildare Observer” were aware that the country was not settled and the wider Clane area was no exception in terms of the violent incidents reported. Some of the incidents documented were clearly a consequence of the political split but others would seem to have been acts of intimidation and violence opportunistically prosecuted under the cover of a general lawlessness that prevailed.

The reality of the new law-and-order regime in the State became apparent to Clane residents in the first weeks of 1922 when the “Kildare Observer” carried an extensive report headed “Smart capture by volunteer police.” The police in question were not part of a formally organised nation force but rather a local unit established under republican auspices to



enforce order at parish level in place of the Royal Irish Constabulary which was the Crown police force and which had lost the trust of the public necessary for effective policing.



**The post office at Clongowes has been closed for many years**

The report in the edition of 14 January 1922 described how the post office at the formal gateway to Clongowes Wood College on the Clane-Kilcock road had been raided by two men wearing masks who presented revolvers in the face of the postmistress Miss Shanahan and ordered her to hand over the contents of the cash desk. However a plucky Miss Shanahan neither handed over money nor put up her hands but succeeded in concealing a sum of money by concealing it behind the counter. Frustrated, one of the raiders brandished a large knife which he used to break the office telephone and proceeded to rifle her desk from which he took a small sum of money. The pair warned the postmistress not to leave the office for an hour under penalty of their returning and shooting her. They then made their escape. Ms Shanahan ignored their warning and ran across the green of Mainham to a neighbour's house which was described as happening to be "the residence of the Officer

Commanding of the 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion Volunteer Police.” From local knowledge it is known that the residence in question was the Dunne forge at Mainham and the volunteer officer was Pat Dunne, Officer Commanding, Mainham Company, Irish Republican Army.



Pat Dunne

Returning to the newspaper account, the report recounts a dramatic pursuit. The volunteer police officer gathered his men together, dispatched search parties on all the roads in the area. With two men he took the Celbridge road out of Clane and some miles east at Baybush they apprehended two suspects on bicycles. A search of their persons revealed cash (taken from the post office), two masks, two toy revolvers, and a large army knife. They gave their addresses as being in Co Dublin. They were taken back to the post office at Clongowes where Miss Shanahan identified them and it was established that one of them had worked as a servant in the college two years previously. The report concluded by praising the “plucky action” of Miss Shanahan while also emphasising that the

capture of the culprits established “a very creditable record” for the Mainham Volunteer Police, it being the second effected by them within the past month. This outcome demonstrates how the republican police was effective in detecting crime in the locality at a time when the formal police force, the RIC, was ceding its authority in the law-and-order space.

The republican police as they were still constituted in April 1922 – it would be some months before the Civic Guard, or official police force of the new Irish State would be effective – were equally adept at monitoring petty crime. Under the heading “Window Breaking at Clane” a man named Michael Roche was charged by Battalion Police Officer Farrell with breaking a window in the licensed premises of Miss Jones at Clane. The special court which was not a Crown court but a republican court with Messrs. S. Garry and L.J. Fullamon on the bench, ordered the defendant to pay a pound in fine and costs but, being unable to pay, he was removed to Mountjoy prison for a month’s imprisonment.

However, not all threats to persons were averted by the improvised police units of the new Irish State as was evident by a warning from the pulpit reported in May 1922. Rev. M. Kelly, C.C., told parishioners at Mass in Staplestown that the intimidation by some directed at their Protestant neighbours would have to stop. He went further in describing those involved in such acts as being “low, cowards.” He said that never before had Irishmen gone out with blackened faces to persecute their neighbours because of their religion. He referred to the damage to a Protestant man’s property in the locality and to the killing of a man’s horse in a neighbouring district and said that the sin would not be forgiven until ample restitution had been made personally to the injured parties. He adverted to the fact that there was now an embryonic Free State Government in place and that intimidatory crime such as cattle-driving was absurd when the State was not yet in a position to deal with land distribution. His injunction to the congregation reveals an unsettling undercurrent to the revolutionary narrative which has been understudied in Co Kildare – the

extent to which there was sectarian intimidation with land-grabbing as its objective.

As 1922 progressed into the summer months, the political situation at a national level had fractured violently. No sooner had the British army and administration began to vacate Ireland than those who had won the south of Ireland its measure of independence had turned on each other. The anti-Treaty forces had taken possession of the Four Courts in April 1922 and after weeks of kidnappings and reprisals on the streets of Dublin the new Free State Government was prompted to assert its authority. It shelled the Four Courts faction who, following a devastating explosion, evacuated the building and began to stream out of the city attempting to re-group and push back against the pursuing Free State forces. Mobility was important to the anti-Treaty combatants and the best source of such mobility was the cars owned by the occupiers of the country houses in north Kildare.

This pattern was reflected locally in press reports of July 1922 which told of how armed men had commandeered a Ford motor van, the property of Captain Dunne of Blackhall Stud, Clane. They also called at the premises of Captain Williams of Prospect, Sallins, where they carried off three tins of petrol. Attempting to make a stand, a number of the anti-Treaty fighters or “Irregulars” as they were commonly referred to in the press, took possession of outbuildings at Longtown, Clane, the residence of the Sweetman family. This was the last militant activity reported in the area for some months and the autumn of 1922 seems to have passed relatively calmly in the Clane area as the fighting in the ongoing Civil War concentrated in the south and west of the country.

However the potential for malicious acts remained and on a November night the skies over Donadea blazed as a massive fire engulfed farm-buildings on an out-farm of the Donadea Castle estate belonging to Miss Aylmer. Only the efforts of the land steward, Thomas Keogh, who resided at the farm known as Kilinamoragh saved the entire farmstead from being

engulfed. As it was almost 200 tons of hay and crops was destroyed which together with buildings and machinery was valued at £1,200 – compensation for which would inevitably land with the ratepayers of the county. The press report noted that the “cause of the outbreak is believed to have been malicious.”



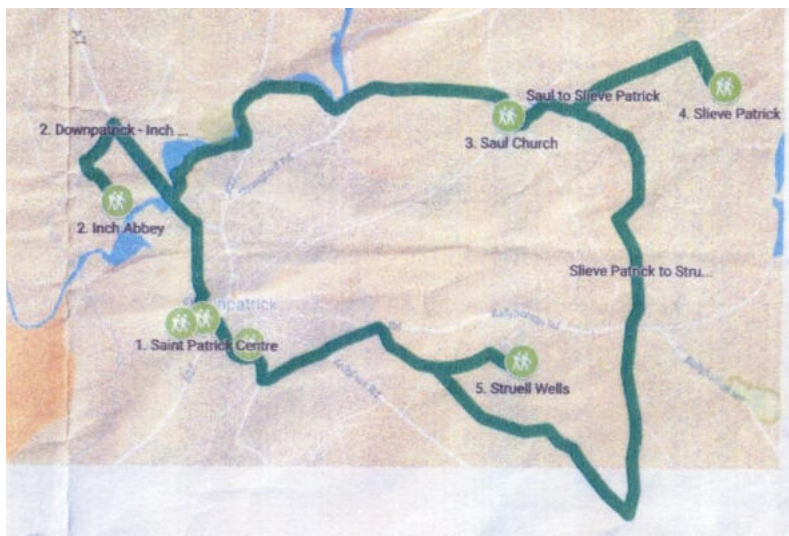
**Sergeant James Finn**

The uncertain nature of policing in the Clane area which had seen the Royal Irish Constabulary yield to the localised republican police units in the disturbed years from 1919 to 1922 was to find a permanent form in December 1922–reflecting the progress of the Free State government in stabilising the new state. The Kildare Observer of 6 December 1922 reported that a station of the Civic Guard had been established in Clane. The first officer-in-charge was Sergeant Finn accompanied by a station party of four Guards beginning an unbroken police presence in the town to modern times.

# ST PATRICK'S WAY: DOWNPATRICK CAMINO *Larry Breen*

A number of years ago, encouraged by one of my best friends, I decided to tackle the Camino Santiago de Compostela, or at least part of it. It was a memorable experience for many reasons, not least of all for the wonderful people we met along the way. However, I realised that there are many pilgrim paths at home here in Ireland. So why not walk in the footsteps of our own ancestors and what better path to follow than that of our Patron Saint, Patrick.

The Pilgrim Walk, at Downpatrick, County Down, was over two days with the first leg a six-mile journey followed by a twelve mile walk the next day. Pilgrims usually stay over-night in Denvir's Hotel in Downpatrick, Ireland's oldest Coaching Inn dating from 1640 and full of old-world charm. An ideal location for following St Patrick's Way.



**Saint Patrick's Way**

Located in the medieval town of Downpatrick is St Patrick's Centre, the only permanent exhibition in the world telling the

story of Ireland's Patron Saint. It was here that my great friends and fellow pilgrims Patsy, Paul, Susie and I met to begin our adventure along St Patrick's Way. In St Patrick's Centre you can go back to 400AD when Patrick was alive, hear his amazing life story and hold on to your seat as you are transported on an amazing virtual helicopter ride to all the places associated with St Patrick and his legacy.

### **Mound of Down**

Our first stop was the Mound of Down. This oval shaped fort situated in the former Quoile marshes just north of the town, is about 200 metres long and 100 metres wide. This Mound of Down or "Dundalethlas" is one of the most impressive earthen fortifications in Northern Ireland. Its known history dates it to the early Christian period 5<sup>th</sup> century AD. The mound was originally almost surrounded by sea at high tide and was of



**The Mound of Down**

strategic importance as it commanded the estuary. It was the scene of a significant battle in 1177 between Rory Mac Dunleavy and the forces of the Norman invader, John de Courcy who although greatly outnumbered defeated the Irish due to his soldiers' superior equipment and armoury.

We then walked along some country roads and on to the banks of the Quoile River as it meandered to the distant estuary and Strangford Lough. It was a pleasant relief to leave the hustle and bustle of the roads and the traffic behind us and enjoy the peace and tranquility along the water's edge. Our next destination was the ruins of the Cistercian Abbey at Inch.

### **Inch Abbey**

The ruins of Inch Abbey presented an impressive picture of what was obviously once a large and significant Abbey.

The first monastery established on the northern banks of the river Quoile in 800 AD was known as Inis Cumhsraigh. It was plundered by the Vikings in 1022 in a raid led by Sitric, King of the Danes. Nothing remains of the early monastery. De Courcy also founded Grey Abbey in Co Down as well as erecting castles at Carrickfergus and Rathdrum. The Abbey was colonised by monks from Furness Abbey in Northern England. De Courcy commissioned one of these monks, a man called Jocelyn of Barrow-in-Furness, to rewrite the legends of St Patrick and it is thought that it might have been at Inch Abbey that the story of St Patrick banishing the snakes from Ireland was actually written. This legend refers to the ousting of evil from the Island of Ireland.



**Inch Abbey Ruins**



The Abbey follows a standard Cistercian plan with a cruciform (cross shaped) church constructed in Gothic style c.1200. The church consisted of an aisled nave to the west, two projecting transepts to the north and south and an aisled chancel to the east. This chancel with its elegant triple pointed lancet windows and a clustered pier in the chancel was far more sophisticated than any that existed in Ireland at that time. It was most interesting to see the putlogs (open scaffolding holes) still remaining in the chancel. It was fascinating also to see the remains of a huge bakehouse situated to the south-west of the cloisters. There is a low tower at the crossing of the north and south transepts and along the east of the cloister are the ruins of the vestry, chapter house, parlour and day room. Inch Abbey remains a holy place of pilgrimage, meditation and prayer.

## **Saul Church**



**Saul Church**

From Inch Abbey our path led us to the cradle of Christianity in Ireland, where Patrick built his first church and where Saul Church now stands. The church is built on the site of Saint Patrick's earliest place of Christian worship in Ireland founded by the saint in 432 AD. Originally built of wood, the church

has been rebuilt many times - most recently in 1932 to celebrate the 1500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its foundation. Dichu, the High King's brother, was quickly converted and gave Patrick a barn or Sabhall in gaeilge, from which the name Saul derives. This became the first church in Ireland. Today the little church built in 1932 sits alongside a round tower as a testimony to Patrick's legacy. Inside heaven met earth here, a place of grace where Patrick passed from this world to the next. The ancient site at Saul has many interesting artefacts including stone-built graves, a souterrain, and an important collection of cross-carved stones ranging in date from the 8<sup>th</sup> to the mid 12<sup>th</sup> century. There are two medieval seals of the "Chapter of St Patrick's of Saul", one showing the Abbot – Brother John with a Bible and Crozier and the other an unnamed Abbot from 1410 giving benediction above a figure of St Patrick.

It was now time to rest the weary limbs and recharge the batteries so we retired for a welcome soup and sandwiches at the "Barn" at Saul. A short coach journey took us back to our hostelry at Denvir's hotel where we enjoyed a well-earned rest and a lovely dinner before retiring for the night with our thoughts on tomorrow's adventure.

### **St Patrick's RC Church Saul**

Next morning at the centre we were met by our guide for the day, Tony Bailie. Our first stop was at St Patrick's RC Church at Saul just outside Downpatrick. Built in 1886 it stands on the site of a previous church built in 1770, it was designed by Jeremiah McAuley who also designed St Peter's Cathedral in Belfast. Inside the church are two impressive Harry Clarke stained- glass windows. Built into the wall to the right of the altar is a slab of rock said to be part of the original altar used by St Patrick at the site of his first church at Saul.

### **Slieve Patrick**

We then walked to the foot of Slieve Patrick. The year 1932 marked the 1500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of St Patrick's arrival in Ireland and to commemorate it the catholic community built Slieve Patrick. The first sod was cut in 1932 and the site was

completed in 1938. There are fourteen stations of the cross on the way up the hill and these were donated by wealthy local families both Catholic and Protestant. Climbing up the hill we were able to see the Belfast Hills and Divis Mountain and to the right, Scrabo Tower on a hilltop and almost exactly in the centre of our view we could see the distinctive humped shaped mountain of Slemish, where Patrick, as a slave, tended sheep as a young man.

On the summit of Slieve Patrick is the tallest statue of St Patrick in the world, around thirty feet (10 metres) in height. It is carved from Mourne Granite, cut by quarrymen from Kilcoo and took six years to carve. A celebratory service was held here on June 12<sup>th</sup> 1938 when it is reported that between 20,000 and 50,000 people attended, led by the then Archbishop of Armagh Cardinal Joseph MacRory. It was the first time RTE did a live broadcast from Northern Ireland. To the south we could see the Mourne mountains and to the south west Slieve Croob and the Dromara Mountains.



**Saint Patrick's Church Saul**

The next part of the walk was both interesting and challenging as it took us up hill and down dale along many grassy boreens

as we traversed the verdant countryside. Points of interest along the way, the Well at Roneystown which was the only source of fresh water for this community until 1963; former mills where wheat and barley were brought to be milled using the currents of the Slaney River; a gate dating from the 18<sup>th</sup> century bearing the notches made by the blacksmith to trademark his work and “petroglyphs” carved into stone in a field and dating back 5,000 years, similar to patterns found at megalithic sites throughout Ireland, at Newgrange and Lough Crew.



**Along many grassy boreens**

### **Struell Wells**

St Patrick’s Wells and Bath Houses at Struell presented an impressive sight in this secluded valley where runs a fast-flowing underground stream under five ancient buildings. Strong associations between Saint Patrick and Struell Wells go back over 1000 years. It was here the Saint was said to have bathed when he first arrived to bring Christianity to Ireland. The site became a famous pilgrimage destination in medieval times when the stone structures we see today were built. The drinking well is inside the circular building made of stone with a domed vault and you can still see traces of the wicker

framework over which it was built. This is the well in which St Patrick is said to have bathed. The structure dates from the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Set into the brickwork is a crucifix which was typical of the style from that period. Beside is an unfinished church which was started in the 18<sup>th</sup> century but never completed possibly because of the Penal Laws at the time. In the centre of the site is the eye-well with its pyramid-shaped corbelled roof. The largest building on the site is the Men's Bathhouse which, is unique in Ireland, and contains seats leading to a "bath-room" and a large "tub" into which the underground stream pours. To the side is the smaller Women's Bathhouse which was the original bathhouse for both sexes. However, the wife of a wealthy landowner, Lady Southwell, was horrified at the thought of men and women changing and bathing together and paid for the construction of the Men's Bathhouse in the early 1700s.



**Struell Wells Bath Houses**

This was one of the most important pilgrimage sites in Ireland, centred around mid-summer's eve on 21<sup>st</sup> June when the waters were said to rise and have healing properties. Up on the hill, covered by brambles and nettles is St Patrick's Chair, a group of stones which pilgrims, after bathing in the healing waters,

climbed up to on their knees, with rocks placed on the back of their neck, and circled it three times.

### **St Patrick's Church Downpatrick**

Our next port of call was St Patrick's RC Church in St Patricks Avenue Downpatrick. There was a Mass house here in 1787 but the present church was started in 1873 and built in the Gothic Revival style with a spire being added in 1895

### **St Patrick's Grave and Down Cathedral**

Our journey was now almost complete so we walked back to the Downpatrick Centre, climbed up St Patrick's Staircase and turned left to Down Cathedral and the Saint's last resting place. On a clear day the Mourne Mountains, the highest named after Patrick's disciple, Donard, are visible.

After travelling for thirty years throughout Ireland to spread his Christian message Patrick returned to Saul to die and his body was, according to his own wishes, placed on a bier which was tethered to oxen and where they stopped was where he wanted to be buried. This spot is where the oxen stopped and it was on this site that he was laid to rest. This became a sacred site for Ireland's early Christians and the first recorded monastery was built here in 753. It is said that John de Courcy oversaw the removal of St Patrick's body from its original grave to the present site. The bodies of St Brigid and St Colmcille were also placed in the grave, fulfilling a prophecy that the three would be buried together.

***“In Down, three saints one grave do fill; Patrick, Brigid and Colmcille”***

Following the reformation in the 1500s, the monasteries were all closed and this site came under the jurisdiction of the Anglican Church but fell into ruin. It was not until 1790 that the church of Ireland raised funds to start its restoration using part of the ruins of the previous churches there, dating back to 753AD and the stones and bricks found there.

St Patrick's grave is marked by a huge granite stone brought from the Mourne mountains in 1920 and carved with the word "Patric". The stone was placed here to stop people emigrating to America from taking a hand-full of soil with them and eroding the grave.

People go on pilgrimages for many different reasons, it may be religious, it can be for personal reasons, it could be a challenge to oneself or maybe just to do something different and meet other people.



**Saint Patrick's Grave**

For me the journey was a little bit of everything, religious as I did feel a Christian presence along the way, personal as I was able to share it with close friends and also strangers (who became friends) and also for that sense of history I felt in all the many interesting and different places we visited. It was, I have to say, physically challenging but mentally it was refreshing and it will continue to live in my memory.

# THOMAS FRANCIS MEAGHER - REBEL AND EXILE

*Jim Heffernan*

Thomas Francis Meagher was born in Waterford on 3 August 1823. He was the son of Thomas Meagher a wealthy business man who was a Member of Parliament and was the first Catholic Lord Mayor of Waterford since penal times. He was educated by the Jesuits in Clongowes Wood College, Clane, County Kildare, where, he developed the strong oratorical skills which would serve him well in later life. He later studied under the Jesuits at Stonyhurst College, in England. In 1843 he returned to his home in Waterford before moving to Dublin to study for the Irish Bar at Kings Inns.



**Meagher circa 1843**

In Dublin Meagher met Charles Gavan Duffy co-founder of the Nation newspaper which advocated repeal of the Act of Union between Great Britain and Ireland. He became acquainted with others around *The Nation*; co-founders Thomas Davis and John Blake Dillon, William Smith O'Brien, Richard O'Gorman, Kevin O'Doherty and John Mitchell. The



group which was involved with Daniel O'Connell's Repeal Association became known as the 'Young Irelanders'

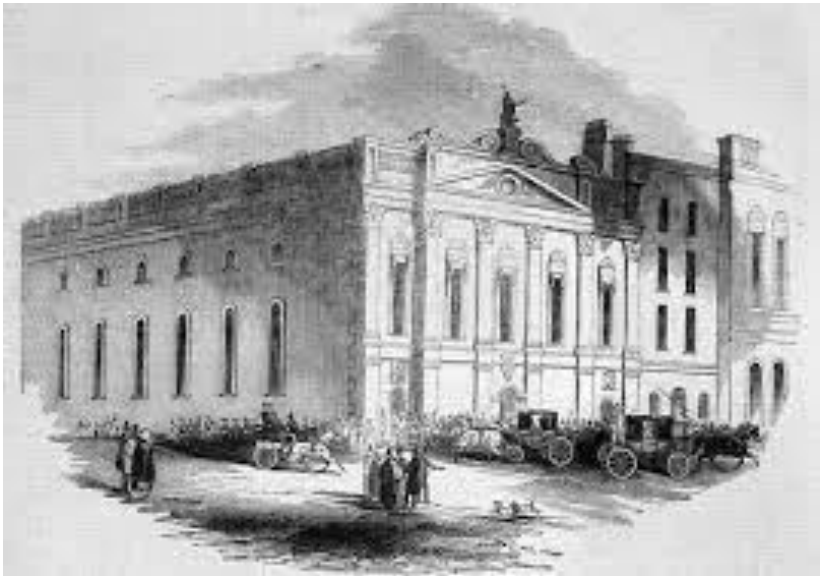
In June 1846, the Sir Robert Peel's Tory Government fell from office and the Liberals under Lord John Russell came to power. Daniel O'Connell tried to lead the Repeal movement to support both the Russell administration and English Liberalism. Repeal agitation was damped down in return for a distribution of generous patronage from the British government. On 15 June 1846, Meagher denounced English Liberalism in Ireland, as he suspected the national cause of Repeal would be sacrificed to the Whig government. He felt the Irish would be "purchased back into factious vassalage". Meagher and the other Young Irelanders vehemently denounced any movement toward English political parties, so long as Repeal was denied.

On 13 July, O'Connell's supporters introduced resolutions to declare that under no circumstances was a nation justified in asserting its liberties by force of arms. In fact, the Young Irelanders had not, until then, advocated the use of physical force to advance the cause of repeal and opposed any such policy. The "Peace Resolutions" declared that physical force was immoral under any circumstances to obtain national rights. Although Meagher agreed that only moral and peaceful means should be adopted by the Association, he added that if Repeal could not be carried by those means, he would adopt the more perilous risky but no less honourable choice of arms. When the Peace resolutions were proposed again at a meeting in Conciliation Hall on 28 July, Meagher responded with his famous "Sword Speech" which included the following:

***"..... Be it in the defence, or be it in the assertion of a people's liberty, I hail the sword as a sacred weapon; and if, my lord, it has sometimes taken the shape of the serpent and reddened the shroud of the oppressor with too deep a dye, like the anointed rod of the High Priest, it has at other times and as often, blossomed into celestial flowers to deck the freeman's brow***

*Abhor the sword - stigmatize the sword? Abhor the sword - stigmatize the sword? for in the passes of the Tyrol it cut to pieces the banner of the Bavarian and through those passes cut a path to fame for the peasant insurrectionist of Innsbruck.*

*Abhor the sword - stigmatize the sword?, No my lord for at its blow, the quivering of its crimson light a giant nation sprang up from the waters of the Atlantic, and by its redeeming magic, the fettered colony became a daring, free republic." Abhor the sword - stigmatize the sword? No, my lord, for it swept the Dutch marauders out of the fine old towns of Belgium - swept them back to their phlegmatic swamps - and knocked their flag and sceptre, their laws and bayonets into the sluggish waters of the Scheldt." "My lord, I honour the Belgians, I admire the Belgians, I love the Belgians, for their enthusiasm, their courage, their success, and I, for one, will not stigmatize, for I do not abhor, the means by which they obtained a Citizen King, a Chamber of Deputies ...."*



**Conciliation Hall Burgh Quay where Meagher made the Sword Speech**

Meagher's speech ended abruptly there, because Daniel O'Connell's son, John, concerned by the support Meagher was

beginning to build for the Young Irelander's position, jumped up and did not let him continue further stating that no one who held his views could remain a member of the Repeal Association. Meagher strode from the Hall accompanied by Smith O'Brien who had been chairing the meeting and the other Young Irelanders never to return, their connection to, Daniel O'Connell was severed forever. The Irish camp divided into two with the formation of the Irish Confederation. From that day forward Meagher was known as: Meagher of the Sword.

The year 1848 saw rebellions throughout Europe. In February 1848 King Louis-Philippe of France was overthrown and the Second Republic was proclaimed. Subsequently rebellions broke out in Berlin, Vienna, Rome, Prague and Budapest and authoritarian governments were replaced by liberal administrations. Inspired by this the Young Irelanders demanded a national Parliament with full legislative and executive powers. The Young Ireland leaders William Smith O'Brien, Thomas Francis Meagher and Richard O'Gorman led a delegation to Paris to congratulate the French Republic. Meagher returned with a Tricolour which would ultimately become the national flag. As most of the revolutions had been relatively bloodless they believed they could obtain similar results in Ireland. They did not call for rebellion but would not make absolute pledges for peace.

On 22 July 1848 the British Government forced the Young Irelanders' hands by suspending habeas corpus meaning that they could be imprisoned without trial. Forced to choose between armed resistance or flight they chose the former although their timing, in the middle of the Great Famine, was inauspicious. The 1798 Rebellion and even the Emmet Rising were meticulously planned but had been brought down by informers; however the Young Irelanders seemed to think that making rousing speeches in disaffected areas would prompt spontaneous uprisings. Between 23 and 27 July they travelled from County Wexford through County Kilkenny into County Tipperary where they hoped to raise support from miners in the Slieveardagh collieries addressing crowds who received them

with enthusiasm but the starving people showed little appetite for joining an uprising. Even those of the clergy who were sympathetic discouraged their parishioners because of the lack of preparation.

William Smith O'Brien with local supporters, mostly miners and tenant farmers, assembled in the village of the Commons on 28 July and erected barricades. On 29 July a force of 46 RIC men from Callan under Sub-Inspector Trant approached the Commons from the direction of Ballingarry. Arriving at a cross roads they saw that the road into the Commons was barricaded and turned right towards Kilkenny, The rebels followed them and the RIC took refuge in a large two-storey farm house taking 5 children who were inside hostage. The house was surrounded by the rebels and a stand-off occurred. To this day the house is known locally as the 'War House'.



**The War House near Ballingarry, County Tipperary**

The owner of the house Mrs Margaret McCormack arrived and demanded to be let into the house; the RIC refused and would not release the children. O'Brien went to the a window of the house with Mrs McCormack and was negotiating with the police when a constable fired at him. Two men were wounded while dragging O'Brien to cover. The rebels were outraged at

being fired on without provocation and shooting continued for a number of hours in which two of the rebels were killed. Eventually a large party of RIC from Cashel, under Sub-Inspector Cox, were seen arriving over Boulea Hill. The rebels who used up all their ammunition in attempting to halt their advance dispersed bringing an end to the Young Irelanders Rebellion. Meagher and the other prominent Young Irelanders were subsequently arrested, tried for High Treason and sentenced to death; the sentences were subsequently commuted to transportation for life.

Meagher sailed from Kingstown together with William Smith O'Brien, Thomas Bellew MacManus and Patrick O'Donoghue on the ten-gun brig *Swift*. As 'gentlemen' they were treated as 'supernumeraries' rather than 'prisoners' and put in passenger cabins. Just over three months later they arrived at Hobart. Fellow Young Irelanders John Martin and Kevin O'Doherty arrived separately on the *Elphineston*. Prior to their arrival Earl Grey, the British Secretary of State, had written to Sir William Denison the lieutenant governor responsible for the so called State Prisoners to say that, as they were gentlemen, they were not to be subject to the usual restrictions and should be given 'Tickets of Leave' allowing them to live freely providing they promised not to escape. All the Young Irelanders accepted their tickets of leave except for William Smith O'Brien who refused on principle to give his promise. Smith O'Brien was dispatched to a prison on Maria Island off the coast. The others were permitted to live freely but in designated districts approximately 40 miles from each other. Meagher was assigned to Campbell Town 75 miles north of Hobart. Although the third biggest town in Van Diemens Land it consisted of one main street and three side streets. He later moved to an hotel in the nearby town of Ross.

In November 1849 Meagher rented a small cottage on the shore of Lake Sorell from a wealthy sheep rancher. His only neighbours were a few shepherds some distance away. Lake Sorell was eight miles wide by seven miles long. There was an

island of 60 acres in the middle of the lake which he also rented. Meagher acquired a number of sheep, four bullocks,



**Sketch of Meagher's cottage beside Lake Sorell by John Mitchell**

two saddle horses and a number of dogs. He hired Tom Egan an Irishman from County Kilkenny, to look after his stock. Meagher purchased a boat which was built in Hobart and had to be dragged eighty-five miles to Lake Sorell by a team of six bullocks.

For a while it seemed that Meagher was settled in his situation but he missed his privileged social life in Ireland. He was depressed when an attempt to organise William Smith O'Brien's escape from close confinement failed. He had been secretly engaged to a Miss Ryan in Ireland but when her parents found out they forbade her marriage to an exile and the young lady wrote to Meagher asking him to return her letters. While out riding in this state of mind he came across the entourage of Doctor Hall who was travelling to Ross to take up the position of general practitioner. Hall was accompanied by his wife and their six children who were in the care of a beautiful young woman Catherine Bennett. Meagher accompanied them all the way to Ross in conversation with

Miss Bennett. He subsequently paid numerous visits to the Hall household in Ross to see Miss Bennett and eventually proposed to her. The couple married on 22 February 1851. Nevertheless Meagher remained unsettled, his demeanor was not helped by the imprisonment of his comrades O'Donahue, O'Doherty and McManus for illegally meeting with each other. Meagher himself avoided the same fate by virtue of a fast horse which got him back across his boundary before the police caught up with him.

### **Escape**

Shortly afterwards Meagher began plotting his escape from Van Diemen's Land. He faced two problems; firstly escaping



**Catherine Bennett**

the constables and finding a ship to take him to a safe place; secondly the State Prisoners were honour bound not to violate their parole and if they withdrew it they were immediately liable for arrest. Meagher's final arrangements were made in January 1852: Catherine, who was now pregnant, went to live with her own people until she received word that Meagher was safe, she would then travel to Waterford to Meagher's father.

On 3 January 1852 Meagher wrote to the district magistrate informing him that he was withdrawing his parole and that if the magistrate felt the need to arrest him he would feel free to attempt to escape. He waited in his cottage until he received word, as pre-arranged, from four young local men that the police were on their way. Meagher and the four men, all mounted, rode into the Bush and waited until Meagher's servant came and informed them that the police had arrived and were sitting in his kitchen. Meagher and his friends mounted and rode to the cottage, Meagher rode up to within pistol shot

of the kitchen door and told his servant to inform the police that he was waiting for them. When the police appeared Meagher declared that he was the prisoner that they had come to arrest and he defied them to do so, his friends in the background cheered. Meagher then spurred his horse and galloped off alone towards the coast. The police, confused by the presence of Meagher's friends, were slow to pursue him and Meagher, who was well mounted, evaded them.

At the mouth of the Tamar River two fishermen were waiting to take him to the uninhabited Waterhouse Island. After several days, much later than arranged, a ship the *Elizabeth Thompson* bound for London by way of Brazil called for him. The captain who was paid £600 for his trouble kept Meagher's identity from the crew. Landing in Pernambuco, Brazil Meagher transferred to the brig *Acorn* which took him to New York.

### **Aftermath**

Catherine awaited news of her husband with her own family in Stonefield where she gave birth to a son Henry Emmet Fitzgerald. The child died four months later on 8 June 1852 and was buried in the churchyard of St John's Church Richmond, the oldest Catholic church in Australia.

On arrival in New York Meagher was warmly received by the Irish diaspora but he had to deal with a controversy over the circumstances of his escape. The British claimed that he had broken his parole and their assertion that he had 'escaped without honour' was taken up by the *Hobart Town Advisor* and the *Sydney Morning Herald*. To resolve the controversy Meagher agreed to refer the matter to a tribunal of prominent Americans undertaking to return to Van Diemens Land if they found that he had not acted honourably. The tribunal, which included the editor of the New York Tribune, a former Congressman, a US District Attorney and a prominent merchant examined all aspects of the case and concluded that Meagher had behaved correctly. Ironically John Mitchell who had been highly critical of Meagher's actions subsequently felt able to use the same formula to facilitate his own escape.





**Memorial to Henry Emmett Fitzgerald Meagher at St John's Church Richmond**

Catherine Bennett left Van Diemen's Land on 5 February 1853 to travel via Waterford to New York to join her husband. Arriving in Waterford and again in New York she was overwhelmed by throngs of her husband's admirers who welcomed her and was uncomfortable in the social circles in which he moved. After six months in New York she returned to Waterford accompanied by Meagher's father discovering on the return voyage that she was again pregnant. Her son Thomas Bennett Meagher was born in Waterford in April 1874; a week later Catherine died of complications arising from her pregnancy.

Like Catherine's other son Thomas Bennett Meagher never met his father, he was reared in Waterford by his grandfather and two maiden aunts. In 1872 aged 18 he moved to New York and succeeded, with the assistance of his stepmother Elizabeth Townsend Meagher, in gaining entry to West Point Military Academy; his father had died in mysterious circumstances in

1862. He was discharged from West Point four months later for deficiency in Mathematics and French; this was not unusual as a third of the students entering in 1872 were either discharged or resigned. He lived for a while in New York with his stepmother before marrying Mary Lavina Carpenter a native of Sacramento in 1884. The couple who had two sons eventually moved to San Francisco where he was employed in the San Francisco Mint. Thomas's wife was a member of one of San Francisco's prominent families the Badlams, a connection which gave him entry into San Francisco High Society. He was a member of the exclusive San Francisco Yacht Club. On 29 November 1909 he was living in Manila in the Philippines working for the Fellowship of Eagles, of which he was a member, when he died of pneumonia; his wife had predeceased him in 1893.

At the time that Meagher and his comrades arrived in Van Diemens Land there were 30,000 serving convicts out of a total population of 65,000. Transportation to Van Diemen's Land ended in May 1853 and on 1 May 1854, to move on from its grim past, its name was changed to Tasmania. Also in May 1854 William Smith O'Brien, John Martin and Kevin O'Doherty were given pardons allowing them to return to Ireland. Meagher would achieve fame in the United States raising and leading the Irish Brigade which fought in some of the bloodiest battles of the Civil War and subsequently becoming the first Governor of the State of Montana but, because of his escape from Van Diemen's Land, he could never return to his homeland.

## **Sources**

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# A VIRTUAL HISTORY TOUR OF NAAS

*Larry Breen*

*This article is an extended script of my virtual history walk of Naas which was broadcast on KFM radio as part of Clem Ryan's "Know your County" radio show.*

## **The North Moat**

Naas has a long history dating back to ancient times, so it is appropriate to start at the Moat of Naas which is the oldest man-made structure in the town. The town is called, Nas na Riogh, meeting place of the Kings. The dun or fort dates from the early Celtic period and was the seat of the Kings of Leinster for over 700 years, rivalling the Hill of Tara in its importance and significance as a meeting place. The last Leinster King to reside at the moat was, Cearbhall, who died in 904. In this early Celtic period the town was visited by St Patrick on several occasions notably in the year 448.



**The North Moat**

The Moat is also associated with the coming of the Anglo/Normans in the 1100s. They used the ancient mound on which they constructed a motte and bailey, a defensive

structure consisting of a hill with a keep on top and surrounded below by a fenced off area known as a bailey. This was a typical structure favoured by the Normans as a means of defence. The moat is therefore an integral part of both the town's ancient and medieval history/heritage.

***Walking back down Abbey road towards the canal we now come to the Abbey Graveyard.***

### **Abbey Graveyard - Dominican Abbey -Abbey Bridge**

The Abbey Graveyard is on the site of a former Dominican abbey dating back to 1335 and was built by the Anglo-Norman Fitzzeustace family. The ruins of the abbey were still here in the 1700s and the story is told that stones from the ruined abbey were used to build the Abbey Bridge in 1789 over the canal.

***If we head back towards the Moat, we pass the Moat Theatre building at the top of Moat Lane.***

### **Moat Theatre Building**

This was the original residence of the Christian Brothers when they came to Naas in 1871. The brothers provided two schools, both primary and secondary, for the education of the town's children.

***At the bottom of Moat Lane we now enter into South Main Street which includes the Market Square and we are now essentially in the centre of Naas.***

### **South Main Street -Town Centre - Normans**

This is a good place to consider the advent of the Anglo Normans coming to Naas. Strongbow, who was Richard de Clare, granted the barony of Naas in 1170 to Maurice Fitzgerald. This resulted in the Normans fortifying the town with walls, including a number of gates, six in total, and also castles, fortified houses, nine in total around the walls. These Normans came from Pembrokeshire in North Wales. There is very little left to remind us of these fortifications except for St David's Castle, also referred to as King John's Castle. The

castle is situated in Church Lane just off South Main Street. Built around 1206 it was visited on two occasions by King John, once in 1206 and again in 1210. A parliament was held here during the king's visit in 1210. It remained an important defensive Norman stronghold in the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries. Interesting to note that an underground tunnel leads from the castle in the direction of the moat which reinforces the connection between these two former Norman strongholds.



**St. David's Church**

Nearby the Castle at the top of North Main Street, we enter the vicinity of St. David's Church which is located on the site of an earlier Celtic Church most likely dedicated to St Corban or St Patrick. There are some parts of the original Norman church incorporated in the present building and the structure is the oldest remaining stone building in the town. The first reference to the church was in 1212 and it is dedicated to the Patron Saint of Wales, St David. The church is still used today by the local Church of Ireland congregation.

***Leaving St. David's Church and walking into North Main Street we pass the Presbyterian Church on the left-hand side.***

## **The Presbyterian church**

This is a fine stone building built between 1866 -1868, the foundation stone being laid by John La Touche. Previous to this the Presbyterian community were located in a building on the Sallins road.

*Just across the road from the church stands the Town Hall.*

## **TheTown Hall**



**The Town Hall**

Built in 1792 originally as a gaol, the building has a chequered history. It is actually built on the site of White's Castle, which was one of the medieval castles built by the Normans when fortifying the town. The building was the scene of a fierce battle in the 1798 rebellion between the crown forces (Armagh Militia) stationed in the building and rebels led by their leader and local farmer, Michael Reynolds, from nearby Tipper. The rebels were heavily defeated and subjected afterwards to extreme brutality by the crown forces. The building later became the Town Hall and served as the centre of local government for over one hundred and fifty years. It was the

meeting place for Naas UDC for many years and still retains its beautiful meeting chamber which is arguably the most attractive room in the town.

*If we walk further along South Main Street and then down Basin Street we arrive at the Naas Canal Harbour.*

### **Canal Stores -Market House**

The Naas Canal is a branch line of the Grand Canal coming off the main line near Soldier's Island at Sallins. The branch line has five sets of locks and two fine old stone bridges, Abbey Bridge and Tandy's Bridge. Finished in 1789, the Canal Stores building at the harbour, still stands proud after restoration work in the 1980s and was once a hive of commercial activity. Barges transported produce and all sorts of materials to and from the harbour helping to provide the life blood of the town. The last commercial barge left Naas Harbour in 1960. A unique feature to be seen at the Canal Stores is the restored crane. It was rescued in a sad state of repair from being scrapped by a wonderful community effort and it now stands as a testimony to an industrial age long since gone but never to be forgotten.



**The Canal Stores**

Just across from the Canal Stores is the Market House, built in 1813 by the Earl of Mayo, of Palmerstown House. It was very much associated with all aspects of canal commerce, handling produce delivered by the barges.

*If we exit Basin Street and turn right, a little further along South Main Street we find the Courthouse*

### **The Courthouse**

Built in 1807, it is an impressive stone building boasting some fine pillars in front, these being added in 1859. It is noted for its fine Victorian court rooms, so much so that they have been used in several well-known films. One courtroom has a great similarity to a courtroom in Bow Street Magistrates Court in London.

*Just next door to the courthouse is the old Garda Barracks.*

### **Old Garda Barracks**

Originally an RIC barracks built in 1870 it still retains its turrets and loop holes and is architecturally a fine building built in semi-baronial style. The local story is told, that in the days of British rule, the design plans were originally meant for a building somewhere else in the empire, possibility India, but they were misdirected and we got the building in Naas. On examination one would have to admit that the architecture does stand out from anything else on South Main Street.

### **Leinster Leader Building -plaques - Seamus O’Kelly and John Wyse Power**

On the neighbouring Leinster Leader building there are two interesting plaques, commemorating two former editors of the newspaper. Namely, Seamus O’Kelly poet, dramatist, journalist, nationalist and John Wyse Power a founder member of the GAA in 1884. Incidentally Seamus O’Kelly lived in the cottage at the first lock on the canal and was known as the gentle revolutionary.



*We will now turn right at Murtagh's corner and head along New Row (Newbridge Road), our final destination along this road is the large ruined building on the outskirts of the town.*

### **Jigginstown House – Aras Chill Dara, Devoy Barracks, Castle Rag**

The first building of note along the Newbridge Road is the Kildare County Council offices, Aras Chill Dara. A unique modern structure constructed primarily in glass and presenting an interesting contrast beside the remains of the old army barracks adjacent to it. The military barracks, built in 1813 was home to the British Army and housed the Dublin Fusiliers for many years and also the Blackwatch Regiment. It was renamed, Devoy Barracks, after the Fenian leader, John Devoy who was born at Greenhills just on the outskirts of the town and who was also employed in the town for a number of years. The Old Arch and Clock Tower from the original barracks still stand as a reminder of the past British army presence.



**Castle Rag**

A little further along on the left-hand side and just before the ruins, there are the remains of a castle, Castle Rag. This is a

Pale castle dating from the 1400s. Naas was on the periphery of the Pale which had many fortified houses along its defensive line, included in this defensive line would have been Clongowes Wood Castle near Clane.

We now come to the ruins of Jigginstown House, said to be the largest brick house ever built in Ireland, and one of the largest ever built in Britain or Ireland. It was built around 1639 by Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Strafford and Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. Meant to be a residence for the visit of King Charles 1, it was in fact never completed. Wentworth, once one of the King's favourites, fell out of favour, was recalled to London, tried for treason and executed in 1641. The local story is that the red bricks used to build the house were first shipped from Wales to Dublin. They were then transported to Naas hand to hand, by a line of people handing bricks to one another along the line!



**Jigginstown House**

*Travelling back into town if we stop on the Craddockstown Road we will find Naas Hospital*

## **Naas Hospital/Workhouse**

What is now Naas General Hospital was the original Naas Workhouse which opened in 1841 and was the only source of respite for the many people who found themselves destitute at the time. It offered some care and shelter for poor people during the rages of the famine particularly between 1845 - 1849.

During this period the people who died in the workhouse were laid to rest in Tipper Graveyard just outside the town. The graveyard at the workhouse was opened in 1849.

There is a memorial granite headstone mined in Ballyknocken Quarry and sculptured by the Mc Evoy family located at the entrance to the graveyard lest these unfortunate people be forgotten. There is another memorial in the foyer of the old hospital (workhouse). This is called “Beyond Tears”, and is a bronze statuette of a mother and two children capturing the plight and agony of the poor of that terrible time. The statuette was designed and made



**Monument at the Workhouse Graveyard**

by Newbridge artist Annette McCormack and is dedicated to the many victims of the famine who died in Naas Workhouse between the years of 1845 and 1849.

### **Our Lady's and St David's Church**

The site for the Catholic church on the Sallins Road was acquired in the early 1800s as a free gift from the de Burgh Estate and was opened in 1827. A fine steeple was added between 1851-1858.

*Travelling further along the Sallins Road we come on the left hand side of the road to the De Burgh Estate at Oldtown*

### **The De Burgh Estate Oldtown**

William de Burgh came to Ireland with the Anglo Normans in 1172 and was granted extensive lands in Limerick. Thomas de Burgh, born in 1670, bought land around Naas in the 1690s and Oldtown was built in 1695 forming part of a large estate. Thomas de Burgh was an eminent architect and was Surveyor General of Ireland. He is noted for buildings like the library in Trinity College and the Royal Hospital Kilmalsham among others. The family became an integral part of the fabric of Naas and resided in Oldtown until the death of Major de Burgh and his wife Clare in relatively recent times. There is a holy well in the elder grove in the Oldtown Estate dedicated to St Patrick and where it is reputed the saint baptised King Dubhlang and his children.

*Coming back onto the Dublin Road and heading north we find a quaint little single story house on the right hand side*

### **The Almshouse**

The original Almshouse had the name Lattin Alms house as it was founded by William Lattin and his wife Anne Lutrell. Known locally as the "widows' home", it was founded to house the poor women of the town. The original Almshouse was rebuilt many times but the original site dates back to 1590.



**The Alms House**

### **The Naas Ball**

To reach the end of our journey we travel along the Dublin Road to the Naas Ball. Although neither an ancient or medieval structure, but modern, it is however synonymous with Naas and recognised throughout the land and it does take us up to the present day and into the twenty first century. I hope our journey from the Naas Moat in ancient times to the Naas Ball in the 21<sup>st</sup> century has been an interesting one.



# GERALD FITZMAURICE FITZGERALD AND THE KNIGHT'S EFFIGY IN THE FRANCISCAN FRIARY

*Lorcan Harney*

## **Introduction**

The Franciscan friary is a well-known landmark in the town of Clane today. In medieval times, it was an important establishment hosting a Provincial Chapter of the Order in 1345 (*Comerford 1883, 101; Stokes 1900, 105; Conlan 2016, 14*), but it may have required rebuilding in the 15<sup>th</sup> century as it received an indulgence for repairs in A.D. 1433 (*Conlan 1988, 113; 2016, 14*).

The friary was reputedly established by Gerald Fitzmaurice Fitzgerald, Baron of Offaly in the mid-to-late 13<sup>th</sup> century, but it was also closely associated with local families including the Sturton, Rochefords and Ugayns (O'Hogain?)- probable ancestors of the well-known Wogans of Rathcoffey in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries (*Archdall 1786, 313; Comerford 1883, 101; Stokes 1900, 106; Gwynn & Hadcock 1970, 245; Fennessy 1994-95, 153; Cullen 2011, 29-30*). The friary was dissolved in A.D. 1540 and its lands granted to a number of local families shortly after and it is recorded in the monastic extents (1540-41) that its 'Church, Chancel and part of the dormitory were destroyed by order of Lord Leonard Grey, late King's Deputy, for the purpose of repairing the King's castle in Maynouth' (*White 1943, 164; Gwynn & Hadcock 1970, 245; Conlan 2016, 16; Given 2017, 88*).

Within the ruins of the Franciscan friary church lie the remains of a stone effigy of a knight. Unfortunately, it is the only visible sepulchral slab within the grounds today that may date back to when the friary was occupied by the Franciscans between the 13<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. The stone effigy was not intended to mark the head of a grave. Instead, it likely formed part of a recumbent capstone from a tomb of an important wealthy secular patron. During medieval times, their remains

were often encased within sculptured stone tombs within the church chancel, with the capstones often bearing effigies of knights, civilians or clerics and the tomb surrounds ornamented in a myriad of Christian biblical imagery. All that survives of this once ornate tomb in Clane is the partial remains of the stone effigy on the south side of the chancel.

This paper reviews the effigy's artistic evidence, its possible association with the reputed friary founder, Gerald Fitzmaurice Fitzgerald, before concluding with a legend associated with it from the time of the Cromwellian wars.



**The Remains of the Friary**

### **The Stone Effigy**

John Hunt, an acknowledged authority on medieval tombstone art, has completed a detailed survey of *Irish Medieval Figure Sculpture, A.D. 1200-1600* (1974, 155-56) and it is worth quoting his short description of the Clane effigy in full here.

***‘This is a much mutilated fragment of a mail-clad knight. Only a part of the trunk from just above the waist and the upper part of the thighs remain. But there is enough to determine that the figure was of the general form and type of the figures at Cashel, Co. Tipperary and Kilfane, Co. Kilkenny. The bottom of the hauberk can be distinguished, as***

*can the upper part of the mail chausses, the surcoat falling away as on the single figure at Hospital, Co. Limerick. A date late in the thirteenth century would agree with the style as far as can be discerned. It is evidently the product of one of the masons of the Dublin – West of England workshops.'*

This limestone fragment is therefore missing the upper chest and head, as well as nearly all of its legs. The hauberk, John Hunt mentioned, comprised a piece of armour that originally covered the neck and shoulder, but later (as with the Clane example) consisted of a full-length coat of mail or military tunic. The mail chausses consisted of armour for the legs, usually made from mail, which could extend to the knee or cover the entire leg. Finally, the surcoat (surcote) comprised an outer garment commonly worn by men and women in the medieval period in Western Europe, which can either refer to a coat worn over other clothes or the outermost garment itself. The chain mail on the knight was then worn underneath his surcoat.



**The Stone Effigy**



## **Gerald Fitzmaurice Fitzgerald's connection to the Effigy**

The stone effigy has been linked with the reputed founder of the Clane friary, Gerald Fitzmaurice Fitzgerald, by numerous writers since at least the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. There is some uncertainty about this individual – some describe him, the reputed friary founder, as the 2<sup>nd</sup> Lord of *Offaly* (*Comerford 1883, 101*), others the 3<sup>rd</sup> Lord (*Lodge 1754, 63; Sherlock 1903, 36*) and others again (*See Cullen 2011, 30*), more convincingly, as the 4<sup>th</sup> Lord or *Baron* (*Fitzgerald 1896, 157; 1904-06, 92; Swinton 1899, 426; Given 2017, 87*) – the latter is also his title in a transcription in the 16<sup>th</sup> century Rental Books of Kildare (*Hore 1859, 272*). Also unclear is when he established the friary: the Annals of the Four Masters report its founding date as 1258 – this date is favoured by most including *Comerford (1883, 101)*, *Geissel & Horgan (1996, 77)*, *Conlan (2016, 17)*, *McEvoy (2017, 3)* and *Given (2017, 87)*.

*Stokes (1900, 105)* suggested a foundation date of about 1260, the Annals of Multyfarnham give a date of 1266 (*McCabe 2002-03, 344*), *Archdall (1786, 313)* suggested ‘some time before the year 1266’, *Lodge (1754, 63)* and *Fitzgerald (1896, 157)* favoured A.D. 1271, while *Sherlock (1903, 36, 44)* assigned a 1272 foundation date. To resolve this conundrum, *Cullen (2011, 30-31)* has suggested that the friary may have been established by Maurice the 3<sup>rd</sup> Baron of Offaly in 1258 – this the date reported by the Franciscan writers of the Annals of the Four Masters – but that his son, Gerald, the 4th Baron, supposedly a minor at the time of his father’s death at sea in 1268, may have been responsible for completing the friary in about 1271.

As the principal benefactor to the friary and as he is recorded as being buried at Clane (in some sources), history may have then given Gerald Fitzmaurice the recognition as the founder of the friary. But some uncertainty prevails as to his place of burial. *Grose (1791, 25)* suggested that a Gerald Fitzmaurice, Lord of Offaley completed the Friary at Grey Abbey in Kildare and was buried at Rathmore near Naas in 1286. *Lodge (1754, 63)* records Sir Gerald Fitzmaurice as finishing the friary in

Kildare in 1260, founding the friary in Clane in 1271 and that 'he died at Rathmore 20 July, 1286' and 'was buried in the said friary in Kildare', presumably Kildare town?

This claim is possibly repeated in the notes in a Book of Hours of the Blessed Virgin Mary, owned by a Hon. Mrs. Swinton, as it contains the following text for July 20<sup>th</sup> 1286 'Obit Geraldus filius Maurice dus de Offaley apud Rathmore 20 Julli 1286, et sepeleteur in mon mi or de Kyld' (*Swinton 1899, 426; McCabe 2002-03, 346*). Under the year 1287, the 16<sup>th</sup> century Rental Books of Kildare draws upon the 14<sup>th</sup> century Annals of Clyn of Kilkenny to record the following: 'mortuus est Geraldus filius Mauricii, capitaneus Geraldinorum' or death of Gerald son of Maurice, captain of the Geraldines, but it does not appear to state a place of burial (*Hore 1859, 272*).

However, the case for Gerald Fitzmaurice being buried at Clane has been tentatively advanced by the two other antiquarians, *Mervyn Archdall* and *James Ware*. *Archdall (1786, 313)* could state that 'Gerald Fitzmaurice died 18<sup>th</sup> July, 1287, and was interred here [Clane]', though qualified this statement by acknowledging that 'some writers give the foundation [of the Clane Friary] to Gerald Fitzmaurice, Lord of Offaley (h), but this account is not confirmed.' The same uncertainty is displayed in an entry for the 'friery of Clan by the Liffy' in *James Ware's Antiquities (1705, 60, 79) of Ireland* – here he notes 'in the Abbey of Minorits [Franciscan Friary] Gerald Fitz-maurice, possibly founder of the place, was buried in the year 1287', though cautions again with the remark that 'some think he was buried in the convent of minorits of Kildare.' Despite this ambiguity, the belief that Gerald was buried in Clane has been treated as more matter-of-fact by later writers with a focus on the Clane friary, including *Comerford (1883, 101)*, *Stokes (1900, 105)* and *Sherlock (1903, 44)*.

In a pertinent comment to this paper's subject (the effigy), *Archdall (1786, 313)* added the following note: 'the effigies of the founder (who he was, is not certainly known) remained, about the beginning of the last century, on a marble monument

which was placed in the midst of the choir, in this friary.’ Where Archdall derived this information is unclear, but the most likely candidate is Friar Donagh Mooney, who wrote an account of the Franciscan Province of Ireland in 1617. He described Clane friary as in ruinous condition, but noted that the marble image of the founder could be seen on the top of his tomb in the middle of the choir (*Conlan 2016, 17*).

*Comerford (1883, 101)* was certainly aware of at least Archdall’s writings and his description of this enigmatic marble monument. Significantly, Comerford also appears to have provided the earliest definite mention of our stone effigy - ‘a fragment of a cross-legged, recumbent effigy has been found within the graveyard, and has been put, no doubt, in its rightful place, in the original Gothic recess.’ But it is unclear if he viewed this limestone cross-legged effigy as forming part of the effigy that once lay on the marble monument within the choir in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

The first most deliberate association linking together our limestone effigy and the possible friary founder, Sir Gerald Fitzmaurice, appears to have been made by Lord Walter Fitzgerald about a decade later – here he stated (*1896, 157*) that ‘in a recess in the south wall of the Abbey at Clane lies a portion of a knight’s effigy. All that remains of it is from the waist to the knees, which are crossed one over the other. This is the only instance remaining in the county of a cross-legged effigy. If a guess might be made as to who it represents, I would say it was Gerald Fitzmaurice Fitzgerald, 4<sup>th</sup> Baron of Offaly, who founded this Abbey in the year 1271.’ Shortly later, an anonymous source, possibly Lord Walter again (*1904-06, 92*), described ‘the crossed-legged stone effigy’ possibly of Sir Gerald Fitzmaurice Fitzgerald as ‘measuring about 3.5 feet in length’ and in a cut-stone arched recess in the church.

About the same time, *Stokes (1900, 105)* described Sir Gerald Fitzmaurice as ‘*the founder, died July 18<sup>th</sup>, 1287, and was buried in this church*’ [Clane friary], and noted that ‘his likeness remained on a marble monument in the choir till the

beginning of the last century.’ Significantly, he (1900, 102) published a photo of the Gothic arched recess with our effigy which is captioned: ‘a recess in Clane Abbey in which lies a fragment of the cross-legged effigy of the founder’, presumably in his opinion, Gerald Fitzmaurice, from the above. All subsequent writers on the stone effigy associate the effigy with the reputed founder of the friary, Sir Gerald Fitzmaurice (*Gwynn & Hadcock 1970, 245; Bradley, Halpin & King 1986, 160; Geissel & Horgan 1996, 77*). *Cullen (2011, 32-33)* supports the idea that Gerald was buried at Clane pointing out that burial at the Kildare town friary was perhaps not possible as it was under the patronage of the De Vescy family until the late 1290s and that the three tomb recesses in the Clane friary choir may have served as tomb recesses for the Fitzgerald, Sturton and Rocheford families in the late 13<sup>th</sup>/14<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Today, the stone effigy piece remains within the elaborate Gothic recess along the south wall of the church chancel. The artistic details on the effigy are today barely identifiable and the stone might also be slightly smaller in dimensions (c. 70cm x 40cm x 25cm) than recorded in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century when it measured about 3.5 feet (1m) long (*Fitzgerald? 1904-06, 92*). This is also suggested by the photo published by *Stokes (1900, 102)*, which *McCabe (2002-03, 345)* has noted appears ‘to have been somewhat larger then than now.’

Recorded as the ‘Fitzgerald Tomb Recess’ by *Cullen (2011, 37)*, it is easy to imagine Mooney’s marble monument prominently displayed within this Gothic tomb recess in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Perhaps our damaged limestone effigy once crowned this ornate tomb, or perhaps it marked another. *Comerford’s (1883, 101)* comment that the stone effigy fragment was found in the graveyard before being placed in the Gothic recess (perhaps about the time he was writing?), could weaken the case that they were associated. Having said that, we should note that the dating of the effigy by *Hunt (1974, 155-56)* to the later-thirteenth century is consistent with the obit of Gerald Fitzmaurice Fitzgerald who is reputed to have died

*circa* 1287. If he did establish or simply just complete the Friary in Clane, and he was also buried there, he should indeed be considered a plausible candidate for commissioning this stone effigy.



**The stone effigy within the Gothic arched recess today**

## **The Stone Effigy in Oral Folklore**

To conclude this discussion of the effigy, I want to finish with a colourful story in local folklore that reimagined the stone effigy as originating from an encounter between English soldiers and the local townspeople in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. As all school children will recall, the Cromwellian wars brought enormous social, political and religious upheaval to Ireland. The impact was immediately felt in Clane following the outbreak of the 1641 Irish Rebellion. For in January 1642, an army sent by the English parliament to suppress the insurrection landed in Dublin and for the next 18 months one of its Colonels, a certain George Monck, campaigned against rebel strongholds throughout Leinster committing several massacres in County Kildare.



**Rathcoffey Castle – the house is 18<sup>th</sup> century in date, but it may incorporate the original castle. The gate house for the medieval castle is located beside it.**

During his ruthless campaigning, local castles at Blackhall, Ballinagappagh, Clongowes Wood and Rathcoffey were

destroyed with the garrisons at Clongowes Wood and Rathcoffey summarily executed in the aftermath (Cullen 2006, 18). These attacks undoubtedly left a lasting local psychological impact and were perhaps preserved within oral folklore through the ‘legend of the Friary soldier’ (involving our stone effigy), an event said to have occurred after the sacking of Rathcoffey castle. Here is a short retelling (with embellishments) of my own, but readers are referred to Malachi Maguire’s website for a much more eloquent account of this folk story.

*The ruthless Monck had barely laid waste to Rathcoffey castle and had sent its shackled garrison to Dublin for certain execution when he next set his eyes on the village of Clane – a papist hotbed nearby, which had wholeheartedly embraced the rebel cause. Unfortunately for the eager Monck, night befell before this task could be accomplished, so he reluctantly stationed a garrison of heavily armed men at Castlebowne to complete the conquest of Clane the very next day. News quickly spread about the impending attack– some terrified locals fled the town, but others thought best to seek sanctuary and refuge inside the ruins of their revered Franciscan Friary, now deserted and derelict for the most part of a century.*

*But unbeknownst to both locals and the English soldiers, there was another force at work that night. For, when the Sons of Míl (or the Gaels as we know them) arrived to Ireland long, long ago, they had to contend with an ancient mythological group, the Tuatha Dé Danann for the rulership of Ireland. Eventually triumphing over these supernaturally gifted folk, the Gaels agreed to subdivide Ireland with them – the newly arrived Gaels would claim the land above, while the Tuatha Dé Danann would take the world below (The Otherworld), now entering and residing within the sídhe – the ancient burial mounds that dot the Irish landscape today. Many centuries of Gaelic rule followed – Christianity took root, writing, literature and scholarship flourished and other communities such as the Vikings and Normans settled in*

*these lands amongst the Gaelic tribes of Ireland. Yet all along these ancient fairy folks, dwelling within their invisible sídhe, continued to cohabit with the peoples of Ireland, even intermingling with them at certain liminal times of year such as Samhain when the boundary between this and the Otherworld was at its thinnest.*

*It was one of these protective ancients (or fairy folk) that arose from his slumber that faithful day in 1642, and who approached a night guard from Monck's detail at Castlebrowne. Engaging with him in conversation, this tall, pale handsome shadowy figure reminded the guard that he was the guardian of the town that the soldiers were planning to burn and that should they proceed into Clane the next day to commit harm to anyone, they would be struck with such fear that they would be petrified to inaction. Scoffing at such superstitious talk, the Puritan guard reached for a dagger to strike this shadowy man, but could not help but only experience a very sudden uneasy feeling as the figure suddenly disappeared before his eyes.*

*The next morning, the soldiers proceeded through the deserted town and towards the ruined friary where the locals were huddled together. Spotting a papist priest towards the front of the terrified crowd, the guard proceeded forward to steal the first life of the day. But the revered priest had a foreshadowing of the day's events ahead and stepped forth to remind the guard about the prophesy he had received the night previously. Distracted momentarily, the guard slowly raised his musket and steadied his hand to release the volley that would send the papist priest to eternal hell. His confidence temporarily strengthened by the baying cries from his fellow soldiers to dispatch his musket at the priest. But instead, his conviction abruptly deserted him as he became consumed by a horrifying vision – his family, friends and kinsmen at home being consumed by worms inside the mouth of a hideous devil.*



*As was then prophesised by our revered Ancient, the assembled crowd bore witness to an astonishing scene– the last remnants of life ebbed away from the terrified guardsman whose body slowly transfigured into hardened stone, before toppling to the ground and smashing into pieces upon the solid church floor. Upon witnessing the untimely and gruesome demise of their friend, the soldiers suddenly became engulfed by a great fear and lowering their weapons, quickly fled the scene. There are some who say that this tall, shadowy, handsome man still walks the grounds of Castlebrowne today and still guards over the lands and townspeople of Clane with equal vigour. As for the fallen soldier, his petrified remains have now largely vanished, but thankfully his armoured torso rests within the Gothic recess today, bearing testament to these faithful events many centuries ago.*

### **Acknowledgements**

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## MAINHAM AND CLONGOWES; LATE 1930s TO EARLY 1950s

*Liam Kenny & Brendan Cullen.*

*This article consists of notes compiled from conversations with Denis Dunne and Sean Dunne and from notes written by Mrs. Esther Kenny ( nee Dunne) in 2003. In addition Denis Dunne showed the notes to the late Sean Cribbin who made helpful additions and amendments. The editorial committee would like to thank Liam Kenny for allowing us to publish these notes verbatim. See Coiseanna 2012 for article on the Forge and Mainham Post Office during the same period and Coiseanna 2020 for an article on Clongowes College farm.*

Kate Fennell, grandmother of Paddy O'Haran, was the owner of the Royal Oak pub. Guinness stout was delivered in wooden kegs and was bottled on the premises. The clientele usually arrived on foot or bicycle. It was especially busy on Sunday evenings if teams from Rathcoffey, Maynooth or Kilkcock were playing a match at the football field in Clane where Loughbollard Estate is now built. The supporters invariably stopped off at the Royal Oak to slake their thirst. Funerals in



**The Royal Oak in August 1996**

Mainham cemetery also brought extra custom to the Royal Oak. As well as beer and spirits the pub also sold some basic groceries, eg. bread, tea and sugar. Joe Graham, Kate Fennell's brother, used to collect the barrels of porter from the canal at Sallins on a weekly basis and bring them home by horse and dray to the Royal Oak.

### **A Punchestown Memory.**

The road passing Mainham green would be black with bicycles on days of Punchestown; the cyclists weaving among the many ponies-and-traps also heading for the great racecourse. The Dunnes remember the Cosgraves from Enfield hacking ponies to Punchestown and stopping at the green for a rest. A particularly graphic memory is of one Punchestown during the war years when the sound of a coach- and four, like something out of the Victorian era, was heard coming down the road from Kilcock – Meath gentry on their way to Punchestown in time-honoured style. The Dunne children waited for its return that evening, it was such a magnificent sight.

### **Innocent Pleasures.**

**Summer:** In high summer the Mainham young folk built a dam at the Gollymochy bridge and went swimming in the resultant small pool. However, they were warned never to go near the Liffey at Wogan's Hole near Richardstown because a Wogan had drowned there many years ago.

**Winter:** Winters seemed to be more severe then. The Clongowes people were quite serious about their winter sports. The ditch which runs about midway across the field on the right (as you walk down the avenue towards the college) was dammed by college workmen at the onset of winter. Just after Christmas there tended to be hard frosts. The Mainham children would watch to see if any of the Clongowes scholars were allowed on to the ice. They would then run down to see the skating; some of the priests were excellent skaters; they all had the proper gear and even played ice hockey on the frozen pond. A fascinating memory revolves around a Mr. Popov, who lived in the Celbridge direction and who used to come to

Clongowes each year when the pond froze. He was Polish and possessed superb skating skills; he used to give impromptu demonstrations, and Essie Dunne remembers him throwing his hat on the ice and then taking a run at the spot and jumping over the hat on his skates, much to the delight of the onlookers.

### **Emergency - ‘Second World War’**

Pat Dunne was head of the Clane unit of the Local Security Force, set up at the declaration of the Emergency. At night, when everybody was in bed, the sound of aircraft – perhaps German or British- could be heard going overhead. Planes were heard going over on the night of the North Strand bombing in 1941. Another night there was a rumour of oil on the road near Donaghcomper and some of the local lads set off to investigate. Bill Dunne used to get up at 7am each morning and tune into the BBC news; they were surprisingly well informed for an area so removed from the war.

### **A Sporting Memory**

There was a cricket team in Mainham in the early 1900s, probably influenced by, but separate from, the college. Pat Dunne got suspended from the GAA for playing cricket. Mainham had a GAA team at one stage which broke away from Clane. However, they met their Waterloo when they were matched against Celbridge. There was a contingent of Civic Guards camped near Celbridge, monitoring a strike on the Castletown Estate. They were drafted into the Celbridge team and gave the Mainham men a drubbing; that was the end of Mainham GAA!

### **Clongowes Staff; 1940s/1950s**

*Farm:* Mick Duffy, Richardstown, trained in Ballyhaise College, steward; Jack Brilly, Rathcoffey; Tommy Brilly, drove the first college lorry, brought goods and produce to and from Dublin; Kit Delaney, ploughman; Jim Noonan, ploughman; Jack ‘Coughlin’ Cribbin, killing and yard; Jack Kinsella, ploughman, lived at the end of the Rampart; Frank Cribbin, looked after the pigs; Mick ‘the cricket’ Dunne,

looked after the pigs, from Blackhall; Paddy Cummins, carpenter, mended the wheels on the drays; Eugene Smith, drove the horse-drawn dairy float that brought the milk up to the dairy twice a day, the skim would come back for the calves; Billy Birchall drove one of the first tractors – a rare US-built Allis Chambers model. Kit Moloney, milker; Jack McCabe, milker; Jimmy Timmins, milker and others; they had about twelve cattle each to milk twice per day. Johnny Rourke, Thomas Brilly, Jimmy Brilly, Mick Brilly (Rathcoffey), Tommy Berns, John O'Connor (Mainham), Paddy Gorman (Clane), Peter Connolly, Peter Donoghue from Millicent, Paddy Moloney from the cemetery gate, and Joe 'France' Bracken were all farm labourers in Clongowes at one time or another. Frank Smith herd, brought the cattle into the yard; Tom Smith his brother, lived in the house in the yard and later became steward; Paddy Timmins, stockman. Others who worked at that time on the farm: Joe Bracken, Paddy Cooney, Mick O'Donnell and Paddy McDermott and a Mr. Masterson. They had a particular role in accumulating fuel for the big college boiler house. This involved the highly laborious job of felling the trees in the Raheen wood (on the farm entrance near the Infirmary) in the winter and going to the bog to save turf for Clongowes in the summer.

**Garden:** Mr. John O'Dwyer, head gardener, lived where Behan's house now stands on the Clane road; Jimmy Nestor and his uncle; Joe Byrne, Aloysius Cribbin, Jim Connolly, who also delivered the coal to the college and to some of the workers' houses; Jack Cooper, groundsman.

**Bakery:** Willie Merriman, Rathcoffey, Tom Cribbin, Willie Cribbin.

**Boiler house:** Nicholas Keary, from the back avenue, Jack Kilduff, from Sallins was the night boiler-man; some of the old gas-making ironwork was recycled to make gate piers around the college lands and can still be seen in the fields; electricity came to Clongowes about 1927.

**House Stewards;** Bill Delaney and Paddy Fitzsimons, head waiters, lived in the house; also Phil Meleady, Paddy McEntaggart, Eddie Irwin, Jim Donoghue, were butlers who served the Jesuit community.

**Coachman;** the Corcorans had been coachmen in the horse-drawn time; later Michael Holligan drove a car and a big white van for Clongowes; the priests also used Bill Dunne who had a hackney at the forge in Mainham.

**Library;** Dan Byrne, used to shoot pigeons in the priests' graveyard (where he is now buried).

**Dairy;** Nanny Plummer, head dairymaid, Cissie Nestor, Mrs. Cooney, Lizzie Moloney. They made all their own butter which was packed into butter boxes and brought to Dublin for cold storage.

**Laundry;** Maggie McLoughlin (the only woman buried in the priests' cemetery). Her Aunt Mary, worked there for many years before. There were at least six women living in who did domestic work and another dozen or so who came in on a daily basis mainly from the Rathcoffey side.

**Carpenter;** Paddy Esmonde was the house carpenter.

**House Maintenance;** Sean Cribbin who lived near Mainham cemetery; his father Jack. Brendan Cribbin, Tommy Doyle and Tom Walsh; Paddy Corcoran; Tom Cribbin who was later an ambulance driver in Naas hospital. Sean witnessed the terrible accident which claimed the lives of four\* workmen when a scaffolding device broke and they fell to their deaths at the back of the college.

\*Three workmen were killed on 20<sup>th</sup> May 1941 i.e. Matt Slevin, Peter Masterson (both buried in the Abbey cemetery Clane) and Ned Murphy (buried in Mainham cemetery).

Fr. Finucane SJ and later Fr. Cyril Power SJ were in charge of the farmyard; Bro. Brennan was the Bursar; Denis Dunne remembers going down from the forge with bills and Bro. Brennan opening a chest with ten shilling notes in it so crisp they looked as if they had been ironed. Brothers McEntee, Glanville, Murray, Greaney, O'Grady and Linnane were among those who were involved as sacristans etc. around the Boys' and People's chapels. Every Christmas Bro. McEntee brought the altar servers to Dublin. They would travel in the van driven by Mick Holligan to Maynooth where they would get the bus; they would go to the Monument Cafe and then to the Pantomime. Among the group of altar boys were Jimmy

Keary, Billy Smith, Tommy Delaney, Denis Dunne and Sean Dunne from the forge and their cousin Kevin Dunne from the Post Office, Mick Delaney, Billy O'Haran, Danny Smith. During the holiday period each altar boy might serve up to three masses a day – in other words there would be about twenty-four masses being said because there were 40 or more priests. A big attraction for the local boys was that on weekdays they would get their breakfast in the college kitchen; it was a place full of the warmth and aromas of cooking with several really big Aga cookers and the smell of baking permeating the building. Brother Nolan was a familiar figure in the kitchen. Brother Keegan was a photography enthusiast and he took a photograph of the Clane GFC lads who won the county Intermediate and Minor championships in 1939; they all assembled in Kelly's field for the picture.

Some Clongowes facts and figures: 13 plough horses, 3 cobs, 7 or 8 bogies, 50 milking cows. Pay in the 1940s covered at least a six day week and for the milkers seven days.

Some Clongowes memories: word would go around that 'there's dripping for sale'; the local youngsters would make their way to Nellie Smith's (the herd's wife) house and get a can of dripping for a few pence.

The sawing down of the Raheen wood (on the farm entrance near the Infirmary), already referred to, was another talking point in its time.

The threshing mill from Whyte's farm on the Doctor's Road (including the traction engine) would come to the Clongowes farm; it would go on to the Royal Oak yard and on to Owen Byrne's farm at Boherhole; Tim Gregory and Garrett Rourke were among the crew who followed it around. A passer-by might often wonder why there were numbers of vehicles in the yard of the forge on Sunday mornings - they were customers of the Royal Oak avoiding the 'bona fide' law which meant that drink could only be served to those who came a long distance.



# KILLASHEE HOUSE: THE CHANGING ROLES OF A VICTORIAN MANSION

*Mary Weld*

Killashee House, situated on the outskirts of Naas Town, stands on an ecclesiastical site, that dates back to the middle of the fifth century. St Patrick and St Auxilius are associated with an early Church in Killashee. An etching of the Round Tower and Church in 1795 appears in Grosse's *Antiquities of Ireland*.



**Killashee House in 1861**

In 1859 Richard J.P. Moore, descendant of the Earls of Drogheda, purchased the house and lands of over 500 acres at Killashee. Soon after Moore commissioned well known architect Thomas Turner to design a new house, to be built on an elevated site. Turner, who had designed the Glasshouses at Belfast, Glasnevin and Kew Park in London, did not disappoint. In Burke's *Guide to Country Houses*, Killashee House is described as a Victorian Jacobean house, with a strong resemblance to Kintullach Castle, Co Antrim. With curvilinear gables, rectangular and round leaded plate-glass windows, some of them having entablatures crowned with strap work, open porch with curvilinear gables supported on

coupled piers. A square turret at one end with open Belvedere and spire, this magnificent house was completed in 1861. The older house, identified in the Noble and Keenan map of 1752, became the steward's house.

Killashee House served in three different capacities since it was built, a family home 1861-1927; a Convent, Novitiate and School 1927-1998; and a country house hotel from 2000 to the present day. I will briefly look at the changing roles of this magnificent mansion.

In 1861 the Moore Family settled into their new home, Killashee House as we know it today, with its beautiful imposing bell tower, a striking feature of the house. With three floors and a basement, the ground floor contained a well-proportioned drawing room, a dining room with an enormous bay window, and a fine ballroom with two magnificent marble fireplaces. Quite at the other end of the scale was a small room containing three doors, two of which would take you outdoors. It is believed this room was used by the landlord to collect rent from his tenants. While they came in through one door, they left by the other. Presses to hold the rent books are still in place in this room. Bedrooms and bathrooms were located on the first and second floors. The basement housed a staff dining room, kitchen, scullery, pantries and a storeroom. A staircase runs from the first floor to the open belvedere that commands a terrific view of the surrounding area. The Moore coat of arms can be seen both in and outside the house. The letter M was engraved into the plasterwork and woodwork, and most noticeably on the newel post at the foot of the wooden staircase. Placed over the front door is the motto 'Except the Lord build the house, their labour is but lost that build it'. Most of those features are still intact.

Moving within the circle of landed gentry, the Moore family extended hospitality to their many friends, particularly during the annual Punchestown race meeting. The Marquis and Marchioness of Drogheda, the Royses of Wicklow, Lord and

Lady Clonmel and the Fowlers of Meath were regular guests in Killashee House.

The name Richard Moore was handed down through four generations in Killashee. In 1921, at the age of 73 years, Colonel Richard St Ledger Moore committed suicide in a small room one side of the main hall door of Killashee House. An extract from Terence Dooley's book entitled *The Decline of the Big House in Ireland* that "landlords had begun to find their disposable income greatly diminished. With the advent of the Land League, they faced increasing pressure to overturn the old ways of land management". This may be the reason Richard St Ledger Moore ended his life. His son Richard Stephen Tyne St Ledger Moore inherited Killashee from his father. Initially he rented the lands and house out to Captain Ainsworth and Mr Lockwood, Master of the Hounds of Killashee. A fire broke out in the stables while Captain Ainsworth lived in the house. Thankfully it did not reach the house. The Big Houses at the time were considered to be symbols of colonial rule, and the majority of people would at least have feigned delight at being rid of them. In 1927 Killashee House was sold to the La Sainte Union Sisters, along with 80 acres of land. This did not include the old steward's house, the very historical Church, tower, burial ground and St Patrick's Well, which dates back to early Christian times. In 1930-31 The Land Commission divided up most of the 500 remaining acres. The La Sainte Union Sisters most likely saved the house from being shuttered up or burned down by subversive organisations. Killashee House was about to embark on a new life of prayer, poverty and preparation.

The La Sainte Union Sisters, a French Order of nuns, first came to Ireland in 1884, founding Bower schools in Athlone and Banagher. They added Our Lady's Bower, Killashee in 1927, and by the early 1930s they also had houses in Blanchardstown, Lucan, Tallaght and The Malahide Road in Dublin. Their mission in life was to found schools for the rich or poor, as the need arose.

Certain alterations were made to Killashee House by the Nuns. Two beautiful marble fireplaces were removed from the ballroom, and it and the library area were turned into the Nun's Chapel. A glass panel was fitted high up to the ceiling to allow people to hear Mass from upstairs. The indent in the plaster work for this is still apparent. Structurally very little else was changed initially. The kitchen in the basement was utilized to serve the growing number of Le Sainte Union Sisters, and subsequently the students and staff.

The Second World War added two additional dimensions to Our Lady's Bower, Killashee. Between 1939-1945 the congregation of nuns grew rapidly because of the WW2 bombings in England, when several elderly nuns found refuge in Killashee. The Novitiate for the La Sainte Union Order for Ireland was also based in Killashee. Sister Thecla Garvey (Athlone), who kindly allowed me to interview her in 2002, said she spent her first year as a novice in Killashee, and spent many more happy years there thereafter.



**Bishop Ryan, Bishop of Kildare and Loughlin  
visiting Our Lady's Bower Killashee**

As the need arose a burial ground was consecrated to the rear of the house, where deceased nuns were laid to rest. The

earliest grave was Sr Marie Touhy's in 1931, the last was Sr Jarlath Fahey's, who was listed as Headmistress of the school in 1990 (may they all rest in peace). Symbols of religion quickly became evident. The statue of St Roch, a French Saint who was the Patron Saint of Illness, was strategically placed halfway between the new burial ground and the house. A prayer was recited to him every day by the Community.

The stables that had been fire-damaged prior to ownership were converted into dormitories and classrooms for the new school. The boys who were boarding at Our Lady's Bower Athlone were moved to Killashee in 1927. This was the initiation of a very prestigious school. The nuns offered a very comprehensive preparatory education for children ranging from ages 4 to 12 years. A privately run fee-paying school, it initially catered for boys who boarded, but in the 1960s they also accepted boys as day pupils. Sr Thecla was at pains to point out that no child was refused an education at Killashee, even if it meant a reduction in fees, which was very much in keeping with the La Sainte Union's mission in life.

From 1982 onwards girls were admitted both as boarders and day pupils. Children came from all over Ireland, Europe, and as far afield as Zambia, Kuwait, South Africa, USA, Canada, Hong Kong, Nigeria and Malaya. Those children would not see their family from one end of the year to the other, but akin to the ethos of all involved, parents of Irish children were happy to take home the foreign pupils during holiday time.

The children were taught the usual subjects available in primary school, but lots of extra curricula activities were provided. A fine gym, the only new building erected by the Nuns, enabled the children to partake in physical education as well as a range of indoor games. Musicals and Irish dancing classes were also held in the gym. Piano and guitar lessons were on offer at an extra cost. Outdoor games included rugby, tennis and horse riding. As vocations declined in the 1970s and 1980s, lay teachers were added to the teaching staff.

In 1980, when it became apparent that Our Lady's Bower might be sold to the Irish Government (to be used as a remand centre for women), a committee of parents stood steadfast and worked exhaustively to save their beloved school. Five parents purchased Our Lady's Bower with the understanding that the La Sainte Union Sisters would work in tandem with the Board of Directors. This arrangement lasted for almost twenty years. The La Sainte Union Sisters' years of prayer, poverty, and preparation came to an end in 1998 when Killashee House was sold to a local hotelier.

Extensive refurbishment took place over a period of two years. Rooms were added, seamless and sympathetic to the original Victorian house. The main entrance to the hotel is through what was the original entrance to the stables, and later the dormitories and classrooms. The dormitories and classrooms were transformed into beautiful bedrooms and conference rooms. Original panelling and doors can still be seen throughout. Staircases are preserved in their original splendour. Huge heating pipes installed when the house was built are still in place and working. Very beautiful original fireplaces can still be seen throughout, and the pair of marble fireplaces removed from the ballroom by the Nuns, have been replaced by a beautiful matching pair, which brings this fine room back to its former glory. The stately bookcases, the only remaining original furniture belonging to the Moore family, were returned to the library area at the end of the ballroom. While the original conservatory, designed by Thomas Turner, did not stand the test of time, it was tastefully replaced. The gym, used by the schoolchildren was transformed into a dance floor for weddings and other functions.

On 8th December 2000, just before the magnificent Killashee House Hotel opened its doors to the public, the past pupils of Our Lady's Bower, Killashee, from Ireland and abroad, held their last reunion there. The Sisters, Staff and Students bade farewell to their beloved alma mater, and handed it over to its new owners for safe keeping for future generations.

When Killashee House was sold 1998 the terms of sale included four requests by the Le Sainte Union Community: that the Nuns' burial ground at the back of the Hotel would be maintained; that the Nuns laid to rest in Killashee should be acknowledged when naming bedrooms in what was the Convent; that the gate lodge should be rebuilt; and that the statue of the Saint Roch, situated between the burial ground and the house, should be retained. A recent visit to Killashee House confirmed that all four requests have been fully complied with.



**The present day Killashee House Hotel**

Killashee House has played host to the activities of Irish society for 160 years. From the bad old days of landlordism, to harbouring the aged and vulnerable from the Second World War, answering callings to the religious life, educating the young from all over the world, and responding to the roar of the Celtic Tiger with a luxurious hotel, all under the roof of a splendid Victorian Mansion, that looks as good today as it did in 1861.

# LADIES OF SCIENCE: MARY ROSSE AND MARY WARD

*John McLoughin*

## **Introduction**

As a native of Birr, County Offaly I was always aware of the existence of the Rosse Family who lived in the Castle which is in the centre of the town and surrounded by high walls. It was only in later years that I became aware of the significant female members of the extended Rosse families when I prepared a lecture for the local history society here in Clane on The Two Marys (Mary Rosse and Mary Ward) and their contribution to Science in Ireland.



**Birr Castle**

In the 1800s women could not attend universities. The male population considered women too delicate and not up to the challenge of a higher education. No WITS (Women in Technology and Science) in those times! Governesses were hired to impart ladylike qualities to their female charges, upper class ladies were expected to be able to read and write, play an instrument, dance, and partake in needlework. Making a good marriage was the most important if not only goal of upper-class girls in the 18th century. Thus, the focus of a young aristocratic woman's education was centred around making her as marriageable as possible. There were, however, highly educated young women during the Eighteenth Century. These young ladies were usually upper-class and had progressive parents. However, these young women either had to hide their intellectual prowess or risk being outcasts in high society. This intellectual "elite" was neither particularly wanted by society



nor specially trained. These outstanding women were the results of accidental circumstances or in exceptional cases of specific abilities. Both Mary Rosse and Mary Ward had progressive parents!



**Mary Parsons Countess of Rosse Astronomer:  
Engineer and Photographer**

Born in 1813 in Bradford to a considerably wealthy Yorkshire family, Mary (née Field) had a lively and privileged upbringing. Her father, having no sons, brought up the girls with an excellent education, which included mathematics and scientific subjects. In 1836 Mary married William Parsons, a serious man, 13 years her senior, they were well matched, sharing scientific interests. The marriage was a happy one, she

had 11 Children but only 4 Boys Laurence, Randal, Clere and Charles made it to adulthood. Charles the youngest was to be the great engineer who invented the compound steam turbine and developed optical equipment for searchlights and telescopes.



**The Darkroom at Birr Castle**

They became Lord and Lady Rosse in 1841, taking charge of the ancestral home, Birr Castle, in the Irish midlands. Mary embarked upon a series of architectural projects at the castle, from the construction of a star-shaped moat to a new tower. Many of her design models still survive. At this time, her husband undertook an extremely ambitious and expensive project, made possible by Mary's vast inheritance, to build a giant 6-foot telescope. Completed in 1845, the so-called 'Leviathan of Parsonstown' remained the world's largest telescope for over 70 years.

Shortly afterwards, Mary began an engineering venture of her own. Creating a model from wax she designed a new iron keep gate, complete with decorative flowers and Irish harps. It is believed she cast them herself in the same workshop as the

telescope, using furnaces fuelled by peat from the local bog. Mary is best known for her pioneering photography, which she began in late 1853, experimenting with different photographic processes. Her surviving darkroom at the castle is one of the oldest in Europe. Mary would become an acknowledged expert in waxed-paper photography, winning the inaugural silver medal of the Photographic Society of Ireland in 1859.



**Mary's photograph of her three sons, Clere, Randal and Charles with Jane Knox, sister of Lord Rosse at the mouth of the Leviathan**

When the Great Famine took hold in 1845, Mary Rosse initiated bold schemes at Birr to provide jobs for local people. In collaboration with her uncle Richard Wharton-Myddelton, a former army officer, she redesigned part of the castle grounds, employing more than 500 men in building works that would continue for several years. Later she added a new wing to the castle to accommodate her growing family of children and their tutors. She also built a stable block and a gatehouse, which would be used by her sons as a laboratory.

The outstanding legacy of Mary Rosse is plain for all to see – not only in the lives of her children but also in the achievements of later generations. Notable among her

grandchildren was Rachel Parsons, whose brilliant brain secured her a place in 1910 at Cambridge University, where she was one of the first three women to read Mechanical Sciences. Rachel was the daughter of Charles and Katharine Parsons, both of whom encouraged her interest in engineering. In 1919, Katharine and Rachel, mother and daughter, founded the Women's Engineering Society, the first professional organisation in the world dedicated to the campaign for women's rights and just like the beacon of light that Mary Rosse lit for women in the mid-19th century, the pioneering spirit of the Women's Engineering Society still shines strongly today.

### **Mary Ward (1827-1869)**

Mary Ward was born Mary King. Her mother was the sister of the 3rd Earl's mother, and both these sisters came from Gloucester House near Birr. Mary's mother married the Rev. Henry King of Ballylin House near Ferbane. She was a frequent visitor to Birr and great friend of Mary, Countess of Rosse, the 3rd Earls' wife. Most universities and societies would not accept women, but Ward obtained information any way she could writing frequently to scientists, asking them about papers they had published. During 1848, Parsons was made president of the Royal Society, and visits to his London home meant that she met many scientists.

Ward drew insects, and the astronomer James South observed her doing so one day. She was using a magnifying glass to see the tiny details, and her drawing so impressed him that he immediately persuaded her father to buy her a microscope. A compound microscope made by Andrew Ross (model 112) was purchased for £48 12s 8d. This was the beginning of a lifelong passion. She began to read everything she could find about microscopy, and taught herself until she had an expert knowledge. She made her own slides from slivers of ivory, as glass was difficult to obtain, and prepared her own specimens. The physicist David Brewster asked her to make his microscope specimens, and used her drawings in many of his books and articles.[



**Mary Ward**

She was one of only three women on the mailing list for the Royal Astronomical Society (the others were Queen Victoria and Mary Somerville, a scientist for whom Somerville College at Oxford University was named). In her lifetime she was a celebrated scientist and illustrator whose work had an enormous impact on our knowledge of the microscopic world. Mary became well known as an artist, naturalist, astronomer, and microscopist yet she never received any formal marks of distinction. It should be borne in mind that women could not

become members of learned societies or institutions nor obtain degrees or diplomas during their lifetime. It was very difficult for them to become established or recognised in scientific or literary fields until well into the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, Mary was the first woman to write and have published a book on the microscope although it was very difficult to find publishers who would accept book manuscripts from women. When her first book on the microscope was published in London in 1858 Mary did not use her full name but was referred to as The Hon. Mrs W. She was to write three books on scientific subjects and numerous scientific articles while performing the duties of wife and mother of a rapidly growing family. Her book on the microscope was reprinted at least eight times between 1858 and 1880. She married the Hon. Henry Ward from Castle Ward in County Down. He was the younger brother of Lord Bangor and they had eight children.



**Mary Ward's microscope, books, collections etc. on display at Castle Ward**

Sadly, Mary is often best remembered for her death in 1869. At the age of 42 she returned to Birr for the memorial service of the 3rd Earl of Rosse who had recently died. Riding in a steam carriage built by her young cousin Charles Parsons, she fell to her death from the front of the car. It is said to be Ireland's first road accident.

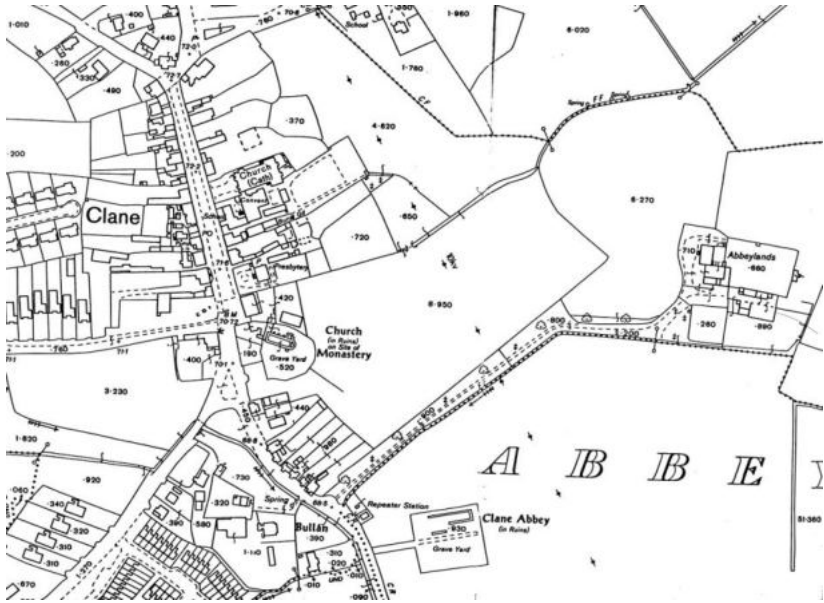
# GEORGE LEYCESTER PENRHYN AND ABBEYLANDS HOUSE, CLANE

*Ciarán Reilly*

A visitor to, and indeed many residents of Clane, in 2022, as they drive along the town's inner relief road which bypasses the main street, have little idea that they are passing through the former Abbeylands estate. Formerly known as 'Vicars Hall', when it was in the possession of Rev Ambrose Cooke, the early Ordnance Survey maps refer to this house as the 'Glebe' and later Abbeylands, while a map of the 1750s gives its name as 'Abby Land'. On the 1830s Ordnance survey maps a tree lined avenue to the house is depicted across lands which encompass the modern developments stretching from Alexandra Park to the Cloisters, the Lawns and the Apartment complex. At the centre of this estate was Abbeylands House.



**Alexander Taylor's Map of Clane and Environs 1783,  
which shows the house, then known as Vicar Hall**



**This map of Clane in 1981 shows the long avenue which linked the house to Sallins Road opposite the Bullaun Stone**

The house is described in the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage as:

- Detached five-bay two-storey over part-raised basement house, c.1775, retaining some original fenestration with round-headed door opening to centre approached by flight of steps and three-storey rear elevation to south-east having round-headed opening to centre first floor. Now disused with openings blocked-up. Hipped roof with slate. Clay ridge tiles. Rendered chimney stacks. Profiled cast-iron rainwater goods. Roughcast walls. Painted. Rendered stringcourse to ground floor. Square-headed window openings. Stone sills. Now boarded-up with some retaining original 6/6 timber sash windows (glazing missing). Round-headed door opening approached by flight of steps. Fluted Doric doorcase with frieze and moulded entablature. Now boarded-up. Bat-wing fanlight. Interior with timber panelled shutters to window openings. Set back from road in own grounds. Tarmacadam forecourt to front. Remainder of grounds undergoing redevelopment*



*as housing estate. Freestanding gas lamp standard, c.1880, to north comprising moulded base with shaft having gas lamp fitting over with moulded finial. Now disused.*

The report continues:

*Abbeylands (House), although now disused and in poor repair, remains a fine and imposing substantial house of the late eighteenth-century. Typical of many substantial houses of the period the house is composed on a symmetrical plan and with elevations of graceful proportions, the front elevation being centred about a fine round-headed door opening with decorative fanlight. The house is of social and historic interest, being one of the largest private residences in the vicinity of Clane, and it is possible that the building was once a source of employment in the locality.*

### ***The Penrhyns and Abbeylands***

Although Abbeylands has had many owners, the focus of this article is on the Penrhyn family. Just when they came to Abbeylands is unclear, although it is believed that they were in residence c1900. The Penrhyns were probably in situ at Abbeylands prior to then, when the family were listed as having been present at the opening meet for the 1900 Kildare Hounds season in November 1900. However, this is not supported by the 1901 census which states that George Leicester Penrhyn was living in Ballymore Eustace.

Born in 1871 in East Sheen, Surrey in England, Penryhan was educated in Eton between 1883-1890. Following the completion of his studies, Penrhyn initially sought a career in land agency work. Married in 1901 to Alice, daughter of William Kennedy of Annfield, Brannockstown. By 1915 Penrhyn was listed as a serving justice of the peace for county Kildare and was a prominent official at the sitting of the Clane Petty Sessions. Indeed, many of the cases brought before him at the Clane sessions involved his Abbeylands estate, which being thickly wooded at this time was frequently raided for timber. Sitting on the JP's bench with Penryhn at this time were J.M. Sweetman, Captain Dunne and Captain O'Kelly.

Throughout this time George L Penrhyn also served as a churchwarden in the Church of Ireland parish of Clane and Donadea. By 1911 the family were firmly established at Abbeylands and with their eight year old daughter, Vere, lived there with their servants Anne McDermott (Laundress), Anne McDonald (Cook) and Bridget McCormack (Parlour Maid). A prominent member of the Punchestown races, Penrhyn was in charge of the members' tickets for carriage enclosure and in charge of the stables. He was also secretary of the County Kildare Lawn Tennis Club and during his time in Clane he organised the activities of the local coursing club. Indeed, the 'Abbeylands Stake' remained a feature of the annual meeting of the Clane Coursing club for many years after. Penryhn was also on the Kildare Polo team in 1905 which played the First Inniskillings at Castletown House in Celbridge and was described as being 'very useful' in the game'. Taking a keen interest, particularly during the First World War in an effort to promote greater agricultural output, Penryn was also a member of the Kildare Farmers Federation. Indeed, both George Penrhyn and his wife were active members of the North Kildare Farming Society, with Mrs Penrhyn winning prizes in 1908 for chickens. They also raised prize winning American bronze turkeys at Abbeylands. Mrs Penrhyn was also an avid sportsperson and was noted in a number of sporting circles throughout county Kildare and elsewhere. In 1927 the Penryhns had dogs at the Kennel Club Dog Show at Crystal Palace, London including those named 'Jenifer of Clane' and 'Jock of Clane'. Another dog called 'Alexander of Clane' excelled at dog shows in Britain and Ireland, while in 1929 she had success at the Crufts Dog Show in Islington, London. In 1927 Mrs Penrhyn triumphed at the Kildare Hunt 'for hunters the property of and ridden by ladies', while in 1932 she came second in the Kildare Horse Show. She also took an active role in other areas of civic life in Kildare and was a regular contributor of illustrated papers for the Military Auxiliary Hospital at nearby Firmount House. As a member of the Naas & District Horticultural Show, Mrs Penrhyn judged the best gardens in her own district and in 1913, for example, she awarded prizes to Mrs Farrell, Prosperous Road; Mrs Casey

and Mrs Reddy both of Capdoo. The Penrhyn's sporting interests also took them to Scotland annually where they went to shoot, a period in which their presence in Clane was surely missed. The sporting life of the Penryhn's was evident in the large and successful gymkhana which was held at Abbeylands in 1928, in aid of the Kildare Hunt Damage Fund. Attended by over 200 people who were entertained to a day of sport and amusement, the event was said to have been a tremendous success. The Penrhyn's association with Clane came to an end in 1933 when the house and lands were advertised for sale. Advertised by Jackson, Stops and Joyce, Dublin in July 1933 and again in October 1933 by Robert J. Goff, Newbridge, the residence was described as being in 'perfect order'. In 1934 Abbeylands was eventually bought by Charlie O'Neill, then Hon. Secretary of the Kildare Farmers Federation and a man whom Penrhyn would have known from his dealings with the group. The O'Neills remained there until the 1990s when the lands were sold for housing development. Despite all of the development which has taken place in Clane in the interim, much of which is centred on the former Abbeylands estate, the house remains a central feature on the inner relief road. One hopes that whatever the future holds for the further expansion of Clane, that Abbeylands House will play a part in this.

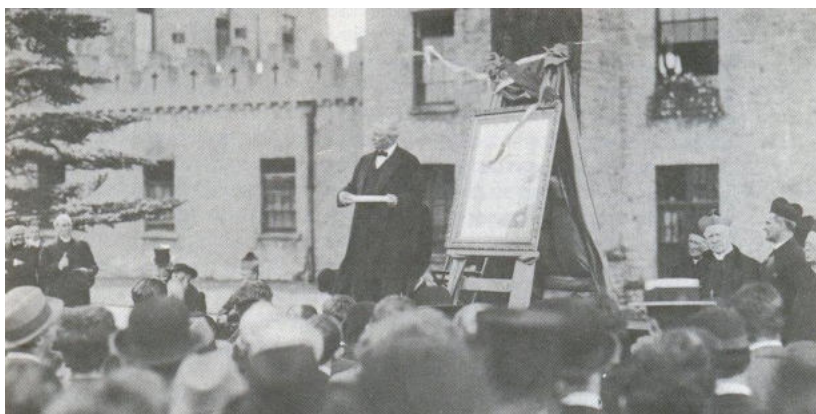


**Abbeylands House is a sad sight in the present day**

# JOHN REDMOND

*Jim Heffernan*

*By far the most famous Old Clongownian in 1914, when the school was a mere century old, was John Redmond. He was the guest speaker on Union Day when it appeared that he was about to become the first Prime Minister of Home Rule Ireland. This was the Jesuit project in Ireland encapsulated in one person - the reason for which schools like Clongowes had been founded.. It was like putting a man on the moon.<sup>1</sup>*



**John Redmond speaking at Clongowes in 1914**

In 1914 Redmond was at the pinnacle of his career. At the time of Redmond's death four years later both his project of a devolved Irish Parliament within the United Kingdom and his Irish Parliamentary Party would be consigned to oblivion by events.

## *Early Years*

John Edward Redmond was born on 1st September 1856 to William and Mary Redmond at their Dublin home 35 Upper Rutland Street. Shortly afterward they moved to Ballytrent House on the Wexford Coast which had been in the Redmond family since 1799; it was here that John was raised. The

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<sup>1</sup> Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review Autumn 2014, Vol. 103; *John Redmond: A Portrait*: Tony Pierce

Redmonds were a wealthy Catholic gentry family who could trace their roots back to one of Strongbow's Norman invaders who landed in Baginbun in 1171. His grand-uncle John Edmund Redmond had been a Member of the British Parliament for Wexford and he was succeeded as Member of Parliament for Wexford by John's father William Archer Redmond.



**Ballytrent House where John Redmond was raised**

John was educated at Clongowes Wood College between 1868 and 1874. He appears not to have applied himself rigorously to his studies but excelled at drama and debating and it was here that he developed the dramatic and oratorical skills which made him a formidable debater in the British House of Commons. He studied Law at Trinity but left after two years moving to London to assist his father who was in ill health; John's father William Redmond died on 30th October 1880 but John stood back from standing for the Wexford seat at Parnell's request in favour of Tim Healy. He was subsequently elected Member of Parliament for New Ross on 1st February 1881.

### ***John Redmond MP***

Redmond's first days in Parliament coincided with bitter debates over the Coercion Bill of 1881. Filibusters in opposition to the bill led by Parnell resulted in Redmond and the other Irish Parliamentary members being suspended. Redmond was in fact suspended on his first day in Parliament. The Coercion Bill was passed on 28th February giving the authorities in Ireland power to detain people without trial on grounds of suspicion of agrarian offences or treasonable conduct, membership of the Land League was considered grounds for suspicion.

In 1882 Parnell asked Redmond to travel to Australia on a fund raising mission to the Catholic Irish community who made up a third of the three million white Australian population. He was accompanied by his brother William who was living in Europe to avoid arrest by the British authorities for speeches he had made in America. John sailed for Australia in December 1882 picking up William in Naples en route and the brothers arrived in Adelaide on 5th February 1883. On their arrival they had to contend with false allegations that the Land League was implicated in the Pheonix Park Murders; the allegations were taken up by most Australian newspapers causing confusion among the local Irish and leading to many halls being closed to them for meetings. The rumours still prevailed when they arrived in Sydney; priests refused to help him with the exception of the Jesuits who were friendly because he was an old Clongownian. This situation prevailed until it became clear that the rumours were false after which people flocked to his meetings. Redmond made it clear in debates that he was not seeking separation from the British Empire merely self government within the empire.

Moving to Orange the brothers were guests of James Dalton a member of the Irish National League and a prominent Irish Australian. It was here that John met Dalton's younger half sister Johanna Dalton; John and Johanna were married six months later in Sydney on 4th September 1883. The couple had

two daughters and a son before Johanna tragically died in childbirth in 1899.

## **Home Rule**

The primary objective of the Irish Parliamentary Party was the repeal of the 1801 Act of Union, which had abolished the Irish Parliament. Home rule as sought by the Irish Parliamentary Party fell far short of independence consisting of the devolution of limited powers related to Irish matters subject to the British Parliament. This modest concept of devolution was opposed by both major parties in the British Parliament; the devolved government would have no control over customs, revenue or police and military. It was opposed by both the Tories and the Liberals until, in the 1880s Gladstone, the Liberal Prime Minister, had a change of heart. The Liberal party split on the issue with Birmingham businessman Joseph Chamberlain leading the breakaway Liberal Unionists. There was strong opposition from Irish Unionists led by Dubliner Edward Carson. The Tories recognised that their best strategy was, as Randolph Churchill put it, 'to play the Orange card' and to encourage the opposition of the Protestant majority in parts of Ulster. Following the split the Liberals would never again have a parliamentary majority, but with the support of the Irish Parliamentary Party, Home Rule Bills were passed in the Commons in 1883 and 1886 only to be blocked by the Tory majority in the unelected House of Lords. In 1884 John Redmond returned to his legal studies at Trinity and was subsequently called to the Irish and English Bars. In the same year he was joined by his brother William as a Member of Parliament.

When the 'Plan of Campaign', aimed at mainly absentee landlords who demanded excessive rents by withholding rents in order to force negotiation, was adopted between 1886 and 1891 Redmond was an early supporter although Parnell remained aloof fearing that it would antagonise English public opinion. In 1888 both John and William Redmond received prison sentences for making speeches urging boycotts of farms from which tenants were evicted; William received a three month sentence and John a five week sentence.

In 1890 the Irish Parliamentary Party was split by the scandal arising from the Kitty O'Shea divorce. Contrary to a widely held view it was not the condemnation of Irish Bishops which caused Parnell's ultimate downfall but the fact the Gladstone, upon whose support the Party depended for Home Rule succumbed to pressure from his Nonconformist constituents and refused to have further dealings with him. Redmond supported Parnell although he had not been one of Parnell's inner circle and when the party split two to one Redmond became leader of the minority pro-Parnell faction.

In December 1899, some ten years after the death of his first wife, Redmond married Aida Breesley, an Englishwoman from Leamington and the family moved from Belvedere Place to Leeson Park. Of his three children the eldest Esther was fifteen, William, who was at Clongowes, was thirteen and Johanna was twelve. Aida's support would prove a major source of comfort to Redmond as she accompanied him everywhere on his travels.

The split in the Irish Parliamentary Party lasted ten years until 1900 when it reunited under Redmond. Redmond had articulated his vision of Home Rule in a speech during his visit to Australia in 1882 summing it up as the restoration to Ireland of representative government but without complete separation from Britain and its Empire because of geographical and commercial ties and because the Irish should share the benefits of the empire to which they had contributed.

Gladstone was the only leader of the Liberals to support Home Rule as a matter of Justice, for his successors it was regarded as the price of the Irish Parliamentary Party's support in Parliament. After Gladstone Home Rule was a low priority for the Liberal leadership but everything changed after the General Election of January 1911. A minority Liberal government was formed under Herbert Asquith but depended on the support of the Irish Parliamentary Party. As the price for supporting the passing of the budget Redmond extracted a commitment from a reluctant Asquith that he would proceed with a third Home



Rule Bill and pass legislation removing the permanent veto of the House of Lords. Under the Parliament Bill of 18th August 1911 the Lords were now only able to delay the Bill for two years. The Third Home Rule Bill was placed on the Statute Book in 1914 with its implementation postponed until the end of the war.



**John Redmond with his wife Aida Breesley and his daughter Johanna from his first marriage**

In parallel with all this Unionist opposition encouraged by the Tories grew. An 'Ulster Covenant' was signed by 500,000 people on or before 28th September 1912 against Home Rule. The Ulster unionists raised a 100,000 strong private army, the Ulster Volunteer Force, threatening rebellion if Home Rule was introduced; their stance was backed by the Tory Party.

Subsequently the Irish Volunteers were formed by the nationalists later that year to defend Home Rule. The British Government instructed the Commander in Chief of the Army to prepare plans to prevent the UVF from seizing arms dumps. This order prompted the so called 'Curragh Mutiny' of March 1913; British officers at the Curragh Camp were encouraged by their commanding general to write en masse threatening to resign if ordered to move against the Ulster Unionists; this caused Asquith to back down. Unionist tactics now focussed on Partition with much debate on how much of Ulster would be cut off in the event of Home Rule. The British government was now faced with the threat of a Unionist Insurrection supported by the Tory opposition with the support of their army in doubt. King George V weighed in lobbying the government to accommodate the Unionists. The Unionists rejected the proposal for a county by county plebiscite being aware that they could only be absolutely sure of a majority in two counties Antrim and Down. On 12th May 1914 under pressure from the Tory Party and the Ulster Unionists Asquith added an amending bill to the Home Rule Bill which provided for temporary opting out on a county by county basis. This was reluctantly accepted by Redmond; it would have meant four counties Antrim, Down, Derry and Armagh opting out. The Lords amended this to a permanent opting out for all counties. Ultimately the British Government accommodated the Unionists by giving them six counties. They did not want nine counties fearing that the demographics would ultimately lead to Reunion.<sup>2</sup>

On 28<sup>th</sup> July 1914 the ongoing territorial quarrels of the rival European colonial powers were sparked into the catastrophe of the First World War by events in the far-off Balkans. In a show of loyalty to the Empire the Ulster Volunteer Force volunteered en masse to serve in the British forces. Redmond, in what is a major stain on his legacy followed suit urging the Irish

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<sup>2</sup> It is not possible to cover in detail the negotiations and manoeuvring which led to Partition in a short article of this nature. For the definitive account of the period see Professor Ronan Fanning's book 'Fatal Path'.

Volunteers to enlist thus sending tens of thousands of Irishmen to their deaths. As a consequence the Irish Volunteers split with the minority who opposed Redmond retaining the name Irish Volunteers. Following the outbreak of war the two major British parties formed a coalition, with Redmond no longer holding the balance of power in the Commons and consequently losing his leverage over the Government.



John Redmond (centre) with brother William and son William

Everything changed for the Irish Parliamentary Party in 1916. The Easter Rebellion and the British response totally alienated Irish Public opinion. Over a few short years the Irish Parliamentary Party was obliterated being replaced by Sinn Fein. John Redmond's brother William was serving with the Royal Irish Regiment in Belgium when he was killed in the Battle of Messines Ridge on the 7th June 1917. John Redmond's health had deteriorated and he died in London on 6th March, 1918.

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## JOSEF LOCKE

*Mario Corrigan*

According to his Civil Birth registration, Joseph McLaughlin was born on 23 March 1917, at 19 Creggan Street, Derry; his parents were Patrick McLaughlin (a butcher) and Annie Frances Doherty who had married in St. Columba,s church on 1 January 1902. They had ten children. Joseph sang in the local church choir but this young Derry boy from the Bogside, would become an international star. Joe joined the Irish Guards in 1934, and soon found himself shipped off to Palestine. By 1939 McLaughlin was back home in Northern Ireland and joined the Royal Ulster Constabulary as a fitness instructor, nicknamed by his friends '*The Singing Bobby.*' One day, in Belfast he auditioned at the Empire Theatre and came out with a contract for £7 a week (he was on £15 a month with the RUC). The rest was history. By the time he was doing Bandstand in Belfast in January 1943, he was referred to as the '*Famous Ulster Tenor.*'

In April 1944, Joseph McLaughlin, made his first operatic appearance in *Madame Butterfly* with the Dublin Operatic Society but even great operatic stars had to make a living and he toured Variety outside of opera season with Jimmy O'Dea, Noel Purcell &co. and alternated between the two genres in 1944 and 1945. He received some amazing reviews singing opera in Dublin, but was happiest, singing and performing that which he loved. When the war ended he set sail for England, to become one of the highest paid stars in Britain. Jack Hylton offered him an engagement at the Victoria Palace and he arrived to find himself billed as 'Josef Locke' to make it easier for the audience to understand. They took him to their hearts. Joe found himself starring in a Tom Arnold show, *Starry Way*, at Blackpool, alongside George Formby, returning there for some 10 seasons between 1946 and 1969: sharing the stage with seasoned performers and new faces such as 13 year old Julie Andrews. And so developed a treadmill of pantomime, touring cities, summers in Blackpool and the TV and radio that made him famous.

George and Beryl Formby introduced him to Columbia records and in the space of a couple of years over a million records were sold in the UK alone. Joe recorded his first songs in March 1947 becoming something of a favourite on Radio Éireann and the BBC alongside the Andrews Sisters, Nelson Eddy and Sinatra. By March 1949 he was *appearing* at the Palladium in London. By November 1950 the *Irish Examiner* announced 'more than 1,250,000 copies of .... 'Hear My Song. Violetta" had been sold.'



**Joseph McLoughlin aka Josef Locke**

Now, a star of stage, radio and TV, he was cast in a number of John E. Blakeley's, Mancunian Films; *Holidays with Pay* (1948); *Somewhere in Politics* (1949) and *What a Carry On* (1949). He commanded fees of £1-2,000 per week. The combination of his powerful voice, his impressive frame and

his witty one-liners proved irresistible, particularly to his female fans who packed venues to hear his, by now, trademark songs. The *Irish Independent* in November 1950 remarked “...the sale of his gramophone records ... now tops the sales of such favourite stars as Bing Crosby and Frank Sinatra.”

When not on the road he was living at Blackpool. Locke never lost his love for Opera and often recorded the songs in English, popularising them for a new audience.

There was tragedy in the life of Joseph McLaughlin: failed marriages and sadly the loss of three children in his lifetime. But finally, Joseph McLaughlin found his lifelong companion when he married Carmel Dignam, from Celbridge, in August 1971. His life as the performer took centre stage. In 1949, he stood in for legendary Italian, Tito Gobbi at the Royal Albert Hall and starred in the Royal Variety Performance at the London Palladium in 1952. Joseph McLaughlin sang Danny Boy, starring alongside Gracie Fields, Vera Lynn, Norman Wisdom and Maurice Chevalier: the first Royal variety for Elizabeth as Queen. By 1955 he was back in Dublin and then New York.

By now Josef Locke was in trouble with the Taxman. Afraid of being jailed, he decided to do a runner to Ireland in the middle of the night in late 1958, adding to his celebrity, but closing a door on a world of fame and graft of almost 13 years. Joe made peace with the Revenue in the UK, and returned in 1967, playing Blackpool for the following two seasons. He appeared on *The Good Old Days*, on RTE and *Frost on Sunday* alongside Sammy Davis Junior, Peter Sellers, Ronnie Corbett and Danny La Rue. A powerful figure on stage, Big Joe, would play to his strengths captivating his female audiences with a kiss, a wink, a smile and a wave. Joseph was wont to play on his Irish charm, but in contrast to the nostalgic sentimentality of much of his popular Irish material, Joe was superb when it came to delivering operatic favourites and rousing popular sing-alongs.

While he was not enjoying the heady successes of earlier times, there were still regular engagements in 1970, an LP, an Old Tyme Music Hall Tour and even TV appearances.

Above all, Josef was from Derry. By this time the city was torn apart by the Troubles. In February 1972, he topped the bill at a concert at the National Stadium for dependents of Bloody Sunday. Joseph McLaughlin, performed tirelessly for charities and good causes. He remained in demand, and headed a Centenary Command Performance in the Blackpool Opera House in 1976 and was back in June 1977 with his own show in the Olympia featuring Charles Lynch and Mary Sheridan starring also on *The Good Old Days*. Joe had another re-invention in 1984 in the Braemor Rooms, the National Concert Hall, and the Olympia and he recorded a live album. *Hear My Song*. Having been part of the first *Late Late Show* season in July 1962 he featured in a lengthy tribute on the Show ahead of an award in the Olympia for 50 years of service to the industry.

The movie *Hear My Song*, written by Adrian Dunbar and Peter Chelsom, was an exaggerated biopic of Locke, starring Ned Beatty, Tara Fitzgerald, David McCallum, and James Nesbitt. It premiered at Cannes in 1991 and secured US distribution, proving a surprise hit both sides of the Atlantic. At the London premiere in 1992, Locke serenaded Princess Diana, only to be surprised by Michael Aspell with a big red Book. *As well as 'This is Your Life,'* he appeared on the Royal Variety Performance that year. There was renewed interest in the man, the myth and the music and his early recordings were again sought after.

Joseph McLaughlin passed away in Clane, Co. Kildare near where he had lived in his later years, on 15 October 1999. He was 82. On 22 March 2005, a magnificent bronze memorial to Locke was unveiled in Derry by Phil Coulter and John Hume. Coulter, commented: "*His stage presence, timing and voice were joyous to appreciate.*" Gone, but not forgotten.

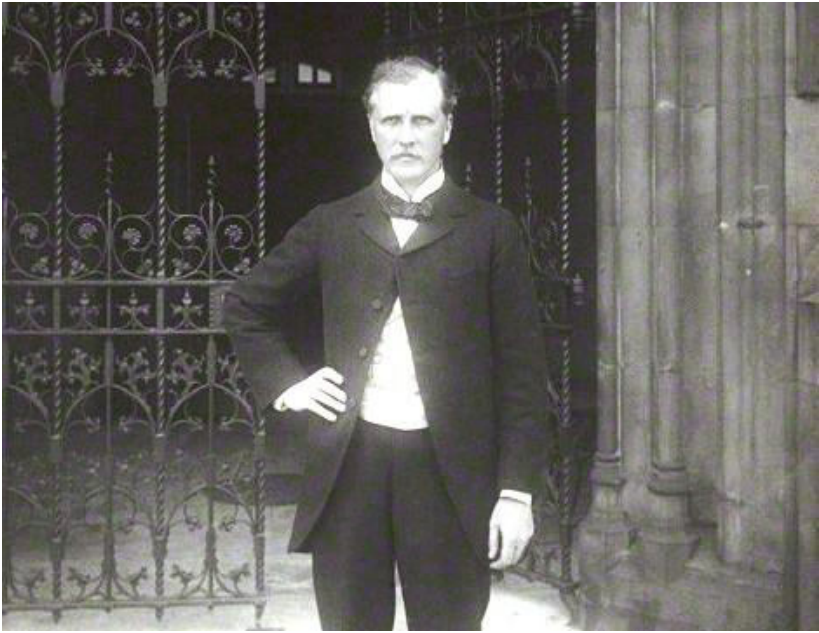
# THE LEINSTER LEADER: FRAGMENTS OF ITS EARLY HISTORY

*Henry Bauress*



Throughout its 20th century history, the Leinster Leader represented a conservative tradition in the regional press of an independent Ireland but its early key owners, managers and journalists had diverse backgrounds. The Leader was set up in August 1880 with share capital of £1,500. Shareholders included Members of the UK Parliament (MP), curates and priests from Carlow and Kildare. In 1886, after early difficulties, it was bought by Clongowes Wood educated MP, James L Carew (son of Laurence Carew and Ann, only daughter of Garrett Robinson, Kilrainey, County Kildare) and James Leahy, with Carew paying virtually all the £1,100. Its owners promoted a nationalist viewpoint, albeit from different viewpoints and intensity with Carew, its manager, promoting his own political pro-Parnell cause. Carew died suddenly in 1903, leaving the shares to his wife, Helen, whom he had married in 1896.





**James Laurence Carew**

By 1916 Helen and her son from her first marriage, Sir Coleridge Kennard, had reduced their shareholding significantly as she had sold most of her shares in 1904, for £5,000, to a newly formed company, indicating a profitable run since 1886 with the company's worth growing at around 8.4% a year over eighteen years. Helen, born circa 1856, had married her first husband, Coleridge Kennard, in 1884 with both families each giving £50,000<sup>3</sup> plus £3,000 a year income, to the couple. Coleridge drowned, aged 23, in April 1886. Sir Coleridge, educated at Eton, had a colourful life. He served as a diplomat and took to Persian poetry, hashish and opium as well as losing heavily at casino gambling, amidst a turbulent love life. A member of the Bloomsbury set, known for their bohemian attitudes to food, sexuality and art, he usually received £3 a year in dividend from the Leader, as did Helen. Helen was a close friend of Oscar Wilde and anonymously provided £2,000 for a controversial monument to Wilde in Pere

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<sup>3</sup> £6.2 million in 2020.

La Chaise graveyard in Paris, designed by the sculptor, Jacob Epstein.

Set up to promote the Irish nationalist cause, albeit via nonviolent reform, the *Leader's* first editor, Patrick Cahill, a London University law graduate among other things, was jailed for publishing seditious material in favour of the Land League. Jailed with him was William Staples, a Naas merchant, who also had shares in the paper, later passed on to his niece, Kathleen Dowling. The second editor, John Wyse Power, who attended the founding meeting of the GAA, also served time in jail for protesting against landlordism.



**Plaque to John Wyse Power at the Leader Building**

By 1916, the *Leader* had become very profitable, from printing, publishing and investment. It had gained sufficient profit to enable it to invest in other companies, home and abroad, particularly railway companies. On 20 April, 1916, days before the 1916 Rising in which editor, Michael O'Kelly, some of its journalists, including columnist, Brian O'Higgins (Brian na

BanBan) were involved, the Leader held its 12th ordinary AGM. It reported profits of £944, with £736 from the newspaper/printing operation and £208, coming from an estimated £4,000 in investments. Shareholders took out £492 in dividends from the profit. Three years earlier, the annual wage bill was around £1,659 but wages seem to have failed to keep up with sterling inflation between 1913 and 1918. In September, 1915, the board voted to capitalise £5,910 from its reserves and pay a bonus of £30 per share free of income tax on each of the issued 591 £10 ordinary shares in the company. A consequence was, for example, that the largest shareholder, Charles T Gatty's annual 1915 dividend of £186 rose 60% to £298 by 1919, by which time the editor's annual salary was equivalent to £208. A clerk in the Naas office, a Miss McGrath earned £48 a year in March 1913 and got a rise to c£58 in 1919.

Some newspapers were family owned but the Leader had a number of key shareholders, whose interests were well protected by the Board of Directors, who had a shareholding interest. When the Leader group was sold to UK based Johnston Press in 2005 for €138.6 million much Irish attention was focused on the estimated €30 million sale price by a Laois based shareholder, Elizabeth O'Kelly, no relation to the O'Kelly brothers. She died, aged 92, in December 2016, leaving her estate of €30 million to five charities. Her shares originated with James L Carew. Some had passed to his brothers, Thomas and Bernard.

The shareholding of another woman, Hester Smallbone, whose 22% was worth €25 million, got much less attention in Ireland than the O'Kelly one. It came via Charles Tindal Gatty, who, when he died in 1928, was described as being "associated" with the Leinster Leader. However Gatty, a Catholic convert, who ran for election in West Dorset in 1892 as a Gladstone candidate, had the largest shareholding in the Leader in 1916, at 38%. He was the maternal grandson of the Rev Alexander Scott, chaplain and multilingual foreign secretary to Admiral Horatio Nelson. When Nelson died on his flagship, Victory, at

the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805 Scott was holding Nelson in his arms. Gatty sued his West Dorset political opponent, Henry Farqueson, for saying he had been expelled from Charterhouse school for sexual activities. He won his case in 1893 and a jury awarded him £5,000, later reduced to £2,500 (£328,522 in 2020) on appeal. He was involved in politics at a high level and in Ireland he was involved with the Irish Art Companions, which promoted Irish culture and industry and with whom Willie Pearse, Padraic's brother, was associated. Gatty was a member of Conradh na Gaeilge.

Gatty's shares were passed on to family members and in the 1940s one of them was Horatia Persis Parrington. Horatia is the name of Nelson's illegitimate daughter by his mistress, Emma Hamilton. Gatty, who was co-opted as a director of the Leader at the company's 1916 AMG, had been editor of the Western Chronicle newspaper in Yeovil, from 1887. He was also private secretary to the 3rd Marquess of Bute, also a Catholic convert, around the 1884/5 period. He was friendly with George Wyndham (Chief Secretary for Ireland from 1900-1905 and great grandson of Lord Edward Fitzgerald, of Carton and 1798 fame).

Another 20% shareholder/director in 1916, was Daniel E. Williams, whose family held a majority shareholding by the 1980s. In the early 1860s, he started work aged 14/15 in a mill at Tullamore, soon becoming a distillery. By the 1890s he was wealthy, involved in a grocery chain, malting and wine and spirit distribution, as well as the Leader. He died in 1921 and was succeeded in his business by his three sons, Edmund, Daniel and Jack - all of whom had been educated at Clongowes Wood College in Kildare.

The next two largest 1916 shareholders were Mary Carew and Nicholas Synnott, who each had around 12.7%. Mary was the wife of the late Thomas Maurice Carew, a brother of James L Carew, some of whose shares ended up with his brothers, Thomas and Bernard. In December 1916, following Bernard's death, some of his shares were transferred to Bernard Robinson

of Phepotstown, Kilcock, a cousin of Thomas and Bernard, and, months later, to Daniel E. Williams. After Thomas died, his wife, Mary, married (in 1920) Major John O’Kelly and Thomas’s shares were transferred into her married name, Mary O’Kelly. Mary died in 1942, and in 1945, the 63 year old Major John married 21 year old Elizabeth Sykes, who became Elizabeth O’Kelly, who held the shares in 2005.



**Furness House**

Nicholas J Synnott, who lived at Furness House, on a 300 acre farm, was also a shareholder and director of the Leader. A non-practicing barrister and Justice of the Peace, he was a director of the Bank of Ireland, the Great Southern and Western Railways and was chairman of the Naas Board of Guardians. A Catholic unionist, his cattle were subject to “cattle driving” attacks by republicans in early 1918, whereby cattle would be found on the road with notices around their necks stating: “The land for the people and the road for the bullocks.” Another early shareholder was Jeremiah Buckley, an accountant, who set up the Limerick Leader newspaper. He had a 5% shareholding in 1916. Politics continued on the Gatty side. Hester Smallbone, who held the Gatty line shares in 2005 and who died in 2012, aged 87, ran for Parliament in Richmond,

London in the 1980s as a Liberal Democrat. She was a councillor in Richmond, south-west London, from 1961 to 1965. Born Hester Parrington to music teacher parents (her mother was Horatia Persis Parrington), she joined the WAAF (Womens' Auxiliary Air Force, a British military service in World War II) in 1942, serving as a radar operator. By 1916, the Leader ownership and editorial direction was a mix of Catholic, unionist, liberal, republican and other influences. Its manager and highest paid employee was John Joseph Devlin, a Church of Ireland man.

The Collins legal family involvement, ending in 2005, appears to have begun with the sale of one share by Charles T Gatty to a solicitor, Eugene F Collins, in March 1918. The company continued to grow and the Board came under pressure for wage increases, at a time of heavy inflation around and after World War 1. In December 1918, the Board granted a £44



**Hester Smallbone**

“Christmas box to staff.” In March 1919 they invested £1,000 in a War Loan at 4%. At the 1919 AGM, the salary of each board director was increased to £50 a year. At times the Board had issues with Michael O’Kelly, its editor, who was more militaristic than his more literary brother, Seumas. On December 9, 1916, it agreed that his articles be overseen by J.J.

Devlin, the manager. It had fired him from his job in November 1916, with a payment of his weekly salary of £2.10s and £10 in lieu of one month's pay. A delegation to the Board from Naas UDC, sought to have him reinstated. The Board did so on the condition that he “obey all present and future orders of the Board.” He received a number of bonuses between 1917-1920 and his salary rose to £4 a week.

Michael's brother, Seumas, a playwright and short story writer among other things, served as a Leader editor from 1906-12. When he left in 1912, Michael took over and in addition to his editorial duties played a key role in republican activities. When Michael was arrested following the 1916 Rising, Seumas returned briefly to take over the editorship, until Michael was released and returned to his post. Whatever the politics of its earlier owners, journalists, printers and managers, the Leader continued to be very profitable.

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# **CARTON OBSERVED: SOME REFERENCES TO CARTON HOUSE FROM THE KILDARE OBSERVER 1880-1935**

*Mario Corrigan*

The Leinster Family and indeed Carton itself were no strangers to the press. *The Kildare Observer* however gives us a local perspective, a tantalising glimpse into the everyday world of the great estate and its dependents.



**The 4th Duke of Leinster Charles William FitzGerald**

One of the first mentions of ‘Carton’ is a long report on the Leinster lease and the disgruntlement of the labourers and tenants on the vast Leinster estates. The beleaguered 4th Duke



of Leinster (Charles William FitzGerald 1819-1887) was defending his offer of 20% abatement on the half-years rent due. He reminded his tenants that they should give labourers work as he could not continue to do so. Deputations from Athy and Castledermot were received by his agent at the Dublin Offices, followed by public meetings in Athy and Maynooth. At Athy, Mr. Plewman, commented, "It is not in the province of the Duke of Leinster to dictate to any farmer as to how many men we will employ to make the most out of his soil."



**A Land League meeting in Kildare Town 1881**

The family were newsworthy. 'Unlike many of the Irish nobility, the FitzGeralds have always been residents in Ireland, which fact gives unusual historic interest to Carton.' Fashionable intelligence reports listed their comings and goings — the 4<sup>th</sup> Duke and Duchess headed to England for Christmas in 1880; the 5<sup>th</sup> Duke and Duchess, having returned from Constantinople to London, it appears had planned to spend the winter at Carton in 1891, and after their sojourn in Aix-le-Chapelle in August 1892 planned on taking up residence in the house. The Marquis of Kildare was announced as High Sheriff of the County in the paper of 29 January 1881. In January 1882 we note the mammoth rejoicings as Lord

Frederick FitzGerald, Captain in the 60<sup>th</sup> Rifles and third son of the Duke, returned to Maynooth from five years service in Afghanistan and Zululand. The Maynooth Band, whose instruments had been the gift of Lord Frederick's grandfather, missed his train but proceeded that evening to Carton to pay their respects and to entertain. The town was illuminated and tar barrels blazed the following night as the junior members of the family came down and were 'lost in the crowd;' Frederick happy to speak and shake hands with the people of Maynooth.



**Carton House pictured in the Kildare Observer of October 1874**

There were excursions to the estate; such as the picnic organised by Messers. J. Watkins & Co., celebrated brewers in 1882 and the visit of the Ancient Order of Foresters, Dublin District in 1885. Dogs however were not allowed to run free. The demesne closed in August 1899 due, '...to the conduct of some excursionists who, being privileged to meander through the extensive and lovely grounds, did a considerable amount of damage.' Special permission was granted however to St. Thomas's Dominican Choir, Newbridge when they visited Maynooth on their annual excursion that same month.

In April 1899 the Duchess of York was taken for a jaunt in an open carriage to Carton from the Viceregal Lodge and was received by the young 6<sup>th</sup> Duke who was to enter Eton the following month. On Wednesday 5 July of that year the Duke and Duchess of Connaught were entertained on their way back to Dublin from the Curragh. As the country prepared for the

Queen's visit in 1900, the Queen's first visit to Ireland in 1849 was recalled, when she attended Carton on 10 August. In 1904 the Duke of Leinster entertained Cardinal Vanutelli, the Papal Legate, at Carton after his visit to Maynooth College.

But it was also a place where local school children could be entertained by the Duchess in 1892 or the County Kildare Archaeological Society were treated to lunch when they visited, Taghadoo and Maynooth in 1893. The 5<sup>th</sup> Duke (first president, 1891) and Lord Walter FitzGerald were key members of the Society; on this particular occasion both made presentations and the Duke gave a tour of the house. The lands at Kilkea and Carton featured quite regularly in reports on the Kildare Hounds.

A FitzGerald wedding was noteworthy and there is a large report on the marriage of Lady Alice, eldest daughter of the 5<sup>th</sup> Duke of Leinster, to Major Charles J. O. FitzGerald, of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry. The report began with a lengthy history of the family and ended with a lengthy list of presents and present givers, including: the representatives of the tenantry of Maynooth and Moyglare, the parishioners of Castledermot, and the pupils of Castledermot school; the Carton, London and Dublin households and outdoor employees and the tenants and employees of Kilkea Castle. Handsome floral arches with sentimental mottoes were erected in Maynooth with a large arch at the entrance to Carton bearing the motto, 'The House of Geraldine' and 'Crom Aboo' on the reverse. The Church was decorated by the Duke's men and afterwards the wedding party returned to Carton for the wedding breakfast.

An editorial in 1883 reported on the forthcoming wedding of the Marquis of Kildare. The Marquis and Lady Hermione Wilhelmina Duncombe (born in 1864), eldest daughter of the Earl of Feversham, were married at St. Paul's Knightsbridge. The description of the bride's dress and her ten bridesmaids, their flowers and ornaments are reminiscent of those of modern society magazines. On the day, the Duke organised 'an elegant dejeuner' for some 400 schoolchildren from the local schools

in Maynooth, and over 100 employees were treated to a 'substantial dinner' at the racket court at Carton. The town was illuminated in the evening and a large bonfire lit in front of the courthouse with a pyrotechnic display at the Leinster Arms Hotel. 'Both' Maynooth bands entertained the crowds in the streets. The town was also decorated and illuminated on the 6<sup>th</sup> Duke's majority and his return to Carton in 1908.

The economy and administration of the local area was inextricably linked to the great house as demonstrated by the sale of Maynooth Courthouse in 1883. A letter from the Duke at Carton allayed the fears of the Grand Jury over the use of the building, '...I am willing to buy the house on the same conditions as before, viz.—to keep it as a Town Hall, free for all business connected with county business.' The house was acquired and operated as a Town Hall. It was burned in March 1920 and the Duke awarded compensation of £565, with 10 guineas costs.

The family sat on the Grand Jury and both Lord Walter and Lord Frederick served at the Local Petty Sessions courts. Indeed, the family were constantly called upon for committee and society patronage. At a meeting of the Celbridge Branch of the Unionist Alliance, Colonel Dease, expressing his regret at the death of their President, the 5th Duke, recalled, 'The last thing his Grace did was to express his wish that his sons should be brought up at Carton, where they should know all their neighbours, and he hoped they would become as good Irishmen as he had been.'

The 4th Duke died at Carton on Thursday 10 February 1887 after a short illness in his 68<sup>th</sup> year and was survived by his wife the Duchess, Lady Caroline Levenson Gower. He had represented Kildare as MP from 1847-1852 and was to be succeeded by his son Gerald, Marquis of Kildare. It was noted, 'The deceased Duke was deservedly popular among his dependents, and was personally liked by all classes of the inhabitants of the neighbourhood.' Celbridge Board of Guardians suspended business as a mark of respect for the

‘irreparable loss,’ of their Chairman, who ‘... was a constant attendant at our meetings and in every way as chairman gave entire satisfaction to every member of this board.’ Ironically a letter from 4 February in the same issue from the Duke’s agent, Charles Hamilton, issue stated the Duke refused to accept anything less than 18 years purchase of the fixed rents from his tenants in Athy.

The description of his funeral was remarkable. He was buried in the railed-off family plot at Carton where he had constructed ‘...a small mound within a couple of hundred yards of the house,’ which contained four simple graves for three of his daughters and one son. The funeral was private and, ‘Consequently none of the gentry of the neighbourhood attended.’ The plain oak coffin was borne from the house by his four sons and Archbishop, Lord Plunket, who attended the funeral, read the service and performed the last rites. Some one hundred people attended the funeral including servants, farm labourers and some people from Maynooth but ‘None of the tenantry were present.’ Window blinds were drawn in the town and shop shutters closed, ‘...but no further demonstration of feeling was permitted to take place.’ Messages of condolences were received from all parts of the three Kingdoms, including the Queen and the Lord Lieutenant; the latter had expressed a desire to attend, ‘...but this was not acceded to.’ Floral tributes were prominent, and marks of respect were paid at Athy and Rathangan.

The death of the 5th Duke on 1 December 1893 of typhoid fever was not well covered though motions of respect and sympathy were recorded by the Celbridge Board of Guardians, the County Kildare Archaeological Society, Athy Town Commissioners, the protestant parishioners, and a large public meeting of people of Maynooth. A resolution was passed at the latter to express the townspeople’s ‘great loss.’ Rev. J. Hunt, who occupied the chair, observed, ‘... that there is scarcely a family in the town of Maynooth that has not directly or indirectly experienced the advantage of having a residential duke at Carton.’ Details of the Duke’s will were published and

Lord Frederick FitzGerald and Charles Hamilton were appointed executors. Lord Frederick and the Duchess became legal guardians to the 6<sup>th</sup> Duke of Leinster. No specific provision for the upkeep of Carton was made so it fell to the trustees.

The Duchess died in March 1895, having left Carton to recover from illness. Renowned for her beauty, she was a socialite unlike her husband and enjoyed racing at Ascot and Punchestown and the galleries in Dublin and London. The blinds were drawn at Carton and the gate lodges on the demesne and the shutters pulled down in the businesses of Maynooth. An historic connection was reported when Helen McCorquodale died in Richmond Surrey on 17 April 1896, a daughter of Lady Pamela and Lord Edward Fitzgerald. The romance of Lord Edward and Lady Pamela was ever a popular theme in the newspapers.

From time to time the history of the family or reports on individual family members were a commodity an editor could rely upon and make use of. A wonderful story was recalled in an exposé of Lords Walter and Frederick about Lord Frederick's participation at an eviction in the north of Ireland. An old peasant asked him, "Tell me, yer honour, aren't you a relative of Lord Edward?" "I am," answered the Major of the Rifles. "An' why are ye here," asked the peasant, 'an' Lord Edward such a friend of Mr. Parnell's?" Lord Frederick was dumfounded, but managed to reply, "Well, you see, Lord Edward is dead for nearly a hundred years." "Divil may care," replied the peasant, "If he was alive wouldn't he be on Mr. Parnell's side?" "To tell you the truth," answered the officer, "I believe he would be." On another occasion Lord Frederick was listed for having subscribed £5 to the Evicted Tenants' Restoration Fund and he was elected to the new County Council in 1899. In 1914 he gave the use of Carton demesne to the Maynooth National Volunteer Corps for drilling purposes.

With the onset of World War I the Duke of Leinster pledged £1,000 to the National Relief Fund in 1914. A Garden Fête for

the prisoners of war of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers was held at Carton on 2 September 1916 and some £300 was raised. Opened by the Lord Lieutenant the attendance apparently ‘...was the largest ever seen in this magnificent demesne.’ On Monday 11 Sept. Lieut.-Colonel Lord Frederick presided over the first meeting, and was subsequently elected as chairman of, the County Kildare War Pension’s Committee.

Interesting nuggets appear from time to time. An Ogham stone found by Lord Walter FitzGerald at Donaghmore (Grangewilliam) graveyard was also removed to Carton for safe-keeping in October 1902, with a proviso that it should be available to the public for viewing. At a visit of the Kildare Archaeological Society in September 1893, a portrait of Lord Edward FitzGerald and a bust of his wife Lady Pamela were examined as was the stone rent table from Maynooth Castle. The pouch, powder-horn, sword and pistol of Lord Edward were kept in the picturesque Shell House for a time. Reporting the death of the Duchess of Leinster, the ‘*Observer*’ mentioned that the 4<sup>th</sup> Duke who created the cemetery at Carton around eleven years previously had transferred some of the remains of family members from the family burial vault, in Maynooth Protestant Church, to Carton. The reference to the cemetery mound at Carton as ‘Hollyhill’ is also interesting.

There are little insights into the life of the estate. A notice of 1 April 1882 announced the death on 26 March of Jane Harriette Knowldin at Carton Gardens beloved wife of Edward who was probably the gardener at Carton at the time. Later, Mr. Alexander Black from Carton Gardens was appointed as a regular judge for the North Kildare Horticultural Society at their Annual Show. Names from Carton are listed among the prize winners: Bain, Geraghty, Kenny, Kelly, Lovely, Hume and Ingles for example. At a Petty Sessions case in Celbridge in December 1898 against a poacher on the lands at Railpark, Maynooth, the Carton gamekeeper, John Scott, gave evidence against the accused. Michael Boyd a (night?) watchman on the estate brought a case against the local midwife before the Celbridge Board of Guardians in Oct. 1910.

A case before the District Court in Kilcock in August was bound over to the Naas Circuit Court in December of 1929. Georgina Inglis had written threatening letters to Lady Nesta, Alexander Black, gardener and Steward at Carton and George Hamilton, agent to the estate, because her father, who she lived with, had been moved from one house to another on the estate. He had worked the Leinster estate for over forty years, first at Kilkea and then at Carton. She pleaded guilty and was bound to the peace and discharged, Lady Nesta, Mr. Hamilton and Mr. Black speaking on her behalf. She had threatened violence should Mr. Cusker be installed as gamekeeper. Mr. Cusker was installed and he made headlines in November 1930 by catching a young poacher on the demesne.

The estate featured regularly at the Royal Dublin Shows and County Shows and the Duke was often listed as a prize winner, especially in the livestock categories. In 1908 The Leinster Cup was presented as a perpetual trophy. The Duke was also successful in the Ulster Show in 1909 and 1910. This competitive spirit provided a catalyst for improvements in animal husbandry and agriculture and culminated locally with the inaugural North Kildare Farming Society Ltd. Show in November 1904; the estate witnessed success in the farm produce categories such as oats, mangels, turnips, swedes, potatoes and butter. By 1910 the Duke had won the Brown Cup on two successive occasions and a wonderful battle of the old and new worlds in the Kildare and Dublin Shows ensued with Stephen Brown from Naas over the following decade. In 1904 the celebrated Shell House Gardens at Carton were the location of the North Kildare Horticultural Society's fifth annual flower show and Lord Frederick was listed as one of the Society's Vice-Presidents. The Show was held again at Carton in 1908 and 1911.

There is a sense of great sadness at the passing of the demesne from the family in 1922 to Sir Harry Mallaby-Deely, M.P. Lord Edward FitzGerald became 7th Duke of Leinster almost by default. He had 'disposed of his inheritance to Mallaby-



Deely in 1919 when he was in financial difficulties and had little chance of becoming duke, having two elder brothers. Lord Desmond FitzGerald however was killed in the War and the 6th Duke died in Edinburgh, on 2 February 1922 aged 35 years. The new Duke told the Press he had received £67,500 and £1,000 a year as a loan for ten years and he had since offered £150,000 for the repurchase. The late 6th Duke left unsettled property to the value of £24,602. Probate of his will was granted to Lord Frederick. The Duke had made a request that his successor would make adequate provision for all employees or other dependents not kept on in service of the family after his death. When Lord Walter died on 31 July 1923, leaving a personal estate of £10, 178 12s. 6d., the probate of his will was also granted to Lord Frederick. The long-time custodian of Carton, Lieut-Colonel Lord Frederick died on 8 March 1924 at the age of 67 years. His rather short obituary in the *Kildare Observer*, gave some indication of his military career and other appointments. His will provided for members of the family and bequests to some of the employees of the estate and Carton household.

Coverage of the demesne in the newspaper declined but for some hunting and other mundane references. The estate was however represented at the R.D.S. Spring Show in 1925 when the pre-war attendance figures were doubled and the Duke featured among the prize winners. By early 1930 rumours of a Jubilee Nurses Fête offered promise of a return to former glories at Carton. It was held on Monday 9 June when the gardens were opened to the public. It was August 1932 when the Duke visited Carton again, with his son, the Marquis of Kildare and suggested he might return for a lengthy stay. Lord Kildare, returned for the Dublin Horse Show, in August 1934 and stayed at Carton. Lord Henry FitzGerald and his wife, Lady Mabel stayed at Carton with Lady Nesta, his sister, in September of that year though it seems he seldom missed an annual visit to the demesne. Lord Kildare who had just left Sandhurst visited his grand aunts at Kilkea and possibly Carton in December/January of 1935. The last issue of the *Kildare Observer* was published on 4th May 1935.

## MISCELLANY

### *The Mantle of St Brigid at Bruges*

On the Federation of Local History Societies trip to visit the battlefields of Belgium and France in 2016 a conversation on our outward journey with the Federation President, Canon Sean O'Doherty, raised an interesting point previously unknown to me about the presence of St Brigid's Mantle or Cloak in the Cathedral of St Sauveur in Bruges. The so-called mantle or cape of St Brigid – La Manteline de Sainte Brigide is somewhat of a misnomer as it is not a complete cape or garment but a rectangular piece of woollen cloth measuring about twenty one by twenty five inches of a dark crimson colour and covered all over on its face with tufts of curly wool.

How it ended up in Bruges tells an interesting and fascinating story. The story is taken from an article in a Flemish periodical called "Rond den Heerd" (Round the Heath) of the year 1868. According to this, the relic is stated to have been bestowed on the Cathedral of St Donass, together with jewellery and other gifts by the Princess Gunhild, a sister of King Harold of England, who took refuge in Flanders after the defeat and death of her brother in 1066, and who died there in 1087. Princess Gunhild's exile and death in Flanders, are historical facts, but so far as the Mantle of St Brigid is concerned this part of the story appears to rest only on tradition. It gains some support, however, from the fact that Gundild's family had had somewhat intimate connections with Ireland; because when in 1051 her father, Earl Godwine, having quarreled with his son in law, King Edward the Confessor, was exiled from England and took refuge in Flanders, his sons, Harold and Leofwine, Gundild's brothers, went to Ireland, where they stayed with Dermot, King of Leinster. The two sons busied themselves in Ireland in collecting ships and men to assist their father in gaining his restoration, which was amicably accomplished in 1052. It is certain that the sons would have visited the shrine of St Brigid and returned with relics in memory of their pilgrimage. The first documentary mention of the relic was in 1347 as part of the property belonging to the Cathedral of St

Donass. It was kept at the Cathedral till towards the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century and was annually exposed for veneration on the 1<sup>st</sup> February, St Brigid's Day. St Donass' Cathedral was destroyed at the French Revolution but the relic was taken away for safe keeping. It was subsequently presented to the Church of St Sauveur or St Salvator which was adopted as the Cathedral of Bruges and where it remains to this day.

On a day trip to Bruges I did manage to visit the Cathedral and see the Mantle for myself.

*Larry Breen*

### ***Them were the Days***

*The following excerpt is from an article by Liam Burke in "Clane the village we knew", which is a wonderful evocation of life in the village in the 1940s, '50s and '60s.*

We spent many sporting hours in Manzor's field, where, apart from football, Bryan (Sammon) organised athletics and he himself excelled in high jump and running. We would run a mile-race, which was four laps of the field and with over fifteen of us participating, Bryan would pull away from us with a half lap to go and win by over thirty yards. We also had a paper chase on various occasions, where two lads, who were called the hares, got a five minute start on the rest of us. They would head off with two bags of newspaper, which were cut into small pieces, and as they went from field to field, would drop a few pieces of paper .....

We also played football in the terrace and many balls had to be retrieved from the front gardens..... In winter when the weather was below freezing point, we would pour a few buckets of water on the road to make slides. One such slide was between our house and Mahony's and it was about 30 feet long – we had endless fun for days, but Mrs. Jo Mahony put a stop to it with a packet of salt and told us to "hook it". One winter's day after a heavy night's snow, Jim Mahony, Paddy Behan and Pat Burke were coming home from the village when, on the approach to Phil McCormack's house, just before the entrance to the terrace, Phil Snr threw a big snowball at

them. Jim and Paddy responded by hitting Phil, and after a few more snowball exchanges, with some snow going in through the front door, Phil warned them, but his words landed on deaf ears. Jim threw another hitting Phil on the head, and that was that: Phil was not in the best of moods and jumped over the timber fence, taking after them.....

***Brendan Cullen***

***Castle Rag, Naas.***

*The extract below is from “Nas na Ri, Reflections and Recollections” by Larry Breen.*

Castle Rag was what was known as a small “Tower House” and typical of fortified houses was built to guard the margins of the Pale. Naas was on the periphery of these fortifications set up by the English occupiers to defend themselves from the native so-called “wild” Irish who frequently raided the settlements for livestock. There were many of these houses all along the line of the Pale and remains of similar castles are still to be found in other parts of Kildare like Rathcoffey and Clongowes Wood. The Pale was a boundary consisting essentially of a fortified ditch and rampart built around parts of medieval Meath, Dublin, Louth and Kildare to encompass the lands controlled by the English settlers. There is still to be found one of the few remaining portions of the Pale at Clongowes Wood College in Clane. The origin of the phrase ‘beyond the Pale’ nowadays means unacceptable or outside agreed standards. This type of fortified house was a popular form of residence among wealthy merchant classes in medieval Ireland. They would also sometimes serve a dual purpose of a business and residential nature with the business being conducted on the ground floor and the living quarters on the upper floors. Castle Rag affords us the chance to reflect back to when these structures were an integral part of everyday life in medieval Kildare. Castle Rag predates its larger neighbour Jigginstown Castle by over 200 years, being built around 1400.

***Brendan Cullen***