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FOREWORD

Greetings to all our readers and welcome to the twelfth issue of our parish annual. We extend a special welcome to our emigrants and those living away from the parish.

Again this year we have many articles, pictures, poems and numerous other items that, no doubt, will be of interest to many. Indeed we would claim there is something for everyone. Ted Childs takes us on a boating trip around the lakes above Killaloe in his new boat. Jimmy Ryan writes about the life and times of his uncle, Fr. Denis Ryan.

We hear from Ken Kingston about growing up in the village. The late Tom Begley has left us a fascinating account of his native village Montpelier in past times. Marty O'Brien recalls the deeds of John Enright, Castleconnell's only ever World Champion. This year the village commemorates the centenary of his death. Well-known comedian, Tom O'Donnell writes about Castleconnell, his spiritual home, and Maurice Spillane takes us to Outer Mongolia to tell us about his work with street children there.

These are just a sample of what you will find throughout the following pages of An Caisleán 2008. As always we ask, please send a copy to an emigrant relative or friend.

Thank you for your continued support for the Annual.

"An Caisleán" Editorial Committee:

Joe Carroll, Pat Skehan, Peggy Duffy, Steve Reidy, Mary Dillon.

Pastoral Messages

From Rev. Donal Dwyer C.C., Castleconnell, Ahane, Montpelier and the Rev. Stephen White, Dean of Killaloe and Rector of All Saints Church, Stradbally.



I gladly avail of the invitation of our editor to send greetings and good wishes to all our parishioners. In particular I greet all who are ill, retired or worried about money at the end of the Celtic Tiger. By all accounts the economic forecasts are grim, the papers are full of doom and gloom as every day we read about the worsening economic environment, high oil and food prices, levy rates on homes, interest rate rises making mortgage repayments less affordable, negative equity,

unemployment etc the list of our woes is impressive. Perhaps the following little story will help us get through the economic downturn.

In the autumn when geese head south for the winter they fly along in the "V" formation. Science has discovered why they fly thus. It has been learned that as each bird flaps its wings it creates uplift for the bird immediately following. By flying in a "V" formation the whole flock adds at least 71% greater flying range than if each bird flew on its own.

Whenever a goose falls out of formation, it suddenly feels the drag and resistance of trying to fly alone and quickly gets back into formation to take advantage of the power of the flock. When the lead goose gets tired, he or she rotates back in the wing and another goose takes over. The geese honk from behind to encourage those up front to keep their speed. Finally, when a goose gets sick or wounded by a gunshot and falls out two geese fall out of the formation and follow the injured one down to help and protect him or her. They stay there with their member until he or she is either able to fly or until death comes and then they launch out with another formation to catch up with their group.

If we have a sense of the goose during the economic recession we will stand by each other when things get rough. At the same time it is vital that we do not see money as the biggest thing in life. Religion, love, friendship, health and many other things are more important than being rich.

Finally, I hope you will find some enjoyment from your browsing and reading of this edition of "An Caisleán". May the days ahead bring you fresh hope and may God be with you and your families.

Fr. Donal Dwyer C.C.



As in previous years, it is my pleasure to have been asked to contribute a pastoral article to this annual edition of An Caisleán.

This year my reflections stem from a busy period within the life of my own diocese of Limerick and Killaloe, and more widely within the life of the Anglican Communion. Thus in May of this year, Trevor Williams was elected as the new Bishop of Limerick and Killaloe and he was enthroned in St. Flannan's Cathedral,

Killaloe on 19th September. One of his very first tasks was to attend the Lambeth Conference (the ten-yearly meeting of all Anglican Bishops) in July of this year, a conference which, on this occasion, had many difficult and potentially divisive issues to discuss in connection with such topics as human sexuality and the ordination of women as bishops.

All of this impressed on me the interconnectedness of many places and peoples, as at Lambeth Irish met Ugandan met American met Australian met Japanese and so on! And because our bishop was there, we here at home were part of these meetings and discussions, at least in the realm of prayer and support, and because we would be affected by any decisions which might be taken there. Equally too, relationships between Anglicanism and Roman Catholicism and the Orthodox Churches of the east would be affected as the other world communions responded to whatever the bishops at Lambeth might do.

And so, on a more local scale, our various communities and all of the individuals within them are interconnected. Many people we will know, others we may not, but all of our actions will have some effect on others: where we work, shop, educate our children; how we use our car; how much energy we consume and so on. And similarly our prayers connect us (as hopefully do our actions to back up our prayers) as we pray not only for the great world causes of peace and justice, but also for the family around the corner going through hard times, the lonely person down the street or whoever.

Just as my parish does not exist in isolation from the worldwide church, so too none of us lives in isolation from our community and neighbours. In a world where community and belonging are under threat in so many of the larger towns and cities, we do well to remember that we have a real treasure in our communities and our lives together, and to make it our aim to foster them and to welcome those who may from time to time join us.

May God continue to bless our lives together in Castleconnell, Ahane and Montpelier.

With all good wishes for another year.

Stephen R. White

LIMERICK CITY IN THE MISTS OF TIME

By Mary A. Moloney

Ring a ring a rosy, as the light declines, I remember Limerick city in the rare ould times With apologies to Pete St. John

In these days of urban renewal I am taken back to a time when Limerick city had many stores now long gone. Amongst the names that survived into the twentieth century were Boyd's, Newsoms, Spaight's, McCarthy's, Cannock's, Cruises' Hotel, Roche's Stores, Todd's and Woolworth's. The list seems to be endless, all gone but not forgotten. (Not quite, I hear you say, McCarthy's is still in business). Why don't we go back to the "good old days" for a little while as we linger over a Limerick city now all but disappeared into the mists of time! But what has all this got to do with our parish journal you may ask, well when we were all a little younger than today, "going to town" meant going to Limerick; so off we go to read a little history of those stores we all visited in our youth!

Boyd's was situated in William Street. J&G Boyd was very much an integral part of Limerick's business and commercial life. According to Kevin Hannan writing in the *Limerick Chronicle* in December 1993, "many of the merchants took great pride in their premises, and in many cases no expense was spared in securing the services of the best architects and builders. Boyd's splendid premises are still the finest ornament in William Street". Boyd's which was founded in 1848 traded in mowing and reaping machines, hay makers, horse rakes 'to meet the demands of the hay making season', corn and grist mills, chaff and turnip cutters, ploughs, harrows and 'other implements of husbandry', churns, gears and dairy requisites while the upper storeys contained dye-stuffs, cement, plaster and window glass, starch, soda, salts and candles. This list of products is taken from a letter to the editor of The Limerick Chronicle of June 1889, where Boyd's, following a fire on the premises took issue with the "erroneous reports made public through the press generally, vis, that in addition to agricultural implements and general merchandise, the burnt stores contained petroleum and other oils of an inflammable and dangerous character". This was not the case not a drop of oil of any description was stored on the premises maintained the letter-writer.

Time marched on, and Boyd's hit the headlines once again on March 30th 1993, this time the long established firm was to close, with the loss of 8 full time and 10 part time jobs. A spokesman for the company told *The Limerick Chronicle* that they had also decided to close Boyd's Centre in William Street. It was to affect 5 tenants trading there. In 1991 the company had embarked on a major refurbishment and rebuilding programme with entrances from William Street and Cruises Street. Boyd's business focus in those latter years was in the retailing of hardware, paint and garden products. As with many companies the economic climate was blamed for the general downturn in business, and Boyd's which had been at the heart of Limerick shopping for almost 150 years ceased operations from its premises in 11/12 William Street on April 8th 1993.

Spaight's was another hardware store associated with the city. This was situated where the "new Dunnes Stores" is now located opposite the Franciscan Church. Of course by the time you read this the Franciscan Church will also have been closed owing to a shortage of priests.

But that is another article in itself. Francis and James Spaight were very important to the life of the city for the greater part of the 19th century. Francis started his timber importing business in Sarsfield Street. Following the development of the Dock Road more extensive premises were purchased by the river. James Spaight son of Francis was MP for Limerick and was elected High Sheriff in 1853. As Mayor of Limerick in 1856 he assisted in the ceremonial laying of the foundation stone of St. John's Cathedral. Of course we know that was not the only church he was associated with. He is also said to have donated the timber and slates to our own St. Patrick's Church in Ahane during his tenure as MP. He lived at No. 77 George's Street, now O'Connell Street. According to Kevin Hannan writing in The Limerick Chronicle of December 1993 when Richard Russell of Plassey passed away, 'Spaight was elected to succeed him as President of the Chamber of Commerce. Though the family has died out of the city, the name is still preserved close to the scene of their early activities". That is no longer the case, as we in 2008 now have Dunnes Stores located on that site.

Back in the 1990's, Newsoms was another hardware store preserved on the spot in which it first began. Founded by Joseph Phelps Newsom, began his business selling Smiths coal and bar iron in a yard known at that time as Newsom's Lane, (now known as Upper Denmark Street).

He was known to be straightforward and honest and is believed to have assisted the destitute nail-makers, by giving them the iron they needed and accepting some of the nails as payment. Newsom's business prospered and in time his premises grew to be situated in William Street. The yard where he began his business all those years ago, in latter years became a car-park for their customers. Newsom's name remained over the door until its closure too,

just a few years ago. It had moved with the times and had traded in paints, wall paper, kitchen appliances, electric lights and crystal ware, as well as the mandatory box of nails!

Another link to the parish is found in McCarthy's Furniture Store. Probably one of the oldest firms in the city still in business unlike the aforementioned stores, McCarthy's has been trading in home - furnishings for over 160 years. Fine furniture was manufactured on the premises, by their own cabinet makers. On the other hand they also turned out coffins for the deceased members of high society. Thomas Nevin of Mountshannon (who during his lifetime donated the bell and the Stations of the Cross to Ahane Church) died in 1905 and was laid to rest in one such coffin.

From coffins to Cannock's! The late Jim Kemmy wrote an article in The Limerick Chronicle in February 1984 regarding Cannock's. This store was situated where Penney's is now located in O'Connell Street. The following information came from the Kemmy article. The premises later to become known as Cannock's was built by Christopher Meade sometime before 1800. An early lease holder of the store was Thomas Waller a "fashionable woollen draper". The rapid expansion of the new city attracted the attention of developers William Taylor Cummine and James Mitchell from Glasgow. In 1840 they bought 134 George Street, now 139 O'Connell Street. After 10 years they sold the premises to George Cannock, a fellow Scot. A few years earlier Cannock had bought drapery stores in Cork and Dublin. The Cannock - Arnott Company set to work. The store was managed by Peter Thom, who joined the firm in 1853 and became director in 1864. William Tait who worked in Cummine and Mitchell's (later Cannock's) in 1844 as a shop assistant (having been let go for the winter months) had himself by the year 1858 become the largest employer in Limerick having caught a niche in the market for shirts, employing 1,300 workers and 150 sewing machines. On November 11th 1858 John Arnott sold his interest in Cannock's to Tait.

Tait was responsible for major reconstruction and with the magnificent new facade the store became one of the finest shops in the country. Within 2 years as Managing Director of his clothing factory and of Cannock's, Tait had established himself as the largest clothing manufacturer in the British Isles.

In 1865 George Cannock the other partner in the store decided to retire to London with his daughters. In 1866 Tait became Mayor of Limerick and went on to retain the office for two more terms. Tait's pre-occupation with politics probably led to the collapse of his business empire and in turn they sold Cannock's to Michael J. Clery, whose partner was James Moriarty Tidmarsh. Clery was described as follows: an entrepreneur quite different from his predecessors, far more cautious but extremely astute. J. Clery later left Limerick and moved to Dublin to supervise his interests there. In 1888

building work began on the new extension to the store and the clock tower was also added at this time. The new clock and tower became Cannock's hallmark and a distinctive feature of Limerick city life. It was known as a Westminster chime clock, and was designed to ring every 15 minutes in addition to striking the hours. Later in 1963 *The Limerick Chronicle* of February 27th informed its readers that "the massive bells of Cannock's Clock went to Nigeria where from Missionary Church belfries; they call African's to prayer!" Kevin Hannan writing in *The Limerick Chronicle* in 1993 spoke of "the grand clock, which was as much a feature of Limerick as Nelson Pillar was to Dublin was replaced by a modern version, much to the displeasure of many citizens who were saddened at the substitution of the old familiar clock which had faithfully recorded the passing hours since 1888".

In 1900 the store expanded into Brunswick Street. During the Civil War extensive damage was done to the shop. In 1927 the 300 workers in the firm were forced to take a $2^{1/2}\%$ reduction in their wages because of the bad economic climate. In 1963 the frontage of the building was completely rebuilt by the local building contractor Patrick Cullen. The company was taken over by Winston's in 1972. In 1980 the property was sold to Penney's for £950,000.

The Limerick Leader of 15th March 1980 marked the passing of Cannock's with the following words: "the doors of Cannock's & Co. finally close this Saturday 15th March, ending a lifespan of 140 years. The great portico witnessed the coming of the railway, the Famine of 1847, the Fenians, Daniel O'Connell, the Rising of 1916 and the Civil War. George Cannock, the founder of the firm, assisted in the establishment of Arnott's of Dublin, Michael Clery, the founder of Clery's of Dublin was the first Chairman of Cannock and Co. as a public company.

Under the heading of "Commercial Limerick" we read the following description of Cannock's Store: "the visitor passes northwards through the immense rage of ware-rooms, in which are displayed with effective taste the latest fashions in costumes, silks, millinery, mantles, furs, artistic furniture etc a total distance of 288 feet - the entire floor area of the establishment occupying the enormous aggregate of 39,360 square feet. The leading features include woollens, prints, hosiery, gloves, handkerchiefs, haberdashery, ribbons, laces, shoes, silks, cloaks, perfumery, carpets, hats and caps and ready made furniture".

Finbar Crowe writing in the *Old Limerick Journal* finishes the Cannock's story. He writes "Cannock's continued to trade in Winston's premises in William Street but the change was psychologically and commercially unpalatable to many of its older customers. It eventually ceased trading before finally going into liquidation in 1984. The great House

of Cannock's which had contributed so much to the economic and commercial life of Limerick employing hundreds and serving thousands was now no more!"

Speaking of Daniel O'Connell leads us nicely to a piece of Limerick known for graciousness and beauty, Cruises' Hotel in O'Connell Street. It was the oldest hotel in Limerick, four storeys high, and having a guest list during its time which included Daniel O'Connell himself. Cruises' Hotel was demolished to make way for the new pedestrianised Cruises Street which opened in October 1992. *The Irish Times* of May 20th 1992 carried the following report under the headline "Strong Interest in Limerick's New Street": 'Seven stores have either been sold or rented so far in the £30m Cruises Street shopping and residential development which is to open in Limerick next October. There will be a total of 55 shops, some 2 storey and the remainder 3 storey. Some of the big name stores mentioned for location on Cruises Street include Eason's, Hickey Fabrics, Specsavers, Tyler's Shoes and Hugh Campbell Hairdresser'.

At the turn of the twentieth century a young man named William Roche started a modest furniture store in a side-street in Cork city. He prospered and moved to more spacious buildings and developed a drapery trade. This was in time to become known as Roche's Stores. He did well in Cork and Dublin and by mid 1937 the premises of McBirneys and Company became available and were taken over. In 1947 the premises was gutted by fire which began in the basement. But Roche undaunted, kept the staff in employment by transferring some of them to Cork and some to Dublin. As he had done in Cork during the Civil War (when his store was destroyed there too) he utilised available premises to keep business going. Across the street from the main building was a yard and stables, Daly's Bun-shop and Tiger O'Brien's Pub. Roche's Stores started trading immediately in the available space across the road through the archway from where the delivery horses in their time had emerged. Rebuilding started early and the new premises opened in 1951. Roche's stores later acquired Cannock's and Tiger O'Brien's.

Roche's Stores was synonymous with Irish retailing for generations. The Limerick store which was located at 134-135 O'Connell Street occupied approximately 60,000 square feet of shopping area on three floors according to the Limerick Leader of 1986. The supermarket (located on the ground floor) which closed in 2002 comprised of 12,000 square feet. Staff on the first floor sold ladies fashions, and girls wear while the second floor contained hardware, china, gift-ware and linens. However William Roche did not live to see the completion of the Limerick store. He died on February 23rd 1939. In time Roche's Stores had eleven outlets throughout the country, but it did remain a family run business.

By 2006 *The Limerick Post* was telling its readers that Debenhams were locked in talks for a take-over of eleven Roche's Stores outlets including the one in Limerick. Roche's era as Ireland's retailing giant had come to an end. As Anne Sheridan wrote on the Limerick Leader "Roche's was a truly Irish firm that provided middle of the road goods, at a reasonable price and with excellent customer service". Not a bad recommendation after 106 years!

Mention of McBirnevs there takes me back nicely to The Limerick Chronicle of Saturday December 15th 1888. We might think that today is the day of the hard-sell, but in 1888 the writers wrote advertorials so beautifully that I just had to guote what the writer had to say about McBirneys and Todd's of Limerick. Remember this was 1888! McBirneys ...had games for long winter evenings, tops, guns, dolls, glass and china goods, vases, figures, leather goods comprising of superior hand and handkerchief bags, purses, cigar and cigarette cases. We remarked a very choice selection of fans and hand screens, plain and painted. There is a very pretty selection of artificial flowers in handsome pots, admirably suited for the table or the embellishment of a public or private room. There is of course the large and well selected stock of fashionable goods among which may be mentioned, in somewhat irregular order, seal mantles, fur lined cloaks, plush dolmans, and jackets, fur bows, collaret's and muffs, children's fancy pinafores, ladies evening dresses and fur-bound evening shoes. Coming to more homely materials, we may remark that goods are offered for charitable purposes at especially low prices - blankets and flannels of which there is a large stock.

Messrs Todd and Company "this old established firm have also a large and interesting assortment of superior Xmas goods and presents calculated to please the most fastidious tastes. A variety of artistic photo albums, work boxes, hand bags, baskets, and photo frames, a large assortment of toys, *Xmas tree ornaments.* ...fur and lace suitable for Yuletide presents. Several pretty specimens of Limerick lace are on view and the dress and mantle departments are replete with novelties from the English and Continental markets. The furniture department is fully supplied - there being an ample stock of cabinets, Japanese goods, flower and umbrella stands open to inspection. There are music stands, old fashioned chairs, brass goods and so on. As with McBirneys a large stock of blankets and other goods are offered for charitable purposes are marked at especially low prices. In 1959 there was a fire at Todd's and in 1960 the entire Todd's site was demolished to make way for a new more modern building. In 1999 Todd's underwent another renovation, this time costing £4m and reopened as Brown Thomas.

Last but by no means least is every child's favourite store, Woolworths which was situated in O'Connell Street had opened its doors to the public in May 7th 1921. According to Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia The F. W. Woolworth Company (often referred to as Woolworth's) was a retail company that was one of the original American five-and-dime stores. The first Woolworth's store was founded, with a loan of \$300, in 1878 by Frank Winfield Woolworth. Despite growing to be one of the largest retail chains in the world through most of the 20th century, increased competition led to its decline beginning in the 1980s. In 1997, F. W. Woolworth Company converted itself into a sporting goods retailer, closing its remaining retail stores operating under the "Woolworth's" brand name and renaming itself Venator Group. By 2001, the company focused exclusively on the sporting goods market, changing its name to the present Foot Locker Inc (NYSE: FL). Woolworths of O'Connell Street was a large knick-knack store, containing rows of sweets under glass covers, tins of biscuits, records, hankies, bathsalts, hardware and electrical goods. By Woolworth's 100th anniversary in 1979, it had become the largest department store chain in the world, according to the Guinness Book of World Records.

The Limerick Leader of 28th July 1984 heralded the demise of Woolworths telling its readers that "the marginal profit margins were not enough, the increasing sophistication of Irish society and the corresponding tendency for shoppers to go to specialist shops ... it was clear that the large knick knack store was itself passing with the times". Closure meant that forty full time and part time workers lost their jobs. By November 1985 the official opening of a 12 shop unit opened on the former Woolworth site, following a conversion cost of approximately £500,000. A good mixture of retailers including a news agency, coffee dock, gift shop, and ladies fashions store were among the new tenants. Woolworths was gone.

I hope you enjoyed our trip down memory lane, doubtless there are many shops and stores you remember too, perhaps this will get your literary juices flowing and you will share your memories with us next year.

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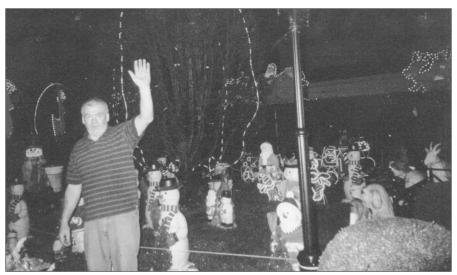


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- Pictorial 2008 -



Christmas in Ennis: Castleconnell man, Jim O'Driscoll shows his Christmas lights and decorations at his home in Ennis.



The spectators at the Christmas Day Swim in O'Brien's Bridge in aid of the children's playground.



Statia Byrnes recovering from the Christmas Day Swim.



Eamon Joyce (Monty) shows his fine 11lb hatchery salmon to his son, James.



Susan Joyce and Shirley Hartigan collecting for Daffodil Day in Castleconnell.



St. Patrick's Day Parade makes its way up Castle Street.

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Taking part in the St. Patrick's Day festivities were Sarah Peril and Grace Corbett.



Eamon Nicholas in his butcher's stall in Annacotty.



Tidying up the shrubbery at Ahane Church were, Pauline Minihan, Rosaleen Kelly, Agnes Collins and Maureen O'Malley. Breda Cregan, not in picture, also helped with the work.



Tommy Reidy at the "Fresh Laundrette" in Annacotty.



Riverside garden developed by the O'Brien's Bridge Community Group.



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Enjoying the sandwiches at a get together of Evelyn Mangan, Anne Guntrip, Eileen O'Dea, Margaret Hannon and Doris Fahy.



 $Summer\ Festival\ on\ the\ lawn\ of\ the\ ACM\ Centre.$



Heritage Corner: Old farm machinery and implements at O'Brien's Bridge.



Mike Tierney, Donal Morrissey and Paddy Hickey at the Development Draw.



Christy Crotty painting the Heritage Gates at the cemetery in O'Brien's Bridge which were restored by the Community Group at a cost of €4,000.



Breda Cregan, Kay Coughlan, Breda Ryan and Helen Slattery all of Ahane.



Dan O'Keeffe, Gary and Nancy Holt, Majella Reidy and Áine Reidy at the Development Draw in Hickey's Bar.

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? Celebrating 20 years in Castleconnell ?



Berna Hayden, Peggy Duffy and Mary Tierney in the village.



John and Sinéad Freeney in their restaurant Ti Seán in Castleconnell.

Michael Kelleher

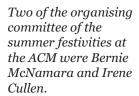
Montpelier

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Electrical Repairs
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This hand-crafted Irish oak cross was dedicated to the people of O'Brien's Bridge by Haulie Fitzgerald of New York in memory of his mother, father and brother. The cross was erected in the village graveyard by John Lynch and Christy Crotty.





An Caisleán - The Castleconnell, Ahane, Montpelier Annual 2008



On the History Tour of Ahane were the Historical Society on Tony Dwyer's bus.



Some of the attendance at the Duck Race in O'Brien's Bridge during the summer.

Best Wishes to "An Caisleán" from



Paddy Madden Plumbing & Heating 9 Maple Grove.



Ned Fitzgerald and Mary McDonald on the Main Street.

Gilhooly's Lisnagry

Good Luck & Best Wishes from

Lisnagry Post Office



Ashling Freeney conducting her Art Workshop at the ACM Summer Festival.



Karen Murphy and Niamh Davern outside Londis in Annacotty.



Annie Meeney, Kathleen O'Keeffe & Dan O'Keeffe.



Gary Holt and Catherine O'Doherty at the Summer Festival Barbeque.



Cora Moran with her class at the Summer Festival.



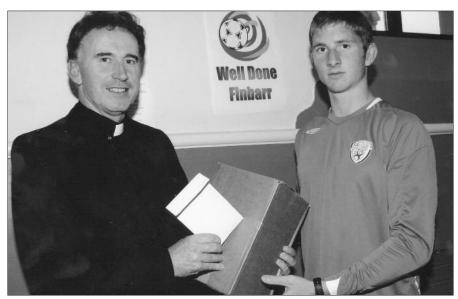
Professional Photography



Sandra Mullane taking her children to school.



Pat and Angela Dempsey getting ready to cut the cake at Pat's 60th birthday party.



Fr. Brendan Kyne P.P. making a presentation to Finbarr Ryan after his return from the World Deaf Football Championships with the Under-17 Irish Team in Greece.



Footballing Ryans: Denis and Maureen Ryan with Finbarr who played with the Irish Team in Greece and his brother, Aidan.



At the Duck Race in O'Brien's Bridge: Joe Sciascia, Sally Madden, Ann Ryan, Steve Clothier, Rory Clothier, Dion Ryan, Catherine Ryan. Seated, Seamus Madden, Martin Howard and Statia Byrnes.

L. SLOAN

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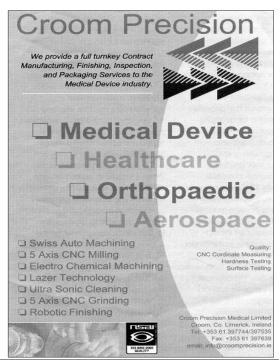
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Reminiscences of an Emigrant

By Ken Kingston

If my memory serves me right, it was Charlotte Brontë who wrote: "memory in youth is active and easily impressible; in old age it is comparatively callous to new impressions, but still retains vividly those of earlier years."

Though I don't think I am more "callous to new impressions", memory is hesitating and it takes longer to remember things. However, I have found that, perhaps, she was right about retaining the memories of earlier years, at least some of them.

Having lived in England for forty years, I have not set foot in Castleconnell in all that time. This summer, as President of the Irish National Services Museum Association, I was an invited guest at the unveiling of "Ireland's National Monument to the Fighting 69th Regiment and Brigadier General Michael Corcoran" at Ballymote, Co. Sligo, by the Honourable Michael Bloomberg, Mayor of New York, on August 22. While staying with my brother, Gerard, in Co. Dublin, for a short time, he showed me a copy of An Caisleán, 2005. In it, among other things of interest to me, was a photograph of the Fitzgerald School of Dancing in the 1950s. There, among the rows of young people of the village were my sister, Sheila, and myself. I amazed myself by being able to name several others, without hesitation.

On returning home, I started to wonder what else I could remember. I searched deep but initially nothing sprang to the surface of my memory. As the days passed, it became important to me to try to remember and, gradually, snippets came from nowhere. I am sure there should be an awful lot more.

Among the earliest memories was of that of standing outside our house, "The Bungalow", watching bigger boys playing football on the road by Carroll's field, between our house and Carroll's shop. One of the players came running down chasing the ball, which had either gone wide or had been a goal. Unfortunately for me, he knocked me over and broke my collarbone. I was tiny but I do remember the pain. Next, I remember the building of the village hall - a truly community effort. As I recall, the young men of the village all worked on the project, giving their spare time to the physical building of the hall. I remember being really surprised to see the local curate actually taking part in the manual labour. This was an important

milestone in the life of the village. Concerts, competitions, even the County Féis, were held here. The previously mentioned photograph of the Fitzgerald School of Dancing was taken on the stage and it was here that I won a medal for Scéalaíocht, in the Féis (1962 or 1963). I am still very proud of this medal. It is silver, bearing a Dublin hallmark for 1960, with enamelled arms of the Four Provinces in small circles at the four extremities - Ulster arms at the top, Munster arms at the base, Connacht at the left (west) and Leinster at the right (east). Celtic scrolls between each of the arms complete a circle. A circular band inside this bears the inscription Féis Contae Luimnigí. The very centre has an open book imposed on an Irish harp.

I also played the tin whistle, for a short time, in the village band. I remember that I was not very good at it. Music was never my forte, though I did take music lessons in Limerick and passed The Royal Irish Academy of Music Preliminary Pianoforte Examination, 1961. However, the constant rapping of a pencil on the knuckles, as a punishment for hitting the wrong keys, became a little tedious. I also remember that retaliation did nothing for the progression of my piano lessons. I have not played a musical instrument since.

Religion played a huge part in the village life and early memories of the retreats have remained with me - the rather terrifying but fantastic sermons delivered by preachers from religious orders, who came to our church to keep us on the straight and narrow. I can recall a certain lady member of the congregation, who burst into tears at one of these services. Jehovah's Witnesses from Limerick created a rather unnerving atmosphere in their efforts to convert us as we came out of Sunday Mass. This effort was not sustained for too long a period. Another thing, which seemed rather strange to me at the time, was the arrival of a curate who owned a couple of greyhounds. This was something one expected from gambling men, not men of the cloth. The next curate to arrive possessed a horse. One did not expect to come across a priest out riding. This seemed to me to be the prerogative of the rich.

Swimming in the Shannon was also a great pastime of the young in the village. We would swim near the bridge, which crossed over to Co. Clare. A number of us, including my late brother, Harry, were fishing on a stone weir near the World's End when some boys on bicycles, wearing their swimwear, came past shouting that someone was in trouble. We went to the World's End but there was nothing we could do. A boy had already drowned. He was visiting a family in the village. A search party eventually found his body. There were other tragedies I recall. An infant, who lived on The Lane, was run over by a reversing coal lorry, while another child was killed by a kick from a horse near the Tontines.

Unknown to my father or mother, at certain times, I would be paid a couple of pence to collect beer from Castleconnell Railway Station, where it would arrive by train. I would place the beer on a two-wheeled luggage trolley and negotiate it down the station steps. It was then pushed to its destination - Richardson's public house. The most difficult part of this operation was the step-negotiation. A wooden barrel of Guinness, when it had fallen down several stone steps was prone to cracking. When this happened, a creamy coloured liquid would squirt out all over the place. One would then have to slow down; pray the beer would settle and push it very gently to the pub, in order to receive payment.

The village "cinema" was the old wooden hall, which seemed to hang out over the River Shannon, at The Spa. It was enjoyable, even if it was a little cold, windy and sometimes, tended to be a little rowdy. Those who misbehaved during the film were liable to receive a light blow from a torch. The programme included Zorro and Hopalong Cassidy, and the cowboys (and cowgirl) often featured were Roy Rogers and Dale Evans, Gabby Hayes, Tom Mix etc.

I also recall seeing torch-lit processions in the village when Republicans, who had been interned without trial in the Curragh, were released and returned to the area.

It is claimed that everyone remembers where he/she was on November 22 1963, when he/she heard that President John F. Kennedy had been assassinated. At first, people thought it had to be some sort of sick joke. It had been less than five months since he had made a speech to the Irish Parliament in Dublin and presented the flag of the 69th Regiment New York State Volunteers, Irish Brigade, of the American Civil War, to the people of Ireland, June 28 1963. The flag is on display in Leinster House, Dublin. I saw it during my last visit. Where was I when I heard the news? I recall being present at one of Davy Quaid's evening Irish language classes when someone arrived and broke the news. Everyone present was astounded.

Castleconnell was famous for fishing and ambassadors and other dignitaries would visit John Enright to be taken out on the Shannon and to buy his world famous fishing rods. I seem to remember the expression "green heart" in relation to these rods. We fished for, and caught, eels, perch and bream, while the older boys caught pike and salmon. The fish we caught were received willingly by our mothers, cooked and served at dinner. One memorable catch by the older boys was a huge pike, which was pushed up the village over the handlebars of a bicycle. I think virtually everyone in the village had a piece of this fish. The other thing that struck me in relation to fishing was the numerous occasions on which a man of principle, Seán Carroll, was escorted away by a member of the Gardaí for refusing to give up his right to fish without a licence on the Shannon. Several terms in prison could not shake



Castleconnell Village where I spent my childhood days.

his resolve to continue fishing where he had always fished without anyone's permission.

The Gárdaí patrolled by foot or by bicycle. There was great excitement in the village when an arrested man made a run for it and was brought to the ground by a Garda, on the Main Street. Such occurrences were rare in Castleconnell. Occasionally, there was the odd fistfight, usually about nothing of any importance. Poitín makers were another group that had to be dealt with and though not very exciting to hear about, clamping down on them could be dangerous for the individual Garda. When the film Mise Éire was released in early 1960, with the fantastic music of Seán Ó Riada, it did not take long for people to let it be known that Ó Riada's father had been the local Garda sergeant, in the not too distant past. History, as taught in schools, had very little interest for me—long lists of dates of battles etc., Along came this film and it awakened a keen interest in me of the exploits of Irish soldiers, particularly abroad, which has remained with me to this day.

Other visitors to the village included Tinkers. They did not call themselves Travellers in those days and they did actually repair pots and pans. Many people were afraid of these travelling people because they were different to us. They did not live in houses and their children did not attend school. It was a mystery how they survived the wet and the cold, living in the country lanes. Though most people shunned them, I recall my mother, paying these strangers to do repairs. She also gave clothes to one particular family, who returned on a regular basis.

Finally, the village pump comes to mind. A few of us boys found a spring by the castle, which obviously flowed into the Shannon. It was covered with watercress and other plants. As we stripped away the covering there was a spirit bottle lying in the water, which I foolishly picked up. The bottle broke in my right hand, slashing me between the thumb and index finger. It was very bloody. I ran all the way up to the pump, bleeding profusely. Scared, I placed my right hand under the water-flow, while I pumped with my left hand. The blood flowed all the time. My next stop was Scanlan's public house. This was always the first stop for members of our family, in the event of injury—not to drink but to visit Mrs. Maureen Shanahan (nee Scanlan), the sister of the renowned Ahane and Limerick hurler, Paddy Scanlan. Mrs. Shanahan was a nurse and she tidied up the wound and bandaged it. Luckily, I did not need an anti-tetanus injection. The wound healed and I had no ill effects but I still have a scar on the inside of my right hand, between the thumb and index finger.

I am sure that, given some more deep thought there are other memories of those "earlier years" waiting to come to the fore.

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PRECIOUS MOMENTS

I heard a thrush
Sing on a bush
In a garden fair.
There was joy and beauty in its voice,
I'm glad that I was there.

I saw a child
So sweet and mild,
Blue eyes and golden hair.
First small steps on life's rough road,
I'm glad that I was there.

By a wayside stile
I sat a while
In the morning air.
Such solitude I ne'er had known,
I'm glad that I was there.

I heard a cry
As I passed by,
Rabbit in a snare.
I eased its pain and set it free,
I'm glad that I was there.

Winter days, freezing white,
Days without respite,
Trees lifeless and bare,
But a small bird sang on a frozen bough,
I'm glad that I was there.

A summer breeze
Through the trees,
Bells for evening prayer,
Sweet voices rising to the skies,
I'm glad that I was there.

These moments divine,
Once were mine
On precious days and rare,
I thank the Lord for simple things,
I'm glad that I was there.

Joe Carroll

Best Wishes to An Caisleán from the Craft Fair Committee

ANNUAL CASTLECONNELL CRAFT FAIR 2009

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Lisnagry National School First in Environment Competition

Another year has come and gone in Lisnagry National School. In September six new teachers joined the staff, Mr. Feeney, Ms. Bourke, Ms. Carroll, Ms. Daly, Ms. Copse and Ms. McInerney. All six have made a huge contribution to the success of the school.

As we look back over the year there were many outstanding events some new - others a product of seeds sown in previous years. Certainly the newest was Baton Twirling. The girls of Third and Fourth Classes took part in this exercise and really enjoyed it. The culmination of this was a visit to the school by the former Mayor of Limerick Mr. Michael Hourigan to present prizes.

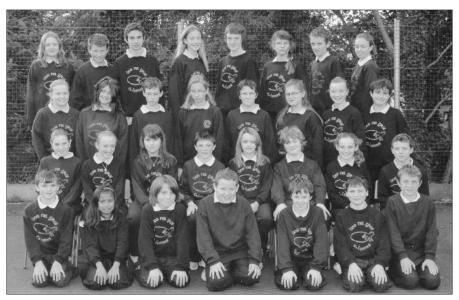
We had many other notable visitors to the school - Andy Lee met all pupils and brought his boxing belt with him. Niall Moran visited Junior Infants and promised to bring the McCarthy Cup in September. Mary Kerrigan a famous children's author, spoke of her work as a writer during Book Fair week. Clan Tuama theatre group paid their annual visit with their presentation of Óisín in Tír Na nÓg. The younger pupils were fascinated by John Wilson's Puppet Theatre. This included a workshop and the children could see how the characters came to life.

The environment is very important in the school. Every effort is made to re-use and recycle. The highlight of the year was the Limerick County Council project by Third and Fourth Classes which won first prize. Third Class made a tree while Fourth Class made a scarecrow, all from recycled material.

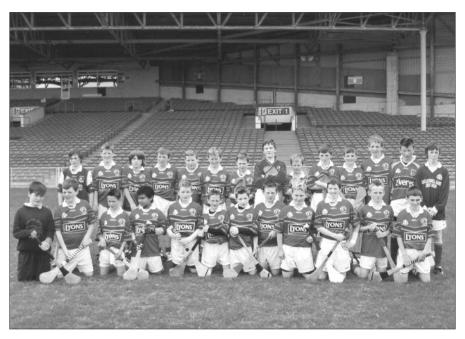
Once again sport dominated the lives of many children. The school took part in every event possible, Hurling, Football, Badminton, Basketball, Cross Country, Chess, Handball, Quizzes etc. While we had many winners participation was the key note.

The year was also noteworthy for the fundraising that was carried out for the poorer people in the world. In all three major events took place. In October five hundred Euro (?500.00) was donated to Ms. Helen Scales for the homeless. In March almost one thousand five hundred Euro (?1,500.00) was raised for Fr. Tadhg Herbert's Mission in Brazil while five hundred Euro (?500.00) was donated to the Muscular Dystrophy Association. We should all remember that "It is in giving that we receive".

Staff of Lisnagry N.S.



The sixth class of 2007/08 at Lisnagry N.S.



Lisnagry N.S. hurling team at the Gaelic Grounds in Limerick.



Róisín Owen of Lisnagry N.S. winning the Cross Country.



Kate Feeney competing in the Cross Country at U.L.



 $\label{limerick} \begin{tabular}{ll} Limerick\ and\ Ahane\ hurler,\ Niall\ Moran\ chatting\ with\ the\ Junior\ Infants\ at\ Lisnagry\ N.S. \end{tabular}$



David O'Hora attending to the school garden.



New potatoes from the school garden.

Fr. Denis Ryan

1898-1963

I wish to record my great indebtedness in composing this small work, to one of the most wonderful people that I had the good fortune to know for part of my life. I have endeavoured to follow his example in my own life and since I have some wonderful memories of him personally, I wanted to convey an authentic picture of my dear uncle, Fr. Denis, to all my grandchildren and relations, who may not have known him.

Since I am one of the fast diminishing numbers of those who knew Fr. Denis personally, I am going to attempt in my limited way, to record personal memories which I hope will convey the wonderful person he was, a humble man with great commonsense.

Denis Ryan was born on the 12/02/1898 at Laught, Lisnagry, Co. Limerick. He was the eldest son of James and Margaret Ryan. He had two brothers and one sister, Johnny, Joe and Katie. He attended the local school which was located near Ahane Church, in the Thornfield Estate between Willie Ryan's house and the Old Forge, on the start of the Clyduff Road.

After Ahane School, he attended the Crescent College in Limerick, run by the Jesuits. After the Crescent, he went to study at St. Patrick's College in Thurles and then to the English College in Rome. He was ordained a priest in Rome on 10/06/1922 at the St. John Lateran for the Dioceses of Clifton in England.

His first appointment, in June 1926, was as a curate to the Pro-Cathedral. In October 1925, he was sent to Salisbury as a curate. In October 1931 he was appointed priest in charge at Chard.

He was appointed Parish Priest in Nympsfield in July 1932, in Chippenham in June 1934 and in January 1948, he became Parish Priest of Corpus Christi church in Weston-Super-Mare.

It was while he was in Chippenham during the Second World War, 1939-1946, that he made contact with me and my brother and sisters by letter. We have many pleasant memories of receiving a gift from "Elvery's" in Dublin by post every Christmas during that sad time. Fr. Denis would send money to Elvery's and select a toy for each of us, his nephews and nieces. How we used to look forward to that big parcel arriving with a Christmas box for myself with my name written on it. There would also be one for my sisters, Peggy and Lily and for my brother, Louis. That parcel used to make our Christmas. It arrived faithfully every year during the war years and indeed long after.



Fr. Denis and parishioners at a Good Friday Procession.

He also encouraged us to write letters to him and he would reply encouraging us in our schooling, praising us and always showing love and affection for all of us. He never ordered us to do anything but he had a wonderful gift of encouraging us in our lives in a very gentle and loving way. During the war years he could not return home.

You can imagine our joy and excitement when at the end of the war in 1945, he returned home. We were all overjoyed to see our uncle whom we had never met before. We were also grateful to the good Lord for having brought him safely through those very dark dismal days, when bombs were dropping from the skies all around him. He used to act as a warden in the air raid shelters and some of his experiences of those times were daunting.

When he arrived home we felt that God had answered our prayers, as we had remembered him in our family Rosary every evening.

We had seen family photographs and so had an idea of what he looked like. I was eleven years old and I was overcome with delight at meeting him for the first time. He too showed his delight in meeting all of us after those six long war years. Despite the fact that he was after a rough crossing by boat from Fishguard to Rosslare and the fact that he had got very little sleep, he would remain with us chatting and enquiring all about us and all the relations, friends and neighbours. When chatting with my father, his brother, and my mother, I used to overhear some of the difficulties he had

encountered in his parish during the war years. The people were very poor and money was scarce. The parish had to find the money to pay the teachers in the Catholic schools as the state did not recognise them in those times. The condition of the buildings such as the priests' houses, churches and schools was very poor.

Fr. Denis had to undertake the job of putting all those in order and in addition, had to raise money for a new church. The foundation stone was laid by Bishop Lee of Clifton on June 19th 1935. It was a great day of rejoicing for the people of Chippenham. The church was dedicated to St. Mary, Mother of God. Six months later on February 29th 1936, the new St. Mary's church was officially opened. In a history of St. Mary's parish, written by Jack and Nora Eagles, they refer to one of the oldest parishioners who was present that day, a Mrs. Binks, who describes the joy and delight shown on Fr. Ryan's face as he entered his new church. She also described the church as "light and airy with big windows, shiny parquet floor and a beautiful stone altar". It must have been very uplifting for him, after the dark cold chapel, with damp rotting floor boards.

I had the good fortune of serving as altar boy at his Masses while he was on holidays with us. This experience of being close to him in his priestly ministry of celebrating Mass, of watching him saying his office each day, of listening to him greeting the congregation of neighbours and friends, of travelling on bicycles visiting relations, has been a tremendous influence in my spiritual life. I didn't realise at the time, but as I grew older, I was able to remember the example he gave, without giving any strict orders. For example, there would be a group of us serving Mass and naturally we would be a little bit boisterous to say the least, talking and laughing rather loudly. Fr. Denis would give us little jobs to do, like putting the cruets on the altar. lighting the candles, putting out the various books. As he gave each of us our little chores, he would speak in a very low hushed voice, which would be gradually reducing to almost a whisper. This methodology succeeded in gradually getting all of us communicating in whispers also. I realised afterwards that this was his way of getting us, in a very gentle way, to show reverence for the wonderful event which was going to take place on the altar, namely, the great sacrifice of the Mass.

He would proceed to vest and when he would have his alb on; he would kneel down on a kneeler and pray for a short time before completing his vesting in preparation for Mass. Then, as the time for Mass approached, he would put on the chasuble. We would have remained very quiet during this time, as we lined up and awaited his signal to go out on the altar. His very demeanour conveyed a reverence that we all seemed to emulate as we proceeded with joined hands to the altar predella.



Fr. Denis with parishioners who received Confirmation.

His prayerful words and gentle actions during the Mass conveyed a reverence to all of us and to the congregation, that there was something great and holy taking place on the altar. After the Mass was over, we would proceed back to the sacristy and he would bow to all of us and thank us in a manner that made us very much part of this great celebration. He would then remove his vestments and after placing them neatly on the press, he would kneel down again and spend at least fifteen minutes in thanksgiving.

This memory of the preparation and thanksgiving of the Mass remained with me and as I got older, I realised the wonderful reverence he showed. This has taught me to appreciate the wonderful sacrifice of the Mass in my own life and I have been faithful to this and will remain faithful to the end of my life with the help of the good Lord.

There was a special plus for me when I was invited to serve Fr. Denis' Mass at the Sisters of Charity in Woodstown. Those wonderful sisters look after handicapped children and Fr. Denis used to say Mass for them during his holidays. After Mass, we both were given a most beautiful breakfast which I really enjoyed. The nuns certainly knew how to present the beautiful food in a very special appetising way. I remember enjoying those breakfasts in a very special way.

Our mode of transport was the bicycle which as well as giving us exercise and fresh air, also provided us the easy means of meeting the people who always stopped to talk to Fr. Denis. He would always have memories of younger days at the old school in Ahane recorded. He had a special interest in

every one of the neighbours and friends and would try and visit as many as he could in his short vacation time. He would help his brother Johnny with the farm work in the summer. I remember an occasion when Johnny had purchased an old winnowing machine, which used to be operated with horses. This machine would thrash corn and blow the chaff off, leaving the seed to be gathered up. Johnny was very innovative so he adapted this machine to be operated by an old tractor. He did this by fitting an improvised pulley on the winnowing machine and connecting a belt from the tractor. The tractor was started up and the winnowing machine was set in motion at a much greater speed then what it was originally designed for, since it had been operated previously by horses. Fr. Denis was assigned the job of feeding in the sheaves of wheat. As the corn entered the machine an extraordinary whining noise could be heard and as the sheaves disappeared, a cloud of white dust surrounded Fr. Denis and soon turned his black suit to white. He looked like a miller dressed in white from head to toe. Instead of the machine leaving the seed, it actually was spinning so fast that it turned the seed to flour, hence the white dust. Since he had a great sense of humour, he just laughed when he realised what had happened, he always loved helping Johnny.

Johnny died in 1954 at the age of 54.

Fr. Denis said the rosary in the church at the arrival of the corpse and I remember him asking me to stay close and to continue the rosary should he become tearful. He really loved his brother Johnny and it was apparent that he missed him so much. We all missed Johnny too as he was a very gentle uncle and was so good to us always.

One of the memories I have of the emotion of loneliness was when Fr. Denis was returning back to his parish in England after his vacation. I was always allowed to accompany him to the railway station in Limerick. I used to dread the parting. The two big suitcases would be removed from the taxi and we would all help to carry them up the stone steps and into the station. We would then look after the cases while Fr. Denis joined the queue for the ticket office. Having purchased his ticket, he would then purchase a newspaper. We were then allowed down the platform while he boarded the train. When he had found a seat he would speak to us out the window until the shrill blast of the guard's whistle set the train in motion. We all said our goodbyes and we would stand watching while Fr. Denis waved his folded newspaper and until the train was out of sight.

Whenever I visit the train station in Limerick, I am always conscious of the lonely feeling I experienced all those years ago and I still have to fight back the tears.

During his holidays home to Laught, he used to organise a visit to the seaside. He would bring my mother, my grandmother, Mrs. Butler, my Aunt

Kate, my sisters, Peggy and Lily, my brother Louis and myself by taxi to Kilkee.

We used to love the long car journey, the picnic on the rocks, the ice-cream treats and the splashing in the water. On one occasion we went to visit Lisdoonvarna. As we were passing a weighing scale Fr. Denis suggested that we weigh ourselves. He was anxious to get my grand-mother on the scales, he succeeded in this and when she got up, the indicator jumped to fourteen stone. He quietly placed his leg also on the scale and it jumped to eighteen stone, my grandmother exclaimed (using a bit of flowery language) to "let me off this thing quickly!" I remember Fr. Denis being in bursts of laughter as we proceeded. He was the one to extract some strong words from my poor Granny. I'm sure the good Lord forgave her indiscretion and indeed it was not her fault. We used also visit our cousins, the O'Gorman family in Crecora, we have lovely memories of those visits and I know Fr. Denis would be very happy to know we have kept up contact with each other down through all the years.

In order to get some further information about Fr. Denis I contacted his double first cousin, Sr. Philomena Moloney who is a Sister of Mercy, in her 102nd year. The following are Sr. Philomena's memories of Fr. Denis:

"The Ryan's of Laught and the Moloney's of Ballyvarra were very closely connected. Jim Ryan of Laught, my uncle, was my mother's brother and his wife, my aunt, was my father's sister, so Fr. Denis and I are double first cousins. Our families grew up together, the Ryan's very frequently came to Ballyvarra and we went to Laught and enjoyed our time with our cousins. Fr. Denis was the eldest of his family and was in the same age bracket as my eldest sister, May. That meant that he was nine years older than I was. On account of the difference in age I had less contact with him than I had with his young brother, Joe, who was my own age.

However, I have very happy memories of Fr. Denis. He got his education in the Jesuit College at the Crescent, Limerick. He was gifted with intelligence and was an outstanding pupil. I once heard his mother, my Aunt Maggie, speaking to my mother. She said "his testimonials would get him into Maynooth" but Fr. Denis had no ambition to go to Maynooth. He wanted to go on the foreign missions. In order to please his mother and to be nearer home, he chose the English mission. He entered the Seminary in Thurles and began his studies for the priesthood. He told my sister that he attributed his vocation to the priesthood to his contact with Aunt Polly, his father's sister, who died young. He must have been only seven or eight years old when she died. He remembered the prayers she taught him and the talks he had with her as she put him to bed at night. He did not stay long in Thurles. His Bishop, being aware of his intellectual abilities, sent him to Rome to complete his studies. He went to the English College in Rome. I'm

not sure of the year, but it would be 1918 or 1919. He spent four years in Rome and they were not allowed home for holidays, so, there was no contact with him except by letter. He was ordained in Rome in 1922 but he was kept on to do further studies. He began his Course for Doctorate of Divinity. Unfortunately, he never finished the Course. In the spring of 1923, his father, my uncle, became very seriously ill and Fr. Denis was



Fr. Denis with his brothers, Joe (left) and Johnny.

sent home to be with him. He stayed during his father's final illness until he died in October 1923.

To sum up then I hope the foregone memories of my dear uncle Fr. Denis will be of interest to the parish Caisleán readers. Fr. Denis left us Christian values of truth, prayer, humility, charity and great respect and dignity for every human being we encounter. May his beautiful soul rest in peace in his Heavenly home. He has a very privileged burial place in the church grounds of Ahane Church, his native parish.

No happy time that passes Is ever really gone. If it leaves a lovely memory For looking back upon.

Jimmy Ryan

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Clubs & Associations

Old Time Gaels Honoured

In November of last year a special Presentation Night was held in the Millennium Centre in Caherconlish to honour staunch Gaels of East Limerick who have given life long services to the Gaelic Athletic Association. Among the fourteen old time Gaels who received awards was Peggy Duffy of Castleconnell and Ahane camogie fame. Since the founding of the Ahane Camogie Club in 1929 Peggy Duffy (nee McCabe) and her family have been steeped in its Gaelic traditions. Peggy's career spanned the decades from the '40's to the '70's and her many honours included nine County Senior Championships, six county Senior Leagues, four Munster Club Championships and two All-Ireland runners up medals in 1967 and '68. She also served as

Secretary to the Limerick County Camogie Board from 1967 to 1978 and was Chairperson for a period during the 1960's.

Peggy's brother, Martin McCabe was a former President of Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann and former Chairman of Limerick County Camogie Board. Peggy's other brother, Seán served as Secretary of Ahane GAA Club and also as Chairman of Limerick County Camogie Board. Her sister, Josephine served as Vice-President

Peggy's niece, Julie McCabe accepts the Award on Peggy's behalf from Eddie Wade.



Peggy Duffy was one of the great Gaels of the past who were honoured by the East Limerick GAA Board.



of Ahane Camogie Club.

Throughout the years Peggy has remained a great upholder of Ahane's proud tradition and is held in high esteem by all Gaels in the division. How appropriate therefore that the Chairman Eddie Wade called on her to accept this token of appreciation from the Gaels of East Limerick.

We in An Caisleán would like to add our heartiest congratulations to Peggy who is, as we are proud to say, a valued member of our committee since its inception in 1996 and has carried on the same dedication she had given during her camogie days.

Castleconnell Craft Fair

We estimate that we have contributed between €80,000 and €100,000 to local voluntary efforts. For this contribution we receive the support of the community in many ways including Ahane G.A.A. acting as car-park attendants, Ahane Camogie Club running the Raffle, assistance from the Scout Unit in transferring the Craft workers material to the venue.

Included in the range of crafts represented are the following; Paintings, ceramics, glasswork, leatherwork, woodturning, jewellery (modern, reproduction antique, etc.), bespoke soaps, candle-work, knitwear, silk work, Christmas ceramic scenery and bespoke furniture. In all the 20 years of the Fair, only one local artist still exhibits with us. Barbara Hartigan from Castleconnell has been the epitome of the long lasting artist and her collections of personality portraits (many signed by their famous subject) are invaluable.

The ambience of the hotel and its surroundings as well as the welcome of the staff, the food and drink makes this a very special outing for all the family. With the assistance of all sectors of the community, this event is the best example of community coming together for mutual benefit.

As the Craft workers come from all over Ireland, there is a great selection and range of Craft styles as well as wood types for woodturning and other wood-related products.

We carefully select the exhibitors to ensure that the crafts on view and on sale are authentic Irish crafts which are created by the artists selected. The special appeal of the Castleconnell Craft Fair is that the artists will be manning the stalls and are available to the public to discuss their requirements or talk about corporate gifts available from their workshop.

All in all the Castleconnell Craft Fair is special in many aspects including quality, ambience, location and sheer brilliance.

A visit to Castleconnell Craft Fair will alleviate the anxiety of Christmas shopping for the unusual gifts for that special person.

Patrick T. Dempsey, PRO, Castleconnell Craft Fair Committee

Castleconnell Project Ltd.

The Community Employment scheme continues to provide various services to the community. The sixteen participants are allocated to various organisations such as Ahane GAA, St. Vincent de Paul, Castleconnell Hall, ACMKIDZ, Tidy Towns and ACM itself.

With the support of the community and FÁS, we operate training courses which will help in the participants' seeking mainstream employment. Under the supervision of Mike Moran, the operatives carry out their tasks which include emptying of bins, street sweeping, and general upkeep of walls etc. As a help to ACM, they provide both secretarial assistance to that organisation and to ACMKIDZ, St. Vincent de Paul operate a shop in the village with help from Community Employment and Ahane GAA and the Scout unit also have the services of Community Employment.

FÁS provides most of the funding for the operation of the scheme with the balance coming from the community. We are always thankful for donations and will assist any organisation we can with our limited resources.

Irish Harp Centre & Music School

The past year has flown! The Music School has now grown to a staff of 20 teachers teaching 18 different instruments while also serving as the Mid West Examination Centre for Thames Valley University, London College of Music. The school examination results have now placed us in the top category of their centres worldwide. The highlight of the year was a concert in the University Concert Hall by both the National and Irish Harp Orchestras with a finale involving all the members of the school including students from our projects in 7 local schools. They played to a capacity audience and we would like to record our most sincere thanks to the Castleconnell Ahane Credit Union for their generous support and encouragement. A DVD of the event will be launched on the 26 September.

The year has been particularly noteworthy for Janet Harbison with the launch of the Janet Harp at the World Harp Congress in Amsterdam. The Harp designed by Janet and built by CAMAC of Brittany is designed specifically for Irish Traditional players rather than the more normal classical style models.

Meanwhile on the international front the centre continues to attract students for courses ranging from ad hoc lessons, summer schools to 1 year residencies, to date from 34 countries. Performing has taken the Irish Harp Orchestra on its now annual European concert tour playing to audiences totalling over 55,000. Other tours have taken in USA (including the home of Elvis Presley - Graceland), Cyprus, France and Germany.

Finally, but most important of all I would like to record my thanks and appreciation to our incredible team of teachers and the equally incredible people of our community in this place.

Malcolm Gullis, Principal.

WEMBLEY / LISNAGRY F.C. SCHOOLBOY/GIRL SEASON 2007/2008

First of all, it should be noted that Lisnagry F.C. had to amalgamate with Wembley F.C. in order to use their facilities, as we still do not have a permanent playing pitch in the vicinity.

We had a very successful season this year. We had a record number of under age players, ranging from U6 to U15. Our U15 team won their Division Cup and got to the final in the League. Congratulations to all involved.

We held our Annual Christmas Swim at the World's End on Christmas Day. There was a huge turnout for this very enjoyable event. We would like to thank Charcos for providing punch on the day, which was very gratefully received by all who had plunged into the cold water! We would also like to thank Paul Knapp, for being the Lifeguard on the day. Thanks also to all who sponsored the spot prizes for the raffle.

We had a very enjoyable end of season "Fun Day" in July when the children played a mini-league, and finished the day with the children playing against the parents! Great fun was had by all.

None of this would be possible without the voluntary assistance of all the Managers namely;

U6 Keith Power

U7 Brendan Clancy

U8 Ron Lanham

U9 Joe Byrnes

U10 Alan English & Brendan Myers

U11 Johnny Quigley & Gary Holt

U13 David Byrnes & Ger Byrnes

U14 Mike O'Regan

U15 Joe Byrnes & John Mulligan.

We would like to thank all the members of our hard working committee, who work tirelessly behind the scenes. We would also like to thank our non-committee members who help out with fundraising, transport etc.

We hope for future success in the Club by acquiring our own playing pitch in the area and possible promotion within the divisions.

We are always looking for more volunteers to help out with the under age teams. If anyone is interested, we train between 10 and 11am in Hermitage Park, so come along and get involved with the youth of the area. Joe Byrnes.

Castleconnell Tidy Towns

2007/8 has seen the re-establishment of the Castleconnell Tidy Towns Committee under the able Chairmanship of Albert Enright, who has worked tirelessly over the years to promote the town and its environment. It is good to report that our initial goal has been achieved, namely our entry into the 2008 National Tidy Towns Competition. At the time of going to press we await the result and our report!

Perhaps our most visible efforts have been the hanging baskets in the streets and the care of numerous small sites in the town, not least in the designated heritage area by the river, arguably one of the finest views in the country. Now we must look to the future and recruit new members for the committee. Our vision is one of action rather than meetings and therefore we invite all who value living in this unique place to join our work. Those interested should contact Malcolm Gullis at the Irish Harp Centre on 061 372777.

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CCE Craobh na Cruite

The Comhaltas branch of Comhaltas Craobh Na Cruite was instigated at the suggestion of Senator Labhrás Ó Murchú. Just outside the gate of the Irish Harp Centre is a fitting memorial to Martin McCabe who contributed so much to musical life in the parish not least through his teaching and of course to the establishment of a parish based branch of Comhaltas. Indeed he served with distinction as President of the organisation which has branches throughout the world. Following his untimely death the branch amalgamated with a number of other parish branches and the good work continued. However, with the re-establishment of a vibrant music school in the parish it is appropriate that it should once more have its own branch. We are delighted and honoured that his widow Mary has consented to be branch President. Because of the unique geographical position of Castleconnell to three counties membership and participation in Fleadhs is widespread and we are committed to encouraging the younger generation to enjoying both the social and musical experience of making music together.

ACM Activities for the year

As usual, the ACM Committee activities ranged from VEC Classes, (computers etc.) meeting of various organisations in the parish, St. Patrick's Day Parade, a very successful Summer Festival and Santa party. Starting in September 2008, we have computer classes (beginners and intermediate), creative writing and flower arranging.

Meeting twice monthly, the tireless committee embarked on a very ambitious plan to commence after-school service to primary school children. Commencing in September 2007, the service ran from 2pm until 6pm daily, Monday to Friday. The children who had signed up were collected from Castleconnell National School at 2pm or 3pm and brought to the ACM centre. There, under the supervision of Centre Manager, Elaine Faul and Katherine..., the ACMKIDZ were looked after. Given a healthy snack, refreshments etc. they were allowed play time and structured activities. They were helped with their lessons and had all their needs met. Margaret O'Sullivan and Tammie Ryan joined the staff from January 2008 from Community Employment. Up to 20 children are participating in the service at present.

As if that was not enough, funding was sought and sanctioned by Pobal from the Department of Health and Children. This funding will be used to provide for a purpose-built facility for after school service. This will allow us to provide up to 40 spaces for this service. With the excellent fully qualified staff, we are providing the community with much needed facilities. We are grateful to Co. Limerick Childcare Committee for their valuable advice and encouragement in furthering this project.

The building of this facility will commence in September 2008 and be complete by summer 2009. We would like to thank the people of the area who supported us and continue to support us in all our efforts in the community. To the various sponsors who have come on board we say a special thank you. To the Co. Limerick VEC who provides us with tutors for the various classes we are eternally grateful.



Kate Griffin and Brid Coughlan enjoying a trip to Bunratty.



Jennifer Mackey and Kate Minihan returning from the County Fun day in Bunratty.



Ahane Scout Group climbed Keeper Hill in April where they enjoyed the four seasons in one day.

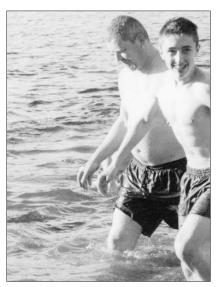


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David Byrnes and Oliver Phillips taking part in the Christmas Day Swim.

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Joe Byrnes, Gavin Byrnes, Declan Byrnes and Peter Byrnes braving the icy waters.



Ian Mooney, Player of the Year, being presented with his trophy by Dom Considine.



Young Lisnagry players at the end of the season sports day. From left; Jack English, Jack Minihan, Harry Knopp, Gerard O'Regan, Conor Myers, Eoin Maguire, Thomas Kitt and James Byrnes.



Wembley/Lisnagry Fun Day: Players and Mentors.



At the Care Of The Aged outing in Tralee in July were, from left, Breda Joyce, Susan Joyce, Lillian Enright, Peggy Hogg and Colette Thompson.



Also at the outing were, Nuala Coleman, Muriel and Michael Shyne and Helen Hartigan.

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Players from the Under 10 years team of Ahane and Claughaun who took part in a tournament.



Ahane Junior A team who won the East Final with a victory over Doon.



Castleconnell/Ahane I.C.A. celebrated its 30th birthday in the Woodlands House Hotel in Adare. From left; Pauline Minihan, Rosaleen Kelly, Mary Kennedy, Maureen O'Malley, Mary O'Grady, Agnes Collins, Betty Tuohy, Phyllis O'Brien. Seated, Maureen Kenny, President, Breda Cregan and Babs Meskell.

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My Journey of a Thousand Miles

By Ger Fitzgerald

I believe it was the ancient Chinese philosopher Lao-Tzu (604 B.C.-531B.C.) who imparted the judicious quotation to us that "A journey of a thousand miles must start with a single step". Wise words. My own journey of a thousand miles began sometime around the winter of 2004 when I decided that I wanted to enter seminary and try to become a priest. Many people, when I come home on holidays,



ask me what seminary is like and so I decided to write an article to describe life in St. Patrick's College, Maynooth.

The line on the vocations poster read simply, "Push out into the deep" a command of Jesus to his disciples as they fished on the Sea of Galilee. They obeyed Him and a great catch of fish was their reward. Push out into the deep. I had always wanted to be a priest. Ever since I was young it has always been with me and eventually, sometime around the winter of 2004 I decided to apply to the vocations director for Killaloe Diocese.

When you apply to be a priest you quickly realise that this is like nothing else you could ever do. The vast questionnaire you have to complete, containing approximately one hundred questions (I can't remember the exact number) is a swift wake up call. The first meeting with your vocations director is promptly followed by a psychological test, which for me at any rate, lasted one full day and took place in Maynooth College itself.

I remember well my first visit to the college. It was early 2005 and I arrived under cover of darkness in driving rain. The college itself cut quite the imposing spectre. It's hard to describe a first impression of the place but I think in hindsight I would much rather have arrived during the day. On driving in the gates of the college you are faced with what I now know as Stoyte House. This contains the President and Vice-President's offices. The current President is Monsignor Hugh Connolly from Northern Ireland. He replaced Monsignor Dermot Farrell just last year. To the left and right of Stoyte House there are two archways. If you go through these archways you will catch your first glimpse of the seminary itself. The building facing you now would be St. Patrick's House, and also directly ahead of you would be the two big wooden doors of the College. From here you would also catch your first glimpse of the College Chapel, a theological work of art and also of the famous dining hall, Pugin Hall.

However, I was not to know any of this as I took my first few tentative steps into the unknown on that wet and miserable evening. I will always, incidentally, be grateful to the taxi driver who drove me from Dublin directly to the college door for a measly twenty Euro. If not for him, I would still be roaming the streets looking for Maynooth.

The first psychological exam, which I did under the tutelage of Sr. Eithne Swan, was difficult enough. One memory that really sticks in my mind was the session with the building blocks. I was given five or six building blocks and then shown a diagram and instructed to arrange the blocks into that design. I can safely say that if I was still there today I would not have been able to do it.

Regardless of the situation with the building blocks I managed to do very well over all and thus secured a final meeting with Bishop Willie Walsh, sometime around March of 2005. This was another nerve-wrecking meeting, because he would either accept me or reject me for the Diocese. Luckily, for me, he accepted me and I was off to Maynooth to study for the priesthood.

There is always a great deal of excitement in the family and the neighbourhood when someone goes to be a priest. I'll always remember the night before I left there was a little gathering in my house and everybody wished me well and hoped for the best. The following day, I packed my bags and once again, headed off into the unknown. The thousand-mile journey was now well and truly about to begin.

Upon officially arriving in the college things move at an alarming speed; you are quickly shown to your room, which in my case (for first year at least) turned out to be room 50 in St. Mary's house. It's a funny feeling to walk into a room and see nothing but a bed, a sink and a wardrobe. You begin to wonder have you made the correct decision. The first Mass for the new students follows and then a meal with your parents in Pugin Hall is served. Then it's time for the hardest part of all, to leave your family. They go home and you stay. It might only seem like a small thing, but in reality it's very different. You suddenly find yourself all alone, in a group of people you've never met before and miles from home. It's lonely.

Friendships are quickly made and you settle in soon enough. The toughest part, for me, was the first month of my first two years. Known as the Spiritual month this four week period sees no mobile phone allowed, no papers, no letters or no going outside the grounds of the college. It seems very tough, but, it gives you space to ground yourself and to take in everything that is happening. Personally, I was glad to see the back of those two months but in hindsight I can see the benefits.

Now that I'm in my fourth year of seminary, just one away from deaconate ordination, with the help of God, I've become used to the seminary system. Life in the seminary is very much focussed on the four

pillars of priestly formation as laid out in Pope John Paul II's encyclical Pastores Dabo Vobis. These four facets of formation are spiritual, pastoral, human and academic. Spiritual formation is very important. The priest, who doesn't pray, Pope John XXIII tells us, is a priest who will find himself in trouble. Prayer is an every day occurrence in seminary. Morning Prayer is usually at 7.15am except for Thursday and Sunday when we have it at 7.50am and Saturday when we say it in private. Mass follows at 7.50am on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday. On Thursday we have Mass at 6.00pm and we are joined by the lay students for that. There are two Masses on Saturday morning, at 7.50 and 9.30 for those who wish to have a lie in after the hard academic week. Evening prayer takes place every evening at 6.10pm except Thursday when we join with other students in our Diocese. As I'm the only Killaloe student, I say it in private. Night prayer is perhaps the most peaceful and spiritual of all the gatherings of the day. It takes place at 10.15pm and lasts about fifteen minutes. A lovely peaceful end to what is usually a hectic day.

The academic side of things is very interesting. Philosophy takes up the first two/three years of your study, depending on whether you do the Diploma or the Degree. In my study of Philosophy and Arts I was lucky enough to encounter Mr. Donal McMahon to whom I will always be indebted as not only a great teacher, but also as a good friend. After Philosophy you move into the daring and exciting waters of Theology. Theology is fascinating. You begin to learn that nothing is as black and white as you had hoped for. As a quick example, I've often been asked, "wouldn't it have been great to have been a disciple of Jesus, to hang around with Jesus and St. Peter?" Well, in the Gospel of Mark the disciples are portrayed as the group who are with Jesus and yet do not have a single clue who He is; so much so, that in the end, they all desert Jesus. Fascinating! The academic side of formation is very tough. Exams take a lot of study and effort, but, thanks be to God, I've managed to pass them all well to date, as well as getting all the languages out of the way. Greek, Hebrew and Latin can appear daunting, but they are passable.

Pastoral formation is very important. Pastoral formation affords you experience in practical matters. For example my Pastoral placement in first year was in a Nursing Home, in second year I was with the Beavers and last year I worked in Merchants Quay Project in Dublin, a shelter for homeless people and people struggling with drug addiction. To hear these people's stories really moved me, and made me realise how lucky I am. Next year is my Pastoral year, where I shall be in a parish for the year. Indeed, while you are reading this, more than likely I'll be in Mullingar helping out as best I can.

Human formation is just getting on with the lads and not shutting

yourself off. It means growing as a human being, using the skills you have to become a better person, better able to live with people, come to grips with celibacy and better able to deal with people whom you will meet every day. Human formation is your own personal growth and maturing over the years.

And that is Seminary life. It's not all doom and gloom and prayer either. We have a great games room up there with two pool tables, upon which I've lost my fair share of bets, we have good social life and opportunities, we mix well with the lay students, and behind all the serious study, prayer and formation we do also have a lot of fun and form friendships that will endure for life.

While I do enjoy, and have enjoyed my time up there, nothing beats coming home to Castleconnell at Halloween, Christmas, Easter and summer. To everyone who has helped me this far, in any way at all, I say, thank you very much. Your help, no matter what it was, even a letter, is very, very much appreciated and always welcome. Hopefully one day I will be able to repay that kindness. Until then I would ask you to keep me in your prayers as well as Ger Jones from O'Briens Bridge currently studying in Rome and also Rev. Fergal O'Neill, recently ordained to the deaconate; two great friends of mine, and two great future priests. The journey of a thousand miles continues for the moment. Hopefully, the end will be the fulfilment. Many thanks for reading.





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A MONGOLIAN JOURNEY

By Maurice Spillane

October / December 2007

Greetings from the home of Genghis Khan.

Having managed to get a reliable internet connection I can now tell you about the work I hope to get involved with over the next three months, and also let you have an idea of the work of the Christina Noble Children's Foundation here in Outer Mongolia. I am based in Ulaanbaatar and the weather has been reasonably mild since I arrived on 9th October. At the moment it's only minus 5 to minus 10, but I am reliably informed that it is due to drop to minus 30 in the next week or two. If you remember I was without my bags for sometime when I arrived in Ireland, well I ended up here with what I stood up in again. On this occasion we were happily united in a short time.

The Mongolians are a beautiful people but probably the worst drivers I have ever seen and that includes Bangkok, Manila and all of India. Ulaanbaatar the capital has a population approximately the size of Perth or Dublin, the centre of which was built by the Russians in typical 1960's communist style of high-rise apartments. The centre houses approximately one quarter of the population in reasonable circumstances. The remaining three quarters live in what is called the Ger District, an area surrounding the city on three sides similar to a shanty town. In that area people live principally in Gars, the traditional Mongolian one room felt tent erected on wooden frames, or in wooden huts similar to an old garden shed. There is no running water, no sewage or sanitation and no real road system in the Ger

district. Furthermore, as a result of the severe winters with temperatures dropping to minus 40 and below, everyone burns coal. This is the cheapest fuel, but with the consequence that the air is heavily polluted in winter. The contrasts of a country striving to modernise against the backdrop of a nomadic culture are considerable.



Street children scavenging for food.

Following the Soviet withdrawal in 1990 after 80 years of occupation, the country suffered economic and social disintegration. With the collapse of the social welfare system, many families were plunged into poverty and thousands of children found themselves homeless and on the streets. Some found shelter in the black market area while others occupied the maintenance manholes, through which the power company pipes hot water to heat the high-rise buildings.

The group I am working with is "The Christina Noble Children's Foundation" (Foundation). It was set up in 1997 following a visit to Mongolia by Christina Noble having successfully set up a similar charity to help children in Vietnam. You will not believe how small a world it is when I tell you that the Foundation in Mongolia is being managed (and very well I might say) by a man by the name of Eamon Thornton who lived in Sligo for many years running a plumbing business and was involved in the Diving Club there. Although the Foundation has achieved a great deal in the last ten years, saving hundreds of children, new children continue to occupy the manholes, the black market area and the children's prison. The Foundation continues to do most of its work in these areas but their resources are always limited. Recently I watched them struggle to buy winter jackets and shoes for the children. They are also trying to find the money to buy more bunks for the boys' prison where some children sleep on the concrete floor.

The Foundation was recognised as the "Best NGO in Mongolia in 2006" and has set up five programmes aimed directly at alleviating the results of poverty on children. I will explain these as briefly as I can:

1. The Child Sponsorship Programme:

The objective of this Project is two-fold: firstly, to prevent children becoming street children; and secondly, to ensure children complete their education. A family whose child qualifies for sponsorship must adhere to two conditions, namely, the child must remain living at home and be enrolled in full-time education.

The programme seeks to unite an individual international donor with a child living in poverty in Mongolia. The donor commits to pay \$US24 (approx. €15) per month, of which \$US20 is passed directly to the child in their local currency. \$US2 is reserved for medical expenses for the children and \$US2 goes toward that Programme's administration cost. (I understand that the \$US24 figure has been in place for ten years and is currently being reviewed). To receive their monthly donation the children visit the Foundation's office in Ulaanbaatar once a month. This serves a number of purposes, in that the Foundation's social workers can enquire what the previous month's money was spent on, and see that everything is well with the child. Any letters or gifts the sponsor may have sent are also passed on.



Pals.

I believe that giving money directly to the child is unique to the Foundation. As I understand it other organisations invest the donor's money in programmes the child may access such as schools. However Christina Noble strongly believes that giving the child the money gives the best outcome and having watched the programme in action it is clear the difference it makes to the children and their families.

All children receive home visits by the Foundation's social workers and the sponsor gets an annual report on the child's progress with current photographs. The children are encouraged to write to their sponsor and the sponsor to the child. The staff at the Foundation translates the mail and sends this together with the original letter.

Because of the cost involved, children in remote rural areas outside Ulaanbaatar are visited by the Foundation once every two months with their payments. The next trip is in the first week of December and due to the lack of surfaced roads the journey takes a full five days. I am due to go on that trip and am told the average temperature will be between minus 30 and minus 40. (I hope the anti-freeze is up to it!) There are currently approximately 1,346 children on sponsorship with a waiting list of over 600.

2. The Ger Village:

On her first visit to Mongolia in 1997 Christina envisaged the construction of a village of Gers for homeless and abandoned children where they could live safely in as close as possible to the traditional form of Mongolian life. Situated approx. 12kms from Ulaanbaatar the Blue Skies Ger Village is now home to 48 children who live in nine residential Gers each kept by a Ger mother, usually a homeless single parent, who is also allowed to bring her own children to live. Along with the residential Gers there is a large community Ger, a small workshop, a cookhouse, poly-tunnels for growing vegetables, a shower and toilet block, a playground, a small bakery, and a

schoolhouse. Next year a new Music and Arts Centre is planned together with a small library. Various donors support the Ger village's maintenance and expansion and it has been a great success.

3. Give a Ger Programme:

This is based around the concept of giving homeless families or families living in difficult situations a new fully furnished Ger, which is in fact a new home. Donors send the Foundation funds with which to buy and erect new Gers. The programme has grown from the 8 Gers given in 2002 to over 100 in 2006. New fully furnished Gers cost approximately \$US900 and of course there is a waiting list. There is no difficulty with land. People just erect their home on vacant land and register themselves as the occupiers of that plot.

4. The Education Programme:

The objective in running this programme is to identify children (still living with their families) who have either never attended or fallen out of the mainstream education system. These children are then given an opportunity to commence or continue their education. Unfortunately the State education system is in crisis being increasingly unable to find the resources to meet the educational needs of the population and many thousands of children through lack of funds or other poverty related reasons find themselves unable to access the state system. Classes for these children are held at the Foundation's offices in Ulaanbaatar, and at the schoolhouse located at the Blue Skies' Ger Village. In addition to classes in all main subjects, the children also enjoy a hot lunch which may be their only hot meal. At present 160 children are enrolled in the Education Programme with 50 of these in the kindergarten. The Foundation also provides education at the Boys' and Girls' Prisons, where many children from the age of 14 are incarcerated for poverty-related crimes. Unfortunately for the inmates of the Boys' Prison I am currently the English teacher four days a week.

5. The Healthcare Programme

This programme provides a free Drop in Medical Clinic to the children on the Child Sponsorship Programme and their siblings who cannot afford the state health system. The Foundation has two doctors and a nurse on their staff. Currently there is a pool of approximately 5000 accessing the clinic which is housed in a room at the local hospital. Children who are too sick to attend are visited in their homes. The Foundation also provides a Night Clinic to street children. This operates from the back of a large specially designed truck which travels with a doctor and nurse to where the street children sleep around the black market and in the underground maintenance manholes I previously mentioned. On these visits free medical care is

provided to all, also hot food, warm clothing, footwear, candles and other supplies are handed out when funds allow. Warm clothing and blankets are always in short supply. I go on the Night Clinic and can confidently say that it is a programme that brings real comfort to the neediest. To see the smiles on the faces of children as



Children arriving at the night clinic.

young as six when you care for their most basic needs would melt your heart. However although it may sound wonderful to be bringing some comfort to children in such dreadful circumstances I can assure you there is no romance involved, when after 15 minutes or so in the back of the heated truck they must get out so you can move onto the next stop. Currently the Night Clinic is funded by donations to operate twice weekly throughout the year, however attempts are being made to raise a further \$US25,000 per annum to allow the clinic to run four nights a week.

There are also plans to do more, particularly for the street children by the erection of a new building which will include amongst other things dormitories and other necessary facilities for up to 60 children. This would immediately get many children off the streets and there are plans already in place to bring volunteer vocational instructors from Ireland and the UK who would also reside in the building while at the same time teaching and training the children to a high standard, which would guarantee them a job in the booming construction sector. Unfortunately such undertakings are costly with the land and building costs being in the region of \$US1m but the Foundation is confident it can and will achieve its goal.

It is tough but it's not all doom and gloom and real progress is being made with the children. The selection of photographs helps to illustrate some of the areas I have described. One very important thing I must say is an experience such as this puts into stark perspective just how lucky we all are. If you would like more information, or wish to make a donation to the Christina Noble Children's Foundation, please visit the website www.cncf.org or call the office at 01 645 5555.

Maurice Spillane is a Castleconnell native now living in Perth in Western Australia with his three sons John, Patrick and Ben.



A boy coming up through a manhole in the morning having spent the night down there.

Peter Huson

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Rhyming and Rapping Together at Castleconnell N.S.

The school year began for us with great excitement and enthusiasm. Our enrolment had grown by 40 pupils and five new teachers had been appointed. The main focus for our school community was to assimilate this growth without compromising our unique school atmosphere and the rich education we provide for our pupils. Our participation in the National Pilot Project for Teacher Induction (NPPTI) was invaluable in the induction and mentoring of our exceptional young teachers. This project facilitated the sharing of expertise, skill and wisdom between our older more experienced teachers and our new staff.

The 2007/08 school year was the third and final year in our European Comenius project funded by Léargas. Our pupils have been exchanging letters and art work with our partner school in Cyprus and Sicily. Our mascot



Mrs. O'Callaghan's Junior Infant Class of 2007/08.

"Capitan Euroctopus" had adventures in Finland, Belgium, Sicily and Guadeloupe. We published his adventures in a multi-lingual book and published a calendar featuring the art work of pupils from all our partner countries. Staff from our school travelled to Belgium in October and to Guadeloupe in February for the closing ceremony of our three year project.

The holistic, broad and balanced education we provide for our pupils has been enriched by our participation in many projects, both local and national. Pupils from 3rd, 4th, and 5th participated in the Write - a - Book competition organised by the Limerick Education Centre. All our pupils performed well in the project with some pupils being awarded distinction. Our pupils also participated in the EBS/INTO handwriting competition and once again one of our pupils was awarded a prize at local level.

Pupils from 5th class entered a competition organised by the INTO and the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform. The children wrote a Rap on the theme of disability and inclusion. They were chosen as the county winners and invited to attend a prize giving in Liberty Hall in Dublin. All pupils from 5th class travelled to Dublin for the event and returned home in triumphant mood as the national champions beating off competition from every county in Ireland. The pupils and teachers received a rapturous homecoming when they were met by parents at the railway station in Castleconnell. The prize for their achievement was €12,000 for investment in Information Technology in the school.

Once again this year our school choir have proven to be excellent ambassadors for our school and the community of Castleconnell. The highlight of the year was their participation in the renowned Cork International Choral Festival. This was the first time a choir from Limerick had participated in the Primary schools competition. 52 pupils from 3rd to 6th class took to the stage in the magnificent surrounding of the City Hall in Cork. The children rose to the occasion and produced a flawless performance and were awarded third place.

From a sporting point of view this year was busier than ever with our pupils participating in Inter-School Leagues in hurling, camogie and Gaelic football. Our boys and girls also participated in the five-a-side soccer league and the girls reached the county finals. Following on from our achievements in basketball last year our pupils participated in the City League and the Limerick East League. Our pupils also participated in the Limerick City Sports in the University of Limerick and local cross country running events. We are very proud of the positive, sporting attitude of our pupils and applaud their efforts and achievements in the sporting arena.

We had some very active quiz teams in the senior classes this year. Our 5th class quiz team reached the County finals in the Community Games Quiz and a team from 4th and 5th came third in the Limerick/Clare final of the



National Rapping Champions: At the award ceremony at Liberty Hall, Dublin, from top; James Hopkins, Class Teacher, Angela Dunn, President I.N.T.O., Cian O'Dowd, Jamie Haughey, Michael Culhane, Bonnie Maughan, Niall O'Donnell, Timmy O'Connor, Derbhile de Paor, Principal, James Reddy, Lela Hill and Aileen O'Neill.

Credit Union Quiz competition.

Our school chess club continues to flourish. This year a chess team from our school represented the parish in the Community Games U-12 Limerick finals and won for the third year in a row. This team went on to participate in the Munster Finals and were narrowly beaten. In addition to the Community Games our school chess team also reached the All Ireland round of the inter-school league.

In terms of the development of our school facilities our staff, Parents Association and Board of Management have been very focused on ensuring our school is a 21st century facility for our 21st century pupils. The main project this year was the installation of interactive white-boards in all classrooms. This was a very ambitious project and was only made possible by the support and commitment of our staff and parents. The prize money from the Rap Competition won by 5th class was the starting block for this initiative. Our Parents Association came on board and ran a highly successful Race Night in Charco's with the support of many members of the local business community. This project was truly a whole community effort and we are deeply grateful to all concerned. Pupils in our school will benefit from improved teaching and learning as a result of this worthwhile initiative.

The Board of Management of the school is very conscious that the outside of our building should reflect the excellent facilities held within. To this end the outside of the building has been painted for the first time since our school was built. We are delighted that the outside of our building now reflects the vibrant, joyful and progressive activities which take place in the building.

At the end of another school year we reflect on our achievements and consider the challenges we face. Perhaps our biggest challenge for the 2008/09 school year is the management of the traffic problem which calls into question the safety of all who use the school. There is an active committee in place and we will be working closely with Gárdaí, Engineers and the Limerick County Council. I am sure that the entire community will support our efforts in this matter to ensure the safety and well being of all our pupils.

Staff of Castleconnell N.S.



Community
Games
Chess Team:
Jack
English,
James
Reddy,
Michael
Culhane,
Keegan
Park, Niall
O'Donnell
and Aileen
O'Neill.

An Caisleán - The Castleconnell, Ahane, Montpelier Annual 2008

RHYMING AND RAPPING TOGETHER

Castleconnell N.S. Limerick.

Drama Introduction to Rap

Boy 1: Hey, does that girl in the wheelchair wanna play?

Girl 1: I don't know, let's ask her.

Boy 2: Hey do U want to play basketball with us?

Girl 2: Yea, sure. I'd love to play but I'm not so good.

Boy 3: Around here, we focus on peoples' abilities, not disability

Girl 3: Hey, ... I've got an idea. Why don't we write a rap about this?

Everyone: YEA!!!!!!!!

Hey there dudes come listen to me Gonna spin a rap about disability The world is full of difference, we all ain't the same Why don't we just listen in this life-long game

There once was a boy who was really kind He was always mocked, 'coz he was blind One day he awoke, to discover he was cured And on that fateful day, his eyes began to pour.

Cousin's in a wheelchair, he plays in all our games
Neighbour's got Down syndrome; we love her just the same
Einstein was autistic; he was a real smart guy
If you've a disability, it don't mean U can't try

Got to look deep down, look at all that's good Don't allow prejudice, in your neighbourhood. No one's good at everything, we've all got "Our Thing" The point is to remember, to all be friends.

Focus on the positive, look at people's skills

Don't be mean and nasty: it PEEVES us to the gills

People 'av disabilities focus on what's good

Focus on ability in your neighbourhood.



Miss Barry's 2007/08 Junior Infant Class at Castleconnell N.S.

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An Caisleán - The Castleconnell, Ahane, Montpelier Annual 2008

HELEN CARROLL - AN APPRECIATION

The news of Helen Carroll's peaceful passing on August 28th was met with great sadness in the Parish. Helen was born and reared in her beloved Castleconnell, she spent her working life here and later she married her husband Joe with whom she raised two children, Gerard and Vincent, She was a quiet and unassuming woman who supported her husband Joe in all his endeavours within the parish and also with his writing. (In fact, she was his greatest critic). She was a devoted wife and mother who took great pride in the accomplishments of her family. Helen loved to have visitors to her home where she provided tea and the most delicious cakes coupled with great conversation, but never gossip which she could not tolerate. Later, during her stay in Rosary Hill Nursing Home due to her failing health, she loved to see people calling and even though she was being urged to rest, the oxygen mask kept being removed in order for her to participate in the conversation and often it was a wry or humorous comment! Helen will be remembered lovingly by her husband and family as a wonderful wife and mother who was always there for them. Her friends and neighbours remember a loval and true friend and a great neighbour. She was a woman of great perception and will be remembered for the kindness shown in her own quiet way, to young married couples who were trying to make ends meet in the recession of the eighties. Her efforts were never publicised but greatly appreciated.

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John Enright - My Hero

By Marty O'Brien

In the 1980s on our way to Kerry where we had a house rented in Ballybunion for our summer holidays. we always stopped in Castleconnell coming and going. We would have a picnic by the river and call in to the shop that had big salmon on display and old fishing tackle hanging on the wall. With five children I was not into old fishing - that would come later when I came across an article by Daniel F. McCrea in an old issue of the magazine "Rod and Gun". That was in February 1979. Daniel visited Castleconnell in that year to investigate the life of John Enright. He lamented that there was nothing in Castleconnell to commemorate the achievements of the local



John Enright, World Fly Casting Champion.

angler who became the World Fly Casting Champion in 1896.

Around 1990 I began to collect antique Irish fishing tackle and had acquired an old brass reel made by the Enright's of Castleconnell. I was curious to find out more about the man and visited Castleconnell myself and talked to local people to try and unravel the Enright story. Then I met Paddy Lee whose grocery shop had been the Enright tackle shop and where the famous Castleconnell greenheart rod was sold having been made in the nearby Enright factory. Paddy was a great help and gave me numerous items associated with the Enright's. Later I met Albert Enright who was enthusiastic about the achievements of John Enright. Albert was also so generous in giving me some photos and cards associated with the Enright firm. Later I also met Joe Carroll, author of several books about Castleconnell, and he too was a great help to me in my research. All these locals have a great interest in the great Enright family and are part of the driving committee who worked to ensure that John Enright will never be forgotten in Castleconnell.

What I can tell you about John Enright is that he was a very shy man, a small man but from the waist up he was all muscle with great powerful arms

that came from fly casting from a very young age. This was his secret strength that came from working as a young boy in the rod factory, swishing and testing the big greenheart rods. It is now very difficult to get even a photograph of John Enright or anything to do with the firm - ledgers, books, fishing tackle or catalogues. They must be out there someplace. I will keep searching. Some of the highlights of John's career were:

- 1896 in London World Fly Casting Champion in three events including the prestigious 20-foot rod event and the World Record previously held by J.J. Hardy was broken.
- 1900 in Paris at an angling exhibition he equalled his record from London of four years previously.
- 1904 in London he broke his own record with a throw of 147 feet.
- 1906 in New York on Harlem Lake he broke the world record yet again with a throw of 148 feet and 6 inches.

He broke numerous other records with smaller rods ranging from 11 to 15 feet. As far as my research shows, John broke at least eleven world records using different rod lengths.

John Enright used these events to market and sell the rods produced in Castleconnell. With his fame and success his rods sold to all corners of the world and his business thrived. He was internationally renowned.

John's last display was in the Franco-British Exhibition Tournaments held near Shepherds Bush, London in July 1908. Even though he was unwell he gave a marvellous display of his outstanding casting ability. He died at this home in the Shannon Hotel on 25th October 1908 at the early age of 44 years.

I want to leave the last word to J.J. Hardy of the great Hardy Tackle Firm who was John's principal and most formidable opponent in the casting tournaments of the World. In a letter to the Fishing Gazette in October 1908 after he had heard of the death of John Enright, he said of him, "he had never heard an ill word spoken of him." Surely, no man could have a better epitaph.

MEMORIES OF SCHOOL DAYS IN CASTLECONNELL IN THE SIXTIES

By Eva Kelly (Nee Dougan)

In 1960 my father Paddy Dougan, an army officer, was transferred from Cork to Limerick. Being an avid fly fisherman he chose to bring his family to live in Castleconnell. We lived in a lovely old house next to the Shannon Bar and the great Mick Hickey.

I went to the old school at the river where I was taught by the gentle Mrs. Houlihan. I adored my school days in Castleconnell as each day was a new adventure. I experienced freedom there never surpassed. Most days coming home from school the group from the village would either go down the river or climb the old castle ruins (which was banned). I remember one day Mr. and Mrs. Houlihan arriving along in their little grey car and stopping underneath the castle and ordering us all out of hiding immediately or they would call our parents. We all crawled home mortified.

Another favourite was going to wakes where you had to touch the corpse or you would dream of him or her forever. The relatives usually thought we were such holy children they fed us lemonade and cakes.

I loved the village shops especially Richardson's when sent to buy loose biscuits. I watched sheep being slaughtered in Delaney's yard and bought sweets in Miss Ryan's shop. Sometimes shows came to the new hall and

more importantly a chip van, which parked outside our house.

Summertime in Castleconnell was magic - your own swimming pool and diving board at Worrall's End and of course picnics to Doonass Falls with my mother, sister Aisling, Anne Doyle and Marshie Delaney. We were invariably chased by a bull (which in hindsight was surely a bullock). I think the bull was more afraid of us screaming than we were of him. It gets us to the falls quicker anyway.



Eve Kelly (nee Dougan) on the frozen

In sixth class the school moved to the new school and I remember going on a bus to O'Brien's Bridge to do my Primary Cert. School tours were also memorable - the best being a trip to Shannon Airport. We also went on a bus to Nenagh to sing in a festival in the Cathedral. I can still sing all the Latin hymns that Mrs. Houlihan taught us.

In 1963, year of the big freeze the Shannon froze over at Worrall's End and we all went skating on the ice. It was a most amazing sight; simple times, simple pleasures.

In 1964 my father was transferred to the Curragh and I was broken hearted to leave Castleconnell. In a twist of fate my twin sons ended up being taught in the Curragh by Mrs. Houlihan's daughter Berna 26 years later.



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Turning our bicycles at Larkin's We head towards Gillogue

Dad carrying a tin can jumps the low wall stomping down nettles on his way to the lower field to pick the biggest juiciest blackberries you ever saw.

Mam sits on a fallen tree trunk
mothering the baby
as we pick at our height
and run
slithering on cow dung
to thunder handfuls
into her can
our fingers and mouths
purple.

All containers full
we head back
to the Parish
to feast on hot blackberry jam
spooned over thick slices of Tubridy's
black crusted cottage
the juice running down
our contented chins.

Mae Leonard

AHANE N.S. TRACES ITS HISTORY

Ahane, a seemingly insignificant townland in the parish of Castleconnell in east Limerick, which does not appear on any ordinance survey map, has made significant contributions to the development of cultural, educational and sporting life. Ahane became synonymous with hurling not only throughout the entire country but also as far afield as the Americas and Australia in a time when telecommunications was as far removed as a shuttle to the moon.

The economic circumstances in the early 1900s were such that the majority of people did not have a lot going for them. The G.A.A. and hurling games in particular, at both local and inter-county levels, helped raise their spirits. The cry "Come on Ahane the spuds are boilin'" which could be heard on many a hurling pitch was synonymous with raising the spirit.

Formal education in Ahane took over from Mr. Patsy Collins hedge school in 1823. Sir Richard Bourke, born in 1778, was the philanthropist who paid for and built Ahane School before the Famine occurred and prior to the repeal of the Penal Laws in Ireland. As a result of the generosity of Sir Richard Bourke, a stone building was erected by him on his estate, Thornfields, Ahane in 1823. This school commenced with 79 pupils, boys and girls attending and was in situ until 1933 when the new school was built down the road at the Cross of Laught.

Sir Richard Bourke, who subsequently became Governor in New South Wales, was guided by his experience gleaned in Ahane, when he set up and developed the educational system in that part of Australia (1831-1835).

The 1933 school served the community well over the years and an extension was built in 2002 with Principal Margaret Hannon at the helm.

Tracing the school's progression, in 1823 there were 79 pupils enrolled in Ahane school, there were 88 in 1933 and now in 2008 there are 122 attending Ahane N.S.

Each century has brought huge improvements and Ahane N.S. is now a high tech school complete with fully networked computers. The commitment to being a green school is illustrated by the school being twice winners of the Tidy Towns School Awards in the Mid West Region and complete with a solar panelled road sign, vegetable garden, flower garden and nature trails. This work is overseen by Mr. Michael O'Shea, who won first prize this year for 'Best Environmental Educator 2008'. The love and nurturing nature continues to be embedded in the children's minds.

As winners of Limerick County Council Environment Awards and Discovery Science Awards over the past four years, the accomplishments of the school continue to grow.

Changes continue to take place in Ahane N.S. This year we saw the opening of a new extension in Ahane N.S., with the addition of two new classrooms. Bishop Willie Walsh visited the school on June 19th to bless the new facilities. Parents, pupils and neighbours were invited to join in this celebratory occasion. The school's commitment to a green planet was endorsed by the planting of a Chestnut tree by Bishop Willie Walsh in the school grounds.

The Board, Principal and Staff can look forward with confidence to meeting the requirements of the community but in so doing must not forget the efforts and achievements of those who have gone before us.

Staff of Ahane N.S.



At the official opening of the new extension to Ahane National School; Bishop Willie Walsh, cuts the ribbon watched by Deirdre Connolly, Willie O'Dea, Minister for Defence, Siobhan Kennedy, Michael Lynch and Liz Kiely, Principal of Ahane N.S.



At the blessing of the new extension; Liz Kiely, Principal, Cora Mulvihill, teacher, Bishop Willie Walsh, Fr. Donal Dwyer, C.C. and Fr. Brendan Kyne, P.P.



Ahane N.S. teachers, staff, Board of Management and Guests. From left; Michael O'Shea, Simon Tuohy, Kieran O'Donnell, Bridget Teefy, Bernadette Condon, Siobhan Browne, Siobhan Kennedy, Liz Kiely, Fr. Donal Dwyer, C.C., Mary Jackman, Deirdre Connolly, Susan Cannon, Theresa Mason, Paulette Hodkinson, Trish Cosgrove, Vivienne Morris, Michael Lynch, Conleth Hussey, Bishop Willie Walsh and Cora Mulvihill.



Bishop Willie Walsh plants a chestnut tree to mark the occasion of the opening of the new Ahane School extension watched by Michael O'Shea, Keelan Fitzgerald, Eoghan Hussey, David Kennedy, Christina O'Connell and Liz Kiely.



Some of the pupils of Ahane School.



Getting ready for the Supervalue Tidy Towns competition at Ahane N.S. Back row; from left, Amy Ryan, Oisín Culhane, Gearóid Coffey, Ciaran Barry, Noel Brennan, Seán Devitt, Michael Ryan, Laura McInerney. Middle row; Edana Flynn, Vichy Callinan, Josh Ryan, Blathnaid Nevin, Kate O'Brien, Luke Connell, Christopher Williams, Eamon O'Keeffe, Maeve Conroy, Niamh O'Curry, Sarah Hourigan. Front row; Dion Brazier Smalle, Saoirse O'Toole, Áine O'Curry, Gearóid Harnet, Stephen Coughlan, Adam O'Brien, Mark Gleeson, John Moloney, Clanci Collins Maher, Niamh Reynolds, Liam Conroy, Eoghan Hussey, Joe Griffin.



In the school garden, Laura Griffin and Michael O'Shea.

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FORTY FIVE

By Pat Tuohy

Recently when I was returning from a Forty-Five card game in Boher, Ballywilliam, Michael Murphy was with me and he posed the following questions. What sort of brains had the person who designed the game of Forty-Five and who wrote the rules?

I did not know but over the next couple of weeks, I pondered and started thinking about his questions. There are variations of Forty-Five played in many parts of Ireland such as "twenty-five", "thirty-one", "one hundred and ten" and "spoil fifteen", but the rules are predominantly the same. I was reared in Gouig where there was a great culture of Forty-Five and I remember being a young lad with my father saving turf in the bog at the end of the 1940's or early 1950's. During tea break the neighbouring turf savers would assemble and talk about everyday things. In my eyes at the time I thought that the men were all big men, such as Mickey Murphy, Paddy Power, George Kingston, Tom Grace and my father. Usually on a Monday the conversation would be on the previous night's Forty-Five rubber played in the Gaelic Hall in the village.

Even at my young age I marvelled at their power of recall, every card played the previous night would be played again, with comments such as, "if Stephen Tuohy had played the three of diamonds instead of the deuce of clubs," or "if someone had crossed the high man" or "did not 'stick' the dealer" or "did not play for the table the result would be different". I knew that those neighbours did not know who wrote the rules or who designed the regulations governing the card game, but my God they knew their Forty-Five, and could remember the night's cards like a computer.

I was struggling at the time trying to memorise lines from a book of Caesar (all Gaul was divided into three parts) or lines from a book of Virgil concerning Aeneas and the dawn rising up. Other topics were discussed among the turf savers of my childhood; our terrier had entered a badger's sett in the Black Haggard and was lost for the most part of a week in spite of our best efforts to retrieve him. That dog was discussed at length but eventually after a week he wobbled back home much the worst of his ordeal but he survived. Sometimes international events were discussed such as the assassination of the great pacifist Mahatma Gandhi in India in 1948, but the discussion did not dwell on his loss as a political leader, but the huge funeral pyre that was created for his cremation.

Some years later when we were hurling on Sunday afternoons in Ryan Malachy's field or on the road, if the afternoon became rainy or wet, we went

into either Byrne's or Ryan Malachy's house where the game of Forty-Five was invariably in progress. Again if the men were short of numbers to make a "six" or a "nine", I would be asked or cajoled or invited to partake. During the playing of the hand dead silence prevailed, but after each hand an inquest would be held about what should have been played and what not. I sometimes wished that I was not dealt any trumps, because then I could not be accused of playing the wrong card at the wrong time. I remember comments and questions that the card players would address to each other. "Did your heifer calve yet? The one you bought in Newport, the spotted one, had you much of a pull? Clubs are trumps" all in the same breath. "Are there many eels in the drain you are shovelling? And diamonds it is". As well as the players previously mentioned the men who played in the 1950's included men such as John Tuohy, Mick Burns, Denis Walsh and Dan Ryan Malachy all are gone to the Great Arena in the sky where I am sure they still enjoy the game of Forty-Five. They loved their game pitting their skills against the opponents, and played with honesty and approached the cards with respect which meant enjoyment for all.

I move forward fifty years and am working with the Department of Agriculture based at the beef plant at Nenagh and I played Forty-Five in Ballinahinch once a week with Seán Ryan Malachy and it's like a time warp going back to the fifties. Mick Flynn dealing the cards would turn and say to me, "Paddy what are cows making in Nenagh at present? Diamonds are trumps".

Definitely when Michael Murphy asked as to who wrote the rules or who thought up the game he activated an amount of thoughts and memories in me. I am indebted to his brother Gerard Murphy of Gouig for doing research as to the origin of the game of Forty-Five.

Forty-Five is a descendant of the Irish game Spoil Five, which in turn is a descendant of a game King James VI of Scotland popularised in the 17th century called Maw. King James was known to have a servant hold his cards for him when playing. Maw is first seen being played in 1511 and the earliest written rules come from 1576 in Scotland.

The history of the name of the current version is unknown, especially since Forty-Five has no relevance to the New England version of the game, although some contend it comes from the fact that there are four fives in the deck. It is played in Taunton, Massachusetts and Haverhill where Forty-Five tournaments are popular. A similar game is also played on the west coast of the South Island of New Zealand. There is a large admixture of Irish immigrants on the West Coast which may indicate why the game is played there.

Like Cribbage which is the English national card game our game has changed little over the last four hundred years. The basic idea is that five tricks are played and the aim is to win them yourself or else prevent the opposition winning them. Each trick is worth five except when the trick is won with best trump when it is worth ten. The Irish word for a trick is "CUIG" which means five. In 1593 somebody called Rich wrote Green's News from Heaven and Hell to the reader which includes the useful information that "Although the knave of trumps be the second card at Forty-Five, yet the five finger may command both him and all the rest of the pack". During the Puritanical Commonwealth period, card playing almost died out in England but with the accession of Charles II to the throne in 1660, a renewed interest in card playing developed in both Ireland and England. An engraving of 1626 shows the Kings of England, Denmark and Sweden all playing cards and the value of the five of trumps is supreme, but the ace of hearts has a higher value than the knave.

Forty-Five is still in a healthy state at present in Ireland where it is played in little community halls in our rural villages and in some public houses and clubs. In Patrick Kavanagh's great poem "The Great Hunger" he describes the men returning home from a game of Forty-Five in Duffy's house in the early hours of the morning:

And their voices rumble like laden carts And they are happy as the dead or sleeping... I should have laid that ace of hearts...

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Emer Corbett

The Days of the Slanesman

By Joe Carroll

This year of 2008 we witnessed the end of another long tradition in the parish with the passing into history of the old craft of the slanesmen who worked the bogs of Castleconnell and Annaholty. This spring and summer's turf cutting was confined to lines of turf churned out by a mechanical turf-cutting machine at the request of turbary owners who still prefer a turf fire to central heating, electrical or gas appliances. The absence this year of the few traditional turf cutters spelt the end of a craft and a skill that for more than a century was a way of life for many.

Turf cutting in the bogs of Castleconnell and Annaholty goes back a long way. The first recorded accounts of turf being cut with a slane or sleán was in the bogs owned by Mac Nabs and Cawleys located left and right off the road near the village of Montpelier during the Famine years of the 1840s. Large workforces were employed on these bogs and the availability of work of this kind played a large role in alleviating the starvation and hardships of many in the area. The rate of pay was 5 pence a day from dawn to dark and extra was paid to slanesmen and horse and cart owners.

Then in later times many families became closely associated with turf cutting and it was mainly from certain areas that the well known slanesmen came, from families with a long tradition in the craft. One such area was appropriately enough, the Bog Road where the families of the Bourkes, Tierneys, Moloneys, Keatings and McMahons had few equals. The same could be said of Steve Casey, Richie Buckley, Michael Reidy and Tom Joyce. In Gouig and Clooncommons there were the Keane, Shyne, Byrnes, Murphy and Ryan families who produced the fine slanesmen in that era. Woodpark and Gardenhill could boast too of men who could hold their own in any lineup of expert slanesmen. They came from the Berkerys, Joyces, Doyles and Maddens. There were some fine individual craftsmen too like John Joe Mulqueen, Tommy Reilly, John O'Neill and Ned Bourke. In that area too there were the O'Donnell's and the Quinns of Woodroad. From Stradbally there was Paddy Travers, another expert with the slane and there was Joe Ryan from the Old Street, Johnny O'Brien of Nelson's Cross, Christy McInerney of the New Line, Seán Ryan from Derryhasna and the Skehans who also gave their name to the well known Cross.

But there was a social side also to the craft of the turf cutter and an event held as part of a Rural Week programme in the 1940's was a competition to find the best slanesman and barrowman in the parish. The

contest was held on Matthew Doyle's turf bank a short distance from the Dublin Road. The event generated a lot of interest and speculation and attracted a large crowd to Gouig bog on a Saturday in June.

The rules of the competition were laid down that each pair, slanesman and barrowman was given a bench of turf to cut and wheel out to a spread. The time allowed was one hour. Marks were awarded for the amount of turf cut, the size and uniformity of the turf and the neatness of the bank at the finish. The barrowman's work was judged on the way the



The last slanesmen: Seán Joyce.

turf was thrown, and the tidiness of the spread.

Ten teams took part in the competition, encouraged and urged on by friends, relations and supporters. The judges were Tom McCabe from Shower and Johnny Doyle from Woodpark, who after much deliberation and consultation arrived at a decision. The result was announced on the Sunday at a Féis held in the village. Slanesman, Jimmy Hyland of Belmont and his barrowman, Martin Tierney of the Bog Road were declared the winners. In second place were Seán Ryan of Derryhasna and Johnny O'Brien of Nelson's Cross. Third place went to the Woodpark pairing of Michael Meaney and Mick Doyle. A fine slanesman from Ahane, Martin Collins of Laught and his barrowman, Tom Wilmott of Drominboy were in fourth place.

Then in the industrial boom of the late 1960s and early '70s turf cutting was very much in decline and save for the few dedicated turf men the bogs became deserted.

But in the following decade the rising cost of other fuels sent people back to the bogs of Castleconnell and Annaholty. But it was a new age and the introduction of the turf-cutting machine that could turn out large quantities in a short time spelt the beginning of the end for the traditional method of turf cutting in the parish, and even though the old ways, the skills and techniques were still practised by the few, the grand old craft of the Castleconnell slanesmen was slowly dying out.

Silence has settled over the once great peat land, a silence that is only broken by the lonesome cry of the curlew.

The slanesmen have gone their way.



Martin Roche



Maurice Keating

An Caisleán - The Castleconnell, Ahane, Montpelier Annual 2008

Rolling Back the



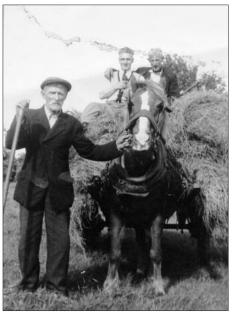
Above: This first picture shows Irish workers in Germany during the 1914/18 War and includes three Enrights from Castleconnell who were taken prisoners of war at Le Mons and made to work on the railways. After the war they were repatriated and returned home.



Nancy Mulqueen of Woodpark, (standing) and her sister, Mary Ryan of Kilonan.



Three Lovely Lassies: Taken at a concert in the Star Ballroom in Cappamore in 1959, Ann Mulqueen, Woodpark, Breda Meskell, Lisnagry and Maureen Meskell, Lisnagry.



Patrick Shyne of Forge Road drawing in hay in the 1940's, with his son Flannan and son-in-law, Jack Hogg.



A late 1940's picture taken at the Spa; Patrick Carroll, Tessie Murphy, Maisie Carroll and Dermot Murphy.



A Castleconnell Camogie Team of the 1940s: Back row; Mary Ahern, Fanny Murphy, Peggy Close, Babs Quaid (Tuohy), Baby Hartigan, Kitty Shyne. Front row; Mary Farrell, Mary Hogan, Eileen Shyne, Josephine McCabe, Nellie Connors. In front, Mary Murphy.

Pat Carey

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A 1954 school class of Ahane N.S. Back row; Willie Collins, Ned Byrnes, Patrick Hourigan, Joe Richards, Peter O'Malley, Michael Hourigan, Peter Killeen, John O'Malley, Richard Hourigan, Seamus Ryan. Middle row; Pat Hayes, Peter Ryan, Jerry Condon, Mike Fitzgerald, Paddy Collins, Tim Bourke, Jerry Coffey. Front row; Connie Carroll, Jerry Barry, Pat Nash, John Hayes, Henry Ryan, J.J. O'Malley, John Linane and Pat Linane.



Ladies Day: Taken at a wedding in Castleconnell sometime in the early '50's. Included are from left; Patricia Hogg, Peggy Hogg, Babs Tuohy, Moira Hogg, Mrs. Flanagan, Fanny Coffey, Eileen Connolly, Mary Bradshaw, Josephine McCabe, Betty Hogg and Nellie McCormack.



Another 1959 picture of a group of dancers. Back row; Mary Mulqueen, Ann Mulqueen, Teresa Mulqueen, Liam O'Reilly. In front are Sadie Mulqueen and Eileen Mulqueen.



At a dance in the 1960's were, from left; Geraldine Travers, Delia Mulqueen, Ann Mulqueen and Mary Donnelly (Ahane).



Bridie O'Dwyer (O'Malley) and Tessie Murphy pictured at a function in the hall in the 1960's.



Taken at the St. Stephen's Night Dance in the hall in 1961; Breda Hogan, Josephine Hogan and Ann Mulqueen.



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Mrs. Thackeray, Mrs. Julia Hogg and Fr. Fogarty in Ballybunion in 1965.



The Hogg Family and friends taken outside the home-place sometime in the late '50's or early '60's.



Julia Hogg and Seán McCabe in Ballybunion in the 1960's. On the left are Eileen Doherty and Theresa Richardson.



An Annacotty soccer team from the 1980's; Back row; Frank Berkery, Seamus Madden, Noel Bridgeman, Seán Madden, Matt Givens, Tony Curran (Manager), Brian Hurley. Front row; Willie Nicholas, Ger Ryan, John Crotty, Vincent O'Brien and Pat Hassett.



he Staff of Clareville Waterworks in the 1970's. From left; Tom Hayes, Pat Jones, Willie Joyce, S. Bushley, Anthony Travers, K. Doherty and Jack Gleeson.

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Kearney's shop near Chapel Hill in the 1960's/70's. From left; Willie Rohan, Hannah Kearney, Bridie Kearney and Tom Kearney.



The Tierney's of the Bog Road taken in the mid -1970's. Back row; Mike, Mattie, Paddy, Dick and Eileen, Parents, Kathy and Martin and George.

Front row: Mary, parents Kathy and Martin, George.



A 1980's Lisnagry under 14 soccer team, runners up in the Limerick Schoolboys League at Hermitage. Back row; Frankie Ryan (Trainer), Thomas Carey, Martin Hough, Mark Sheppard, Seamus Byrnes, Edward Benn, Thomas Byrnes, Daragh Kennedy, Thomas O'Brien, Tommy Sheehan (Committee). Front row; John Coleman (Chairman), Liam O'Sullivan, John O'Brien, Neill Doyle, Owen Cinneide, David Ryan, Greg Doyle and Stephen Bond.



Sean McMahon and Stephen Reidy at a wedding in the 1960s.



Mass on the hills of Lebanon in 1986 celebrated by Fr. Seamus Dunican, brother of Rosaleen Kelly of Rivers, Lisnagry. Fr. Dunican was in the Lebanon with the Irish Army and is seen here celebrating the Mass for the soldiers from Munster. He is now Parish Priest of Rahan in Co. Offaly.



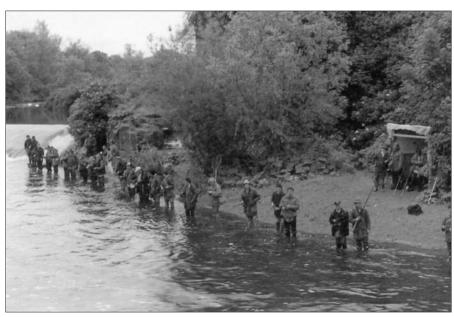
At the unveiling of the Martin McCabe monument at the Ferry in the 1980's; Noel Murphy and Seán McCabe.



Frank Spillane and Josephine McCabe at a function in the village in the 1980's.



Castleconnell man, Tom Garry and the Artane Boy's Band leading the St. Patrick's Day Parade in Moscow in 1993.



A large gathering of fishermen on the Mulcair River the old mill in Annacotty in the 1990's.

Eamonn Whelan

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At the Kilmurry Lodge in 1997 at an evening for Clyduff residents were, Steve Guntrip, Rev. James Minogue, Margaret and Lucy Jackson, Mary A. Moloney and Anne Guntrip.



Curley Connolly takes Jack Roche for a pony and cart drive during a Care Of The Aged outing to Lahinch in the late 1990's.

More About The Village

From The Writings of Paddy Joyce

Underneath the beautiful beech tree at the bottom of Main Street was Cloon Well, which gave beautiful cool water to everyone, and never seemed to run out. And then, the Mall, a walk that carried you along by the grounds of Island House and the little river, a breakaway from the Shannon, to relieve a backwater of the Shannon. At this point the Shannon was nearly double its width. The Mall continued to the Spa, where it took a detour away from the Shannon to come back again to the Worlds End. In the three documents about the history of Castleconnell, it was mostly concerned with the houses of the gentry, and very little about the village itself, so I will, as far as I can remember, give an outline of the village.

At which point does the village commence? I don't know, so I will start at Daly's Cross. The first house was Frewen's, and then the pub that gave the cross its name. On the right a large house, but who lived in it at that time I don't know. Just after that you turn left to the village. The family who lived here will be remembered, for it will be always known as Skehan's Cross. Next is Hogan's who are painting contractors. Both houses are empty now. Next is Kearney's, whose eldest son Martin was also a painter. Just opposite the Railway Station is the home of Eddie Hartigan or Old Ned, a man I could write chapters about, as I worked for him for quite a while. At the other side of the railway lived his father, who was the head of a large family Building Firm, and whose great-grandchildren carry on to the present day.

Back to the Railway Station: At that time it was the heart of Castleconnell. All day long the trains were arriving, goods at one side and passengers at the other. But it was at night time we felt the real magic of it, when the glow of the Steam Engine would be seen in the distance. The Garry family were in residence, with Tom Benn a porter. Later on I was for a short time, a boy porter and was I proud singing out "Change here for O'Brien's Bridge, Newport or Clonlara". My only drawback was the railway cap was too big and used to fall down over my eyes at the most awkward moment.

The Life and Times of Standish Hayes O'Grady

By Mary A. Moloney

Erinagh House, birthplace of Standish Hayes O'Grady "the last of the grand old scholars of Ireland" (Eleanor Hull) is situated on the west bank of the river Shannon just 1.5 km North North West of Castleconnell, Co. Limerick. Consequently many worthy publications have noted that Standish is a Limerick man, born in Castleconnell, but as he was born west of the Shannon, he is undoubtedly a Clare man. To paraphrase Oliver Goldsmith from his poem the Deserted Village "he (O'Grady) claimed his kindred there (in Castleconnell) and had his claim allowed".

Erinagh House, a late eighteenth-century two-storey dwelling was home to at least three generations of the O'Grady clan, namely James Smith O'Grady Admiral O'Grady and his son Standish Hayes who was to follow in the footsteps of his cousin novelist Standish James O'Grady and turn to Celtic Literature.

Standish Hayes O'Grady, son of Admiral Hayes O'Grady and nephew of 1st Viscount Guillamore, was born in 1832 at Erinagh House into an Anglo-Irish naval family. He was educated at Rugby School in England before attending Trinity College Dublin. On speaking of his Ascendancy education, he stated 'At school and in Trinity College I was an industrious lad and worked through curriculums with abundant energy and some success; yet in the curriculums never read one word about Irish history and legend, nor even heard one word about these things from my pastors and masters. When I was twenty-three years of age, had anyone told me – that Brian Boru was a mythical character, I would have believed him'. But he was soon to rectify those misconceptions.

Standish Hayes O'Grady had sought out the leading scholars of the period, namely Eugene O'Curry and John O'Donovan. He worked under the guidance of O'Curry and O'Donovan in copying old Irish manuscripts in the library of T.C.D. This interest was instinctive as he had spent his formative years wandering the county Limerick countryside collecting folk-tales and learning about customs.

He described the Irish language as "his sweet mother tongue", not surprising when ones reads "he was brought up and fostered in the Irish speaking barony of Cloonagh". Standish Hayes O'Grady was a founding member of the Ossianic Society in 1853, becoming its president in 1855-'7.

According to Robert Somerville-Woodward, "The aim of the new society was to collect and publish the poems and tales of Oisín and the Fianna, especially those preserved in extant manuscripts in the Irish language. The Ossianic Society lasted for nine years and had a large and influential membership including William Smith O'Brien and John O'Daly.

Standish Hayes O'Grady edited many Irish texts including an edition entitled *The Adventures of Donncha Ruadh MacConmara*, by the Cratloe poet, written when he was only 21 years of age. It was published by O'Daly in 1853 over the name S. Hayes. The third volume of the *Transactions* (1857) of the society edited by O'Grady contains his translation -edition of *Toraigheacht Dhiarmada agus Gráinne*.

The Silva Gadelica (1892) Standish Hayes O'Grady's most important work, on his return from California where he was employed as a Civil Engineer for 30 years, was his compilation on the Catalogue of Irish manuscripts in the British Museum, upon which his friend O'Curry had worked. Hayes O'Grady never completed this as he is said to have had a disagreement with the Museum authorities. He broke off in mid-sentence never to return to the catalogue! It was later completed by Robin Fowler and published in 1926. This irritability was also visible when he was sometimes confused with his kinsman Standish O'Grady, the novelist, author of "The Coming of Cuchulain". He said "Let me intimate since I am often tantalized by having a kinsman's good work attributed to myself, that my trade mark, ... is ... in full STANDISH HAYES O'GRADY"

Perhaps his pride and arrogance were not misplaced as he is mentioned along with John O'Donovan, Eugene O'Curry, and Douglas Hyde as being paramount to a Gaelic literary revival.

W.B. Yeats said of him "that great scholar Hayes O'Gradyboasted that although he had lived in England for forty years he had never made an English friend." Douglas Hyde, said of him [he was] "a brilliant and correct speaker of Irish, as witty in that language as he was in English".

Standish Hayes O'Grady died at Hale, Cheshire, in 1915. Standish Hayes O'Grady, Antiquarian, Civil Engineer, and Historian is immortalized in his myriad of works, and shall not be easily forgotten by his compatriots in Castleconnell, Co. Limerick. We leave the last word on Standish Hayes O'Grady to Herbert from his book "Worthies of Thomond" 'his loss to Irish literature was great!'

The Shannon's Siren Lure

I had always been interested in boats from an early age. So, when my wife and I found we were spending much more of our time on the banks of the Shannon, it was difficult to resist the urge to get afloat again.

Of course, unless you are an athletic rowing enthusiast there is not much scope for would-be mariners in the immediate vicinity of Castleconnell. However, I gather there was a time when quite large craft were able to moor up near the village en route to the Port of Limerick. The stone quay at the World's (Worrall's) End with its surviving mooring bollards is, I gather, a relic of those far off days. I am advised too that it is still possible to identify traces of the two canals that were successively built on the Clonlara side of the river to enable boats and barges to circumnavigate the Falls of Doonass and so make their way safely into the Shannon Estuary. I am told the Shannon Hydro-electric Scheme finally put paid to a throughput of waterborne commercial trade. Although the advent of railways in the mid-nineteenth century had hastened the decline of transport via the network of canals that had been constructed throughout Ireland in the late 17 and early 1800's, commercial traffic on the Irish waterways did continue into the 20th century. Much Guinness was delivered to the Mid-West of Ireland by barge for over one hundred years. Commercial traffic survived on Irish waterways until the 1920's and the warehouses and office buildings of the Shannon Navigation Company still survive at Killaloe.

Killaloe is the southerly limit of safe navigation on the Shannon. That said it is possible for hardy souls to enter the Headrace Canal below Killaloe and travel down to the ESB generating station at Ardnacrusha and pass through the lock there. This leads into the Abbey River and thence to Limerick and the Shannon Estuary. Although the navigation from the Abbey River into the estuary has been vastly improved and a marina has now been established next to the Hunt Museum, the ESB at Ardnacrusha has to authorise the trip. Care too has to be taken with regard to the tidal state. If there is too much water in the river, it is difficult for even a small cruising boat to pass under the city bridges into the main waterway.

Since Killaloe is, in any event, the nearest point on the navigable Shannon to Castleconnell, I opted to base my nautical endeavours there. I had first to find a boat. A friend of mine living in Wales had a nearly new Drascombe Lugger for sale. Although she is quite a small sailing boat, this class of vessel enjoys a good reputation for stability and seaworthiness. So I decided to buy Vahan, named I was informed after a princess heroine in Welsh mythology.

I had obtained a berth at the Derg Marina behind the Lakeside Hotel. The Drascombe Lugger is 18 feet in length and looks attractive underway with its three dark red sails set. Moulded from GRP (glass reinforced plastic) the hull design is based on that of a Yorkshire fishing coble. This was a small rowing and sailing boat once used by a fisherman working on the coast of the northern English county. It was a sturdy craft. It had to be as it was usually launched from shingle beaches into the steep waves often found around the shores of the North Sea. The state-of-the-art fibre-glass replica seeks to incorporate all the seaworthy features of the original coble. Where the masts and rigging are concerned the designers piously stuck closer to the original construction. The Drascombe has no alloy masts and none of the stainless steel technology installed on modern sailing boats. It's all sticks and string; wooden masts, and lots of rope to be threaded through pulley blocks. As a consequence the Drascombe takes a long time to rig. This can be rather off-putting, particularly where novice sailors are concerned.

One of the advantages of a mooring in Killaloe is that it gives a boat owner easy access to Lough Derg, where the Shannon ponds out between the Slieve Aughty Mountains of Clare and the Arra Mountains of Tipperary to form a vast, if quite narrow lake. The Lough is 22 miles (35kms) long from north to south and 7 miles (12kms) at it's widest. It is the second largest lake in Ireland. Such a large area of open inland water makes it an ideal place for sailing. The Dromineer Yacht Club is one of the oldest in Ireland and sponsors a great deal of sailboat racing on the lake. The major problem with small sailing boats is that they take a long time to get anywhere. Even at their fastest point of sailing an ordinary dinghy is unlikely to go much faster than 4 or 5 knots, say up to 6mph. Thus, it could take 2 to 3 hours to sail up to Garrykennedy or Mountshannon. Since the prevailing wind in these parts comes from the south or west, the return trip is often into the wind. That means to get back to Killaloe the boat usually had to tack. Clearly, any craft under sail cannot move directly into the wind. Tacking is the process whereby a boat sails as close to the wind (close hauled) as it can. In an ordinary sort of boat this means at an angle no closer than about 45° the boat has in effect to zigzag, towards its destination; in this case, to and fro from one side of the lake hopefully getting somewhat nearer to its desired objective with each leg. As she turns the sailboat "tacks" causing the wind to blow onto alternate sides of the sails as the boat turns into and across the wind. This can be a tedious and not very comfortable process in a small, heeling boat and, again, rather off-putting for newcomers. You really need two people to sail a sailing boat, even a small one. Most of the "crews" who sailed with me were new to sailing. All too often, we had neither the time nor the inclination to sail close hauled for 3 to 4 hours which meant, invariably, the voyage back to Killaloe was powered by the "tin topsail" as the outboard engine is affectionately called.

As we all know, in these climes the weather can often be wet and the wind strong even inland. The stretch of water from the Scariff River to Dromineer is about 7 miles. This is quite a "fetch" for a strong westerly wind and as a result, the water state can become quite lumpy, generating short, steep waves of four feet or more. In such conditions, even armed with a life jacket and waterproof clothing, you really have to like sailing to be on the water for very long in such conditions. Notwithstanding all these climatic and navigational challenges we had lots of fun on Lough Derg in Vahan.

When you get to a certain age sailing a boat like a Drascombe on your own, in the conditions that can arise on Lough Derg, is quite demanding. When I found that few people were able and willing to sail with me, I decided that it was time to sell Vahan. I did and she went to a new home in Donegal. After being boat-less for a year or two, I began to show symptoms of marine deprivation. I remedied this condition by the simple expedient of buying a new boat. This time I faced defeat bravely and opted to buy a motorboat. Not a very environmental friendly decision these days but, if you yearn to explore the 400 odd miles of Ireland's navigable inland waterways. a motor vessel is your best option. There are too many narrow rivers and canals, crossed by low bridges to make a sailing boat a viable option for the would-be explorer. I opted to buy a Hardy Seawings 234 motor cruiser. Hardy Marine has a reputation for building well-designed and sturdy boats, capable of making offshore passages safely. I did not have any plans for ocean going but I wanted a small, reliable boat. My Hardy Seawings 234 is called Seajay. She is 25 foot long and has a 120 hp diesel engine. The boat can sleep four people at a pinch but two is far more comfortable. So Seajay is more of a lager raft than a gin palace. Even so, she is quite well fitted out; complete with galley, stove, fridge, WC and shower and hot water system, I purchased the boat on Loch Lomond and had her "low loaded" from Scotland to Killaloe.

A motor cruiser enabled us to get to know Lough Derg far better than we could hope to do in a small sailing boat. Seajay has quite a big wheelhouse and a large stern cockpit fitted with a weatherproof awning. Of course, cruising in good weather is far superior to wet and windy conditions but the protection Seajay affords means that weather is not a totally inhibiting factor. We have enjoyed picnic trips to most of the many attractive havens and marinas around the lake including Mountshannon, Garrykennedy, Dromineer, Terryglass and Portumna Harbour. A pleasant trip on a sunny day is to cruise up the narrow but navigable and picturesque Scariff River. Irish Waterways has recently completed a new cruising boat dock just outside the town of Scariff. This provides all the necessary amenities for visiting picnickers.



Seajay under way on Lough Derg with the author at the helm, flying the inland waterways ASSN Ireland.

I have heady plans to go further a field in Seajay. Over the past 30 years, the commercial value of pleasure boating as a tourist activity has been increasingly recognised in Ireland. Many of the waterways had been neglected when viable commercial navigation effectively ceased. This was particularly true of the canals. Quite a number of these have now been restored for boating and work is in hand to rehabilitate others that had been left derelict. It is now possible to travel by boat from Limerick via the Shannon, the Shannon-Erne Waterway and Lough Erne as far as Belleek in Co. Fermanagh. You can also enter the Grand Canal at Shannon Harbour on the river above Banagher and travel all the way to Dublin. Alternatively, on the Grand Canal, just before you get to Robertstown in Kildare en route to Dublin, you can turn south into the Barrow Navigation and travel all the way down to New Ross and Waterford. Work is in hand to complete restoration of the Royal Canal. Much of this canal is already open for boating. When renovation is completed, it will afford a second waterway connection from the Shannon near Longford to Dublin. A campaign has been mounted to reopen the Ulster Canal that connects Lough Neagh with Upper Lough Erne at Belturbet. Full restoration will involve a great deal of work and inevitably prove expensive. However, if the link could be re-opened, it would then be possible to travel by boat from Coleraine on the coast of Co. Derry, via the Lower Bann Navigation into Lough Neagh and thence all the way to Limerick and the Atlantic Ocean.

Apart from all the civil engineering involved, a great deal has been done to make the waterways attractive to pleasure boaters. There are now many well appointed marinas and yacht harbours. The tourist traffic has spawned good restaurants and accommodating pubs along the waterways. There has been a growth too in boat hire companies. A large fleet of motor cruisers is available for rent. This kind of holiday in Ireland seems to be attractive to many people from Mainland Europe. Sometimes, when waiting in a lock on the Shannon in high summer, the majority of people on the boats surrounding you speak French, German or a Scandinavian language, rather than English. All this development has made pleasure boating in Ireland a more pleasant experience than it once was. One hesitates to carp, but I sometimes find some people who have hired boats for holidays not always that competent at driving them. This lack of facility can be somewhat disconcerting when a not very experienced helmsman is trying to manoeuvre a large boat in a limited space at speed. My other complaint is that riverside suppliers of marine diesel are not exactly plentiful. Having to walk a mile or more to a petrol station and then carry a large, full jerrycan of diesel back to your boat can take the edge off an otherwise potentially enjoyable evening.

Waterways Ireland is the all Ireland body responsible for the care and maintenance of Irish inland waterways. Another all Ireland organisation is the Inland Waterways Association of Ireland (IWAI) of which I am a loyal, if not very active member. The IAWI is a club for people who own or use pleasure boats on Ireland's inland waterways. It provides a wide variety of help and advice for members. In collaboration with the Irish Sailing Association, the IAWI operates training programmes to develop safe boat handling and awards proficiency certificates to boat skippers and crew members who achieve the requisite standards of competence. The IAWI also acts as an active lobby dealing with Government and Corporate entities in defending the interests of members. At branch level, the IAWI conducts a wide range of social activities for members. Rallies are favourite events, where members gather with their boats for social interaction and entertainment. Last year the Lough Derg Branch organised a sail-incompany. A fleet of members' boats travelled down the Headrace Canal through the Ardnacrusha Lock and into the Shannon Estuary. At the mouth of the river, the boats followed the Kerry coast to Fenit. This was a very successful trip, although one of the boats caught fire on the return leg.

Despite my best intentions, I have not travelled that extensively on the Shannon or elsewhere. The furthest I have been to date is Lanesborough, at the northern end of Lough Ree. Last year a friend and I tried to see how far we could get in a week. The problem is that you have to allow enough time for the return trip to Killaloe. We discovered it takes 3 days to travel from Derg Marina to the Ballyleague Marina near Lanesborough. Bear in mind

that although you can drive quite fast on the lakes, there is a speed limit of 5 knots on rivers and canals. It would probably take the same amount of time to make the return trip via the Barrow Navigation to New Ross and Waterford. A journey from Killaloe to Dublin via the Shannon and the Grand Canal might take slightly less time. I had made it to Athlone previously. The town's riverside has been rendered attractive to sailors with a well appointed marina and several good restaurants. Loughs Derg and Ree are large areas of water surrounded by impressive scenery as well as affording a variety of pleasant harbours and attractive places of interest to visit. The river trip from Portumna Bridge to Athlone is for me, frankly, rather dull - a slow plod between seemingly interminable river meadows.

Admittedly, there is a nice restaurant in a restored military fort at Shannonbridge but the only real highlight on this leg of a cruise is Clonmacnoise, the site of the monastery founded by St. Kieran in the sixth century which played a major role in the establishment of Christianity in Ireland. A number of religious buildings have been restored and there are protected ruins of others. There is a museum that offers a very accessible presentation of the site's history. The appeal for people approaching Clonmacnoise by water is that there is a dock at the site where you can tie up and walk straight into the monastic enclave.

A longer trip this year would be an attractive option but it is difficult for me to find enough time to undertake an extensive expedition. I am trying to pluck up enough courage to make the epic voyage via Ardnacrusha to Limerick and beyond, perhaps to the marina at Kilrush. Although Seajay is built for seagoing, to go further afield would require me to fit the boat for offshore cruising. This means a new digital VHF Radio, GPS Satellite navigation, if not radar, a life raft and, sensibly, a back-up outboard engine. All a bit daunting from a financial point of view so, for the time being, I shall probably settle for lunch in Larkin's Pub in Garrykennedy.

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PASSING ON HISTORY

By Joe Carroll

Last year during the months of January and February Pat Tuohy and I gave a series of weekly talks on the history of the parish from earliest times to the end of the twentieth century.

The talks were organised by the ACM committee and held in the Centre at Castle Street, in Castleconnell, an old building that has been rejuvenated but which still retains that homely atmosphere of an old family dwelling. Small wonder at that as the place was originally the home of one of Castleconnell's most famous sons, great Irishman and freedom fighter, Seán Carroll

At the outset when the ACM committee invited us to do the series we were a little apprehensive and wondering would anyone be interested. What kind of attendance could we expect, maybe fifteen or twenty each night?

On that first night surprise turned to amazement as people crowded into the Centre, not only from the village and its environs but also from much further afield, from Newport, Annacotty, O'Brien's Bridge and even from Limerick City. The committee were at times hard pressed to find seats for everyone and sitting on the steps of the stairs or standing room only became the options.

The series proved an outstanding success; the hidden interest in the history of the place had come to the fore in no uncertain terms. Two factors contributed greatly to the talks. One was the great interest shown by the number of new residents attending the weekly talks and the other, surprisingly, was the large attendance of the younger generations. Talking of younger generations; as the talks went on we began to realise more and more that were it not for an older and now past generation these weekly sessions would never have taken place, the local history "Village by Shannon" would probably never have been published, history walks and bus tours of the area would never have been.

Then I began remembering the historians of the past, men like Ned Hartigan who kept an account through his writings of earliest times in the village when St. Joseph's Church was built and how Fr. Pat Hennessy beguiled the American millionaire, George Peabody, into donating the railings around the new church. This and many other historical facts about life in Castleconnell came to us from the pen of Ned Hartigan.

I remember too the winter nights Pat Tuohy and I spent at the home of Mick Hassett in Birdhill. Mick, I always considered to be the complete local historian, for not only did he know the history of his own parish; he also had

a great knowledge of the surrounding parishes. It was Mick who told us about the birth of Christianity in the parish, the early churches and their fight for survival, the old De Burgh castle and its 700 years of history.

Then there was Tommy Fitzgibbons or Tommy Gibbons, as he was better known. He once said to me, "you have no idea of the wealth of history that is in these parishes of Castleconnell, Ahane and Montpelier". As time goes by I often think how right he was. Tommy told us all about the Shannon Scheme and the people who worked on the project. He also had a great knowledge of families in the locality and would spend hours "tracing" their history.

It has often been said the great Shannon River made Castleconnell and were it not for the Shannon it is probable that the place would never have existed. It is a debatable suggestion. But without doubt the great river played a huge role in the history of Castleconnell. With all this in mind there was only one man we had to talk to about the Shannon and he was Paddy Shyne of Gouig. Paddy had a lifelong affinity with the great waterway, having grown up on its banks and spending all his working life as a Fishery Warden with the ESB. Many hours I gave with Paddy at his home in Gouig where he told me the story of the great river, the fishermen and the boatmen, the Enrights and the famous "Castleconnell Rod", Anthony Mackey and his eel weirs, the gentry who lived along its banks and the characters he remembered in that golden era in Castleconnell when the anglers of the world came to fish the lordly Shannon.

Davy Quaid the well remembered parish clerk was another who had a deep knowledge of the history of the place and could recount tales of the old castle, the gentry in the fine houses, the founding of the Gaelic League in Castleconnell, the great Feiseanna in the village and the long line of priests who served in the parish and much more.

In Mountpelier, I remember, we talked to Tom Begley and recorded his memories in the sitting room of Betty Bonner's Public House in O'Brien's Bridge. Tom told us of his growing years in Montpelier, the great fairs held there, the neighbours and the characters he had known. Some of Tom's recollections can be found elsewhere in this issue of "An Caisleán".

Then there was Dan Meskell and we spent many hours with Dan as he told us all about Anthony Mackey and his eel fishing at the Spa and his peat works at New Line where his uncle Anthony had the distinction of manufacturing Ireland's first peat moss.

Dick Ryan of Castle Street was another man who imparted a lot of what he knew to me over the course of several years. Dick had a great knowledge of the village of Castleconnell, the people who lived there in former times and the characters he remembered from the days when his father, Martin was the local blacksmith. Dick once showed me an old cooking pot from the Famine times that was in his family for generations, and he told me about the old market place in the village and a field that was known as the Market Field for a long time after.

I remember Pat Tuohy interviewed the great Mick Hickey about his life and times. The interview was published again in the 2007 issue of the parish annual. It is a fascinating account of his youth around Carrowkeel, the forges of Quilty's and Ryan's, schooldays at Rich Hill, the time the family moved to Barrington's Bridge and eventually to Castleconnell and the house that was once the famous Shannon Hotel.

At the other end of the parish we gave nights in Timmy Ahern's house in Ahane. A font of knowledge, he traced for us what it was like growing up on a farm in the 1930's, the Barrington's of Glenstal and the famous Ahane Fife and Drum Band, the places the band played in and the stories that went with them. He



An old Famine Pot once seen in Dick Ryan's garden.

showed us the big Orange Drum that came down from the North of Ireland and given to him by Sir Charles Barrington.

Another historian in Ahane was Steve Coffey of Ballinagowan. Steve passed on all he knew about that area to Mary Antoinette Moloney who has diligently compiled the history of Ahane parish in her book "The Small Ford, The Story of Ahane".

The War of Independence and the Civil War that followed both played a huge part in Castleconnell's history. A local family immersed in these troubled times was the Baggott family of Gardenhill. John Baggott was shot by the Free State forces at Gouig Hill in 1922. To get an insight into the troubles of that time we spoke to John Baggott's nephew, Tom Baggott, who has an immense knowledge of the Republican campaign of that time and a great general knowledge of the history of the parish. He is the sole survivor of that select group we spoke with and recorded what they had to tell. The others are all gone to their eternal reward.

It has often been said that to properly chronicle the history of any place one has to go back to the older generations. Both Pat Tuohy and I found this to be positively true. We also found each and every one of those people we talked with to be more than willing to pass on all they knew, like they wanted the history they had to be preserved and shared.

For us it was an honour and a rewarding experience to have met them.

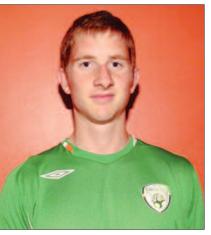
An Caisleán Miscellany

People, places and other items compiled by Joe Carroll and Steve Reidy

FINBARR RYAN

This year An Caisle n is pleased to feature a local your sportsman, Finbarr Ryan, son of Denis and Maureen Ryan of Chape Hill. At a special function her Parish Hall in July, young sock star, Finbarr Ryan was welcomed home after his international dewith the Irish Soccer team that finished sixth at the World Dear Football Championships.

Lisnagry s Under 17 Player The Year, Finbarr was also a member of the Ahane Gaelic Football team that won the All! Ireland F ile Peil in 2005.



Finbarr Ryan

When we spoke to Finbarr at his tour with the Irish team he told us all about the build up to World Championships and the games he played.

On June 29th 2008 I left home to go and represent Ireland in the first World Deaf Football Championships in Greece. It was in that I went for a trial for a place on the Irish team. With the salmost over with Lisnagry F.C. I felt up for it. Two months lates in the middle of sitting my Leaving Cert. I received a letter tell was selected to travel to Greece as part of a squad of 22 plays. When we got to Greece we had five days of training. I found it had adjust to the heat. We played Italy in the first group B game and 2?1. In our second game we beat Venezuela 9?2. In our last group game we were beaten 3?1. We then went on to face France in the Quarter Final. After ninety minutes we were even on a scoreline of 1. Unfortunately we conceded a goal in the last minute of extra two were disappointed but felt we had done our best in all the game

I arrived back home on the 14th July and was met by many families and friends. I was blown away by the great support and presented with a plaque by Fr. Kyne that night on behalf of the pand A.C.M. Lisnagry F.C. also presented me with a plaque before for Greece. I also received sponsorship from Castleconnell/Ahane Credit Union. I would like to extend my gratitude to A.C.M., the Credit Union and Lisnagry F.C. for their support and of course to my family, friends and well?wishers.

I now look forward to competing for a squad place on the Iris Football Olympic Team in the Deaflymics in Taipei in China in 200



Finbarr is carried shoulder ?high by Lisnagry team mates, and support

OPERETTA

REDCAP IN FAIRYLAND

PRESENTED BY

The pupils of Castleconnell National School on Sunday 14 July 1949 at Hartigan s Hall

? CAST ?

Redcap Kathleen Houlihan
Fairy Queen Peggy McCormack
Attendants Nora O Carroll
Audrey Murphy
Patricia Kingston

L. O Carroll

Fairies Caroline Hogg

Eithne Quinn M. L. O Carroll Noreen Ryan

Elves Eddie Veale

Joseph Hogg

Brownies John Flanagan

Patrick Hogg Se n Hartigan Jerry Wynne Johnny Tierney Gerry Kingston

Red Riding Hood Patricia Joyce
Cinderella Breda Mackey
Jack and Jill Georgie Kingsto

Georgie Kingston and Breda Copley

Aladdin Michael Hogg
Dick Whittington Maudie Carter
Boy Blue Billy Shyne

Father Time Eddie Fitzmaurice

Guest Artists

Eddie Brown Tenor

Tim Hayes Piano Accordion

Other Attractive Concert Items ? Full Orchestra

FAIRY GRASS AND THE ANGELUS

In a small hollow on the eastern side of St. Thomas Island on the Shannon, near Limerick, Granny and I found it, masses of it dance in the warm breeze? Fairy Grass we called it but my father had a more sinister name for it? he called it Hungry Grass. He told us stories of people who would not cross or tread on the plant lest suffer pangs of the great hunger. Granny always kept some in the house? to cure the shakes, she said? and what s more it keeps omice.

So there we were, Granny and I, on St. Thomas Island collect bunches of this Fairy Grass. Then she taught me how to wrap each little seed head in a scrap of coloured foil that she had saved the Christmas sweets. And indeed, it becomes magic grass with all the little heads glittering in the sunshine. We must have sat for couple of hours or so working together with Granny singing hymns and encouraging me to sing along with her. An old heron, standing in the shallows, eyed us sceptically. The glorious smell of woods smoke rose on the air from the picnic fire. There wasn t a whisped wind and when the Angelus bell pealed out from Parteen church across the stillness of the river we paused and blessed ourselves. That day of the Fairy Grass on St. Thomas Island my Granny taught me how to say the Angelus. How many of us pause to recite it these

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New Rail Service:

People travelling from Castleconnell and its environs to Lime City can now park their cars and take the newly introduced morning commuter train. Bringing commuters from Nenagh, Birdhill and Castleconnell the train arrives at Limerick Station at 8.45 every morning.

The service was introduced on 1st September following a long series of discussions led by the Nenagh Rail Partnership and Castleconnell Rail Action Committee and groups of activists along line.

Timetable for the new service is as follows:

Limerick?Castleconnell?Birdhill?NenaghNenagh?Birdhill?Castleconnell?

Depart Limerick 06.40, 16.45, 17.47 Arrival Castleconnell 06.57. 17.04, 18.06 Arrival Birdhill 07.07, 17.14, 18.16 Arrival Nenagh 07.31, 17.38, 18.40

Limerick
Depart Nenagh
07.55, 11.02, 18.45, 19.47
Arrival Birdhill
08.17, 11.25, 19.08, 20.10
Arrival Castleconnell
08.27, 11.35, 19.17, 20.20
Arrival Limerick



Castleconnell Railway Station, one of the stops in the new Commuter Service between Nenagh and Limerick.

? LIMERICKS ?

There once was a hairy musician,
Who went out on a rip roaring session,
He sang Drops of Brandy,
And played Napper Tandy
Then fell through a wooden partition.

There was an old woman from Crag,
Who was constantly chewing the rag,
Although she s now dead
And buried in lead
Her tongue continues to wag.

A cute politician from Manister,
Said as he slid down the banister,
It is my ambition,
To obtain a position
As a high flying Government Minister.

An old millionaire named Mac Morse, Whose condition grew steadily worse, Wrote out a docket,
For a shroud with ten pockets,
And a tow bar to put on the hearse.

A thick head employed at A Proctor
Was the factory s laziest worker
He covered his dossing
By bullying and bossing,
And now he s the company director.

Joan O Siochr

Is this a Record?

In round three of this year s County Senior Hurling Championship played at the Gaelic Grounds in August, Ahane advanced to the quarter finals with an impressive 8 points win or Murroe? Boher.

An extraordinary feature of the game was John Meskell s four points scored directly from sideline cuts. All the line balls taken from close to the 45?metre mark and put over the bar with plenty to spare. Mentors and former Ahane players cannot recall feat ever been accomplished before. The Ahane man has certainly perfected the art of taking sideline cuts, one of the great ski

GREETINGS

Bail o Dhia ar an obair! God Bless the work! A man passing by called out to me as I was planting in the front garden the other day. God Bless the Work. That took me back, I can tell you. How long ago is it since I heard that?

God save all here! My Grandfather came into our house always with a blessing on his lips. Ah she s lovely God Bless I ? my Granny crooned over a new baby ? the Lord bless and save her ? she d say. She lit candles for special intentions and prafor the Holy Souls. Lord save us from all harm, she d cry, crossing herself, on hearing bad news. Well, the Blessings of God on you ? was her thanks if you did a turn for her. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost ? my mother recited as she cut the shape of a cross on the soda bread dough before it went into the oven.

I use some of those well?worn aspirations almost every day as part of my tradition? handed down to me for preservation. They are part of my being now.

And the other day when passing by my garden the man touched his cap in greeting to me saying ? Bail o Dhia ar an obair ? God Bless the Work and I thought of how wonderful it would be if we could retain that lovely greeting by passing it to someone today.

Mae Leonard

OUR COVER PICTURE:

On Cloon Island is the remains of a monastic settlement. In earliest times Cloon Island or Inis Cluain as it was then known, completely separated from the rest of Castleconnell and was surrounded by deep flowing water. The only access to the island was by boat. In 1291 Ronald De Burgo set up a small monastery on the four acre island for Franciscan monks. The presence of an Abb there was indicated by two cross slabs set into the stonework of small church, the walls of which are all that remain of the Friat There is no trace left of any other buildings of antiquity on the

The picture is courtesy of Ann and Brian McLoughlin, Island House, Castleconnell.

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An old programme from a Grass track Meeting at Castleconnell in 1959.

THEN AND NOW



The old Bog Road



The new Bog Road

THEN AND NOW

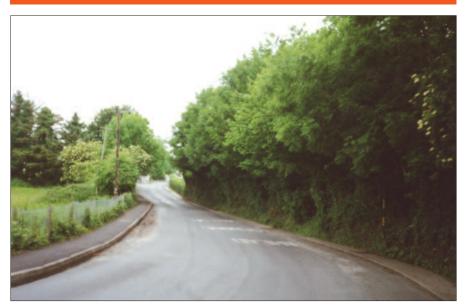


Sheehan s Public House in former days.



Recent development of the site.

THEN AND NOW



A turn on the road near the railway station ? how it used to look.



How it looks now.



Lisnagry School under 11 team who took part in the quiz, Dorothy Daly Jack O Brien, David Rowesome and Conor Cannon.

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Scenes from the Castleconnell and Annaholty Bogs captured recently.

EXILES RETURN



Bonnie, Rick, Ed and Susan Crossman visited from the USA



Also from the US came Cladia Cameron, her mother and friends searching for Maddens.

EXILES RETURN



Kitty and Bob Grossman, (formerly Kitty Bourke) came from the USA.



Eileen Hartigan (Tierney) and her daughter, Patricia from England.

EXILES RETURN



The Hennessy brothers from England and Gardenhill.



Willie Joyce at home in Woodpark.



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Castleconnell School Team winners of the Credit Union Schools' Quiz under 13 years; from left; Evan Crotty, Paddy Morrissey, Scott Brophy and Eimear Hartigan.



Castleconnell School Team under 11 winners of the Credit Union School's Quiz. From left; Melanie Hardiman, Rachel Slattery, James Haughey and Neil O'Donnell.



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John Quigley, left, Captain of Castle Golf Society presenting the Captain's Prize to the winner, Gareth Walpole.



Newly decorated Castleconnell National School.

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We opened our doors in May of this year following major renovations. We cater for 24 residents, with various dependency levels, 24 hours daily. We have nurses and carers on duty 24 hours, with a high dependency unit for both men and women, this is en suite, as are most of the rooms.

It is a home from home and as such you go to bed when you want and get up when you want, but meal times and drug rounds are kept to time for obvious reasons.

We have a wonderful team of nurses, carers (most of whom have completed Fetec Level 5), catering and housekeeping staff.

Our hairdresser visits weekly to our wonderful salon. Physiotherapy is Monday to Friday. You can also have a massage from our masseuse if required. The chiropodist visits monthly or more often if necessary. Why not try our jacuzzi bath!

We have Bingo & Music sessions weekly. Mild exercises daily. The residents love to watch sport and old time movies on our 50" television in the main sitting room. Papers daily. Birthday parties for each individual - also special events are celebrated.

All future residents and their families are encouraged to come and look around for themselves prior to booking a bed in our home.

We hope to renovate the old part of the house that was once a Boarding School in the near future thus bringing the bed capacity up to fifty, and making it a more enjoyable place to live for the residents.





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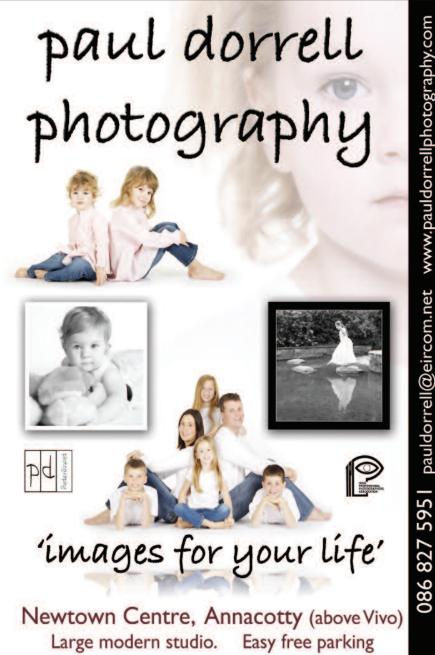
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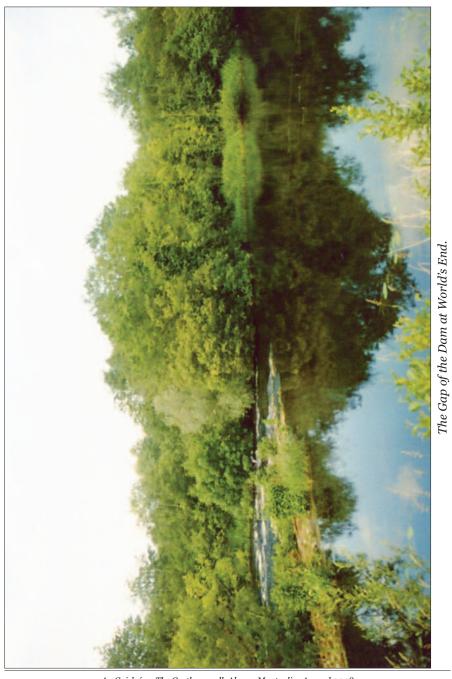




Days of Pounds: A £100 note and a £50 note from another time.







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Alan Collins BE MIEI



Frankie Ryan and John Murphy celebrating in the village.



Castleconnell pilgrims on Rosary Square who took part in the Diocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes in October: Standing: Steve Reidy, Dolores Madden, Billy Wilmot. Seated: Kathleen Madden, Kathy Wilmot and Rose Reidy.



Montpelier/O'Brien's Bridge



Old holding tanks for eels on the riverside near the village.

ORANGE BLOSSOM, POT MENDERS AND SHUSTER'S BIBLE HISTORY

By Berna Hayden (Houlihan)

Spring came to the Spa when Dote Brien's orange blossom tree, a specimen tree of rare beauty, to the left of her front door coming down from our house, came into bloom. I have never seen such a beautiful, blossom laden, orange tree before or since. The scent of this tree was so wonderful. It is amazing how scents stay with you and years later the same scent rushes you back down the years and you're right again.

Late spring, early summer every year Mother shod us with new arrivals. Generally a light tan colour with a T strap, a beautiful motif and the whitest of ridged rubber soles. The trip to town for the footwear also included a visit to Noonan's of William Street. There the girls were 'measured' for a skipping rope. The rope had to fit easily from your outstretched arms, under the soles of your feet. Knots were tied on either end and everyone was happy. The boys got tops and 'whips'!

As the weather grew warmer the white soles became stained with the melting tar of summer and soon the sandals were discarded in favour of bare feet. The warm tar squeezed between your toes was so soft and comfortable. This was sheer bliss; but the job of cleaning off the tar was a different story. Cleaning the toes involved the use of salted butter and you were banned to the dairy to clean up.

Summer brought swimming, salads and apple tarts and baskets of tomatoes.

Lots of colourful characters visited the Spa in summer. Caravan folk set up camp just up from our back gate. These were shrewd people settling down where there was plenty of fuel, i.e. sticks for the camp fire and access to fresh water. There was a little stream that ran by our house, and a neighbourhood where food for man and beast was always there for the asking. These artisans were very welcome. All the leaking pots and buckets were fished out from under the sink and around the yard and a shopping list prepared for Meskells for various sizes of pot-menders. Pot menders consisted of two shiny ... of some alloy or other and a washer all held together with some sort of ferule. Soon the saucepans were mended and the buckets were sporting brand new bottoms. The women of the travelling folk wore great rugs as

shawls and gathered under the shawl a baby on one arm and on the other arm wonderful baskets filled with bits of lace, coloured ribbons, very large crepe paper flowers, little poems and prayers on decorated card, mugs and 'gallons' they had crafted themselves. Blessings were showered on the household and home when a purchase was made.

I never saw the inside of these barrel caravans but I envied the inhabitants living in what seemed to me to be a rolling art gallery, even though the mule's appetite for our hedge and the goat's for Dad's roses, not to mention the greyhound's amorous glances at our purebred brindle, didn't find favour with father.

Confirmation for the students of Ahane, Rich-hill, Mountpelier and Castleconnell was held every three years. Preparation for Confirmation included chapters of Catechism questions and answers and the much more difficult Catechism Notes. We also studied Bible History. The book we had was Shuster's Bible History. I loved these stories! The year of my Confirmation was 1951. Kate and I were confirmed that year. We were outfitted with wonderful grey costumes topped off with gorgeous straw hats. These were the last confirmations given by Bishop Fogarty. The Liturgy was wonderful. All the children sang the Missa de Angelis. I loved this Gregorian chant especially the Great Credo in Unin Dei. At the end of the ceremony there was a procession of the Blessed Sacrament and the canopy was carried by four principal teachers, one from each area.

Castleconnell is such a uniquely beautiful village I think artisans and scholars should be encouraged to come and hone their crafts there. In the early 50s, Josephine McCabe introduced us all to the magic of a library in Castleconnell. I read in "Village by the Shannon" written by Joe Carroll and Pat Tuohy that small industries and crafts were thriving there in the mid nineteenth century. There are potters, weavers, painters, poets and writers and many musicians in Castleconnell. The little village has everything needed to nurture the imagination of tomorrow's child.

Slán agus Beannacht oraibh agus ar bhúr gcuid oibre. Míle buíochas as ucht an cuireadh slíochta scríobh don Chaisleán, 2008.

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TOM O'DONNELL REMEMBERS

My "love affair" with Castleconnell began when I reached the tender age of four and a half years. For being a "good little boy" my Mother God Bless her, rewarded me with a trip on a Sunday afternoon to beautiful and picturesque Castleconnell. The travel tickets were well within our reach a shilling and a "Tanner" for yours truly.

A crowded bus of over thirty people mostly mothers crammed with joyful expectation for a holiday afternoon in a little village famous at that time for its illustrious and legendary hurlers. The bus driver I recall was George; a "soda cake" who I learned later had a family of beautiful daughters. When the bus stopped the few male passengers made a "bee-line" for Scanlon's Pub, which incidentally reared an icon among hurling goal-keepers, the late Paddy Scanlon.

My mother grabbed me by the hand and whipped me down to the Mecca of the lovely Shannon - "The Worlds End". Already there were dozens of trippers basking in the sun and many more of the adventurous and athletic types swimming, gliding off the rickety diving boards. For about four hours I



Tom O'Donnell enjoying the World's End in the days of the old diving boards.

paddled with other children while Mother laid out the inevitable flask of tea and a few brawn sandwiches at the same time gossiping with several other mothers. Ah yes, my first of many experiences in a place that for very many decades later and still I proudly call my 'Spiritual home'. During those intervening years I camped there with the Boy Scouts, serenaded and entertained the occasional young lady who crossed my path and in my mother's declining years the poor soul regarded it as our Las Vegas.

To the great surprise of the other members of my family, I became a journey-man comedian - a long story for another time - but suffice to say my first big "Extravaganza" was in the New Hall in Castleconnell. For this great event I was jolted into it by a dear friend and work mate and most respected villager Willie Frewen - sadly no longer with us. He and Davy Quaid and the Parish Priest let me have the Hall for a Variety Concert which was a sell out and consequently was the first of many such shows which many years later paved the way to Carnegie Hall and the Royal Albert Hall in addition to appearing on the opening night of RTE in 1961.

For almost forty years my stage partner Paschal O'Grady joined me in a most wonderful and fulfilling career making people laugh as one Sunday Irish newspaper stated; "they put smiles on the faces of the people in Irish towns and villages when many of them hadn't a loaf of bread to put on the table".

To the dear people of Castleconnell I say, most sincerely, thanks for your encouragement, friendship and loyalty throughout the years and, by the way, I'm still drinking Sarah Frewen's tea!! Slán.

Best Wishes to "An Caisleán" From Bonner's Bar O'Brien's Bridge

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WELCOME NEW BABIES



Saoirse Kelly, Bruac Na Sionna, O'Brien's Bridge.

Olivia Mary McCarthy, Castlerock, Castleconnell.

Nathan Michael Carey, Newgarden, Lisnagry.

Margaret Ann Culhane, Montpelier, O'Brien's Bridge.

Luke William Doherty, Cedarwood Grove, Castleconnell.

Donacha O'Donnelly, Clyduff, Lisnagry.

Emily Maeve Spollen O'Brien, Knockbrack West, Lisnagry.

Samuel Martin Hourigan, Mona Lodge, Castleconnell.

Cian O'Hanlon, Iniscluain, Castleconnell.

Emma Bridgie Doyle, Ballyvarra House, Ahane.

Caiden Finn Smith, Riverbank, Annacotty.

Sarah Mai McBrearty, Gardenhill, Castleconnell.

Caoimhe Elizabeth Naughton, Cois na Sionna, Castleconnell.

Seán Morgan Costello, Castlecourt, Castleconnell.

Fionn Declan O'Reilly, Montpelier, O'Brien's Bridge.

Laura Sinéad Bickford, Stradbally North, Castleconnell.

Seamus Edward Quinn, Ardnatagle, O'Brien's Bridge.

Rachel Jacqueline Trehy, Gouig, Castleconnell.

Hannah Marie Robertson, Castlecourt, Castleconnell.

Dylan James Carmody, Montpelier, O'Brien's Bridge.

Abby Grace Flynn, Thornfield, Lisnagry.

Claire Ryan Norton, Castlecourt, Castleconnell.

Carrie Anne O'Connell, Coolnahila, Lisnagry.

Luke Christopher McGrath, Montpelier, O'Brien's Bridge.

Amy Sian Collins, St. Patrick's Villas, Castleconnell.

Kieran Alan Frawley, Lisnagry.

Ellie Marie McCaffrey, Inis Cluain, Castleconnell.

Orla Herbert, Lisnagry.

Rebecca Ellen O'Sullivan, Lisnagry.

Ellie Maeve Hartigan, Lisnagry.

Carla Kate O'Connell, Coolreidy, Castleconnell.

Seán Pádraig Cahill, Mountshannon, Lisnagry.

Elin Niamh McCabe, Annacotty.

Heather May Horan, Castlerock, Castleconnell.

Cian Seán Meleady, Oak Lane, Castleconnell.

Cíara Jane Davis Molloy, Annacotty.

Ava Crump, Lisnagry.

Rhys Michael Porter, St. Patrick's Villas, Castleconnell.

Jessica Mary O'Brien, Nelson's Cross, Castleconnell.

Owen Ryan Foley, Coolnahila, Lisnagry.

Ruairí O'Dhuinn, Castlecourt, Castleconnell.

Eamonn McConnell, Ballyvarra, Lisnagry.

Holly Kate Murphy, Grange House, Ahane.

Meabh Kelly, Lacka, Castleconnell.

Alannah Kate Peters, Castlerock Woods, Castleconnell.

Tom Quigley, Gardenhill, Castleconnell.

Cora Joan Garvey, St. Patrick's Villas, Castleconnell.

Ronan Shane Butler, Coolriree, Castleconnell.

William John Peril, Woodpark, Castleconnell.

Aodhán Cusack, Knocksentry, Ahane.

Tara Huson, Knocksentry, Ahane.

Aaron Huson Bird, Johannesburg, South Africa.

Aoife Nora Holland, Knocksentry, Ahane.

Owen Joseph Clifford, The Spa, Castleconnell.

Ben Pio Hartigan, Belmont Road, Castleconnell.

Ali Mai Murphy, Scanlan Park, Castleconnell.

Shane Cross, Annagh, Lisnagry.

Benjamin Michael O'Connell, Grange Upper, Lisnagry.

John Hilary Graham, Lisnagry and Harold's Cross, Dublin.

Erin Margaret Deere, Scanlan Park, Castleconnell.

Alison Mary Cumber, Gouig, Castleconnell.

Eanna Donal Gallagher, Maple Grove, Castleconnell.

Shane Patrick Hourigan, Derrylusk, Castleconnell.

Tony Séamus Ryan, Gardenhill, Castleconnell.

Cian Francis Hassett, Ballyvarra, Lisnagry.

Claire Danielle Hayes, Scanlan Park, Castleconnell.

Tara Maree Violet Fox, Rathlinn, Castleconnell.

WEDDING BELLS

Congratulations and a long and happy life to the following couples who were married during the past year:



Samuel Musgrave, Adare and Margaret Egan, Bunkey, Lisnagry.

Michael Gleeson, Cappamore and Grace O'Brien, Ballyvarra, Lisnagry.

Ronan Mulvihill, Raheen, Limerick and Elaine Hartigan, Hermitage.

Shane Blake, Iniscluain and Karen McCarthy, Iniscluain.

John Flannery, Scanlan Park and Claire Mooney, Dublin.

John Gerard McMahon, Annacotty and Rosemary Moloney, Annacotty.

Thomas Culhane, Montpelier and Sarah Feheney, Montpelier.

Seán Bruic, Coolbawn Meadows and Elaine Byrnes, Coolbawn Meadows.

Ronan Hayes, Cork and Barbara Dundon, Castleconnell.

Trevor Carroll, Portlaoise and Emer Jones, Woodroad, Lisnagry.

Cyril Hartnett, Limerick and Leanne Sheppard, Gardenhill.

Christopher Norton, Castlecourt and Ita Ryan, Castlecourt.

Thomas Holmes, Murroe and Edel Tyrrell, Edelweiss, Stradbally.

Brian Heffernan, Rhebogue and Clodagh McGill, Annaholty.

Patrick Ryan, Monaleen and Sarah Nestor, Kilrush.

David Sadlier, Borrisoleigh and Kerrie Crowley, The Hermitage, Castleconnell.

Dara White, Castleconnell and Christine Kruse, Oregon, U.S.

Gary McNamara, St. Patrick's Road and Michelle McNamara, Garryowen.

John Ryan, Newport and Paula Cosgrave, Rich Hill, Lisnagry.

THESE WE REMEMBER

During the past year the deaths took place of the following people:



Liam Skehan, St. Flannan's Terrace. Castleconnell.

Margaret Cuthill, Hertfordshire and formerly of Lisnagry.

Seán McNicholas, Dublin and formerly of Woodpark.

Julia Ryan, Killeenagarriff.

Breda Broderick (nee Joyce) Limerick and formerly of Castleconnell.

Martin Roche, New Line, Castleconnell.

John Hayes, England and formerly of Annacotty.

James McKeever, Maple Grove, Castleconnell.

Willie Rainsford, England and formerly of Gardenhill.

Tom Blake, Scanlan Park, Castleconnell.

Carmel Houlihan, Limerick and formerly of Castleconnell.

Bob Critchley, Coolbawn, Castleconnell.

Ellen Minihan, Dublin and formerly of Clyduff.

Gertie Leonard, Lisnagry.

George Poole, England and formerly of Montpelier.

Bridget McNamara, Killonan.

John Wilmot, Drominboy.

Amy O'Donnell, Woodroad, Lisnagry.

Jack Turner, Patrickswell and formerly of Woodpark.

Bridget Riordan, Drominboy.

Margaret Harvey, Montpelier.

Brendan Campbell, Lisnagry.

Elizabeth Gubbins, Mountshannon Road.

Betty Wallace, England.

Keith Poole, Castleconnell.

Phil McNamara, Limerick and formerly of Rich Hill.

Owen Gilhooly, Lisnagry.

Paddy Coleman, Castleconnell.

Tom Begley, Montpelier.

Josephine Hartigan, Ballinagowan, Lisnagry.

Timmy Ahern, Laught, Lisnagry.

Emmie Doyle, Castleconnell.

Paddy Hayes, Limerick and formerly of Lisnagry.

Seán Ryan, Castleconnell and formerly of Montpelier.

Mike Meehan, Scanlan Park, Castleconnell.

Mary Ann Mulcahy (nee Madden) England and formerly of Gardenhill.

Tommy Joyce, Woodpark.

Bill Cussen, Woodpark.

Geraldine Dolan, Ballinacourty.

Conor Tuohy, Carrigaline and formerly of Castleconnell.

Helen Carroll (nee Supple) St. Flannan's Terrace, Castleconnell.

Kathleen Kelleher, Montpelier.

Patrick Hourigan, Limerick.

Mary Fogarty (nee Keane) England and formerly of Clooncommons.

Betty Butler, Coolriree.

R.I.P.



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TOM BEGLEY'S MEMORIES OF MONTPELIER

Some twelve years ago while researching on our publication "Days by Shannon", we interviewed the late Tom Begley of Montpelier. A man with a great knowledge of his own place, Tom gave willingly of his time to tell us about Montpelier and O'Brien's Bridge. It was a fascinating and memorable account of growing up in Montpelier, told in his own inimitable way and with all the craft of the true storyteller. Sadly, Tom passed away in April of this year but the memories he left will always be there. From the pages of "Days by Shannon" we are pleased to reproduce this account of his beloved Montpelier in this edition of "An Caisleán".

Joe Carroll and Pat Tuohy

I was born and reared in Montpelier, and lived in one of a group of houses known as The Range. This row of houses was from Brown's corner down to Aherne's. They're all gone now of course: but I remember well the families who lived in them. Ours was the first, just at Brown's corner, next to us were the Gammel's, then there was an old lady - an unmarried lady, Maggie Ryan - she was known as Maggie the Cook. Then next door were the Bond's, and after them there was Mrs. Ryan and Martin - who was popularly known as The Thrush. Hogan's came next and the end house was Slattery's. The Slattery's were a big family; there was Rody, Mikey, Jimmy, Dan, Bill, Paddy, Johnny, Richard and one sister, Mary.

I started school in 1930, across the Green in the old school house, and finished there in 1939. The teachers there were Willie Toomey and his wife May. There were a lot from the Clare side going there and a few families from the Birdhill side, and even though the pupils came from Limerick, Clare and Tipperary, there was not much rivalry - well we weren't aware of it then, like we were when we were older. We often had hurling matches against Cragg and Castleconnell, and Mr. Toomey was great at giving a helping hand. He would always write out the team on the blackboard to show us where we were to line out. There were few other games other than hurling, except football to a lesser extent and a form of rugby we played in the school yard. We always played hurling on the village green. I remember playing conkers too at school - cracking conkers, we called it.

At that time also the priest from Castleconnell used to visit the school every week. The first priest I remember coming to our school was Father Walter Moloney - a curate, and a lovely man. He always brought a big bag of sweets, and he didn't give them just to the ones who answered the questions on religion: no they were divided among everyone in the school.

Confirmation, of course, was a big day in our life. In our Confirmation time, Bishop Fogarty was getting old and wasn't able to take big classes; so only eight or nine of our class went before the Bishop; the rest went before the Diocesan examiner.

We used to walk to Mass in Castleconnell for years upon years. I remember people walking to first Mass there on Christmas morning. Mass then would be at half past seven, and the women would leave at half past six, on a cold frosty Christmas morning. Very few people had a pony and trap, because you know, Montpelier then, was a very poor place. I remember the missions in Castleconnell also. Every four years they were held, with big crowds going from here. I recall, as a young fellow, being taken out of the seat and put sitting inside the communion rail to make room for the adults.

One of the most abiding memories I have of my childhood was in 1936, to see John Dillon and Pakie Hayes, who had joined the Volunteer Force. This was known as De Valera's army, because Dev wasn't long in power, and there was a big recruitment drive going on. To see those men coming home was something everyone took notice of, because they were the first soldiers from here to join that force. There was Jimmy Ryan also - a brother of Martin Ryan (Thrush). He was in the cavalry corps of the regular army, and an exemplary soldier in his magnificent uniform. I can still see him after all those years. Other members of the regular army were the Howard brothers from Fairyhall, Christy, Jim and Martin who gave a lifetime of service to our country.

Of course the biggest event in my schooldays was the Fair Day, and we always got that day off from school. There were eight fairs held every year in Montpelier - 14th January, 18th March, 8th May, 8th July and again on the 25th July - which was popularly known as the Strawberry Fair. Then there was the 7th September, the 7th November and 6th December. The four biggest ones were, the January fair, the ones in March and November, and the fair before Christmas. They were what I would call the four popular fairs, because they had the biggest attendance, and I remember the Green in Montpelier - which was a spacious place for cattle - being packed to capacity.

The fairs covered a wide area; they came from Kilbane in the West to Ballinahinch in the East, and from Killaloe in the North to Murroe in the South. I remember well, as a young fellow, the Fitzgerald's of Murroe bringing big droves of calves and having them in front of our house. The bigger cattle would be on the other side, from the school right down to Joe

Ryan's pub, and the horses all around Brown's pub. Then you had the bonhams in the cars, which would be parked in the channel that carried the water. The wheels of the cars would be put into the paved channel, so as to lower the body of the car, to give easy access to would-be buyers. That channel is still there on the Birdhill road.

Then you had the people who followed the fairs - the ballad singers and sellers, those selling harness and clothes too. The fellow selling the clothes would always be more vociferous than anyone else: he had to be to be heard above the din of the cattle. He would start with a high price and come down, down until he was rock-bottom.

A woman I remember well coming here to the fairs was Miss Murphy from Doolin. She had a horse-drawn tea van, painted green, and she served teas from the van and sandwiches too. She always left the van here in a shed when the fair was over. The next fair, she'd be back again. Many a time I drew the van for her. She used to do the Bridgetown fairs as well. Mrs. Caplis of Montpelier also did catering on fair days, and always had a big clientele.

Then when the fair was over the big clean up would take place. The County Council workers would appear, and of course everybody in the Range would turn out and wash down the walls of the houses. They would be plastered by the cattle - the whole area would be in a bad state, particularly so in winter time, or if the day was wet.

Another important time in Montpelier was during the Shannon Scheme. It gave a lot of employment in the place, and there were many workers here from other parts of the country: mostly from the West of Ireland - a lot of Connemara men. Every nook and corner was taken over by the workers. Quite an amount of them lived in the old mill across in O'Brien's Bridge. I often heard talk of drunken brawls that took place here when pay day would come around. There were seven or eight civic guards here at the time, and they were kept busy trying to keep the peace. Very few of the workers from outside remained on after the scheme- most of them drifted away.

Some people here lost their fishing rights because of the Shannon Scheme. The Aherne's were fishermen here for a long time before the scheme, and another fisherman I remember at that time was Willie (Bill) George. They lost out; but of course a good many in Montpelier and O'Brien's Bridge got employment with the ESB when the Power House started up.

Going back to my schooldays again; I remember saving hay on Inish Losky - the island in the Shannon - with Josie and Jack Aherne. There were sixteen acres there and all the hay there had to be cut with a scythe. That was in the 1940's and I remember the hay had to be brought to one side of the island and trams made on the shore. When it came to bringing the hay home,

there had to be two boats tied together and the hay built upon them. Then when it got to the other side it had to be loaded again onto horse-drawn cars.

You know there are people buried there on that island, and there's the remains of a monastery there. My mother used to say that the last person she knew to be buried there was a Mrs. Brown. Her son, Will Brown, lived here in Montpelier where Mrs. Hickey's garage is now.

Of course, most funerals went to the Lisheen, and the custom then was, when someone died, a wake was held in the house - just like a lot of other places - and the whole locality would come in. They would ensure that the corpse was never left alone, day or night, during that time - that was the custom. And when people were buried in the Lisheen there was no horse-drawn hearse: the coffin was shouldered to the graveyard. Of course, in that time, you know, people of Montpelier were not taken to the church. The priest came and conducted the funeral service in the home. There were a few men buried in the Lisheen also who were killed in the construction of the Shannon Scheme. Their graves are unmarked, but I remember seeing one man's grave with a timber cross with the name Conroy on it. But the timber rotted away after some years.

In my youth there were two pubs in Montpelier - Brown's and Joe Ryan's, and in O'Brien's Bridge the ones I remember were John Ryan's, Bonner's, Keogh's and Kelly's. There was a butcher's stall here also in the 30's. It was run by Denis O'Malley - he hurled for Ahane, and he had a pub in Denmark Street in Limerick. I remember the travelling shop coming here - Jimmy Ryan (Dick) used to drive it and he would call to all the houses in the place every week. The travelling shows came here too, and all the smaller circuses.

The village green was famous one time for pitch and toss, which was played there every Sunday throughout the year. You would have ten or twelve playing in the school - as it was called. Nobody at pitch and toss ever admitted to winnings - everyone was a loser; ever exaggerated losers. I once heard Tom Donoghue saying that he would bring out a pick and dig up the place to find all the money that was lost there, or could not be accounted for. Then for some unknown reason pitch and toss suddenly died away and no one ever tried to revive it.

In my young days there were three carpenters in Montpelier - Mike Bourke, Paddy Butler and Pat Aherne. They made horses' cars and creels, and you would always see them outside the door drying. I often twisted the stock for Mike Bourke. The stock is the centre of the wheel, you know, and it had to be twisted until it was got into shape. I would twist it and Mike would have his chisel and mallet on it, shaving it off. It would take hours to finish. Then it had to be mortised, to take every spoke in the wheel. There were no

shortcuts in that kind of work. These men also made wheelbarrows and turf barrows, which were very much in demand in that time too.

There was always a great spirit of neighbourliness among the people of Montpelier. And when someone had something to be done - whether it was bringing home the turf or killing a pig, everybody took part. Whatever was to be done was everyone's business while it was going on. It was the same in times of trouble; the neighbours were always there. Nowadays, I suppose, we feel we are able to live apart from our neighbour - it's a terrible pity, because when you're in trouble, it's your neighbour you have to face.

Montpelier was a very closely knit community then, and I'm glad to say that it still is. I have lived here all my life, without ever leaving it, and you know, I never wanted to.



Tom Begley's Montpelier

HISTORY CORNER

- From the Enright records for the late 1890's: When fishing on the Shannon was at its all-time best the famous Castleconnell fishing rod was exported in hundreds to all parts of the globe. The records contain a letter from a large sporting firm in St. Petersburg in Russia commenting on the quality of the rods, which they said were "beyond praise", and informing Messrs Enright that they intended introducing the Castleconnell Rod to Russian anglers and placed an order for 25 rods to start with. It is also on record that the Tsar of Russia, Nicholas the Second, when on a fishing trip always used an Enright rod.
- Castleconnell's oldest and longest established family is the Hartigan family, having been here since the year 1400. The second oldest family in the place is the Enright family who came here from Shinrone in County Offaly in the year 1500.
- Back in the 1860's there were no fruit or vegetable shops in the village. Basket women hawked them around or sat in the marketplace or at street corners. Two such women in the business were Beth Trill and Nance Dohen. Little is known of the former but Nance was a well known character who lived at Station Road. She was an all round merchant as they were called and in the spring and summer months she sold all the surplus fruit and vegetables from local orchards and gardens. Another of Nance's specialities was the making of candy. The ingredients are not known but the method was that the concoction had to be boiled and then put on a flat stone. The candy was doubled over and over by hand and became very sticky in the process. If it turned out well, she called it Peggy's Leg but if it wasn't up to standard she sold it as American Rock.
- In 1864 at the northern end of the parish in Annaholty a company named Kings took over a large portion of the bog there and set up a factory for the making of what was believed to be the country's very first peat briquettes.
- Among the many owners of The Grange, one of the locality's finest old houses was Lady Georgina Fraser who died in 1909 at the age of 86 years. She had the distinction of being the first person in Castleconnell to own and ride a bicycle. When she got too old to cycle,

she gave the machine to her gardener, Jimmy Connell who lived near Nelson's Cross. Jimmy became the envy of everyone as he cycled through the village on Lady Fraser's bicycle.

- The Railway Station at Castleconnell dates back to the year 1855. In that year the laying of the railway line from Limerick City had been completed and work on the building of the station house at Castleconnell was in progress. All the stone for the station came from Rourke's Quarry in Ballyhane.
- The Limerick to Castleconnell line was officially opened on the 8th August 1858 when the first passenger train puffed its way into Castleconnell Station. The service was extended to Birdhill the following year.

This was the old Waterford & Limerick Railway Company and all the engines, carriages and wagons bore the initials W&L.

As the number of trains passing through the station increased it became necessary to build a signal cabin there some years later.

(Compiled by Joe Carroll)

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THE CUCKOO - SPRING'S ETERNAL MESSENGER

By Mary A. Moloney



The seed has sprouted in the spring, lewdly sings cuckoo
Loud and lush the grasses spring - lewdly sings cuckoo
Each meadow flower in sunshine blooms - lewdly sings cuckoo
The seed has sprouted in the spring, lewdly sings cuckoo
John Skelton (1460-1529)

Hopkins, Wordsworth, Kipling and Shakespeare have all been enthralled by The Cuculus canorus or as it is commonly known, the cuckoo. It is a dove sized bird with a sleek body, long tail and pointed wings and has a fast flight. At first glance, a cuckoo in flight might be mistaken for a Kestrel. If you are fortunate enough to see one perched close by you will see a grey bird approximately the size of a Collared Dove with long, sometimes drooping wings and strongly barred under parts. The females have a slight brown tinge across the breast. On the odd occasion females occur in a rufous phase, and the ground colour is brown - red. Their young are brown in colour.

The cuckoo is a summer visitor to our shores, arriving in mid-April but peak migration takes place in late April/early May. In some years they are heard as early as mid-March. Bird watchers are not sure where in Africa the Irish birds spend the winter, the only recovery is of a bird ringed as a nestling found in Cameroon in January. It is believed that at the onset of spring migration cuckoos make a continuous flight to the southern shores of the Mediterranean.

Cuckoos arrive in southern Europe in March and it is believed that the flight north is quite rapid reaching the south east shores of Britain and Ireland by mid - April. They depart our shores in July or August, with the young birds leaving a month or so later.

As the rhyme says:

"The cuckoo comes in April,
She sings her song in May,
In the middle of June she whistles her tune,
In July she flies away!"

The cuckoo is well known for laying her egg in the nests of other birds especially the Meadow Pipits, Dunnocks and Reed Warblers but more than fifty other species of host birds have been recorded throughout the British Isles.

Unfortunately the cuckoos' population has shown a moderate decline in England in recent years owing to the deterioration of key host species such as the above mentioned Dunnock and Meadow Pipit. However the good news is that there is an apparent increase in the cuckoos' population in Scotland!

The cuckoo breeds in a wide variety of habitats across the country, from moors to open woodland, farmland and wetlands in fact anywhere it can find a suitable host. All birds fear and despise the cuckoo, the strange trait of not, apparently being able to build a nest permanently marks the cuckoo as a parasitic bird. According to Charles Darwin "the instinct which leads the cuckoo to lay her eggs in other birds' nests is, that she lays her eggs, not daily, but at intervals of two or three days; so that, if she were to make her own nest and sit on her own eggs those first laid would have to be left for some time unincubated, or there would be eggs and young birds of different ages in the same nest. If this was the case, the process of laying and hatching might be inconveniently long, more especially as she migrates at a very early period; and the first hatched young would have to be fed by the male alone".

In recent years according to the BBC website Evolution Weekend, it "has been observed that the common cuckoo with rare exceptions, lays only one egg in a nest, so that the large and voracious young bird receives ample food, secondly the eggs are remarkably small and thirdly that the young cuckoo, soon after birth, has the instinct, the strength and the properly shaped back for ejecting its foster brothers which then perish from cold and hunger. This has been called a beneficent arrangement, in order that the young cuckoo may get sufficient food, and that its foster brothers may perish before they had acquired much feeling!"

"O blithe New-comer! I have heard, I hear thee and rejoice. O Cuckoo! Shall I call thee Bird? Or but a wandering Voice?

William Wordsworth

The arrival of this bird, seldom seen but always heard, (echoing Wordsworth's sentiments) has a special place in folklore and farming practices. For example crops had to be sown in good time early in the spring, and anyone who had cuckoo spuds or oats were looked on with a mixture of pity and disdain. (These were crops sown after the cuckoo came). On a personal note I have heard it said that it is fortunate to hear a cuckoo call and it is also lucky to hear a cuckoo on the wedding morning, or see three magpies. Enough superstition: back to the cuckoo!

On the website Wildlife Lore I found the following piece of information:

"The cuckoo sings in April,
The cuckoo sings in May,
The cuckoo sings in part of June and then she flies away"

"NO - she doesn't sing at all. The familiar cuckoo call is made by the male bird 'coo-coooo' ... while the female gets on with the business of laying her eggs in other bird's nests. Her call is a quiet gurgling noise, described as "a bubbling, chuckling call" by bird-watchers. This is much less commonly heard or recognised.

In April come she will; In May she will stay; In June she'll change her tune; In July she will fly In August fly she must.

"YES - apart from the proviso concerning him/her and the cuckoo's song mentioned above. The last of the cuckoos' will have arrived by April and in May their egg laying exploits will be in full swing. By June, the male cuckoo has ceased to look for a mate and stops calling, allowing the different call of the female to be heard.

A few cuckoos start their migratory flight southwards at the end of July, especially if the weather is not too good, and they will have all left by the end of August. In the meantime they have been stocking up on insects, for example hairy caterpillars and grubs before beginning their long flight south again for the winter.

In recent years the noise levels and pace of life and working in Ireland has left us with the deprivation of being unable to hear the cuckoos' plaintive tones. Imagine going through life and not hearing the cuckoo; in truth that is poverty indeed!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Committee of "An Caisleán" very much appreciate the help of so many people in the preparing and publishing of this year's Annual.

Our thanks to -

- Those who contributed articles, features, poems and other items.
- Those who loaned us their photographs new and old.
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- Castleconnell/Ahane Credit Union for their Credit Union facilities.
- The local shops and business houses for selling "An Caisleán".
- Our Printer, Mossy Kirby and the staff of Mulcair Print.

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