



Cumann Oidhreachtá Eanách Dhúin Annaghdown Heritage Society

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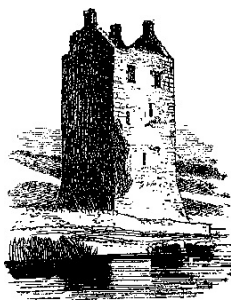
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Samhradh 2023

FÁILTE

The theme of his summer's newsletter is very much in keeping with the rural and agricultural nature of the Corrandulla Show. There are articles on ploughing, a wool merchant and a report on local and national census data. Please do consider putting pen to paper and writing a piece for a future edition. Local oral history, reminiscences and gossip are especially welcome and in need of preservation. If you have something to say but don't have the time to put it down, please do contact us. We would be glad to assist. We wish all an enjoyable day at the Show and a nostalgic trip down memory lane in the Heritage Room.



Membership of the Society is open to all and costs €10 per annum, which can be paid via PayPal using the 'Join Us' button on our website, or at any of our events. You can follow our activities on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube, and by visiting our website.

PLOUGHING IN CORRANDULLA

Claire Burke

In the 1950s, there were three men ploughing with horses and competing in local parish matches. Jimmy Lawless, Paddy Lawless and Pat Fahy were our local representatives. They had meetings in Kelly's pub, now Peggy's. They would collect half a crown from local farmers or businesses in the area. Some farmers and businesses continue this tradition, although the currency has changed since then.

For ploughing matches outside the county, Mattie Dugan's truck would transport the plough to the train station in Tuam. Competitors would get a team of horses at the ploughing matches and it was the 'luck of the draw' what team of horses you would get. At the time, there was a prize for the first person finished. This was a time when there were no sticks used to get to the headland. Matches were often held during the week and the youth would 'mitch' school and go to the ploughing matches instead.

It was roughly the early 50s, when Pdraig and Joe Fahy remember attending their first ploughing match. They cycled over to Charlie Coen's field and met up with the other

local lads. The horses had a nose bag, which is how they would be fed. All the competitors brought their own lunch, a bottle of tea and home made brown bread.

Paddy Lawless had the first tractor in the parish. He competed in Dunmore ploughing match in the single furrow cub class. On the same day, we had teams of horses from Glenrevagh, Cluide, Slievefin and Kilcahill. The horses and tractors paraded from the town of Dunmore to the ploughing field.

From then on, tractors competed in the ploughing matches. Pdraig Fahy remembers Jimmy Burke and John Joe Cunningham competing with the tractor. Jimmy went on to win a number of senior titles. There was a county ploughing match held in Claregalway and no tractors were allowed to compete! John Curry of Glenrevagh was in charge of collecting the finances, which consisted of half a crown or the equivalent of 30 pence.

Pat Fahy, Peter Fox, Charlie Coen and Paddy Lawless competed in the All Ireland senior ploughing class held in Athenry Agricultural College in 1963. Jimmy Burke ploughed in the 2 furrow tractor class. On the same day Joe Fahy ploughed in the minor horse ploughing competition.

In the 70s, Charlie Coen made the change from horse ploughing to tractor ploughing. In the 80s Tommy Burke, Sean Wynne, Martin Hession and Martin Lynch competed locally and represented Galway in the national ploughing championships. Tommy won the county under 28 tractor class in 1982, 1985 and 1987 and went on to represent Galway in the All Ireland competition. Brothers Joe and Pdraig Fahy competed with the horses in the 80s also.

The late Cathal Coen took over from his father Charlie in the 90s. In 1995, Martin Hession won the county in the two furrow tractor class and went on to represent Galway in the All Ireland Championships held in Ballacolla, Co. Laois. Des Murphy was runner up in this competition in the mid 90s also. Patrick Murphy, a nephew of Des competed at under 28 and represented Galway at national level also.

Tommy Burke competed in the under 40 horse ploughing competition in 1993 in Co. Tipperary and with the help of Fahy brothers, Tommy went on to win the All Ireland title. Joe Fahy himself competed in the senior horse class and he also won the All Ireland that same year. Their team of Irish Draught horses won 'The Best Team of Horses', eight years in a row.

Tommy's wife Phil Burke, competed in the Farmerette competition and won five county titles in a row. She went on to represent Galway at the All Ireland from 1993 to 1998. Her daughter Claire took over from her mother in 1999 and

competed at both county and national level also. Christy Burke, Tommy's brother competed at county level and represented Galway at national level also.

Corrandulla organised a Novice competition and this gave a chance to the youth of the parish to take part. Competitors such as Alana Murphy, John Burke, Hugh Burke, Declan Hanley took part and enjoyed learning the new skill. In 2003, there were four members of the one family competing at the All Ireland ploughing competition, in Ballinabracken, Co. Meath. Tommy and his son Thomas competed in the horse class, Eamonn competed in the under 28 two furrow tractor competition and Claire competed in the Farmerette competition.

More competitors may have competed, but to our recollection, the above competitors all competed either with the horses or tractor plough. It was a tradition in the past that the horses in the hunt would ride across the field where the competition was taking place, to signal the finish time for the competitors.

Joe Fahy has won 3 All Ireland titles, Tommy Burke has 1 All Ireland title and now Eamonn Burke has won the All Ireland after 25 years competing. This is a great achievement and all at Corrandulla Ploughing are very proud of his great achievement.

CENSUS DATA IN IRELAND

Gerry Morgan

“Now at this time Caesar Augustus issued a decree for a census of the whole world to be taken.” (Mt 2:1). The collection of census data is a key step for any government that plans to shape its country's future. Little did Augustus realize the impact that his decree would have on the future of humanity. Matthew's account of the birth of Christ was my first encounter with census activity and I have in recent years become immersed in old census records in my efforts to enrich family trees. The Central Statistics Office (CSO) in Ireland has recently released its first set of preliminary data from the 2022 census returns. So, it is perhaps fitting to review some current and past census findings.

Ireland has maintained the British tradition of holding a national census on the first year of each new decade and in recent years has held further enumerations at the intervening five-year mark. The first “careful” census was held in 1821 (earlier attempts were flawed). Much of the early detailed census data were either deliberately destroyed or subsequently lost in the Public Records Office fire of 1922. Only summary aggregated information remains. Our first extant census is from 1901. This and the 1911 data are freely available online. Some older fragments remain, particularly from 1851 in the form of official lookup requests. This was prompted by the introduction of a pension scheme for the very poor in 1908. The easiest way for people to prove their age was to show they were alive and on the census in 1851! There have been some gaps in the cyclical collection of census information over the years. There was no census enumeration in 1921 due to the “unstable” environment in Ireland. The Free State collected its first census data in 1926. Further enumerations were held in 1936 and 1946,

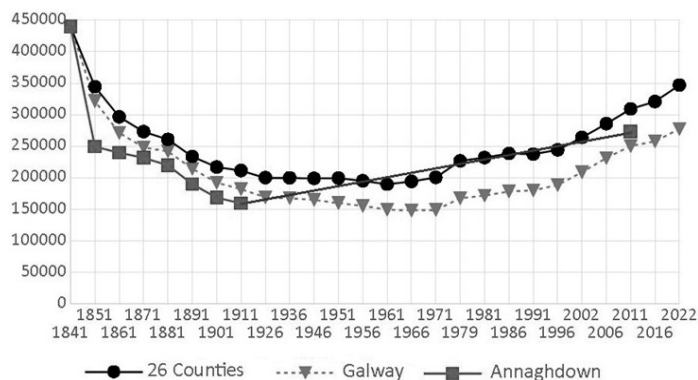


Figure 1. Population in County Galway and Comparison with Annaghdown & 26 Counties.

and then every five years thereafter. The 2021 campaign was postponed to 2022 due to the Covid pandemic.

For those interested in family history, census returns are an invaluable source of information. The Government of Ireland has made census data that are at least 100 years old freely available to the public online. As mentioned above, the 1901 and 1911 information are particularly rich sources. The 1926 data will soon become available. Of course, some of the information included in these census returns has to be interpreted appropriately. Some peoples' expected ages would seem to vary from one enumeration to the next. While many appeared to underestimate their ages in 1901, they opted to be much older in 1911 than the intervening 10 year period, perhaps due to the possibility of getting a pension from the 1908 Act! Other people could be rather imaginative in their responses. A relative, in their 1900 US Federal census return in Wisconsin, wrote “Capitalist” in the space for Occupation. More recently, others in Ireland recorded their religion as “Jedi Knight”. However, the numbers in this sect have decreased from 2050 in 2006 to 1800 in 2022. It is beyond the scope of this article to delve into all the available information in census data. What is easiest and perhaps most interesting to consider is the gross population statistics that can be followed for almost the last 200 years.

The decline in Ireland's population due to famine and economic circumstances has cast a long shadow over the country's fortunes. Annaghdown Heritage Society's Townland Project (available online) has detailed the changes in population in each townland in the Parish from 1841. The CSO has recently released population data from the 2022 census. It is interesting to use this in conjunction with data from previous enumerations to follow trends in our population at a national, county and parish level. It should be noted that since 1922, census data is only available for the Republic of Ireland, so in our comparisons we will use old data only from the “26 Counties”.

Figure 1 shows population data for the “26 Counties” (circular data points), Co. Galway (Triangular data points) and Annaghdown Parish (square data points) from 1841 to 2022. The “26 County” and Annaghdown data have been ‘normalized’ to the Galway data for 1841 in order to facilitate a comparison in trends for all three data sets.

The population in Galway in 1841 was 440,198, while for the “26 Counties” it was 6,528,799 and for Annaghdown it was 7,096. In 2011 it was 250,653 for Galway, 4,588,252 for

the 26 Counties and approximately 4,402 for Annaghdown. In 2022, the population of Galway was 277,737 while it was 5,149,139 for the 26 Counties. The Annaghdown data was taken from our Townland Project which only reported data for 2011 after 1911.

It can be seen from the graph that the population of Galway fell from almost 450,000 to 320,00 in the 10-year period around the Great Famine. This population decline continued until 1971 when a small increase from approximately 150,000 to 170,000 occurred in 1981. Thereafter, the population continued to grow to its current value of 277,737. The trend in the 26 County population shows that Galway fared worse than the State as a whole in the 1841-1851 famine decade. Thereafter, the decline more or less mirrored that of the rest of the country. The Parish of Annaghdown fared much worse than the county in the famine decade, with the population almost halving from 7096 to 4023. The following years showed a rate of decrease like that of the county and state. While recent Parish data is scarce, the recovery by 2011 seems to be ahead of the pack.

It would be interesting to look at trends in other parishes in Co. Galway in more detail to see if the extent of the Annaghdown famine decline was typical for Galway. One might argue that there was a flight of people from rural to urban areas such as Galway City that maintained the county population while depleting the countryside. However, opportunities for survival must have been limited in the City. The 'economic' emigrations in the early part of the 20th century appear to be somewhat more severe in Galway than in the state as a whole. The apparent better recovery in Annaghdown compared to the county and state (as indicated by the single data point for 2011) may be due to the trend for some people to live in rural rather than urban settings.

This is just a small taster of what can be gleaned from Irish census data. While we must always remember the old adage that there are "lies, dammed lies and statistics", the information that will be revealed from the 2022 census in the next few months should prove most interesting.

BRENDAN GILLIGAN, WOOL MERCHANT, AND HIS CONNECTIONS WITH THE ANNAGHDOWN AREA

Evelyn Stevens

Brendan Gilligan was born in 1933 in Tagheen between Hollymount and Claremorris. His family had a country shop and post office and did some farming. They traded in most things that farmers produced-including cattle, sheep and lambs. Eggs were bought and graded and exported to England. His father became ill when he was in his early teens and he stayed at home from school to help with the work.

Brendan met his wife Margaret, a midwife, in the 1950s. He bought a pub (Gilligan's in High St.) in Tuam in 1959 – mainly because it had a yard which he needed to begin his own wool business. His father had been supplying wool to the Foxford Woollen Mills and also exporting to an agent in Bradford in England. Co. Galway was a big sheep-producing area and two wool merchants were leaving Tuam at that time. Brendan's father had sent him to Bradford to learn about the 70 breeds of sheep in the world and the

types of wool. The type of sheep that suited conditions in the west was the Galway type, their wool was used to make blankets, rugs, curtain material and heavier tweeds for coats, but the finer wool was produced from Australian Merino sheep. Brendan built his first wool store at the back of the pub and subsequently bought Egan's Bottling plant in Barrack St. from where he ran his wool business from 1959 until recent years. He exported to wool merchants in Bradford, and sold to Foxford Woollen Mills and to some other businesses in Ireland.

This is an excerpt, dealing with the Annaghdown area, from a longer interview about the wool trade in general. The recording has been sent to the National Folklore Collection in UCD.

E: The last time we spoke you told me about Mr Corbett from Headford – Todd. Would you elaborate on that for me? You said he came from Shrule, gave his farm to his son and he moved in to Headford. What kind of business did he have?

B: One son had a pub on the Curragh Line, in Cloonboo, he was called Cecil. The father lived in Headford in my time, I had a store rented from him in Headford. There was another Todd Corbett in Headford, a nephew of his, he had a pub, they used to buy pigs.

E: In Headford?

B: Yes, there was a pig scale in every village, when a pig would be ready for sale they'd send for Corbett and the lorry would come and they'd weigh your pig for you and pay you for him.

E: I see. I'd heard in the Annaghdown area that people used to bring pigs to Corbett's on the Curragh Line?

B: That's right, Cecil Corbett who ran the pub on the Curragh Line was a son of Todd Corbett, the man I rented the store from in Headford. Todd was married to a Greaney from Cahermorris, there was three or four brothers in that family as well, they were gas men. They had a car, if they had a drink one of them was the chauffeur (laughs) they'd say, 'no more of that for you now'. There were two Todds, Todd the nephew had a pub in Headford, he was the pig buyer.

E: The man that you rented the store from in Headford, what was his business?

B: The man that came from Shrule - that's not quite right, he came from a small village about half a mile from Shrule on the Galway side of the river, I just can't think of the name of the river, it was the dividing line there, if Galway were playing Mayo they'd march on both sides of the river, sods of turf lighting on top of hayforks... whichever side would win there'd be a big parade that night.

E: He had a wool store in Headford that he rented to you?

B: It wasn't a wool store, it was a store, it was in what was called the farmyard, it was an old slated building and I rented it from him and when I attended the markets there I'd store the wool there until it was time to take it out of there again.

E: Tell me then about the markets, where was the market?

B: The market was in the Square, do you know where The Angler's Rest Hotel is? Well there was a big crane there and there was a man there called Dick Geraghty, he was a postman as well, he used to buy the Tolls from the Galway

County Council, so he'd collect at every fair, he'd have a man at each road coming in to Headford – if you had a cow it would cost you a shilling maybe, to weigh a bag of wool would cost you another shilling you know, but he done the weighing and he done the collecting of the Tolls and Customs that people paid when they came to market. It was a big crane, there was a lot of work involved, you'd put the weights on one side and the bag of wool on the other, the weighing alone was slavery, the hay was put up on the lorry with hayforks.

E: And was that money then going to the Government?

B: Yes, he'd rent it for the year from Galway County Council. The same thing was happening in Tuam when I came to Tuam first, there was a scale up there in the Square and there was a guy back the road there who had the key of it, if you wanted to weigh anything he'd weigh it for you, whatever the farmers wanted to weigh, but that all went as time went by because if you were exporting you had to have your own scale and your own store to weigh it out and consequently then you weighed it in.

E: The market that you used to go to in Headford, was there all kinds of things on sale?

B: Tuesday was the market evening in it, they'd have potatoes, they'd have carts of turf, there'd be a long line of pony and carts and then tractors started to get more plentiful, there'd be fellows with bags of wool on top of cars.

E: You'd be there for the wool.

B: I'd be there for the wool.

E: And when you bought that wool you'd bring it to the wool store in Headford.

B: When I'd have enough in the store to make a couple of lorry loads out of it, I'd spend a couple of days out there packing it.

E: Did Corbett have any other business in Headford other than renting out that store to you?

B: He had a bit of land there near Headford all the time, he had another son Peter - he died there - his wife only died last year.

E: What exactly was the business that Cecil was doing with the pigs, what was he doing in Cloonboo?

B: He was only having a market there once a month or once a week, a pig market. He had a pig scale as well in Cluide, at Farrell's house, you had to have a special box around the scale because you had to walk the pig into it if you were selling by weight. They were into the pigs, very big - the Corbetts were.

E: And why Cluide?

B: It was a farming centre, a farmhouse, a thatched cottage just at the turn in the road, you don't go home that way do you?

E: I do.

B: Farrell's of Cluide.

E: Where is it in relation to Castlehackett school do you know?

B: You go straight on towards Cahermorris and you come to a fork in the road going left and right, there's a thatched house, that's Farrell's, Corbett had the pig scale at Farrell's house - which sometimes we did use for buying wool as well, but people would find it hard to read it maybe, it was different with the pig because pigs only came to one weight or

near one weight you know.

E: And did you say it was a farm market in general?

B: No, it wasn't a farm market, it was just an ordinary country house but they used to have the market there for pigs because it was central.

E: That's wonderful, you wouldn't know now to look at that house that it was a hive of activity.

B: You wouldn't, I must have a look at it again myself soon, it was certainly a great sheep area around there Cahermorris and Corrandulla and Cluide, all them areas there they were big sheep producers.

E: Where was that wool gathered for you to buy?

B: Well, I often had markets at Farrell's as well.

E: I see.

B: If we weren't having a market we'd bring it in to Tuam for them you know.

E: So you'd advertise that you were going to have a wool market at Cluide on a certain day and people would bring their wool to you?

B: That's right and that happened. They mightn't come on the day and you might have to go out to them sometimes, sometimes the wool was loose and you could pack it and see what it was like out in their yard and if there was any bargaining to be done, if there was anything wrong with it, a few fleeces, it would be done there, and they'd be happy with that, they'd know exactly where they stood.

E: So you'd go around to the different farmers in the area - would you have a big lorry with you that day?

B: I'd just have a truck that would take a few bags of wool, maybe a tonne or two would be the most on the day - it would depend on where you'd be going, you'd know the amount of wool that would be there, you'd know whether you needed help or not, but it was a big wool growing area, sheep were plentiful in that area and still are.

E: Where would that wool be going now?

B: It's being exported I'd say, it comes in here to the fellow from Wicklow called Vincent Pierce, he bought the place over down here, he's exporting wool all the time.

E: Is it still being exported to England?

B: Yes, to the Bradford area, it's not nearly... I believe they have a couple of hundred tonne down there at the moment unsold.

E: They can't sell it? B: It's not easy, the money is very small, you're talking about pence per pound, it's crazy.

E: It must be very hard for the sheep farmers.

B: It is, they're getting nothing for the wool, one time they got a nice pull out of it, it would pay - if they had land rented it would pay the rent for them, it would pay the rates and all that kind of thing.

E: Are they getting better money for the meat?

B: They're getting good money for the meat, a ewe now would be equivalent to a tenner in my time, it's now worth a hundred, the value of the sheep has increased considerably and they're getting grants as well. I cannot tell you what grants they're getting now, they get a grant for every ewe that has a lamb, there's grants for dipping tubs, I see all kinds of advertisements in the Farmer's Journal, there isn't a thing going now that a farmer won't get a grant for! That's what's keeping them going.