



Cumann Oidhreachta Eanách Dhúin

Annaghdown Heritage Society

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Nuachtlitir Uimh. 13

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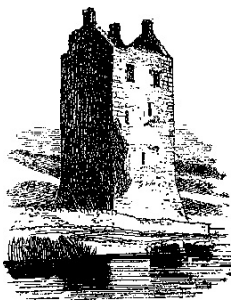
Geimhreadh 2023

FÁILTE

Welcome to our Winter 2023 newsletter. The Society has had a busy and productive year, with excellent lectures from Lillis Ó Laoire and Pdraig Ó Héalaí, and an entertaining book launch with Seán Ó Gráinne, who recently published *Ó Bhun a' Tobair (From the Bottom of the Well)*, based on the recollections of his father, Paddy Greaney from Bunatober.

We also held our usual open day for the Corrandulla Show, and our AGM. Our new chairperson is Irene McGoldrick, with Gerry Morgan taking on the role of PRO. Evelyn Stevens continues as Treasurer and Paul Greaney as website manager. We extend our thanks to Pat Morgan who served as PRO for the past year. We have continued to add information to our website - a major recent addition is the register of deaths for townlands in Turloughmore and Headford registration districts. These records are also now listed on the relevant townland pages at annaghdown-heritage.ie/townlands. Several of our recent events and activities have focussed on folklore, and this edition continues on this theme, with reminiscences from Kathleen O'Shea, in conversation with Evelyn Stevens, and Michael Stewart.

We note with regret the passing this year of two dedicated members of the Society, Rev. Michael Canon Goaley and Michael Hennelly. Fr Goaley was a regular attendee at our events over many years, and a great source of encouragement in recent times. We remember with gratitude his contributions to local heritage, in particular his research and publications on the monastic ruins at Annaghdown. In the mid 1990s, Michael Hennelly was one of three people who held an initial meeting with a view to founding the Society, the others being Br. Conal Thomas and the late Sergeant Smith. Michael was a loyal member and regular attendee at our events through the years. We offer our sympathies to their families. May they rest in peace.



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.

INTERVIEW WITH KATHLEEN O'SHEA (NÉE O'NEILL), MULLAGHADRUM

Evelyn Stevens

Introduction and Family Background

I was born in the Central Hospital in Galway. I had a great memory, my mother used to say 'you used to tell me things from when you were two years of age.' This sounds awful boastful. I remember things from two years of age, I can't remember anything from yesterday, that's the terrible thing about it, but I remember my mother had an uncle, he lived up the Drumgriffin boreen, one time he had a small shop. He had gone to Blaydon-on-Tyne, an awful lot of people from around here went there. It's in the north east of England, not that far from Newcastle-on-Tyne. There were coal mines and chemicals and various things. He met this lady there from Newry, Co. Down, she was an Annie McGuinness and then they went to Philadelphia. I don't know how long they were there but they came back. My mother's uncle was William Rabbitt and he came back anyway in 1907 and they set up a small little shop up the Drumgriffin boreen. I remember one day, my mother thought I was two years of age, I remember going in to that house, the little shop, there was a man sitting. I was always interested in names - family names and place names - which I still continue to do all the time - you can kind of analyse them particularly if there's an Irish tone to them. I said to my mother 'who is that man?'. He was a very stout man, he was kind of hanging over the chair, he had a grey coat or jacket. She said that's Mike Glynn and I thought that was the fanciest name ever with the 'n's I suppose. And I ran around the kitchen, as a child would do, saying 'Mike Glynn, Mike Glynn', I don't know how many times I said it, and then I got tired and ran back in to the shop, and there was a paraffin oil barrel inside the door and I turned on the tap (laughs) I can still see the paraffin oil, it was spread around the floor.

My mother came up in 1923 from Annagh East, she was Julia Lally and she came up to take care of her uncles, unfortunately they had been broken into the night before. She came up across the fields, a shortcut, they were Rabbitts and they originally came from Lackagh, my great grandfather came from Lackagh in Turloughmore and I'm told that he and his brother would walk down in the morning, every morning for the building of Corrandulla Church, and they'd walk back again in the evening, that was their Unislim! That's where he met his future wife, she was a Bridget Greally from Mattie Wynne's house. They got the house across the road from here. Their first son John was born in 1850 and he was a herd in Butler's back the road in Win-

terfield House in Tonagurraun, and he was there, he became the caretaker there in the end. Of course everything around here belonged to Butlers, in Drumgriffin anyway.

On the night of the break in at Rabbitts house in Drumgriffin (Sat. 28th/Sun. 29th July 1923), my mother's brother Michael Lally was 15 miles away in Curraghmore, Claran doing some window repair work for his cousins, the Fahys. He had completed half the work that Saturday evening and gone to bed and had a terrible dream in which his uncles had a break in, and were both murdered. He rose early Sunday morning and told his cousins he had to go home because of the terrible dream he had, telling them he would complete the work at a later date. He came to Drumgriffin to find that the neighbours were there supporting his uncles, John (71) and James (65/66). Paddy Sheáin Qualter from Tona-garraun was first to arrive. The doctor said that James's heart had moved with the shock and he died in the middle of October. Their other brother William who had the small shop in Drumgriffin had also experienced a break in three years earlier when shots were fired over his head.

My mother remembers coming up, it was Wade's land then, Wade's of the mill. She looked up and she remembered the three windows were broken in the front of the house, burglars came and tried to break in. Anyway my granduncle John Rabbitt would always keep the four-pronged fork in the house and he was stabbing them through the broken windows, they didn't get in, it was very well known who they were. She came to take care of them, she was very loyal to them, maybe too loyal in a way, because she met the parish priest who was a Fr Michael Hannon one day and he said to her 'are you going to spend the rest of your days looking after old lads?'. She thought that was a very funny remark from a priest (laughs) but he had a point.

My father actually was born in Corofin, his father James was known as Healy, his mother, my great-grandmother, died in Black '47, she was Catherine Healy, and he and his brother Michael went back to Shankill to the Healys, to his grandparents and his uncles and aunts, I don't know who was there, and that's where my grandfather and his brother grew up, and that's why they were called Healy, they were really O'Neills.

E: And where did she [Catherine Healy] live?

K: Well I think she might have lived somewhere over here, before you come to that house, at one stage, but then Brian O'Neill had lived also over in Gortroe, and there's a garden over there called O'Neill's garden.

My grandfather and his brother did actually work in Cregg as children, when other children were running around without shoes they had boots because they would have to be going out with Errol Ignatius Blake, the son of the place, and his brother Arthur shushing out the birds for the shooting. They weren't very nice from what I heard. My grandfather eventually in later years was the driver of the carriage for the Blakes. Arthur who was kicked out by his mother from Cregg Castle, he went to Corofin, they had plenty of land there, and they had servants' quarters there. The tenants evicted the Blakes in the late 1890s, '98 or '99. Possibly with forks and slashhooks, I don't know. The servants had to go as well, they had nowhere to go. They had a bit of land over there as well. Then my grandfather tried to build

a house across from William Glynn's on the Galway-Tuam road, I think he was a relation too, married to an O'Neill. The former tenants didn't want it, they'd let the building go up so far and then they'd knock it, that happened three times. They wanted the land, a nice bit of land over there. It was Blake's land but they let it, that's how they lived. My grandfather was sinking pumps, he wasn't too long at it when he was caught in the gelignite and blown into the air. My father remembers when he was three years of age, his father coming home in a common cart, and there was more blood in the cart than in himself, that was awful wasn't it. And he remembers Mary O'Brien who had a shop over here, right across the wall there, she took him up in her arms and he was roaring crying and brought him into the house. It was attached to the house they had, all they needed was a roof over their head. They didn't need a lot of space. He wouldn't be able to face things after that, you know anything up to the age of five, it has a lasting effect. You never forget. When they were dividing Blake's land my grandmother sold the land in Corofin to buy the Blake land here, so that's how she managed. But they had to go to America, my father had three sisters and two brothers and they all went to America including my father. My father went at a very bad time in '26 and his brother got sick the following year and he died in '28 - my uncle John O'Neill died on the 12th of July 1928. He's buried in New York in St John's Cemetery, his brother had already died at home but in those days it took a long time for the news to get to America. He died on the first of July, he got diabetes and there was no medication so my father's two brothers one died July 1st '28 and John died on the 12th of July, 11 days between the two of them. My father always said he went to pay the undertaker with whatever money he had saved, and it cost 600 dollars, and when he came back there was a letter for him telling him that his other brother had died at home. He got into an awful state and they had to get the landlady's son who was a doctor - he said he had a rush of blood to the brain, which did affect him in later life, the fright he got. It was bad enough burying one brother but then the other one too, and then when he was three years of age what happened his father, he was blown in the gelignite. He wasn't able to work after that. And his wife would have to go over to Corofin for a head of cabbage. She had vegetables sown over there, over near William Glynn's. Tough times.

Stories

E: How do you know all the stories? You have a lot of stories about landlords.

K: By listening to stories. There was a Tommy Forde in Corrandulla, he lived in that house, I believe it was an RIC station before. It belonged to the Morrises. Delia Morris married TA Lynch, this house belonged to Johnny Morris, he was in England, his wife was... I think she was Annie Walker, and she became a convert, and you know yourself, converts become the best Catholics, they chose to be Catholics, he was too, and my mother used to say we didn't know who the priest was - Johnny Morris was always dressed in black, was it Johnny Morris or was it Fr Hosty. Fr Hosty came back as parish priest in 1910 and he died in 1920. He was here as curate from 1875 to '77. But towards the end, in his last few years here, he got Alzheimer's, up on the altar

he'd be reading the same page all the time - his back to the people, and Johnny Morris would be there to turn the pages for him - my mother used to say we didn't know who was the parish priest!

They had the Dispensary then too, Johnny Morris had a daughter Delia and she went to England and she met TA Lynch, he was from Ballina and when her child came, they came home and she rented the room in the house for the doctor for the Turloughmore area, it was there until 1974. I think Dr Joyce came in 1929 and he used to come to the dispensary day every Friday in Corrandulla, and of course they had to use her kitchen, they had chairs around for people, it was a waiting room as well, I suppose she was getting money for that, why shouldn't she, and she had the room for the dispensary let to him as well. The house is not there now, it was a two-storey one as well with steps going down to it, they knocked that, I think it's Tom Lynch that's there now, he built the house at the back and then he knocked the old house/dispensary. Tommy Forde used to come to us, his grandfather bought the other house, the RIC were stationed there, he was getting 14 pounds a year for rent for that which was a lot of money in those days, there were four windows in it and three chimneys as well. And that was the old RIC station, it's a long single story house, I suppose you'd call it a tenant farmer's house. It's slated, around the corner, the lane beside the post office, so that was the RIC station until the 1870s when they moved to Cloonboo. It was a new building in Cloonboo, out very close to the Headford road.

To be continued in our next edition.

THAT OTHER WORLD

Michael Stewart

The opening of the new pastoral centre in Corrandulla has brought back poignant memories; it was built on the site of the Old Boys' School, and I was present at the opening of that institution many years ago. Not only that, it was also my first day of school.

Schools were cold and uninviting places then, literally very cold in winter. Sometimes we would take sods of turf to help provide a fire, and I can recall a farmer from Cregduff, whose sons were attending the school, bringing his donkey with a full cartload of turf, which we helped pile in the shed outside.

My mother had a very fixed view of school and education in general. She would often quote a respected schoolmaster in Bawnmore, who was said to have proclaimed that 'a day missed at school would come against one forever'. I had mixed feelings about this pronouncement, which I had considered to be a great exaggeration, but then again sometimes I'm not so sure.

Travelling to school back then meant a lot of walking, often through the fields, to take a short cut, or perhaps the boreen leading to our house was flooded. In summer we might go barefoot, even though the roads were mostly rough and stony. It would often be late when we arrived home in the evening, as we were tired and had to rest along the way, or might spend time looking in at the forge, where the blacksmith was at work.

I didn't particularly like going to school, but then that wouldn't be very unusual at the time; indeed some sixth class pupils disliked school so much that they spent several days loitering in the hazel wood close by before their absence was noticed. It was, after all, the age of corporal punishment and stern discipline, and while most teachers were not overly harsh, and the blackboard was a focal point, along with the chalk and the duster, most classrooms displayed a shiny cane in a prominent position, which tended to focus the minds of even the most unruly students. Needless to say, it was not solely used to point out figures on the blackboard.

In a way, I felt that I was rather lucky as I had many breaks from the classroom over my time there. Often I would be tasked with going out to the Church nearby at 12 o'clock and ringing the Angelus bell. It could be an arm-wrenching effort at times, especially if one didn't get the timing right. But then it was a large, heavy bell, and on a calm clear day it could be heard throughout the length and breadth of the parish, and resonate with the workers in the fields who would pause to reflect or pray. In harmony with the chime of the Franciscan Monastery bell nearby, they would provide a welcome interlude to the rhythm of the day.

Sometimes when we were at play, one of us pupils would be hailed by a man who lived across the road and asked to fetch a naggin of 'black and white' from a pub in the village. We all rushed to oblige for he was a generous man and would likely insist that we keep any change.

Bertie lived with his brother Michaelo beside the school. They would have been familiar to the altar servers at the time who would often have to rush from the sacristy, across the road, into their kitchen, to have a lighted coal placed in the church thurible, so as to burn the incense for benediction. They were both hard-working, helpful and well-respected. However, that was as far as the similarities went, for while Bertie was outgoing and fond of a drink, Michaelo was strictly teetotal and even disapproved of having any alcohol in the house, where he ran a small shop. It was ideally situated between the boys' and girls' schools, and he would keep us supplied with copybooks and pencils and a wide variety of sweets and chocolate. He would insert his hand into a large glass container on the counter and take out fistfuls of potters or liquorice assortments, which he would then place into small packets made of old newspapers, for which we would hand over a few pence. He also stocked tobacco, cigarettes and most household staples and would proclaim at night to the neighbours who came to play cards that, 'a yard of counter was more profitable than a farm of land'.

Meanwhile Bertie would provide a valuable service to the households in the neighbourhood as he was an expert at processing pig meat and salting and curing the bacon, which he would then store in wooden barrels or crates. He would continue, however, to indulge his appetite for the drink. There was great consternation one afternoon when he arrived home to find that a cask of 'spirits', which he had left to mature in the shelter of the potato field was accidentally destroyed by a neighbouring farmer, who had earlier taken his horse and plough in to dig the potatoes.

Then there was the stations. On two months of each year, March and October, the stations would be held in every townland throughout the parish, where each house-

hold would take their turn in having Mass said and confession heard in their house. As one of the altar servers then, I would travel with the parish priest (P.P.) on most days around the parish. As well as serving mass, we would help in having the vestments laid out and also with collecting the station money. Sometimes we would be reprimanded if the vestments weren't laid out in their correct order, or if the money wasn't counted correctly. But then we tended to ignore any of his harsh words, as we knew him to be a very kind man. If the station was very large, the curate would also be present to assist with hearing confessions. When mass was over, everyone was served tea and refreshments - some of the men drank whiskey - and the priest would normally dine with the householders, and we, the servers, would be seated at a special table where we could gorge ourselves with cakes and sweets. We would always be given a few shillings, even half a crown, so we would look forward with great anticipation to the stations, which for me was one of the highlights of the school year.

As we drove slowly back to his house, the P.P. would take notes of the houses and farms along the way, especially the haggarts, with their stacks and stands of corn, and the ricks and cocks of hay. He might comment or grumble at the meagre amounts some of the more substantial farmers would contribute towards the collections at Easter and Christmas. 'Look at that now', he would exclaim after observing a prosperous-looking homestead, 'with his 12 or 15 shillings'. Money was scarce then and valuable. There were 20 shillings in a pound and 240 pence. Indeed, a shilling and a few pence would purchase a half-quarter of tobacco or a packet of Woodbines.

On turning into the driveway, he would normally park the car and look down at the hall. It was the new Parish hall, and it had been his inception. Its construction, which was then at an early stage, depended to a degree on a lot of voluntary work and contributions and some farmers came with cartloads of sand and other materials, and others gave of their time. He would be disappointed with its progress, and would despair of having any section of it completed by the 29th of June the following year. That was the date - it was a church holiday at the time - set aside for the parish show and gymkhana, and he felt that it would be ideal to have a show dance and a facility where exhibitors could lay out their crafts and entries. But then building was slow and laborious at the time. There were only two or three men working there and one of them would have to take a donkey and slide each day, and fetch a barrel of water from a well in the monks' yard in order to moisten the concrete. It would then have to be shovelled into buckets, hoisted onto a platform and poured into the shuttering.

He would then turn to me and caution, 'you keep all that under your hat', and I would then head back to school. The hall was to be known as the parochial hall, not a dance hall, he would insist later on. He would continue to take an active interest in its development, appoint the hall committees and replacing them quite often as well.

I was present in the room, where he was laid out the night of his wake, along with his neighbour Johnny Mike from up the village. We talked of his life achievements, and he would relate a little known account of an instance of his

quick thinking and ingenuity, when, as a curate in another parish, he saved the life of a volunteer who was on the run from the Black and Tans during the War of Independence. It seems that this man, who was being pursued at the time, ran into the church before mass. The priest instructed one of the women attending mass to lend the man some clothes. He then had him seated in the women's pew, and the Tans failed to recognise him when they arrived. It was the custom at the time for men and women to be segregated in church and be seated on opposite sides. Indeed, it would be a brave person who would break with this convention and venture across to the other side.

Throughout the night, the housekeeper would leave in tea and cakes, spray some aerosol over the room and recite prayers and the rosary. Johnny would pronounce 'he would run the country, let alone a parish' and that 'when he went to Galway he would be heard'. He added 'we'll never see his like again'. Sentiments with which I would wholeheartedly agree and then there would be a long silence. It was rumoured that he even saved a man from going to jail.

Dawn was breaking when we invoked the Lord's mercy for the last time and left the wake room. The crows were stirring in the rookery nearby as we wheeled our bicycles out the driveway. He was fond of the crows and liked the sounds they made. Even though he might sometimes grumble at their noisiness during nesting time, he would speak with delight of an early morning out and about with only the crows for company, except when the postman passed by. 'They won't bother him anymore,' Johnny remarked as we cycled away.

'So ye waked Fr. Pat!' My father was up and about when I arrived home. 'Ah well he's gone to a better place'. I have often thought of that night and of my association with Fr. Pat as one of the altar servers and, later, as a collector and member of the hall committee. Years later, as I read that poem by F.R. Higgins where he imagined being present at the wake of the Irish storyteller Pádraic Ó Conaire, I pondered the last line of that poem and was struck by its resonance: 'and only the young winds cry'.

The bell still tolls in the church steeple, but it's automated now and more subdued. And largely unheard; as the country is no longer mainly rural and agrarian but has become industrialised and urbanised. And the chatter of the fields has been replaced by the drone of high-powered tractors and other agricultural behemoths such as planters and harvesters. And children no longer walk or take shortcuts to school, having now warmly embraced the luxury of a school bus and car instead of exploring a hawthorn bush in order to seek out a bird's nest. They now see the world on their smartphones and laptops.

But the fields have still many images of times and ways long gone. There are many tracks along headlands, which were once used as pathways to church and shops. And there are the stiles, many of which are still visible, that enable the movement from one field to the next. Indeed, there was a time where some farmers were loath to obstruct those pathways in any way, as if they were still traversed by old ghosts and, somehow, led on to the realm of the dead. And so they remain for the most part derelict, a reminder of the way we lived, remnants of a bygone age, of another world.