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Foreword

This is the fourteenth edition of An Caislean and we are really pleased to welcome all our readers from home and abroad to join with us in our endeavours to record the living history of our parish for future generations. We are grateful to all our contributors who take the time to write or delve through family albums to provide us with the precious photographs which all help to make An Caislean such a successful publication.

In this issue, we have included articles, poems, features and many photographs of past and present events, which we hope will be of interest to you. 'A Ray of Light' is the story of an inspiring young woman, Elaine Fagan, who is the longest living person in the world, with the condition Edward's Syndrome. Joan Ó Siochrú takes us from the 20s to the 80s with her profile of Sean Edmonds, who was truly 'A Patriot and a Gentleman'. Turlough Herbert pays tribute to his uncle Tony, who recalls his childhood in Castleconnell and the great hurling years of the 30s and 40s. We include an article on the funeral of Mick Mackey by Seamus Walsh and Paddy Tuohy recalls a chance meeting in Wexford in the 1960s which proved that the world of hurling is a small realm indeed. In 'The Worst in Living Memory' Tom Lynch recalls the floods of the 50s and being stranded in his own home and ponders on the debate that global warming is responsible for all the recent flooding. Brid Richardson gives an account of her selection as Limerick Rose, Norma McDonagh documents the arrival of the her family to Mountshannon a hundred years ago and Ann Mulqueen, a native and frequent visitor to Castleconnell writes a most informative, interesting and entertaining dissertation of her experiences in the bog as a child. As well, we have some poetry, accounts of all the activities and events in our schools and clubs and lots more.

We hope that all our loyal readers and especially those living away from home enjoy this edition and we would greatly appreciate your contribution whether it is a poem, article, story or photograph, old or recent. As the proceeds are donated to local charities on an annual basis, the continued success of An Caisleán depends on your support.

Finally, a word of thanks to our printer, Mossy Kirby of Mulcair Print for his patience, expertise and co-operation at all times.

Editorial Committee:
Steve Reidy, Pat Skehan, Joan O Siochru, Mary Dillon,
Anne Berkery.

Pastoral Messages

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



Fr. Dwyer's Address

I feel very honoured to be writing this short pastoral message for "An Caislean".

Asking for things is probably what comes into most people's minds when they hear the word prayer. The word prayer originally meant "to plead" and for many today, prayer is still a kind of last resort, a desperate turning to God for help.

In our prayers of petition, let us never forget our family, the family that gave us life: first our parents, living or dead: then our sisters and brothers who grew up with us and shared that giving of life. Let us pray that no matter how far and wide we may be scattered: physically or spiritually by God's loving mercy may none of us be lost: may we all be gathered again at the end, safe at home, with God.

And to Almighty God we offer thanks always and everywhere for all the blessings that come through the Parish of Castleconnell. We pray that God will continue to work among us, sending the Holy Spirit, through with and in Jesus Christ, not just for today, but for always.

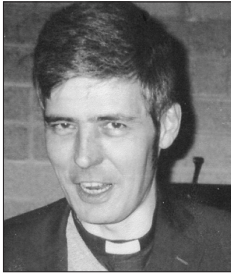
**May God bless you all,
Fr. Donal Dwyer.**

I Live Alone

*I live alone, dear Lord
Stay by my side.
In all my daily needs be Thou my
guide.
Grant me good health, for that I pray,
To carry on my work from day to day.
Keep pure my thoughts: my every
deed,
Let me be kind, unselfish in my
neighbour's need.
Spare me from fire, from flood, from
malicious tongues,*

*From thieves, from fear, from evil
ones.
If sickness or an accident befall,
Then humbly Lord I pray
Hear Thou my call.
And when I'm feeling low, or in
despair,
Lift up my heart and help me in my
prayer.
I live alone, dear Lord, yet have no
fear
Because I feel Your Presence,
Ever near.
Anon*

Pastoral Article for An Caislean 2010



Once again, as in previous years, I am delighted to accede to the committee's request for a pastoral article for this year's edition of An Caisleán. My reflections this year are drawn to the theme of "thankfulness".

My reason for this is simply that over the past year I have been literally swamped by the sheer number of urgent appeals for special aid and relief which have arrived on my desk. They have come from the major aid organisations, from the central committee of the Church of Ireland and from the individual charities and special relief funds.

What this has made me realise is that the past twelve months have seen an almost unprecedented degree of disaster and suffering around the world. There have been droughts and floods, earthquakes and volcanoes, wildfires, famine, disease, war and almost every other kind of crises imaginable and hundreds of millions of people the world over have been affected.

I know full well that we have our problems here at home, particularly in terms of the effects of the recession, and that many people are going through trying, difficult and worrying times. But our nation is not a war zone, our homes have not been destroyed, our water is clean and safe to drink and we are not in imminent danger of starvation.

How fortunate we are in a global context! And fortunate too to have such a strong sense of local community. I hope and pray that a sense of our blessings (even in troubled times) will keep us generous in our response to the almost unimaginable needs of so many of our brothers and sisters around the globe.

May God go with all in our local communities and may he kindle a spirit of thankfulness and generosity in the hearts of all.

May God bless you all in the coming year

Stephen R. White

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A Ray Of Light

Elaine Fagan was born on a lovely sunny day in March 1986, a beautiful daughter for Kay and Michael of Garden Hill, Castleconnell and a welcome and much awaited sister for Nicola 10, David 7 and Brian 4. The initial joy and delight at Elaine's arrival however turned to anxiety and foreboding the following day, when Michael and Kay were called to the Consultant's office where they were informed, in no uncertain terms, that their precious baby had a rare condition called Edward's Syndrome, meaning that she had an extra chromosome on pair 18. Babies born with this genetic malformation usually do not survive more than a few days. Kay and Michael were told that they wouldn't be taking their baby home with them. The Doctor explained that she "was like a car without an engine". They then had to break this devastating news to their three other children, Nicola, David and Brian, who were all looking forward to having their baby sister home to dote on.



Elaine and Nicola Fagan

Instead of having a joyous homecoming with their new born baby, Kay and Michael were joined at her little crib by their children and the children's grandparents, keeping a constant vigil and all holding her in turns in their arms for the last time, as they had been informed by the medics. But Elaine had no intention of going anywhere once she sensed these strong feelings of love and devotion exuding from her new family! This little person weighing just five pounds and one ounce, fought for life with the tenacity and courage which has been tested several times since that day and is still apparent today. After three days had stretched into a week, Kay and Michael began to hope. Although she had been christened, blessed and confirmed by several priest friends, her weight dropped to four pounds and she was being tube fed in a darkened room as her little eyes could not tolerate any light. But then gradually a miracle seemed to be taking place and over the next four months, Elaine began to gain weight and the Fagans were allowed to take her home just in time for David's First Holy Communion, which they celebrated at home surrounded by family.

Kay immediately set about weaning Elaine off the tube and on to a bottle and gradually introduced her to light so that she overcame her sensitivity to it. When she was six months old, Elaine developed serious kidney problems which thankfully are no longer an issue for her however, she also developed a hiatus hernia which causes her tummy to be bloated and can be very uncomfortable.

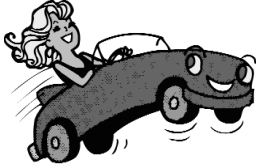
On her first birthday, Nicola recalls that she suffered four massive heart attacks in quick succession and the family were once again preparing to lose their little baby... a grave was even organised for her in the cemetery... but with her inner resilience, and the help of an attending nurse who pumped her little chest, Elaine amazed the medical profession and rallied. However, she has been left with a serious heart defect. Over the years she has been rushed to hospital on several occasions with various infections but she always manages to overcome these with her usual fighting spirit.

This fighting spirit is not just confined to her medical issues. Although Elaine cannot communicate verbally and has very limited mobility, she recognises all those around her and she attends St. Vincent's, Lisnagry every morning where she receives the stimulation and physiotherapy which is vital for her comfort and development. She loves it over there and recognises all the staff and her classmates. Her First Holy Communion stands out as a very special day for Elaine and her family. She looked so beautiful, like a little angel and when the choir sang a song about a special child, there was not a dry eye in the church... even the priest was emotional!

Her personality shines through whatever her adversities and she loves wrestling on the floor with her brothers, she is last to bed if there is any partying being done and enjoyed her 21st in Castletroy Park Hotel as the centre of attention! Elaine lives at home with her parents now that the others have fled the nest, and she requires twenty four hour care so life revolves around her and she is brought everywhere with them. She has a very hearty laugh which raises the spirits of all who hear, especially her attentive and devoted family.

As she approaches her 25th birthday next March, Elaine Fagan has amazed the medical profession with her ability to survive against all the odds. She is making medical history by being the longest living person, with the condition in the world. It is ironic to think that she could not tolerate light as a baby, but is now referred to by Nicola as "a Sunflower, bringing a ray of light to every room she is in". The conclusion could be drawn that Elaine is blessed with her loving and dedicated family but it is apparent that the Fagan family feel blessed themselves to have Elaine wake up every morning with a smile for them, brightening their day and cementing a strong bond among them all.

A. Berkery



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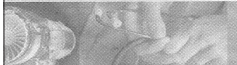
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Ann Mulqueen

The name Ann Mulqueen along with the Mackeys, Mick and John are synonymous with Castleconnell, Ahane and Montpelier parish. Ann was born in Coolbawn Lane in the village of Castleconnell to John Joe and Nancy Mulqueen, one of a family of nine, seven girls and two boys. She attended the local national school and later Rosary Hill Presentation Convent in the village.



Ann heard her first songs at her grandmother, Bridget Mulqueen's knee and later from her extended family and many friends both in Castleconnell and around the country. While at national school, encouraged by Martin McCabe and Davy Quaid, who organised the Three County Feis in Killaloe, Ann entered and won her first big competition. She has huge admiration for these two men as she says they promoted and encouraged the use of the Irish language and culture through conversation, music, song and dance in the locality.

Her next success was at a talent competition run by The Vic Loving Travelling Show in the Market Field in the mid 50's. Patrick (Pa) Hogg was the winner on the night and Ann was runner-up.

In 1958, a man called Donal Ó Riain, from Parteen called to Ann's house in Woodpark to record a few songs. He subsequently entered her in the Fleadh Cheoil na hEireann (All Ireland Fleadh) in Thurles in 1959. This she won three times in a row 1959, 1960 and 1961. This was the launch of Ann's singing career.

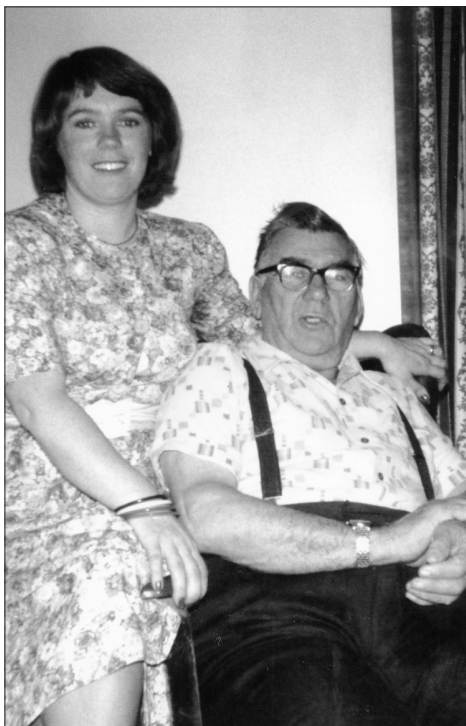
This career took her all over the world promoting the Irish language and culture in song. But, no matter where she found herself performing, she never forgot her native place. She sang proudly of "The Falls of Doonass", the legend of Ahane and the great Limerick team of the 30's and 40's and of course, her great hero, Mick Mackey.

Ann moved from Castleconnell to Ring in Co. Waterford in 1969 to

marry Kerryman, Tomás Ó Céilleachair, a teacher at the famous Coláiste na Rinne. They also owned a pub there called “Tigh na Cheoil” in the heart of the Ring Gaeltacht. It was there that Ann learned to speak the language and to sing the lovely Irish songs which she learned from the famous Sean-Nós singer Nioclás Tóibín, R.I.P.

She also recorded three C.D.s and participated in several T.V. and radio programmes. Ann is still involved in singing, conducting workshops and tutoring many students at home and abroad.

Now back to almost where she started, having reared two boys and three girls, who in turn presented her with six beautiful grandchildren, Ann found herself trying to cope with the “Empty Nest Syndrome” and so enrolled herself in a Diploma Course in Regional Studies with U.C.C. studying Folklore and decided to write her dissertation on a subject that was very close to her and so the story “The Bog” was born.



Ann Mulqueen with Mick Mackey, 1981.

A.B.

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The Bog

by Ann Mulqueen

David Bellamy, the world famous scientist, described the bog as “one of the wonders of the world”.

Peatlands have played a very important role in shaping the history, culture and economy of Ireland. This is not surprising as with 17% of its land surface covered in peat, Ireland has proportionally more peatland than any other country in the world with the exception of Canada and Finland. These peatlands have long been regarded as wastelands, fit only for rough grazing or for cheap but hard won fuel. In actual fact they are one of our great natural resources, not only as an energy source but as some of our last wild areas. (*Peatlands. Cross. 1981*).

There are several **types of bog** in Ireland, the two principal types being, blanket bog and raised bog. I am most familiar with the raised bog, as I lived beside this type of bog and worked in it for most of my young life in Castleconnell, Co. Limerick.

When the last ice age disappeared about ten thousand years ago and the temperature increased, lakes developed due to melting snow and ice. One such lake was left covering a very large area between Gouig and Newport, on the Limerick/ Tipperary border. Then fen, “low marshy land” began to creep out from the margins and was home to water lilies and bulrushes. As the mat of fen vegetation thickened, rainwater constantly moving downwards leached away all the nutrients that survived, allowing bog moss *sphagnum* to establish itself.

My grandfather, Paddy cutting turf
- 1946.



Sphagnum moss has high acidifying qualities and it was soon joined by sedges, cotton grass and heathers especially ling heather.

Rainwater could supply all the nutrient needs of this community, whose surface started to rise towards the source of its supply. As the fen margin crept out towards the centre of the lake, trees decayed and their dead timber became part of the encroaching peat. Those crisp little sticks were a valuable addition to the harvested turf thousands of years afterwards. The bog followed and then eventually the open water disappeared and bog covered the whole area which locals call a “raised bog”. We are fortunate to have inherited that raised bog in Castleconnell.

The bog to the east of our village covered thousands of acres expanding from Gardenhill in Limerick to Annaholty in Tipperary and from Gouig to Newport, in Co Tipperary. It was at one time owned by four landlords: Henry of Forthenry, Going of Cragg, Waller of Castlewaller and De Burgo of Castleconnell. On that bog in the early years of the twentieth century two different companies were set up to commercially harvest peat in two different formats. Anthony Mackey of Castleconnell set up a factory at Clooncommons, Co. Limerick, to produce mill peat or moss peat. It was mostly exported as bedding for horses, particularly to those of the English army in India. (*Carroll. 2000 P*).

When the month of April came round my father would start to prepare and remind us of the commencement of our work in the bog. He loved the bog but we weren't too sure whether or not we loved it. He always referred to that time of year and our start in the bog as 'A call to the wild'. He remembered his own father saying time and time again 'You don't grow up in the bog you grow up with the bog'. As a young child I'm afraid I didn't agree with all these sentiments, but now, in my later years, I do.

It was now time once again to raid the clothes press for suitable attire, as we knew too well the harsh and unpredictable weather that faced us in the bog. All woollen caps that went down well over our ears and noses if possible, were pulled out. Being one of nine children I often had to settle for a tea cosy with the spout and handle hole sewn up. Aesthetics aside, it was the perfect item. No gloves could be worn as you had to put out the fresh turf with bare hands. Good warm jumpers were also a must. The footwear worn was usually Dunlop wellingtons with at least two pairs of socks. As the wellingtons were handed down from older to younger children, if yours were a few sizes too big, you just wore an extra pair of socks or stuffed the toes with newspaper. My mother had wellingtons that were cut above the ankle, as she was a fairly heavy woman and the calves of her legs would not allow the full wellington to go up to her knee, but they served their purpose well. My father was shod in full wellingtons with pants tucked inside and tied with a piece of string to keep the wind at bay.

My father having himself secured two weeks off work allowed us school going children a few days off too.

Weather permitting, we would all set out for the bog. It was usually cold, dry weather in mid April with a breeze that would as they say “cut you”. In the event of a rain shower it was sheer misery, as the bog is a very bare place, with no trees to shelter under. With nothing to protect you, you are at the mercy of the elements! We were glad of our caps (and tea cosies as well!). The setting off morning was a sight to behold. My father and mother on bicycles (high nellies) loaded with kettles, pots, pans and bags. The children were led by an older sibling and walked the full three miles to join the crew. My grandparents, Nana and Da, as we affectionately called them, would usually travel with us on the first day. They would travel by ass and cart as they would carry the big timber wheelbarrow and all the other implements used in the harvesting of the turf. They would join us again from time to time when we fell behind with the work. We would all arrive at about the same time, 9.30 a.m. On the way, my older sister, Peggy, and I would stop at the spring well for a ‘sweet’s can’ of water and collect a dozen duck eggs at Mrs. Carey’s farmhouse.

On arrival we all assembled at the side of the road just outside our bank. The first job every year was to repair the little footbridge that led into the bank. It would have deteriorated during the winter months and had to be filled in with sticks and ‘scraws’ (small squares of top bog grass). This made it safe for the summer months. First to be deposited into the bog was the wheelbarrow, then the gleaming sleán, two pitch forks or sprongs, a spade, a shovel and two planks of wood about three feet long a piece. My father used these to stand on as he cut into the bank of turf. I must mention here that is was breast cutting that was involved. My father, using a sleán to hold the sod in position as he threw it up on the bank, was usually standing about five feet down. When he would cut a sod of turf, he would throw it up the five feet to the “spread” and to whoever was putting it out to dry. As he moved along he would move the planks of wood to give him support on the soft bog peat floor. To prepare the bank for this work his first task was to ‘strip’ the bank. He would get the spade and skim off about four inches of the top crust of the bog. He would keep skimming until he had uncovered about fifteen or sixteen feet and then he would start cutting for the day. He was very particular about having the bank completely straight, so he would attach a piece of cord to the end of a stick, then place it at the beginning of the strip, pull it along in a straight line for fifteen feet, then tie it to another piece of wood and stick it in the ground. This would help guide him in cutting it perfectly straight. While all this was happening my mother was busy arranging the cooking utensils. My grandmother, meanwhile, sat on a seat

made from old turf giving the orders, with many a disagreement between the two I might add. My grandfather would help my father.

My mother's first job was to put the butter in a cabbage leaf and put it in a bog hole. This was better than any fridge, especially on hot days. The milk, contained in a big lemonade bottle, was also put into the bog hole. And as my mother would say, this kept both fresh as a daisy. The rest of the food would be packed carefully into a cloth bag and put into the shade, usually under a clump of heather. A suitable spot for the fire would be then selected. The big black kettle and an old saucepan, or often an old bean tin, for the eggs, would then be set aside. The staple diet for workers in the bog was usually bread and butter with sometimes a pot of homemade jam, eggs and occasionally cheese. Now and again we would have a piece of cold bacon or pig's head. The meat would nearly always be on Mondays, the leftovers from Sunday dinner.

When all the small jobs were done and the bank stripped and ready, my father would call us all to attention. He was ready to cut and we had to be ready to put out. Work in the bog was designated to men, women, children and grandparents. My mother was nearly always the 'barrow woman'. This was hard physical work for men, not to mention women. The sleánsman cut to a rhythm, cutting and throwing up the turf to a fast pace. My mother would have to pick up the sod of turf with a fork and place it in neat rows on the barrow. When the barrow was piled up high she would walk about thirty yards out the spread and arrange the sods at an angle in rows to dry. Often by the time she got back to the cutting bank, her load would have all piled up and my father would scold her and tell her to hurry. Time was of the essence in the bog, particularly if the weather was good. Our job was to help my mother with the pile up. We would put it out with our bare hands, one sod at a time. I had a little trick of my own. I would sink the fingers of both hands into each side of the soft wet sod as I was transporting it out. When it came to burning the turf at home in the winter, I always examined each sod to see if I could see the four finger prints at each side, which I often did. I would let my mind wander back as I watched it burn and enjoyed the warmth of the wonderful red glow of its heat, remembering the cold miserable day I put it out on the spread and revelled in my comforts.

Barrowing the turf was done mostly by the men and if the men were not available then the women had to do the job. The cutting, however, was always done by the man. I never saw a woman cutting turf. Putting out was a woman's job with help from the children. Grandparents did the small jobs like gathering *caoráns* (small pieces of turf), making the fires, cooking and sometimes even looking after a baby in a pram which often occurred. One thing my grandmother never liked to see happening was an adolescent

or teenage girl wheeling the barrow. I had two first cousins who worked very hard in the bog on the barrow while still in their teens. They left for England at eighteen years of age, married some years later, but never had children. This saddened them greatly and my grandmother always maintained that being ‘barrow women’ as teenagers was the reason for this later infertility.

When all the cutting was done and the turf put out on the spread, it was left for about three weeks to dry, then it was turned with forks and left for another two weeks or so. Then came the time for footing. This is where the women came into play. When the cutting was done the men returned to their regular work routine outside of the bog. **Footing** was back breaking work. You remained in a stooped position for most of eight hours a day, but it had to be done. The adults made high footings, made up of about twelve or thirteen sods arranged in a circular shape with one sod on top. We children had our own design, a smaller version of about six sods with one laid across on top. Footing season was usually fine weather and turf was dryer so things weren’t as miserable. In fact I recall this time in the bog as being quite enjoyable. When the full spread was all footed it was a lovely sight to look at.

When all our own footing was done most women, including my own mother and my grandmother, took on contracts. This involved going along to another bog, ‘pricing’ the work and carrying it out for another owner. They would know by looking at the spread of turf how many hours or days exactly it would take them to do it. It was very hard work but it was an opportunity to earn some extra money. My mother often told a great story regarding one of these “contract” occasions. They were “en route” on the ass and cart to commence their day’s work, when my grandmother suddenly began to cry. My mother questioned her reason for crying to which she replied “today is my birthday and I am seventy years old”.

Now, my grandmother who was always partial to a glass or two of “porter” and in her sadness decided to celebrate the occasion with my own mother, who incidentally never drank alcohol in her life. She requested my mother to return to the village and purchase a “sweets’ can” of porter from the local public house and then return to the bog. They sat in the glorious sunshine and consumed the can of porter between them. No need to say what state these two women were in after their birthday celebration. There certainly was no footing done on that day.

The footings were left for a few weeks to dry and then came the time for the stacking. This took place about the middle of August and lasted a few weeks. The stack was oblong in shape, built like a brick wall on the outside and piled with loose sods on the inside. There were two types of stack, ‘the hand stack’ and the ‘quarter stack’. The quarter stack was the bigger of the two and contained a quarter ton of turf or six horse loads. The quarter

stack was specially for selling, as the buyer would know the exact amount he was getting. The hand stack was much smaller and designed for family use. It measured about six feet by three feet wide. Stacking was a craft all of its own. They had to be built very securely with an assurance that they wouldn't collapse before leaving the bog for our sheds. The stack heralded the end of the long laborious job of harvesting the turf and many a man, woman and child would heave a great sigh of relief at this stage. It was very satisfying to stand at the roadside and look in at the spread. The display of so many neatly made stacks, sitting silently in rows, always reminded me of a small village made of brown bricked houses.

Early September was usually the time to bring home the turf. This was a very exciting time for us all. It was a lonely time too, because when the last stack left our bog that was that until the following spring.

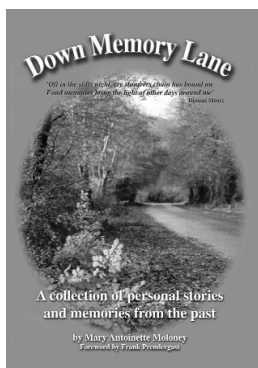
The first job to be done in preparation for transporting the turf home was to dismantle all the hand stacks on the spread, bag the turf and then drag it through the bog and pile it up on the roadside. No horse and cart, ass and cart, or lorry could get in by the little hand made bridge or travel through the soft spongy ground of the bog, so this task had to be done by hand. No easy one I can assure you. Sometimes we would bring home a horse load of turf but the most economical method was to hire Matthew Sweeney's big red lorry and it would all be transported home in three or four lorry loads.

During the delivery operation two teams of workers were needed, one in the bog to pile the turf into the lorry and one waiting at home to store it in our sheds. Neighbours would help out one another in a meitheal (a group of people) so it was non stop work for a few weeks.

The same principal was applied when the lorry arrived. The turf was deposited on the roadside near our house and bags were used to carry it through the yard to the sheds. I often looked at this big black mountain of turf and thought we would never get through it. Of course speed was very important here as we had to have this mountain cleared before Matthew arrived with the next load. No time here for storytelling or telling yarns during this procedure; everyone was too busy.

It would normally take a day or a day and a half to complete this operation and at the end of our hard day's work, we all looked forward to the lovely big meal of bacon and cabbage and lovely flowery potatoes when our job was done.

At this stage we were all settled back at school and winter was slowly approaching. In that era of the fifties and sixties schools solely depended on turf for heating their big, cold, stone classrooms. It was accepted for all of us, children, to arrive at school each morning with a sod of turf under our arms to contribute to the day's heating. We didn't mind the winter winds and snows too much then as we had our warm fires and Christmas to look forward to, the highlight of our winter.



Down Memory Lane - A Collection of Personal Stories and Memories from the Past has been published by Mary A. Moloney and is a substantial volume of 320 pages, containing over one hundred interviews with people from diverse backgrounds in the Mid-West of Ireland, covering stories going back over a century. With the foreword written by Frank Prendergast, former Mayor of Limerick, the book contains narratives from Nora Keane and Edwina McKenzie (two survivors of the ill-fated Titanic). These are prominently featured along with farming life, stories of creameries, threshing and fair days, History and Politics in the Making; Overseas Connections stretching to the Congo, and elsewhere in Africa, Poland, Australia as well as the UK and USA etc; Personal Stories, Religious Practice and Devotion, stories of school days, work and sport are contained in this compendium of essays and memories which is an essential collection for anyone remotely interested in local and social history.

Down Memory Lane is available at a very reasonably priced €15.00 (incl. P&P) from the author Mary A. Moloney, Clyduff, Lisnagry, Co. Limerick and from shops in the Annacotty/Castleconnell/Ahane area for just €12.99.



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About two weeks before Christmas, at weekends, my father would travel the seven miles to Limerick City, with his horse load of turf to sell to his customers. The city people loved the turf fires, especially at Christmas time.

The turf was sold by the bag from house to house and my father had his usual customers from year to year.

The selling of the turf at Christmas time meant extra money in the household and every Friday and Saturday night, during this period, we waited patiently for the horse and cart to arrive home in the yard with all the goodies and with special surprises on Christmas Eve. **The turf had served us well.**

I have great childhood memories of the bog and when all of us seven sisters meet, usually at family gatherings, the bog and its stories are always revisited. My two older sisters always talk of the real reason they went to the bog and that was to get a good tan. In mid-summer when the sun was really hot, the bog was the perfect place to achieve this tan. They both worked in Limerick City and had a half day on Wednesdays. We, as younger kids, waited patiently for the sound of their Raleigh bicycles clattering on the stony, bumpy road which led to our bog. We were ecstatic when they would produce a bag of lovely fresh buns, straight from the city baker, for our 4 p.m. tea break.

Lunchtime was a magical time in the bog. Nobody had a watch. Our time call or cue to start the fire was the chime of the Angelus bell at twelve noon, from Newport Church, which was about two miles away but in the quietness and stillness of the bog we could hear it quite clearly. The fire was started with dried heather and a few “caoráns”, (small pieces of turf left over from the previous year). It was a wonderful sight to see all the blue smoke curling up into the air in each bog for miles around. Lunchtime had surely arrived.

When we had eaten our fill and the utensils were tidied away our neighbouring workers came to visit and to chat and these were the times I remember and loved the most. **There was always someone with a tall yarn or a good story to tell.**

Tom and Mary would visit very often, sometimes Tom on his own and sometimes Mary unaccompanied. My father used to say they were unequalled when it came to telling stories.

I remember Tom telling us on one occasion that one day when he came to cut his turf he found himself in deep trouble. The minute he sunk his sleán to cut his first sod, an almighty eruption of spring water burst into the air to about thirty feet high and he said it lasted for about two hours. My father asked him how he stopped it. He looked at my father and he said “John Joe, I stuffed my coat in the hole and put a plank on top of it and that stopped it. I never saw a drop after that.” Having told his story he would say to my father “John Joe, if you don’t believe me you can ask Mary there.” Mary’s reply always was “he never said a truer word John Joe.”

We had daily visits from Mick too. He owned the next bog to ours. Mick could never tolerate Tom and Mary, though he would spend his time passing sarcastic remarks and trying to catch them out, which made great entertainment for us all. Mick arrived one day just before the other pair. He said to my father “ if these two start with their tall tales, I’m going to quieten them.” Sure enough, Tom and Mary arrived for the mid-day get together. Tom told a few outrageous yarns but the last one took beating. He said he was just about to put a sandwich in his mouth when a big frog jumped out of a boghole and snapped the sandwich out of his hand. Mick was furious and I could see my father was enjoying it all and at the same time looking to see how Mick was taking this one.

“Well I have a better one for you now,” said Mick. “ I brought an eel up to the bog with me yesterday to have for my lunch, (eels were very plentiful in our local river). I lit up my fire and put the eel on the pan to fry it. I decided I would fry an egg with it. I turned to go to a nearby stack for a few sods for the fire. When I came back to the pan on the fire there was no sign of the egg. While I was gone for the turf the eel had eaten my egg.” Mick then turned to Tom and said “now isn’t that a good one?” What made this so funny was that Tom and Mary believed him. They knew too well how hard it was to kill the nerve in the eel. It always seemed to keep wriggling, dead or alive.

Other conversations would have taken place too, with learned men discussing place names around the locality deriving from bog locations. Their meaning would be teased out at length.

All these men were expert **sleánsmen** who took great pride in their work. My father always judged a sleánsman by the way he left his bank in the evening. It had to be straight and smooth and the spread left neat. Nothing else was acceptable to him. I interviewed Pat Touhy from our village about the sleánsmen and he told me they were also very competitive. So much so, that in June 1940, a competition was held to find the best sleánsman and also the best barrowman (a good barrowman was very important). The rules of the competition were laid down and accordingly, each pair, sleánsman and barrowman, were given a bank of turf to cut and wheel out to a spread and the time allotted was one hour. Marks were awarded for the amount of turf cut, the size and uniformity of the sods and the neatness of the bank at the finish. The work of the barrowman was judged on the way the turf was thrown out and the tidiness of the spread. Neighbours, Jimmy and Martin, were declared the winners.

(Interview with Pat Touhy 6/1/’08)

I never heard my father talk of this competition so I asked Pat was my father’s name ever mentioned as a competitor. His own father told him that

dad never entered and knowing my father this was probably true, because if he lost, he couldn't handle the situation as he always thought he was the best sleánsman.

In conversation with an old neighbour last summer, 2007, he told me about the **moving bog**. A neighbour of his was taking his milk to the creamery one morning, in Birdhill, Co. Limerick, in summer 1924. He happened to look in at the bog as he was passing and was shocked and amazed to see the stacks of turf shivering and shaking and trembling. He saw the great bog moving forward, leaving great cracks and dents in its wake. The bog was moving in a floating onward motion. However, the main road acted as a dam and contained it. This area is still called the moving bog.

As well as the bog moving, my father often told us that the turf moved also, not of the earthquake type, as he said himself, "it was an earthquake with two legs." A fair amount of turf stealing went on at the end of the harvest when it was stacked and ready to be brought home. Dad had many accounts of shadowy figures running across the bog with bags of turf on their backs and it wasn't "Jackie the Lantern" or "Will-o-the-Wisp" as he said himself. These night raiders usually belonged to that select minority who either hated the bog or were too reluctant to take on a summer of hard work to provide supplies for themselves for the winter. Most of the pilfering was harmless enough and a bagful here and there wasn't much of a loss. Dad knew a man who wouldn't agree with this sentiment, I'm sure, as he was the victim one time of a cleverly contrived piece of turf larceny. This man had a quarter stack for sale and on a Sunday afternoon a buyer came to look at it and make a deal with the owner. The stack was very well constructed, wide at the base and tapering gradually to the top. It was a work of art and the prospective buyer was greatly impressed with the quality and the presentation of the turf on offer. All of sudden there was a shower of rain, one of those end of summer showers that comes from nowhere. The two men went round to the sheltered side of the stack and put their backs against it to shelter from the rain. All of a sudden the whole side of the stack collapsed in and they were stunned to see that the inside of the stack was completely empty. All the turf on the inside was removed and the outside rows put back in place to make it appear like a normal stack of turf. "Wasn't he an awful devil to do that?" said dad.

I often heard dad talk about these "boyos" as he called them and he said he remembered our three Gardaí at the time spending long cold nights, in their turn, on duty near the bog, watching out for these fly by raiders. At the time, Gardaí only had bicycles to get them around the parish but still their presence near the bog was enough to frighten off the raiders. Dad also thanked his lucky stars that he wasn't one of their victims.

The **Flora and Fauna** of the bog held great fascination, magic and interest for us as young children. Each season brought its own charms in regard to plants, animals and insects.

The first plant I saw and remember most was heather. It grew in abundance in the bog, particularly in the summer. It had a lovely rich purple hue. This heather was always used to start the fire to prepare our mid-day meal and to boil the kettle for the tea. It produced a thick, blue smoke which entered the kettle and produced a peculiar taste in the tea. Old people used to say that you hadn't tasted tea at all until you drank the bog tea, with its heavy, smoky taste. Looking back now over the years, I am convinced this tea must have contained some kind of stimulant for us kids. After drinking it we could not be contained or stay in the same spot. We jumped over bogholes and ditches all over the place for an hour or so after consuming our special beverage. The effect this tea had on us still remains a mystery to me.

I also remember the cotton tops or "bog cotton." If ever we got an ear ache my grandmother always told us to pick off the cotton on top of the stem and put it in our ears and it certainly cured our pain. Maybe there was some healing ingredient in it, who knows?

My grandmother had some great old bog plant cures too, some of which I remember very well. "Meadowsweet," which was quite plentiful, had an ingredient contained in it which was used in the manufacture of Aspirin. The flowers could also be steeped and used as a shampoo and as a face wash and was great for the complexion. A tea made from this flower would also help to bring down a fever.

Of the birch tree she said "Fairies don't like birch as a piece of it was placed in the cradle to replace a baby which was stolen by the fairies. Birch rods were used to beat bad spirits out of people who were insane." We never questioned her. We always believed her.

I went to visit Rita Byrne in Fenor, Co. Waterford, in October '07. She had a great store of knowledge about plant life in the bog. I found her fascinating and she verified all my grandmother's old stories for me. Rita also had a few unusual ones that I hadn't heard. She told me about "Knapweed." It was a cure to stop bleeding and it was also used as a poultice for varicose ulcers. "Yarrow" is one of the great healing herbs. Yarrow tea was given to people with T.B, chest coughs and fever. It was also used as a cure for back pain (lumbago) and arthritis. Its flowers were always cut on St. John's Eve. "Silverweed": the root of this plant was eaten and also smoked like tobacco. Its leaves were also put in shoes and boots to cure sore feet. Rita had an amazing amount of knowledge on all bog plants, cures and superstitions.

(Interview with Rita Byrne, October '07)

Whatever time of the year you visit a raised bog, some animals may be encountered. If not, other signs such as the empty larval cases of Dragonfly, the pupa cases of the Emperor Moth, fecal remains or feathers testify to the hidden presence of a diverse fauna. (*Wild Beauty of the Bog, P 14*).

Insects are perhaps the most familiar group of invertebrates found in the bog and of these, the Butterflies and Moths are the most likely group to be seen. The Large Heath is the only butterfly confined to bogs and is readily identified by its characteristic zig zag flight pattern near the bog surface. Other common species occur, including Green Hairstreak, Meadow Brown and Small Tortoise Shell. (*Wild Beauty of the Bog, OPW, P 14*)

I would like to dwell on the **Tortoise Shell butterfly** for a moment as it is of significance and holds a special place in our family history.

When my mother worked in the bog with all of us, as young kids, she was always aware of and very close to nature and when she heard a bird sing or saw an insect, she would immediately bring it to our attention. Her favourite were the butterflies and in particular the Tortoise Shell. She loved this little creature and when it perched beside her (as it often did), she stopped her work for a fleeting second to appreciate its presence and to admire its colours and beauty. My mother passed away, aged eighty eight years, on March 4 th. 2002. (She died in her own home with all her family around her, just as she wished). Just as she passed away, a red Tortoise Shell butterfly appeared out of nowhere and circled round the room and then disappeared. Two days after, at her burial and as she was being lowered into her grave in harsh, cold and rainy weather, the Tortoise Shell appeared again and encircled us

In the past six years since she passed away, four of her grandchildren were married and at all four weddings the Tortoise Shell presented itself and circled round the family in the church. On another occasion when one of these grandchildren gave birth to her first child, the Tortoise Shell presented itself once again and encircled the labour ward as the child was born.

On my mother's sixth anniversary this year, it didn't desert us as it arrived in the church to comfort us. I'm not a great believer in many things but I find it hard to explain all these instances with the **Tortoise Shell**.

In the bog I got many hours of pleasure watching the tiny **ants** at work. I remember seeing thousands of them around the bog. Armies of these creatures would appear, especially after meal time. I often studied them after lunch trying to carry a crumb of bread back to their nest. They would take hold of it and on their journey back to the nest, would lose it continuously. It was hard laborious work getting that crumb back to their young in the nest. Nevertheless, I fully enjoyed the procedure.

The **Dragon Fly** was one we dreaded. My grandmother frightened us to death about this insect. She called it “the devil’s needle” because of its long, narrow body which ended in a point when it whizzed by we all ducked. Nan told us it would stick its needle into our skin and that it would be very painful.

The beetle like creature was another friend in the bog. We called it the “**Earwig**.” My mother always warned us that if it crawled up our jumpers and got into our ears, it couldn’t be removed. It was certainly to be avoided. Nan had another name for it. She called it “An Dearg Diabhal” (the Red Devil). She told us that at one time it had the power of speech and on Good Friday when the soldiers were looking for Christ to crucify him, they met the “Dearg Diabhal” on the road and asked it had it seen Christ and it answered “Nay, nay”. The soldiers knew well that it had seen Christ so they struck it dumb for lying. After that this species never spoke again.

The smallest mites of all and the most troublesome and vicious were the dreaded **midges**. When they got stuck in your hair and skin, you had to down tools, evacuate the bog and go home. They were merciless and would eat you alive and no matter how you covered up, they would get at you somehow. The invasion of midges in the bog was unforgettable.

Of the **birds** in the bog I remember best the beautiful sound of the **skylark**, singing high up in the sky on a lovely summer’s day. The call of the **cuckoo** too was heard in the summer. The cry of the **snipe** was heard on a dull misty day or the curlew to announce the rain. I was also lucky enough to have heard the **corncrake** which is, sadly, almost extinct in Ireland today. And how could I forget our visitor all year round, the constant **robin**, who never missed mealtime.

Larger animals present in raised bogs include the **Large Black Slug** which can grow to several centimetres in length. The common **frog** is an important predator and finds a varied diet of insects. **Tadpoles** are seen in spring in the pools on the bog. The **Common Lizard** may also be encountered. The Irish hare is one of the most obvious mammals and may be seen running quickly through the vegetation. And of course the fox is also often seen roaming for prey in the bog.

The **frog** was the most common small animal we encountered in the bog. I never liked the look of those slimy creatures. Often we watched him swim in the boghole or in the ditches on the roadside. Very often when footing the turf we got the fright of our lives when a big, fat yellow or green frog would jump up from behind a sod of turf. My father could always forecast the weather by the colour of the frog. They appeared to be a bright yellow when sunshine was expected, brown when rain was on the way and a greenish colour when the cold wind was expected. The frog also was a cure for a

toothache! When you put the frog's head in your mouth and touched the offending tooth, the pain would vanish. Needless to say, we didn't chance that one.

One of the most interesting, supernatural stories of the bog is the sightings of **Willow-the-Wisp** and **Jackie the Lantern**. I interviewed a few of the older local men who worked in the bog and some saw sightings but most did not. Chatting with my neighbour, Tommy, one night, he told me that he definitely saw "**Jackie the Lantern**" on one occasion.

He had occasion to go to the bog one night, something he was not keen on doing. His father had told him once that anyone who walked the bog at night always got lost, got disorientated and never finished the journey. However, there was one act you could do and this would see you to your destination. I asked him what this was and he said

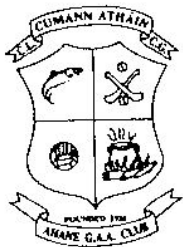
"When you got confused and lost you sit down in the spot you happen to find yourself in, you take off your coat, turn it inside out and put it on again and you would arrive at your destination safe and sound without any trouble." Tommy told me he tried it on that night and swore that he saw the blue light of "**Jackie the Lantern**" hopping in and out of bushes. He wasn't a bit frightened as he felt he had company.

I also talked to another neighbour, Pat, on the same night. He told me he knew of someone who saw "**Willow-the-Wisp**." He explained to me that he was told in his younger days that this strange occurrence was, in fact, gasses which rose up from the bog and caught the glow of the moonlight which formed a type of figure. Pat is a very wise man so I took his word for it.

Pat also lent me a very interesting book written by a Scotsman, Donald MacIntosh, who worked as a surveyor in the rainforests of West Africa. Here is an extract from that book in which he tells us that he visited a swampland area one night called "Devil Bush" and what he encountered there. I found this extremely interesting and I quote :

"The tapping I had been listening to stopped suddenly and now a deadly hush hung over Devil Bush. I was rooted to the spot, unable to tear myself away from this awful place. Far out in the swamp a light flickered. It was the faintest of lights, dim and bluish, such as one would expect from a smoky lantern and it was moving slowly and aimlessly in the heart of the swamp, backwards and forwards above the surface of the water. I watched as it zig zagged back and forth but I could not see anyone. Then I saw another and another moving ever so casually in my direction. Suddenly there seemed to be dozens of them, cold, blue lights jiggling in dance formation, moving faster and faster towards me. I let out a yell of sheer terror and it echoed through the whole swamp."

(MacIntosh, Donald : 1999).



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I am convinced that the West Africans have “Willow-the-Wisp” or maybe “Jackie the Lantern” haunting their swamplands too.

We also had some **superstitions** about the bog in our area and we all adhered to them in case we had bad luck.

It was accepted to be very unlucky to work in the bog on Sundays; you were inflicted with a bad harvest if you did so. “Bog Hawthorn” or the “May Bush” should never be brought into the house in the month of May as it was considered to bring bad luck. It is also said that the crown of thorns put on Christ’s head was made from hawthorn so it was strictly avoided. Our elders also warned us never to kill a spider in the bog. They believed it would rain for ten days if you did so and this would be bad news for bog workers. So all spiders in the bog were saved a sudden death.

Many **finds** have been discovered in the bogs of Ireland and Europe. These include implements once used in the bog, a medieval Christian book, an ecclesiastical crosier, seventh century shoes found in the Aran Islands, a twelfth century reliquary and the famous bog butter. Some former habitations preserved underneath peatlands, prehistoric farms such as the Céide Fields (Stone Age), in North Mayo. Loughbora Campsite (Stone Age) and Clonfinlough Settlement (Bronze Age) in Co. Offaly. The most fascinating of all for me were the bog bodies of men, women and children found in Ireland and Europe.

A thousand year old Book of Psalms was discovered by a construction worker in the Bog of Allen, in Co. Kildare. Experts say it is one of the most significant finds in Irish History and I quote: “In my wildest hopes, I could only have dreamed of a discovery as fragile and rare as this. It testifies to the incredible richness of the Early Christian civilization of this island and to the greatness of ancient Ireland. No one knows how this precious book ended up in a peat bog. But the damp, acidic environment appears to have helped preserve the document, experts say.” (*Pat Wallace, National Museum of Ireland. Internet, July 27th. 2006*).

Many **implements** were dug up from the bog from time to time also, the most common ones being forks, sleáns and various pieces of timber. One of particular interest to me was a strange type of fork, found in the bog next to ours in Castleconnell, Co. Limerick, in the early thirties, by the owner of the bog, Anthony Mackey and it was made by our local blacksmith, Martin Ryan. Both men I knew as a child growing up. It was dated back to the late nineteenth century, not very ancient you might say, but it still was unusual in shape. I have never seen an implement like this used in the bog in my time.

Butter, known as bog butter, was also found in numerous bogs all over Ireland. It was found in wooden vessels or baskets, occasionally in containers

of cloth, bark or skin, in quantities ranging from a few pounds to much bigger lots. This happened during the first half of the last century. The butter was of most importance to the finder and there are records of it being taken to the fairs and sold as grease for cart wheels. In fact it resembled modern day lard, rather than butter and analysis shows that its composition had changed. But there can be no doubt it was originally butter. (*Turf and Slane. Internet, August 2006*).

Body finds are the ones that fascinate me most. It is incredible to think that these bodies survived for over two thousand years buried in the bogs. The two most significant Irish finds were “Old Croughan Man” and “Cloney Cavan Man.”

Old Croughan Man was dug up from a bog in Royal bordering territory and preceded by a mere few months and forty miles apart, by Cloney/Cavan man, on the borders of today’s modern counties of Meath and Westmeath. Although Croughan Man was missing his head and lower limbs, experts estimate his height at six foot six inches, based on his arm span and this makes him the tallest bog body found in Europe. He met with a horrific death, being stabbed a number of times. His nipples were sliced off and he had holes cut into his upper arms, through which a rope was threaded to restrain him. He was also cut in half across the torso and was buried within days of his death. There are various explanations for such bog killings. These include punishment for breaking ancient codes of honour. In the case of the Irish bodies, they were probably used as sacrifices to Pagan Gods. It is also suggested that the bodies were offered to fertility Gods, to ensure a successful reign. The bodies were placed on the borders of tribal boundaries to ensure a good yield of corn and milk during the reign of the king and he could be disposed of if the crop failed.

Old Croughan was scrutinised and examined carefully by a team of experts and they tell us a few unusual and interesting facts about him. Old Croughan’s finger nails were carefully polished and manicured. He certainly did no hard, manual work and would have been known as a “Dandy Man” of his day. Experts were also able to tell what he ate for his last meal, which consisted of meal or wheat and milk or a milk product. They were also able to ascertain roughly the year he was murdered which made Old Croughan Man two thousand years old. It surely is amazing. (*RTE documentary, January 2008*).

Cloney/Cavan Man were excavated on Royal boundaries also. He was severely tortured and met with a violent death. He suffered numerous blows to his chest and head and was also disembowelled. His face was badly injured and he had a broken nose. He was more than likely also sacrificed for the land fertility of the king and to a Pagan God.

Cloney/Cavan Man measured only five feet two inches in height and had the two bogmen met, Old Croughan Man would have towered above him. Cloney/Cavan Man, being short and obviously vain, perhaps to compensate for his short stature, coiffed up his hair, using an early form of hair gel. Naturally enough, he wanted to make himself grander and taller. It's like someone wearing high heel shoes today. Analysis of the substance of the hair gel by Stephen Buckley, of the University of York, in England, showed that the gel was made of vegetable plant oil mixed with resin from pine trees found in Spain and Southwest France. This tells us that Ireland was trading with its foreign counterparts as far back as that time. We also know that he died during summer months as summer berries and vegetable and plant seed were found in his stomach. We know too that he was buried for two thousand and three hundred years. (*RTE documentary, January 10th. 2008*).

There have been about one hundred and fifty bog bodies, men, women and children, dug up in European boglands, particularly in Denmark. The two foremost in my mind are "The Tollund Man" discovered in Tollund, on May 8th. 1950 and "The Grauballe Man" found in 1952. Both locations being about eleven miles apart, in Central Jutland, in Denmark and both laid there for about two thousand years.

I read a fascinating account of this story in the book, "The Bog People" by P. V. Glob :

"An early spring day, May 8th. 1950. Evening was gathering over Tollund Fen. The evening stillness was only broken now and again, by the grating love call of the snipe. The dead man, too, deep down in the amber-brown peat, seemed to have come alive. He lay in his damp bed as though asleep, resting on his side, his head inclined a little forward, arms and legs bent. The dead man who laid there was two thousand years old. On his head he wore a pointed skin cap, fastened securely under the chin by a hide thong. Round his waist there was a smooth, hide belt. Otherwise, he was naked."

(The Bog People, by P.V.Glob. P 21-23).

There is no doubt Tollund Man met with a vicious death and was probably a sacrificial killing also. A plaited rope was found round his neck, forming a noose which could be tightened from the back. Tollund Man most probably met his death by means of this rope.

Science and archaeology can also tell us that his last meal was "gruel" consisting largely of seeds and grains.

The great poet, Séamus Heaney, also read this book, "The Bog People" 1969. It impressed and touched him deeply and he based many of his bog poems on the book. He wrote of the Tollund Man:

"Some day I will go to Aarhus
To see his peat-brown head

The mild pods of his eyelids
His pointed skin cap.”
(*Séamus Heaney, 1996*).

On Saturday, April 26th. peat cutters from Grauballe came upon another well preserved body, “The Grauballe Man,” just eleven miles east of where the Tollund Man was found two years previously.

Grauballe Man had met with a horrible, vicious death also. He would have been a sacrificial killing, just like Tollund Man.

“When found, his head, like the rest of his body, was somewhat flattened by overlying peat which had pressed on his body. Through the years, his skin was a uniform dark, brown and as firm as if it had been tanned. This was due to the preservative properties of the bog water. His hair was found to be preserved on the crown and left side of the head. It was about two and a half inches in length and red-brown in colour. However, this was not its original colour, but, like the colour of the skin, was the result of the effect of the bog water. The eyes, which were slightly screwed up, still contained the eye-balls.

His skull was found to be fractured in the region of the upper temple, caused by a blow of a blunt instrument. A long cut ran round the front of the neck, practically from ear to ear, so deep that the gullet was completely severed. The cutting of the throat was, evidently, the cause of death.” (*The Bog People by P.V.Glob, 1969*).

We will be forever grateful to the people who found these bodies and to the scientists and experts who related all this fascinating information and history to us and to point out to the Irish people, in particular, the wonderful preservatives, minerals and unbelievable science that lie beneath our bogs.

Bórd na Móna is a state owned company, established in 1946. It has a responsibility according to the Acts of the Oireachtas which set it up, to develop Ireland’s peat recourses. It has four divisions which produce peat-based and other products for electricity generation, domestic heating, horticulture and environmental cleansing. The division of Bórd na Móna which is responsible for the production of milled peat, for electricity generation, is the Peat Energy Division. Four million tonnes of milled peat are produced annually by the division. The milled product is supplied to the ESB for the generation of power in five power stations in Ireland. They are Shannonbridge, Ferbane and Rhode, in Co. Offaly ; Lanesboro, in Co. Longford and Bellacorick, in Co. Mayo. The milled peat is also supplied to three briquette factories for the manufacture of peat briquettes. (*Bórd na Móna Fact Sheet 2002*).

It has to be admitted that Bórd na Móna was a great industry economically, industrially and financially, for the people of Ireland. It provided many

jobs, particularly during the lean years after the second world war. It also prevented wide emigration in many parts of the country. Bórd na Móna introduced the turf cutting machine to the bogs. It certainly saved the hard labour but it also wiped out manual work and some very important aspects of rural life in the bog. My family will testify to the huge change in the social life of hand cutting in the bog. It was very foreign to them to see the huge, loud machine enter their bog and cut through the turf in seconds. What it took the sleánsman three weeks to cut, the machine would have it done in a few hours. All they could do was to watch in sadness and revel at its power. It also made the sleánsman redundant, work that was very skilful and artistic and many will agree with me that it was the end of a very important era. Such is progress and we have to move with the times.

Along with the big industrial uses for peat, we had a few spin offs or smaller uses for the product too. Moss peat is used in horticulture and is very important for our flower pots in summer. Peat is used in agriculture as a protein food source and chemical feedstock. Peat is used as bedding for animals, as a base for polishes and waxes and for the manufacture of coke for our summer barbecues.

It wasn't forgotten in the beauty business either, as peat is used in medicinal baths and also used in some cosmetics.

Turf was also used to build houses. I often heard it said that in famine times and when people were evicted, they built houses of turf and they were usually located near food depots. Furniture, small stools and tables, was also made from bog deal, dug up during the cutting time.

Turf items are becoming very popular presently as souvenirs for visitors to our shores. Americans, in particular, seem to love the idea of taking a little bit of turf or peat back home with them, to remind them of the "old sod." I have seen key rings with a little sod of turf hanging on them and I believe they are very popular.

I read a newspaper article lately about Joanne Berkery and her husband, from Nenagh, in Co. Tipperary, who run a business of turf souvenirs in a big way. I quote : "Customers include people who burn the turf at weddings and funerals in the USA. One customer who lives on a boat in Vancouver, in Canada, orders sixty sods five times a year and he isn't Irish. She also sells to a theatre in Chicago which uses it to create the right ambiance for Irish plays. In 1999 they launched another product, a ceramic cottage for burning incense with a turf scent. It was difficult to get this right and to get the smoke to come out the chimney, but we launched it and it is now our best selling product in the USA." (*The Irish Examiner*, 17/3/2008).

So we can't say that the humble sod of turf has only one use.

In this dissertation I hope I have portrayed and explored many aspects of life and work in the bog, from my own childhood memories to the wonderful flora and fauna, some of which I experienced myself and more from the enormous knowledge I learned from books, talks, articles and interviews. It contains supernatural stories and superstitions which I hope will never be lost in the Irish tradition of folklore. There are accounts of finds, implements and items of great interest that told us so much about our past and most interesting of all, the human finds of bodies that lay silently for thousands of years under the dark peat of our boglands. May God bless the people who found all these items and who were intelligent enough to investigate them and to give us the great legacy for future scientific study which I am positive will produce some very interesting and beneficial results.

It is heartening to learn that the government now has a policy that turf cutting is not allowed in certain designated and preserved areas. This is good news, as it will allow us to do more research into the science and archaeology of what may be revealed in the future. Little did we know as young kids that the bogs would become so important.

I am now thinking that the bog may not have been the dark, marshy wasteland that most people thought it was. I now see a great future for the bog.

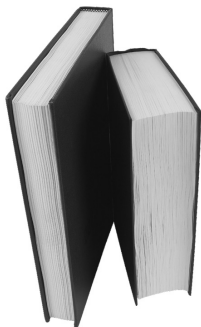
I also wrote this dissertation with a few things in mind, the main one being that it was something I wanted to do for many, many years. I would hope that this account of life style associated with the bog and its people would dispel the notion that anyone who worked or lived near a bog were primitive or wild in some way. We grew up with cruel taunts from our urban counterparts and were often referred to as “boggers” “bogtrotters” and even “culchies”. As far I’m concerned nothing could be further from the truth. I would consider it to be the best university of life and now feel sorry for our “city slicker” friends who missed out on such a wonderful education.

It has been a very interesting journey for me and a subject that has always been very close to my heart. I enjoyed revisiting places of my youth and meeting and talking to people I have not met for a long, long time. My journey along the way has been both happy and sad. I also wrote this personal account of my family and forefathers’ lives, especially with my five little grandchildren in mind, in hopes that some day they will read it and learn how their grandparents and great grandparents and the people who went before them lived their lives working in the bog.

Ní bheidh a leithéid ann arís.

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Glimpses of the Past



Castleconnell Railway Station 1973, Limerick Hurlers bring home the Liam Mc Carthy Cup.



Jimmy and Mary Walsh, Newgarden admire the Daly Cup in October, 1998 after Ahane had won the County Senior Hurling Championship after a lapse of 43 years.



Castleconnell Fishermen in the 1940's

L to R.: Jim Bourke Old Street, Jim Myers Landscape, Bill Tuohy, Chapel Hill, Jerry Bourke, Chapel Hill, Anthony Mackey, Old Street.



Inter School Hurling League in 1949

Back Row L to R: T Byrnes, P. Mc Namara, D. Hayes, D. Hynes, M. Mc Namara, J. Graham, P. Daly, J. Kennedy (Manager/Trainer/Mentor)
Front Row: S. Hynes, J. Graham, J. Hilliard (Capt), M. Mc Namara, J. Doran, T. Sheehan, P. Conway.



Fashion Show Committee for Castleconnell Festival, late 1970's – 80's.
Back Row L-R: J. Hyde, M. Cooke, E. Rohan.
Front Row L-R: M. Mc Donald, P. Duffy, M. Humphreys. J. Mc Cabe.



Main Street Castleconnell about 1900.



Jerry Bourke, Chapel Hill and Dr. Souden, Ballinasloe with the day's catch.



Ger, Mike and Carmel McInerney visiting Santa in 1952.

An Caisleán - The Castleconnell, Ahane, Montpelier Annual 2010



Mick and John Mackey with well known singer Ann Mulqueen in 1980.



The Seven Mulqueen Sisters, Mary, Peigi, Delia, Teresa, Anne Sadie and Eibhlin in 1965.



Ann Mulqueen in school, 1955



*John Joe and Nancy Mulqueen,
Woodpark.*



*L/R: Patrick Mc Cabe, John O'Keeffe,
....., Tom Berkery and
Tom Hogg.*



*Harry Mc Evoy, Peg Ryan, Jimmy
Ryan and Carmel Mc Inerney in the
1940's.*



L to R: Fr. McCormick , Bridget Joyce, Vincent Mc Caffrey and Joe Hyde at the Launch Ahane/Castleconnell Journal in 1988.



John, Geraldine, Christy and Bernadette Travers about 1948.



Taken in Castleconnell during 1930's.

*L – R: Breda O'Connor, Walter Bourke, Donal O'Shea, Madeleine Joyce.
Front Row: Pat O'Connor, Brian O'Connor, Kitty Mac Ryan (Barry), Kitty
Hassett with Baby Hegarty and Maureen Adams*



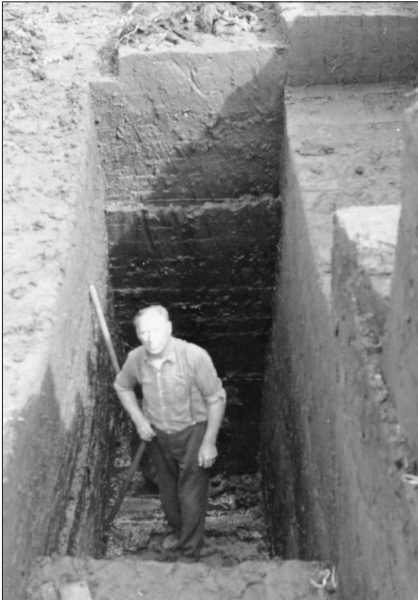
*Geraldine Travers, Jack Kelly, Pat Kelly and John Travers, Delia Kelly, Mrs.
Travers, Ger Kelly and Anthony Travers.*



*Anne Delohery and Mary Foote in
O'Brien's Bridge in the 1960's.*



*Mary Foote and Liam Walsh,
O'Brien's Bridge in 1963.*



*Paddy Ryan cutting turf in the
1970's.*

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Some of the attendance at a social for Old Folks organised by the Castleconnell Labour Party in the 1970's.



Another group at the party organised for the Old Folks in the Village Hall in the 1970's.

*Good Luck and Best Wishes to
"An Caisleán"
from
Anne & Paddy Madden
9 Maple Grove*



The Castleconnell motocross competition of 1959 attracted huge crowds.



Castleconnell Volleyball Team

L-R: Back Harry Mulcahy, Joe Hyde, Tommy Byrnes, George Lee, Jerry Kingston, PJ Holmes.

Front: Celia Minihan, John Hogan and Ann Byrnes.



Group of Musicians and Visitors in Sheehan's pub, Castleconnell in 1977 including Tony McCarthy and Bob Hogg.



Another photo also taken at Sheehan's Pub included are Willie O'Sullivan, Tony McCarthy, Sean Hogg, Bob Hogg, Ena McCarthy and Patricia Curtin.

An Caisleán - The Castleconnell, Ahane, Montpelier Annual 2010



Lisnagry B Team from 1987

Back Row: J. Hinchy, J. Byrnes, M.O'Regan, J. Crotty, C. Cullen, S. Barry, J. Ryan, P. Callinan, T. Sheehan, D. Lee.

Front Row: V. Garvey, T. Coleman, M. Garvey, D. Barry, J. Byrnes, M. Flannery, R. Porter, M. Heffernan.



Soccer Photograph 1970

Back Row L-R: Dermot Power, Noel O'Connor, Brendan Keane, Seamus Barry, Eugene Power, Ger O'Loughlin.

Front Row L-R: Johnny O'Halloran, Paul Garvey, Kevin Barry, Paddy Mc Curtin, John Garvey.



Byrnes family gathering, Dec. 1986
Back L/R: Stephen, Martin, Carmel, Breda, Pauline, Gerard, Marie, Joe,
Noreen, Paddy, Tom, Mike, Matt.
Front: Jack, John, Nora, Joan.



Grandchildren of Brigid and the late Sean Joyce, 2008

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Craft Fair 2010

Castleconnell hosted its 22nd annual Craft Fair on the October bank holiday weekend, Sun 24th and Mon 25th in the Castle Oaks Hotel, Castleconnell Co Limerick.

This event is the longest-running Craft Fair in the region and exhibitors from all over Ireland participated. Started in 1989 as a local showcase for a few local Craft workers, it was then a small Sunday afternoon display. From such small beginnings, the Fair has become a 2 day event featuring the best of Irish craft. The small committee commences work in January each year putting in place all the requisites for a successful and smooth-running event.

After reviewing the previous Craft Fair and making adjustments as to what improvements could be made, we plan for the next event.

Involved in these arrangements include repeat booking of the Hotel, getting application forms out, selecting Craft workers ensuring that there are some changes to keep the event fresh, arranging the raffle, liaising with our helpful partners in the event, going to other Craft Fairs to pick up ideas, contacting the Arts Council, advertising project and other minutiae. As we get closer to the weekend, we busy ourselves with the task of erecting roadside posters directing all and sundry to Castleconnell.

On the first day it is an early start at 7 am, things are hectic with erecting the dividing walls, allocating appropriate spaces to each Craft worker, installing power lines to each stall, assisting the Craft workers to get their displays in place for opening time. We are greatly helped in this by the local Scout Unit. Ahane Camogie Club assist us in getting the raffle stand up and running with various prizes on display in time for the opening of doors to the public.

In the meantime, Ahane Bord na nOg adults are waiting in readiness for the onslaught of traffic armed with walkie-talkies controlling the flow of traffic and preventing congestion. After all this we could do with a rest but not a chance. The doors open to the public at 12 midday on Sunday and that is where the work really starts. Doors to be manned, exits to be controlled, requirements of the Craft workers to be met (“can I get a cup of tea” or “where can I get changed”) temperature of the exhibition hall to be controlled, security at back door, background music selected, at last everything is in place. All we can do is wait for the throngs to appear. It is twelve o’clock, and as Castleconnell mass finishes the first punters arrive about now. They come in droves, the early ones for the best view or while dinner is cooking. The after dinner crew come at about 2.30, well fed and ready for the onslaught.

The hotel is now serving carvery lunch downstairs and bar service is hotting up. The committee take it in turns to have a break and a bite to eat after an early start. And so it continues all afternoon. Raffle ticket sales are brisk but the draw will not be held until Monday evening at 17.30. The music is too loud or not loud enough! The P.A. system drones on about the Craft workers and where they have come from, the Hotel's co-operation, raffle and community stand.

At last it comes to 18.00 and off we go to count the money. We secure the exhibition area. A drink is ordered as we unwind and talk about the first day. Problems encountered are discussed and any remedial action necessary is taken.

Not much rest as tomorrow is another day and the process starts all over again, except the Scouts are not needed. Music, P.A., doors manned, raffle in place and the public come again. Some repeat business from Sunday as they now bring their partners/wallet. So from 12 midday onwards they keep coming. The raffle takes place at 17.30 with doors closing at 18.00.

The door takings are counted and a meeting arranged for the following week. The partition is dismantled and removed, all the Craft worker's displays dismantled and packed away. What took 3 hours to install is uninstalled in 45 minutes.

Once the bills are paid, the proceeds are divided between the various voluntary organisations in the community and a night for presentation of cheques is organised with a little reception. Then we take a month off and start again to organise the Craft Fair 2011.

Just to mention the committee: Chair, Peter O'Connor, admin secretary, Mary O'Connor, secretary, Judy O'Hare, treasurer, Irene Hynes, assistant treasurer and draw co-ordinator, Letty Sloane, vice chair and PRO, Pat Dempsey, committee member Angela Dempsey.

Pat Dempsey

Best Wishes to An Caisleán from the Craft Fair Committee

**ANNUAL
CASTLECONNELL CRAFT FAIR 2011
OCTOBER BANK HOLIDAY WEEKEND**

Sunday & Monday

12 noon to 6.00 p.m. each day

At the Castle Oaks House Hotel

All are Welcome

All proceeds are donated to local community organisations

THE PASSING OF A HURLING LEGEND, MICK MACKEY

BY SEAMUS WALSH

The death of Mick Mackey on 13th September, 1982 removed from the Irish scene one of the greatest figures that ever adorned it. We knew that he had been dying for some time, but when the news of his death became known, it came as a big shock to a lot of people in Limerick and countrywide.

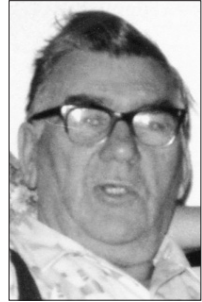
Gaelic Games lost its most colourful ever personality with the passing of a man who became a legend in his own right because of his deeds on the hurling field. His was the outstanding figure in all the great games of the golden days of Limerick Hurling and his was the magnetism that drew hurling enthusiasts from every corner of the land just to see him play.

He was not only one of the greatest hurlers ever to trod on the green sod of all the famed hurling arenas both in Ireland and across the seas, he was undoubtedly also the most notable character ever to grace the playing fields.

Often dubbed the “Playboy of Hurling” he had his own special approach to every situation and this, allied to his magnificent frame and powerful limbs made him a man apart from all others. It is not easy to describe the hold he had on the hurling public. His tactics were highly entertaining as well as most effective and many felt that his playboy approach and bustling assaults were carefully designed to mystify opponents and put them momentarily off their guard.

Mick Mackey won everything worth winning on the hurling field, and in addition to the many grand trophies to his name, he won the love, respect and admiration of the Gaels of Ireland as a true sportsman and one that was never in the slightest degree affected by the acclamation of his admirers.

There were occasions, few in number, when Mick met his master, but he had a trick up his sleeve for the best of them, so any triumph they gained was of a very temporary nature. His deeds on the field gained for Mick Mackey the title “King of the Hurlers” and no crowned head had better credentials for this title than Mick. It is an undisputed fact that no other



*Mick Mackey,
1981.*

hurling hero had a background half so glamorous, half so appetising to the lovers of hurling tradition as that of the Ahane and Limerick star of the Thirties.

The popularity of Mick Mackey and the universal impact he made was well illustrated in the final tributes paid him by the huge attendances both at the removal of remains from Limerick Regional Hospital, and the following day at the Concelebrated Mass and Burial in his beloved Castleconnell. Scenes unprecedented in Limerick were witnessed as huge lines of mourners passed in a seemingly unending stream by the open coffin to pay their last respects to a man they really loved and respected. They came from every Irish county, people from all walks of life, and it was a real gathering of the Gaelic clans, as the old timers recalled memorable days in nostalgic fashion, and the young listened to the wonderful tales of the deeds of Mick Mackey and his men in those seeming far off days.

In the vast throng were many of Mick's contemporaries- old players from every hurling county, nearly from every parish in some instances. The G.A.A., from its President down to the most insignificant member was there to give evidence of the great love and affection in which Mick was held.

The guard of honour comprised of old hurlers, Central and Provincial Council members, was the longest in extent many have ever seen, while the cortege, which was over three miles long, was saluted everywhere as it wended its way to Castleconnell through streets and roads lined with mourners, who have boasted since and will in the future, that they witnessed the last journey of the greatest hurler that ever was. At the O'Connell Monument, the members of the City Council in their robes and led by the Mayor, Councillor Tony Bromell, joined the great procession.

Castleconnell was packed as never before and a guard of honour drawn from the Ahane Club met the hearse and escorted it through the village to Saint Joseph's Church, where the Parish Priest, Very Rev Fr. John Cooney headed the clergy awaiting the remains. Father Cooney said that Mick Mackey had returned to his home parish where he had learned his hurling skills, that later led him to ever increasing success in the Gaelic fields of Ireland. It was to Castleconnell that he returned with his medals and his prizes, won with such skill and accuracy. He had now come back to his own people, the people he loved and inspired.

Every facet of Irish life, sporting, business and professional, was represented at the Concelebrated Mass in Castleconnell Church the following morning at which the Chief Celebrant was Rev. Liam Kelly, C.C.,(a championship winning hurler with Ahane in 1955 and who hurled in the Championship for Limerick in 1956.) who also delivered the inspiring Homily. The Bishop of Limerick, Most Rev. Jeremiah Newman presided,

and read the concluding prayers. During the Mass Jackie O Connell, a member of the 1934 All-Ireland team gave one of the readings as the coffin stood in front of the altar surrounded by many impressive floral wreaths.

One of the outstanding memories of the day in Castleconnell was the manner in which Fr. Kelly caught the essential character of Mick Mackey in his tribute – his words being carried to the hundreds outside the Church who could not be accommodated inside because of the overflow attendance.

In his Homily, Fr. Kelly said – “Mick has come home to his native and beloved Castleconnell to find his resting place. He was always a Castleconnell man and proud of his long association with the Ahane club.

When we were youngsters over the road in Monaleen, Mick was our idol. We had that sense of reverence and awe for the name Mackey. A legend in our time, W.B. Yeats has it: “The names that stopped our childhood play”. We had hurleys in our hands before we could walk, and our sole ambition was to emulate the feats of Mick and his men. Then the thrill of pulling on the green and gold jersey of Ahane for the first time. Then meeting the great man himself, to come under his direction and coaching, his inspirational talks before a game and at half-time. Something reminiscent of the war-cry “Cuimugi ar Luimneach”. I remember Mick being full of admiration for a rising star and his ultimate accolade: “He’d put his head where another wouldn’t put his hurley”.

If as scripture says “we are all here on earth to help others”, Mick surely deserves a high place in Heaven. His influence was felt throughout the length and breadth of Ireland and beyond, The turn-out last night at the removal and today was evidence of his popularity and the impact he made on the social life of the people. He meant an awful lot to a lot of people. There are so many anecdotes and stories told about Mick- people were swapping them until the late hours last night, most of the time some maybe a bit exaggerated or even apocraphy.

What was it that Mick had? Something we all know in our hearts but difficult to articulate. His dynamism, the sheer force of his personality, his leadership, courage, spirit of abandonment. All these and something more. Someone described it last night as “the old Duchas”. Something that is at the heart of our nation and at the heart of our faith. Mick cherished the things that we all hold dear, his faith, his county and his national pastimes. His team mates and his varying opponents can tell you that even in the heat of battle, in the midst of all the turmoil there was always a twinge of humour. He loved the bit of fun. He always gave of his best and led by example. He liked to win but it wasn’t everything. He didn’t mind whether he lost or was held scoreless.

One important aspect of Mick's career which can be easily overlooked today was the impact he and his team had on the social life of the people in depressed times, and not just locally but countrywide. Everywhere people spoke of his exploits, relived the great moments and looked forward eagerly to the next big occasion. Mick was very conscious of this, he loved the supporters and often played to them, giving them a tremendous lift, benefitting them in a deeply spiritual way. It gave the people not only enjoyment but hope and encouragement, and helped them to rise above their anxieties and problems.

Off the field he was a quiet, gentle man bringing to his house the same noble qualities he exhibited on the playing fields of Ireland. He was a great family man and loved young people, especially small children. Those who knew him in the Army and his work-mates in the E. S.B. privileged to have known him personally, can all testify to his kindness, consideration and generosity. After his retirement Mick devoted many years to administration and coaching. He loved the gatherings of old hurlers and valued their friendships, where one could always sense that special atmosphere which makes hurlers a breed apart- fraternity- a man who shared so much with so many. Apart from his passion for the game he was a man of simple tastes- a game of 45 and an odd half-pint.

As the nation mourns one of its greatest sons we pray for Kitty and his family who will miss him most. There is a legitimate place for grief when we mourn our dead. Jesus wept when He was told that his friend Lazarus was dead. St. Paul in our second reading says "we must not grieve like those who have no life". Our faith in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ must sustain us. In our Mass today Mick's death is united with the death of Our Saviour and by sharing in his death he also shares in his Resurrection. This is the sure hope our faith holds out for us. This was the faith and hope expressed by men like Mick Mackey which sustained the people of his time. Mick always had close links with the Church and was proud of the fact that he travelled all over the country playing in tournament games for the local churches. Many will recall some of the great games organised for the Retreat House. He said to me once "I suppose we should have a fair chance of getting into Heaven after playing all those matches. We never turned down any request."

Mick has played the game of life and attained his glory. Now he makes a new beginning, he enters the new and even more glorious half where the Lord has selected a special position for him to occupy in his eternal home. ("If we die with him we will live with him; if we endure with him, we will live with him". St. Paul).

We recall the words of the journalist, Grantland Rice: "And when the last great scorer comes to mark against your name, He'll ask not whether you

won or lost, but how you played the game”.

In times of change Mick is saying something to us all. Are we going to continue pursuing a comfortable and easy life? When we are in doubt do we just do nothing? Do we ask what everyone else is doing before committing ourselves? The dedication and self-sacrifice of Mick Mackey and his men is now folklore and can still serve as an inspiration to us all. He is saying especially to our young people- If you are inclined to settle for a colourless, selfish consumerism, remember Mick. He tells us what human beings are made for, what they are capable of. Mick and his men showed us that there is glory in life, the glory of God is man fully alive and fully responsive to God’s power working in and through him. These men nourished and inspired so many thousands of people not only in their own day but down through the years. It is fitting that today we should recognise the glory in life that was Mick Mackey and thank god for it.

Ta dia buioc do. Go ndeanaid Dia trocaire ar a Anam dhlis “.

The sky was overcast as we followed the remains of Mick Mackey to their final resting place in the quiet cemetery in Stradbally, Castleconnell – within sight of the grave of his father, ‘Tyler’ Mackey who had worn the Limerick colours with distinction in the early part of the last century. The choir sang “Nearer My God To Thee” as the coffin, draped in the No. 11 jerseys of Ahane and Limerick, was carried from the Church of St. Joseph’s to the waiting hearse and John Mackey was one of the family members who shouldered the coffin.

Ahead of the hearse, as it began the journey to the cemetery, walked members of the under-age Ahane teams. On each side were members of great Ahane teams of the past and with them members of recent teams. Then came the men who had worn the Green and White of Limerick, including famous names of the thirties and team-mates of Mick Mackey on the 1940 team. The men of 1940 marched in line as they had marched in the parade at Croke Park on the day that Mackey won his last All-Ireland medal, men such as Jackie Power, Dr. Dick Stokes, Paddy McMahan, Timmy Ryan, Mick Hickey, Tony Herbert, Tommy Cooke, etc.

And then players from the 1955 season, Fr. Liam Ryan, Paddy Enright, Dermot Kelly, Fr. Seamus Ryan and Sean Leonard among them – the team that because of the manner in which Clare were shattered by sheer speed in the burning heat of Munster Final Day in 1955 at the Limerick Gaelic Grounds became known as “Mackey’s Greyhounds”. The men of 1973 also, Eamon Grimes, Pat Hartigan, Sean Foley etc, men who had been inspired by traditions created by Mackey.

Then came great names from different strongholds of the game – so many of them in the cortege that it would be impossible to name them all - names

spanning the period from the thirties to the eighties.

Underage members of the Ahane club carried the many beautiful floral tributes, including a touching flower bedecked hurley from his grandson, Mark.

The cortege moved along the stretch of road by the Castle and the Ferry, past the lovely quiet inlet of the River Shannon with the swans moving lazily on it and we reflected at that moment on Mackey's childhood and youth in this village – the village where he had been born on July 12th, 1912, eldest son of John "Tyler" Mackey and the former Mary Carroll. We reflected on how he first learned to wield a caman in the local Old National School (as we passed it by) and then hoping some day to wear the colours of Ahane, which he did with some distinction.

Now the cortege, stretching way back deep and dense behind us, moves up Chapel Hill and into the cemetery, in which you see the grave of Paddy Scanlan, goalkeeper on the great Limerick teams with Mick. The cemetery could not accommodate the thousands who had walked behind the coffin from the Church. They spilled out on to the roadway, but the tribute of the G.A.A. President Paddy Buggy of Kilkenny was relayed on the public address system. As the coffin was lowered to its last resting place, prayers were recited by Very Rev. John Cooney P.P., and then, in the final parting, a graveside Oration was delivered by Paddy Buggy, President of the G.A.A. In his oration, G.A.A. President Paddy Buggy said "It is with sadness that we gather here this morning to mourn the passing of Mick Mackey. There is a bond of friendship between all hurlers, and hurling people everywhere, and this great gathering is further evidence of the great affection that we hold in this country for our outstanding hurlers.

As a hurler on the 40 yards mark, Munster's pride, and Limerick's glory, Mick Mackey had no equal, he was the greatest centre forward of all time. For a combination of skill and power, brains and strength. Mick, born in Castleconnell and of the Ahane club, had no peer, and those of us that had the privilege of seeing him play, can still visualise Mick in full flight, ball hopping on hurley, on one of his famous solo runs. Mick Mackey's broad grin on our hurling fields was a sign of the enjoyment he got from the physical contact, from participation in our greatest field game, he was a crowd pleaser, he loved the roar of the crowd, and his every move would have the crowd humming. In his prime, nobody ever bested or marked Mick Mackey out of a game, although there was a few like the late John Keane of Waterford who did outhurl him. With his strength, courage, physique and determination, his straight burst up the middle was almost unstoppable, yet he could produce an amazingly elusive side-step when the need arose, and on occasion you could find Mick Mackey ranging out to midfield, and sending long range points sailing between the posts.

Some of Mick Mackey's greatest games were played in Munster finals, one when Limerick completely over-ran Cork in the Munster final of 1935, and another when in 1936 the Limerick team beat Tipperary in Thurles, Mick scoring an amazing total of 5 goals and 3 points.

From the early 30s to the late 40s, Mick Mackey was the star of the great Limerick team of that era, a team that won 5 Munster titles, 3 All-Irelands, 1934, 1936 and 1940, 5 National League titles in a row from 1934 to 1938, the Limerick team being unbeaten over a 22 months period from October 1933 to August 1935, in all playing a total of 31 games. Mick Mackey helped Munster to win 8 railway Cups from 1934 to 1945, and had a wonderful record as a clubman with Ahane, winning 15 Limerick Senior Hurling titles, 7 of them in a row on 2 occasions, 1933 to 1939 and 1942 to 1948. He also helped Ahane to win the Limerick Senior Football Championship 5 years running from 1935 to 1939, and in the Summer of 1939 Mick was a member of the Limerick Junior Football team that beat Kerry in Killarney in the Munster Final.

Mick's greatest glory was probably in 1940 when he captained Limerick for the second time to an All-Ireland title. They had to play Waterford and Cork twice, and in the Semi-Final against Galway, Mick scored 2 – 4 out of Limerick's total of 3 – 6. In the final Limerick had 2 goals to spare over Kilkenny, but according to Mick himself, his most enjoyable game of hurling was played in Nowlan Park, Kilkenny in a National League Final won by 2 points by Limerick, Mick Mackey scoring one and John Mackey the other in the closing minutes.

While we here today are saddened by his passing, I am sure that there is great joy up above with the teammates and opponents he has rejoined, with many a yarn being swapped, and many a bout of play or game being replayed.

Mick was always happiest when in the company of hurling folk, and after his career ended he took to the administration, to help in every way possible with the promotion of our games, and was a member of the Munster Council for over 30 years.

Limerick will be the poorer for his passing, not to mention his club and the followers of Gaelic games everywhere.

To his wife Kathleen, to his family and friends, we all extend our sincere sympathy, and of Mick it can truly be said, *Ni beidh a leitheid ann aris, Ar dheis lamh De go raibh a anam dilis.*"

We picked out in the rows of famous faces around the graveside Jim Regan of Cork and John Maher of Tipperary, two centre-backs who had opposed Mick Mackey in memorable Munster championship games and we also picked out John Quirke, most versatile of Cork hurlers who had some stirring

duels with Mackey. The men from Tipperary present also included Dinny Gorman, Jimmy Butler Coffey (who is hale and hearty after celebrating his 101st birthday on the 26th of October last), Tommy Doyle, Mickey “The Rattler” Byrne, Jim Devitt, John Doyle, Sean and Paddy Kenny and Babs Keating. Also there were “Fox” Collins, Dr. Jim Young and Con Murphy from Cork. From Kilkenny had come Jimmy Langton, Paddy Grace and Eddie Keher; from Wexford came Jim English, from Clare Jimmy Smith, from Dublin Des Ferguson and Christy Hayes; the Connolly brothers from Galway; Seamus Power and Philly Grimes from Waterford and Joe Keohane and Ger Power from Kerry. There were many more of course, but the cemetery was so packed that it was hard to see and recall everyone. They had all come to join in a deep, hurling men’s tribute to the passing of a legend.

Jack Lynch was unable to attend as his wife Maureen had suffered a hand injury that morning, but he sent a telegram which was read out at the Mass.

As the crowds began to disperse from the cemetery, we saw many of the greats of Tipperary, Cork and Kilkenny hurling – and from other strongholds of the national game – stepping quietly forward to shake the hand of John Mackey. It was as if they wanted to say in a silent gesture that nothing could call back the seasons of splendour when Mick bestrode the scene, and John, a flying forward himself on the wing, was – with his fair hair – one of the swashbuckling buccaneers of that era. The mourners lingered long, as if they did not want to leave and many old timers stood in tears by the graveside as they bid a last farewell to the heroic figure who had meant so much to so many.

It was an honour and privilege to have attended with my late father, Jimmy Walsh, the Removal, Funeral Mass and Burial of the late, great Mick Mackey, a man who had given so much enjoyment to so many thousands of people on the hurling fields of Ireland and abroad, over a period of 20 years during the 1930s and 1940s. Mick died at the age of 70 years. Ar dheis De go raibh a anam dilis.

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SOME THOUGHTS ON TONY HERBERT AT 90

On the 8th August 2010 Tony Herbert, a hurler of Ahane and Limerick and latterly of Faughs and Dublin, reached the ripe age of 90 years. The occasion was celebrated in some style at The Goat Inn in Dublin and hosted by another proud Limerick man, and great friend of Tony's, Charlie Chawke. A huge crowd turned out to celebrate with Tony, and the event was a fitting tribute to his indomitable spirit and tremendous character.

Tony was born in Annacotty in August 1920. He was the first child of Paddy and Bridget Herbert who married in 1919. His father Paddy would have been occupying himself in some role or other in the business of national self-determination at the time Tony was born. Paddy was born in the pub in Sallymount in 1885, one of a family of five boys. He played hurling with Castleconnell, Stradbally and Sallymount: which ever selection was representing the parish at the time. In his day he also lined out for Limerick with the famous Tyler Mackey and a number of others from the area. Tony's mother Bridget Kennelly came from Killorglin, Co. Kerry. She came to work in some of the big houses in the area, notably Coolbawn House and later Plassey House. Her brother Paddy was an All-Ireland football medal winner with Kerry in 1913.

Paddy and Bridget Herbert had five other children after Tony; namely Maureen, Seán, Micheál, Helen and Eamonn. The Family lived in the village of Annacotty, just about where the entrance to the Salmon Weir development now stands. Sadly Bridget Herbert died in 1938 leaving a young family behind, but hard as the times were they managed to survive and flourish growing up with a strong sense of nationhood and love for the Gaelic traditions, and in particular the ancient game of hurling.

Tony's hurling career started in earnest during the mid-1930's when he was lucky enough to go to Sexton St. CBS where he had the chance to hurl with and against some of the household names of the game at that time. He captained the CBS to a Dean Ryan Cup in 1937 but unfortunately he was not to have the same success in the Harty Cup. He played on the Harty Cup team in CBS for four years. The chief adversary for the Limerick school in that era was North Monastery of Cork who prevailed over the Limerick lads in the 1940 final when Tony led them out as captain. The North Mon' had among its ranks Con Murphy and Mick Kenniffick in 40'. Despite his disappointments in the Harty Cup it is widely held by his contemporaries



*The Limerick Team that played in the 1940 Munster Final in Thurles.
 Back Row L-R: Paddy Mc Mahon, Mick Hickey, Jim Roche, Paddy Scanlan, Mick Mackey, Paddy Clohessy.
 Middle Row L-R: Jim Mc Carthy, Tony Herbert, Dick Stokes, Jackie Power, Peter Cregan, John Mackey.
 Sitting: Timmy Ryan, Mick Kennedy, Tommy Cooke.*

that Tony had few equals as a College hurler either at that time or any time since, and testament to this is the fact that he lined for the Munster Colleges for three consecutive years while in the CBS.

During this period Tony also played for the Limerick minors. I have heard him recall of how a very young Christy Ring lined out for Cork in a Munster Minor final in 1937. Tony was convinced at that time that he had seen a maestro in the making, commenting in particular on Ring's striking ability at the art of the sideline cut. Tony lined out at half back for Limerick that day, as did Ring for Cork. Tony can even recall that Ring wore unconventional black togs and sported a severe short back and sides on that particular occasion. That kind of recall will not come as any surprise to those who have had the pleasure of Tony's company.

While still at the CBS he pulled on the famous green and gold of Ahane as a senior hurler in 1937. He describes that as one of the proudest moments of his life. It is easy to see why this would be the case when, as a boy of seventeen, one finds oneself in the front line with some of hurling's greatest ever; the Mackey's, Timmy Ryan, Jackie Power, Paddy Scanlon and the many others whom this parish was proud to call it's sons. The great Paddy Kelly of Drominboy also made his debut for Ahane on the same

day as Tony. It should be said that the same Paddy Kelly is regarded as one of the finest hurlers ever to play for Ahane and Tony himself holds with this assessment. It's great to see Paddy's grandsons Brian and Robert Kelly carrying on the name in the green and gold.

In the autumn of 1939 Tony was picked on the Limerick team and won an Oireachtas medal; in the process he cemented his presence on the county team for the coming glory that was to be Limerick's in 1940. On the 16th June in 1940, as a sturdy fair haired youth, Tony lined out at mid field for Limerick, partnering the imperious Timmy Ryan. Tony relates how he marked Mick Hickey of Waterford that day. Hickey was kind enough to enquire after Tony's welfare before the ball was thrown in, but shortly afterwards Tony was on the receiving end of haymaker from the same Mr Hickey. However, help was soon at hand when the legendary Mick Mackey entered the fray, upending Hickey in defence of the young starlet. Hurling was only for the hardest of souls in those days and by all accounts Tony was well up to the mark on that count! That game ended all square and Limerick prevailed in the replay.

On they went to the Munster Final in Thurles to meet a Cork team which had suffered defeat to Kilkenny in the "Thunder and Lightning Final" of 1939. This was a thrilling encounter which again ended in a draw. The replay was every bit as much the classic as the drawn match with Limerick winning 3-3 to 2-4. That was the year that supporters invaded the hallowed sod causing play to be suspended for a time. Nonetheless the 1940 Munster Finals are held to have been among the greatest games ever. In that vein it is worth making the point that Limerick in those years did as much as, and perhaps more than, any other county in creating the mystique, and the romance, that surrounds the occasion of the Munster Final.

Limerick beat Galway in the semi- final in Ennis. Tony was not selected in the first fifteen for the final but was called into action shortly after half time. It was just short of rare to introduce substitutes in those days but the veteran Limerick centre back, Paddy Clohessy, felt his day's work was done when he beckoned to the sideline to bring on the young white head in his stead. Limerick, at that juncture, were trailing Kilkenny and the game was very much in the melting pot when Tony took the field. Jackie Power moved to centre back and Tony took up his position at half forward where he beat his marker, Paddy Phelan, for the first ball and sent it across to Dick Stokes who scored a goal to put Limerick in the lead for the first time that day. Phelan, it should be noted, was selected at half back on the team of the century in 1984. Limerick did not look back after Stokes' goal and Mick Mackey collected the Liam McCarthy cup for what was to be the last time in that particular golden era of Limerick hurling. That was probably

the greatest year Limerick hurling has ever seen as the minors also won the All-Ireland in 1940 as well. In all, Ahane had eleven players on the senior panel and three on the minor team in 1940.

Tony went on to play for three more seasons with Ahane and Limerick lining out predominantly as mid-fielder and a forward but he also played as a defender when the occasion required. He was Timmy Ryan's regular partner in the mid-field in those years. Tony played his final game for Limerick in 1943 and unfortunately missed the Munster Campaign of 1944 and with it the chance of playing with his brother Seán in the epic Munster Final of that year. That was the final that came to be known as the "bicycle final" when, due to the shortage of fuel brought about by the war, tens of thousands made their way to Tom Semple's field in Thurles on every kind of a bicycle known to mankind for the draw and replay.

Tony played his last game for Ahane on Easter Sunday of 43' when he lined out against Eoghan Ruadhs of Dublin in a tournament game in Croke Park. It is worth diverging for a moment to note that tournament games were treated with great importance in those days as they were the only chance for the best club teams from different counties to face up to one another. The games played by Ahane against Thurles Sarsfields and Glen Rovers in the 30s and 40s are revered as some of the greatest games ever played and probably account in some way for the special status those three clubs are afforded in the annals of Hurling history. Incidentally RTE's Seán óg O'Ceallacháin played for the Eoghan Ruadhs in the Croke Park game in 43'. O'Ceallacháin later wrote about the formidable pairing of Timmy Ryan and Tony Herbert at mid-field for Ahane that day. Ahane were the first club side from outside Dublin to play in Croke Park. Tony left Ahane having won four county senior hurling and three senior football medals.

The subsequent years after Tony's departure saw a younger generation of Limerick hurlers coming through. They were extremely unlucky not to have won more All Irelands for Limerick most notably in 1945 and 1949 when they lost to Tipperary in the Munster Final in both those years. Tipperary subsequently went on to take All Ireland honours in 45' and 49'. It is often remarked that Tony's absence in the mid and late 40s deprived Limerick of the ultimate glory which could have set Limerick hurling on a much different course in the following decades. Indeed it was also a great pity he never had the opportunity of playing with his younger brothers Seán and Micheál in the Limerick jersey.

In any event Tony joined Faugh's hurling club in Dublin having taken up residence in the capital in 1943. He won three county titles with Faughs. He also lined out for Dublin for many years and played in the 1948 All Ireland final when Dublin were beaten by a John Keane led Waterford. In 1952

Dublin again suffered defeat to a Christy Ring inspired Cork in the final. Tony lined out at corner forward for Dublin on that occasion along with Jim Prior, Des (Snitheic) Ferguson and Norman Allen. Unfortunately Dublin hurling fell into a bit of an abyss subsequently. In his time with Dublin he managed to win two Oireachtas medals and two Leinster Championships. He played with Leinster in four Railway Cup finals. He won three championships with Faughs and was very active as a player, coach and administrator in the club for many years and is recognised as one of the all-time great characters of Dublin hurling. Tony made many great friends through hurling in Dublin and the high regard in which he is still held by the people in Faughs to this day is quite remarkable. He presently holds the position as honorary lifetime president of Faugh's as well as holding the same position in the National Ex-Hurlers Association. Notwithstanding his long time association with Dublin and Faughs he continues to hold a great passion for Limerick and Ahane hurling. I recall the day in 1999 when Ahane won the county title for the second year running. The preceding evening Tony watched Faughs winning the Dublin county championship. He did not hang on for the celebrations but, rather, sat in his car and drove to Limerick to shout on Ahane in the Limerick decider. The following day I recall how, after the match, he made his own triumphant entry into the victorious Ahane dressing room and was greeted with a rapturous cheer from the heaving throng of players and supporters assembled. That was quite a moment! In the following days Tony endeared himself to the younger generation regaling them with stories from the old days with his own unique and engaging style.

One couldn't talk about Tony Herbert without referring to the fact that he knows just about everyone. Through a lifetime of acquaintance and a penchant for conversation Tony has built up an unbelievably enormous mental data bank of people, places, dates and events which he can draw from in an instant. It is not because he necessarily wants to know these things, but it is more his uncanny ability to soak up and retain information. The corollary of all of this of course is that Tony himself is known the length and breadth of the country as well, and his welfare is always asked after as a matter of course. It is not surprising, therefore, that Tony was deeply involved in politics throughout his life. He was elected to the Senate in 1977 and again in 1981 as a member of Fianna Fáil on the Labour panel. Tony was married to Nancy Hynes of Rivers, Lisnagry for 60 years prior to her sad passing in the summer of 2003. Nancy was the consummate lady and Tony's deep affection for her was always apparent and she is indeed a great loss to him and his family. Tony still keeps in regular contact with her brother Michael Hynes who still lives at Rivers, Lisnagry and who in his own

right is a fine raconteur as well. Tony lost another close confidant this year when his sister Helen Mackey died in June. Tony and Helen spoke for endless hours on the telephone about all topics in general and presumably politics in particular. Helen and himself were very close and obviously of great support to each other.

Tony has had his share of health issues to deal with in recent years; and deal with them he did with great courage and fortitude. As I write I can report that he is in great form and is living at home in Churchtown and is as likely now as he ever was to turn you over with a one-liner.

Tony, along with Tommy Cooke of Hospital, is one of two survivors of the Limerick All-Ireland winning team of 1940. He is the sole survivor of the Ahane teams he played on in the 30s and 40s, whose likes will never again be seen. He belongs to a generation and breed of sportsmen that attained immortality by deed and by virtue with nothing contrived. Tony Herbert maintains, to this day, a charisma that people are drawn to. We are all the richer for knowing him: an inspirational figure.

Photograph courtesy of Gerry Piggott.

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Garden Hill Road before and after the motorway



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"THEN AND NOW"



Mackey's bog before the motorway



Mackey's bog today

“WHERE IS IT NOW?”



The old water fountain at Carrowkeel erected by the Fitzgibbons of Mountshannon.



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“EXILES RETURN”



Left: The Murphy family, Christina, Colin and baby David from Madrid, Spain.

Below: Brian, Carmel (Byrnes, New Garden) and Charlotte Lynch from Kent in England.



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Mary, Anne and Brid Barry enjoying each other's company on Anne's recent visit home from Australia.



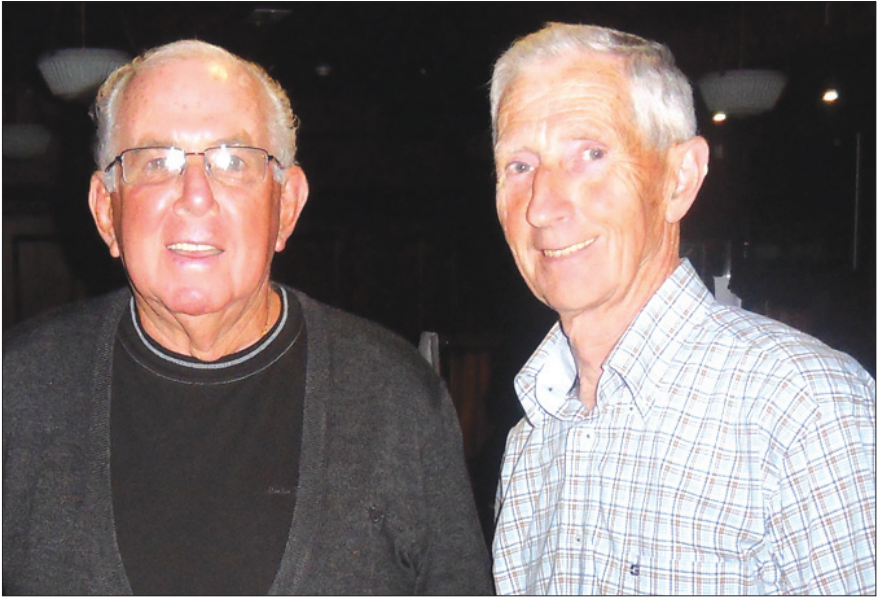
Peter and Josephine Noble (nee Flynn), Kent, England, frequent visitors to Josephine's native village.



Anthony and his Dad Steve Madden from Birmingham



Mary Mulqueen and George Kelder Jr. George came from the USA to see Castleconnell where his ancestors came from (Maddens and Buckleys from Woodpark)



Ed Tierney from the USA with his cousin Gerard from Limerick



Tony Huson, France, his sister Siobhan and her children Tristan and Aaron with Evan Bird, South Africa. Also in the photo are Quaffa Huson, France and Fr. Brendan Kyne.

Pictorial 2010



The Ferry Car Park flooded



The river in flood



The footbridge



Meadow Brook houses under water



The Mall flooded near Cloon Well



Harry Ryan, Thomas Kitt, Conor Myers and Conor Cannon wading through the floods.



The Ordination to Diaconate of Gerard Jones, O'Brien's Bridge took place on April 5th at the Basilica of St. John Latern, Rome.

L/R: Fr. T. Caher, Birr; Chrissie, Rev. Gerard, Nick Jones, Dr. Willie Walsh, Fr. I. McCormack, Ennis; Fr. J. Grace, P.P., Killaloe.



L/R: Lorna Jones, Rebecca Jones, Lauren and Nicholas Jones, Chrissie Jones, Rev. Gerard Jones, Nick Jones, Marian Van Bibher, Conor Van Bibher, Maeve Van Bibher, Dan Van Bibher, Dr. Willie Walsh.



Gerard Fitzgerald, St. Flannan's Terrace, who was ordained Diaconate at St. Patrick's College, Maynooth, on the 30th May.



Chris Fitzgerald, Sean Fitzgerald, William Fitzgerald, Leo Fitzgerald, Pat Fitzgerald, Rev. Gerard Fitzgerald, Anthony Fitzgerald, Ned Fitzgerald, Ger Fitzgerald, Joe Fitzgerald, Mike Fitzgerald.



Front L/R: Sean Fitzgerald, Mary O'Loughlin, Sadie, Ann, Mike, Noreen, Fr. Fergal O'Neill.

Back: Ned Fitzgerald, Peter O'Loughlin, William Fitzgerald, Ann Fitzgerald, Ger Fitzgerald, Ger Fitzgerald, Pat Fitzgerald, Anthony Fitzgerald, Rev. Ger Fitzgerald, Fr. Kyne P.P. and Leo Fitzgerald.



Timmy Murphy and Bernadette Hugh (nee Travers)



Paddy and George Lee enjoying the late summer sunshine in Castleconnell.

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Laura Barry on her pony Ballykeelaune Euro - Millstreet Horse Show, 2009



Anne Marie Walpole on her horse Black Humour - Millstreet Horse Show, 2009.



Confirmation Class 2010 Castleconnell National School

Back Row: Jade Higgins, Sarah Ryan, Jane Kenny, Colm Carroll, Ella Chinnock, David O'Koineme.

3rd Row L-R: Mrs. De Paor, Jordan Ambrose, Cian Enright, Savannah Casey, Aoife Lee, Aine Mooney, Joey Conway, Mrs. Sutton.

2nd Row L-R: Courtney O'Reilly, Emer Kenny, James Byrnes, Adrian Tusymski Vivienne Quinlan, Christopher Trehy, Rachael Slattery, Matthew Coleman, Emma O'Connell, Jodie Manning.

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2nd Row: Mr. Dillon, Leah O’Gorman, Chloe O’Brien, Aidan Carroll, Aaron Ryan, Conor O’Shea, Ava Iwanek, Aoibhin O’Gorman, Ms. O’Brien (SNA).

Middle Row: Lee Parkes, Adrian Kelleher, Christopher Jastrzebski, Nicole Mc Grath, Joseph Bourke, Marea Walsh, Luke Lynch.

Front Row: Aaron Reilly, Brian Murphy, Conor Murphy, Ellie O’Leary-Barry, Megan Freaney, Saoirse Robinson, Sean Freaney, Zach O’Connor.

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Back L/R: Alex Walsh, Robert McGill, Paddy Quinn, Wiktor Kwabinski, Luke Counihan, Andrew Shanahan.

3rd row: Mark Hickey, David Shyne, Elaine Walsh, Aoife Cullen, Elizabeth Allen, Kayleigh Blake, Sean Clifford, Jack Keane.

2nd row: Brian McGill, Tom Marsden, Ryan O'Connell, Patryk Sobolewski, Sean Greensmith, Mark Donnellan, Ivan O'Duffy, Kian Smith.

Front: Aisling Lenihan, Caoimhe McDonald, Ciara Macken, Jane Byrnes, Leah Cosgrave, Shannon Smith, Lauren Burke, Tiffany Shoer, Caoimhe Langan.

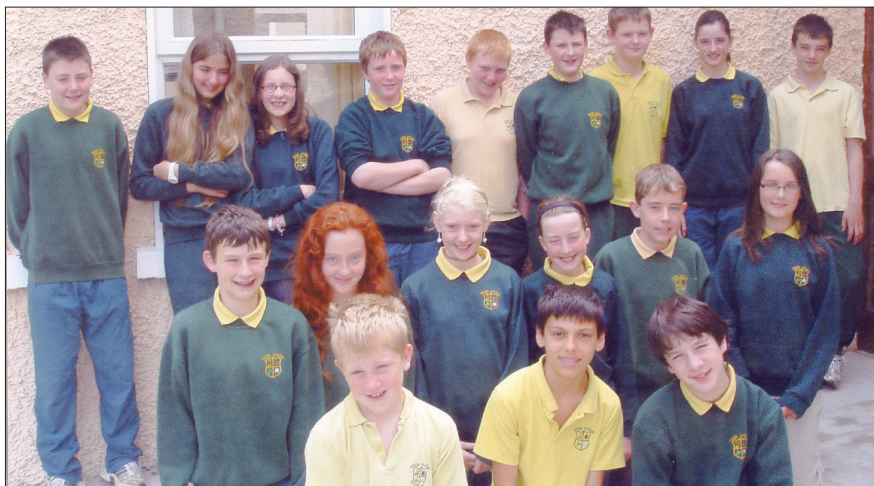


Lisnagry 6th Class students who were confirmed on February 6th, 2010



Ahane School 1st Communion Class 2010

*Back Row L-R: Vivienne Morris, Teacher and Fr. Donal Dwyer.
 Middle Row L-R: Conor O'Brien, Padraig Hartnett, Anna Nagle, Alan Phillips,
 Jennifer Carmody, Kevin Morrissey, Ruth Allen, Harvey Hartigan.
 Front L-R: Rian Collins-Maher, Cian Madden, Ciara Greaney, David
 Brennan, Jennifer Keppel, Denis Hayes, Ava O'Keeffe, Michael Ryan-Lane.*



Ahane N.S. - Confirmation Class, Feb. 2010

*Back L/R: Josh Ryan, Cristina Borcan, Edana Flynn, Gearóid Harnett, Eamon
 O'Keeffe, Mark Gleeson, Oisían Culhane, Niamh Reynolds, Adam O'Brien.
 Middle: Noel Brennan, Vicky Callinan, Siofra Keane, Áine O'Curry, John Moloney,
 Rachel McGill.
 Front: Stephen Coughlan, Liam Conroy, Eoghan Hussey.*

Peter O'Donnell Photographer

ALPPA, QLEP



Panoramic Landscape Photography of Ireland

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www.thewidereye.com



Kate Herbert who played in Primary Game at Intermediate Camogie final Antrim v Waterford in Croke Park on Sun. Sept. 12th.



Aoife Quinn who played in the Primary Game at the Junior Ladies Football Final, Limerick v Down, on Sun. Sept. 26th in Croke Park.



Gerry Piggott, President of Ahane GAA Club receives his award from Seamus Walsh, Committee member of the Old Time Gaels of East Limerick. Gerry won the award for his service to Ahane Gaa Club over the last 70 years.



Our new Motorway



Leading off the St Patrick's Day Parade in Castleconnell



St. John's Brass and Reed Band from Limerick



Watching the St Patrick's Day Parade in the village were Linda Joyce, Grainne Byrnes, Mary Smith, Joe Byrnes, Kit Joyce and Jenny Joyce.



A float in the St Patrick's Day Parade



Ahane Ladies Gaelic Football Club

An Caisleán - The Castleconnell, Ahane, Montpelier Annual 2010



St. Patrick's Day Parade



Vintage Cars in Castleconnell St. Patrick's Day Parade



More from St. Patrick's Day Parade



Brian O'Meara, St. Patrick's Day Parade.



Mona and Pat McNamara at the St. Patrick's Day Parade.

An Caisleán - The Castleconnell, Ahane, Montpelier Annual 2010



Lisnagry Football Club taking part in the Parade



St John's Brass Band playing in the Old Street on St. Patrick's Day



Harley Davidson Bikers in the St. Patrick's Day Parade



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*Tom Kearney celebrated his 80th birthday with a group of friends and relations on Aug. 28th in Herbert's Pub, Lisnagry.
 Back L/R: Seamus Flynn, Connie Carroll, Cllr. Michael Sheehan, Micheál Ó Siochrú, Paddy Tuohy, Ml. Murphy, Joan Ó Siochrú, Peggy Tyrrell, Betty Tuohy, Mgt. Carroll.
 Front: Tom Tyrrell, Marie Haberlin, Paddy Hourigan, Tom Kearney, Mgt. Joyce, Mike Byrnes.*



The Joyce family of Brigid and the late Sean, Clooncommons.



Ahane Ladies Football under 12 team.

Front Row: Aimee Griffin, Christine O'Grady, Aisling Herbert, Emily Knapp, Aoife O'Halloran, Niamh O'Curry, Sine Hartigan, Aine Reynolds and Niamh Martin.

Back Row: Joe O'Curry (Mentor), Robyn Nugent, Katie Molloy, Roisin Clothier, Catriona O'Halloran, Breda Ahern (Mentor) Aine O'Curry, Aoife Quinn (Captain), Siofra Keane, Alice Reynolds (Mentor), Rachel Ryan, Nicole Byrnes, Emer Kenny, Kathleen Conway and John Keane (Mentor)



Castleconnell ladies Kay, Brigid, Monica, Maureen, Nuala - enjoying the sunshine at I.C.A. Outing, Galway, June 2010.

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Best wishes to An Caisleán

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Neil and J.J. Corbett with their snowman



Albie Enright at the Ferry



Ducks at the Ferry

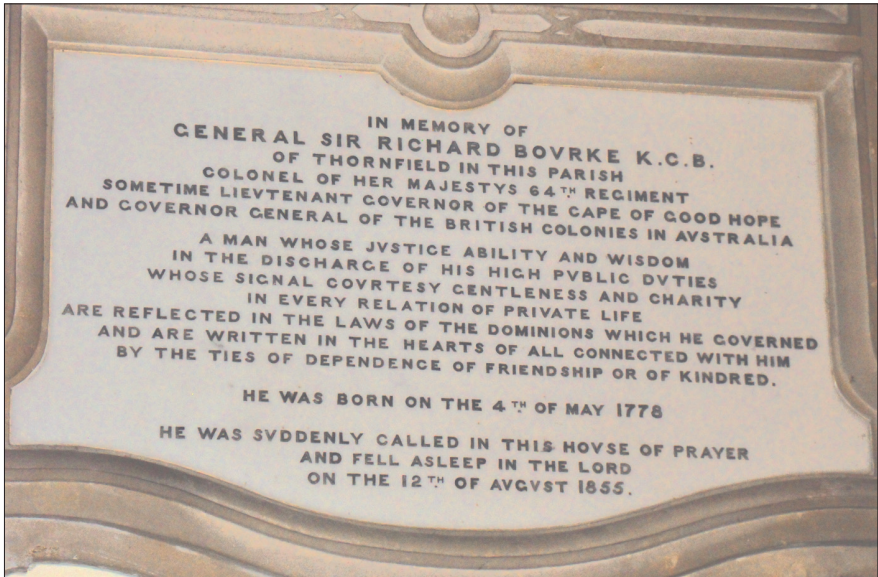


The Castle Lough



Historical Society committee meeting in Shannon Inn

An Caisleán - The Castleconnell, Ahane, Montpelier Annual 2010



A Plaque in memory of General Sir Richard Bourke in All Saint's Church Stradbally.



Enjoying themselves at Shannon Inn were Phylla Lynch, Claire Poole, Pat Byrnes and Mary Bridgeman.



Tom Twomey, Historian and Turlough Herbert of the Castleconnell Historical Society.



At the Historical Society were Mary Tuohy, Tommy Tuohy and Ger Murphy

At the Book Sale in the Hall were Colm Martin, Sandra Kenny and Patrice Haughey



Elaine Stapleton and Kathleen Conran at the cake sale.

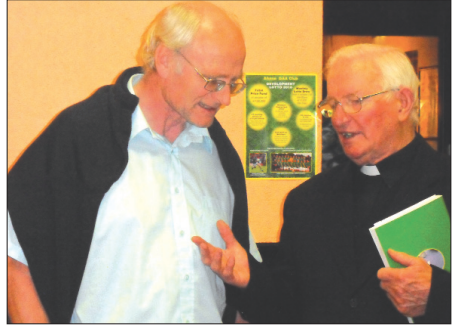


At the All Saint's Church Cake Sale in the Hall were Elaine Stapleton and Shirley Hartigan.

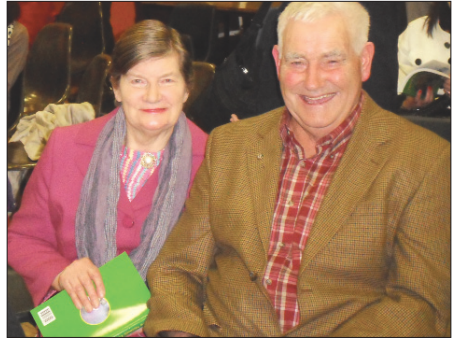


Left: Author Mary A Moloney with MC Billy Connolly at the Launch of her book 'Down Memory Lane' at Ahane GAA Clubhouse

Below: Michael O Siochru and Fr. Minogue were at the Launch of Mary A Moloney's Book 'Down Memory Lane'.



Another group at the Book Launch were Tony Condon, Donal Morrissey and Ber Condon.



Above: Patsy and Willie Keane enjoying themselves at the Book Launch.



Left: Also at the Book Launch were Joan Ó Siochru, Edmund Lawlor, Pat Madden and Billy Connolly.



Castleconnell Community Centre Committee 2010

Maura Mc Namara (Sec) Mary Gleeson (Chairperson), Tom Tyrell, Dillie Edmonds, Patrick Dickson, Letty Sloan, Mary Golden (Treasurer), Judy O'Hare, Stephen Clothier, (Technical Officer), Lorraine Heffernan and Irene Cullen (Treasurer ACM Kidz).



Ahane GAA Cuil Kidz Camp 2010

An Caisleán - The Castleconnell, Ahane, Montpelier Annual 2010

Captain's Prize Day at Connemara Golf Club, Sept. 2010



Timmy McCarthy and Patricia Quigley



Right: Ger Keehan presenting 1st prize to Willie Reddy



Left: Ger Keehan and John Hayes, winner of the Gross Prize



Ger Keehan presenting 3rd prize to Pat Murphy



Ger Keehan presenting 2nd prize to Donal Walshe



President's Prize winner Joan Garihy receiving her prize from President of Castle Golf Society, Liam Freeney.



Ger Keehan, Willie Reddy & Eddie Madden

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Winter scene on O'Brien's Bridge



O'Brien's Bridge in summertime



The village pump



The Heritage Garden



Village flowers



The bridge and river



A winter scene



Another winter scene from O'Brien's Bridge



Ferry Car Park Wall



Nelson's Cross Wall



Main Street Hanging Baskets

Sample of work carried out by our environmental team who continuously work to maintain and improve the locality for the benefit of the community



Charco's Corner Kerb



The Mall Wall

Castleconnell Project Ltd is a FÁS sponsored C.E. Scheme established in 1992 to support and develop the community and voluntary groups. Over the years it has gone from strength to strength and is today employing 21 staff in various areas such as:

- ACM Kidz Childcare
- ACM Office Administration
- ACM Caretaker
- Internet Café I.T. Staff
- East Limerick Youth Project
- Ahane GAA Caretaker
- Castleconnell Community Hall Caretaker
- Castleconnell Parish Administration
- Castleconnell Boat Club Administration
- Environmental/Maintenance Workers

The C.E Scheme is making a huge contribution to life in Castleconnell. Unfortunately not all costs involved in running the scheme are covered by FÁS and we rely heavily on donations from the business community and general public to keep the scheme viable.

Please keep supporting us so we can make Castleconnell a better place to live.

Paul Kennedy

When Paul Kennedy stepped down as Principal of Lisnagry National School at the end of August 2009, his retirement brought to a close a career of outstanding service to education and to the children of the parish.

Paul Kennedy was appointed Principal of Richill NS in July of 1975, succeeding Mr Paddy Fitzpatrick. The history of education in the Mountshannon area of the parish tells us that the Fitzpatrick family presided both in the old school across the road and in Richill for almost a century and a half. It was a daunting task for the curly-haired goalkeeper from Borrisoleigh but over the next 34 years, Paul grew into his task. The 3 teacher school that Paul entered in 1975 was a far cry from the wonderful facilities enjoyed by the pupils and staff today but Paul set about his task with enthusiasm, determination and professionalism. In a parish such as Ahane, Paul's skills as a coach and team mentor were welcome but his expertise spanned all areas of the education process. The school grew year on year and in the 70's and 80's Paul never allowed the poor facilities and overcrowding of the time to distract him and his task staff from the task of providing high quality education. The numbers on roll almost trebled under Paul's watch. In 1991, a new extension with a General Purpose room was opened. Within a short time, the school had outgrown this building. With his eye for forward planning, and the generosity of the late Lizzie O Meara and family, land was acquired at the rear of the school. This land was developed to provide a playing pitch for generations of boys and girls that is the envy of every visitor. Over 400 trees were planted with the help of the pupils of the day as part of Environmental studies but Mr. Kennedy's fingerprints were on every sapling. In 2008, the next phase of the building was completed with its magnificent facilities.

Paul believed that his task was to enable every child to reach his/her potential. He constantly encouraged and motivated his fellow teachers to share his vision. Pupils were afforded the opportunity to play hurling, football, soccer, camogie, badminton and volleyball. Cross country running was on the winter menu. Concerts were held to develop musical and theatrical talents. Artist in Residences, Visiting Authors, school magazines, Green Schools, a dedicated computer room – every experience that would benefit children was provided.

Joe O'Grady presenting a Lisnagry jersey to Paul.



To list Paul Kennedy's achievements would fill many pages. Perhaps his greatest achievement was that he retained his enthusiasm for the challenge to the very last day of his tenure.

In 34 years in Lisnagry, it is doubtful that he made an enemy. He treated everybody, parents, colleagues and pupils with respect and honesty. And the good news is that he is still a familiar figure as he helps to nurture the hurlers of the future. "A teacher leaves the track of his teeth on a parish for three generations," so said Brian McMahon in his wonderful work *The Master*. Lisnagry was fortunate to have such a Master.

Joe Lyons



Aoife, Paul, Eanna and Bernie Kennedy



Aileen O'Keeffe, Fran Crehan, James O'Keeffe, Bernie Kennedy and Anita Hynes enjoying Paul's retirement party.

Pauline Knapp, Emmie Byrnes and Mary O'Mara, all smiles at Paul's retirement party.



Noel O'Connell Retires After 43 Years in ESB

I was born on 21st December 1947 in Croom hospital, an only child of Mary O'Connell, (nee Butler) and Timothy (better known as T.F. or Teddy) both now sadly deceased.

I grew up in a beautiful place called Coolready between Castleconnell and O'Brien's Bridge. At the age of five I went to school in Montpelier and stayed going there until the age of fourteen when I left to work at home on the family farm. I have some great childhood memories of milking the cows by hand, cutting the hay with the horses and mowing machines and going to the creamery on the horse and car.



In 1966 I went to work in Parteen Hatchery with the ESB fisheries. It was a fish farm run by the ESB and it is very interesting work. I watched the fish grow from eggs and when they reached a certain size they were released into the Shannon. A certain amount of them would be tagged and they would swim back up the Shannon to Parteen Hatchery and after 2 or 3 years they would start to spawn again. Fish had to be fed daily and temperatures also had to be monitored daily.

In 1987 I decided I would like a change and I applied for and got a job as a Fishery Officer patrolling the rivers Shannon, Mulcair and tributaries. This was very different as I was working days and nights and it was very challenging. I enjoyed it though as I met lots of people from all walks of life.

Then, things changed within the ESB and I went back again to Parteen Hatchery and there I stayed until I retired after 43 years on 16th October '09. Little did I think when I walked into Parteen in 1966 that I would spend 43 great years there. I had some wonderful times and many a social gathering with food, music and sing-songs with all my work colleagues and I must say that the ESB were a fantastic body to work for and they were very good to us all. And to all of them I would like to say "Thank You".

In my early teens I played soccer with Bridge Celtic and I played hurling and football with Ahane and I got many an injury but I thoroughly enjoyed playing.

In 1973 I married Esther Carey from Ballymackeogh, Newport, Co. Tipperary. (She hasn't stopped shouting since winning the All-Ireland!). We have three lovely sons, John (37), Ollie (34) and Paul (30). We also have two beautiful daughters, Laura (31) and Michelle (23). We feel blessed with two lovely daughters-in-law, Antionette and Dolores and four adorable grandchildren, Dylan (6), Craig (5), Adam (5) and Carla Kate (3). They are my pride and joy and they keep me very busy but make me feel young at heart. They are such a joy to have around and we are so lucky to have them all living beside us. Since I've retired I can spend so much more time with them. I often take them to school or collect them or we go for long walks through the fields and I take them to count the cattle.

I never thought that I would settle into my retirement so easily after having gone to the one job for 43 years. It was strange being at home every day in the beginning, but now there are not enough days in the week.

I love doing my bit of farming and I have a big vegetable garden, a flower garden and large lawns to look after. As my kids and grandkids all live near us, there is never a dull moment, and there is always a hedge to be cut or a lawn to be mowed. But I love being busy and having things to do. At the weekends I love to go dancing and socialising and going to concerts. Long may it continue!

Noel O'Connell



Noel O'Connell with his wife Esther, family and friends on the occasion of his retirement from ESB.



Pat and Anne Skehan pictured at the J.H. Roche Christmas Party.



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Monday: Castleconnell	Mixed Ages 7.00pm - 8.30pm
Tuesdays: Milford's New Hall	Adult Classes 8.30pm - 10.00pm
Wednesday:	Transition Years/Youth Groups
Thursday: Lisnagry N.S.,	Mixed Ages 6-14, 7.00-8.30pm
Friday: Castleconnell	All Ages

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Prop: Pauline Hartigan



Anne O’Keeffe Retires

Anne O’Keeffe retired from the teaching staff of Lisnagry N.S. on September 1st 2010. She was deputy principal of the school since 2007.

A native of the parish, Ballyvarra, Anne joined the teaching staff on the 1st of July 1976 having graduated from Mary Immaculate College in 1972. For the next 34 years she proved to be an outstanding teacher possessing a great knowledge of the basic educational needs of children.

She taught all classes from 1st to 6th and in the process prepared pupils for First Confession, First Communion and Confirmation. She was full of life and energy and took great pride and satisfaction in seeing pupils realise their full potential. She was particularly aware of people with difficulty and hardship, not just in the school but throughout the world. Every year she organised events to raise funds for charity and instilled in pupils the need to help the less fortunate. The pupils, however, will probably remember her especially for the time and commitment she put into coaching basketball.

Bhí suim faoi Leith ag Áine don Gaeilge agus do gach rud a bhain leis. Mhúscail sí suim agus dea-mhéin don teanga i ngach páiste a tháinig faoin a cúram. Comh maith le sin thug sí cabhair agus treoir do na múinteoirí eile maidir le frásaí na seachtaine, seanfhocail oiriúnacha, cluichí suimiúla, 7rl.

As a colleague, Anne was highly thought of and hugely respected. For almost 30 years she was the staff representative on the Board of Management and at all times endeavoured to promote the school in a positive manner. She played a huge part in developing the school as it is today—a far cry from the cold, dreary prefab she first entered in 1976. Her first instinct was never to complain or whinge but —“we’ll make the most of it”.

Slán is Beannacht ó gach éinne i scoil Lios na Groí.



Anne O’Keeffe with Maura Barry at the retirement dinner.

Care of the Aged

The Care of the Aged is a voluntary organisation set up in 1977 to serve the needs of the elderly in the parish. Fr. James Minogue is the patron of the association, with 11 long-serving committee members as well as a sub-group of approximately 22 drivers who help with the delivery of our meals on wheels service. There are no paid personnel.

The services we provide are wide ranging from twice weekly meals-on-wheels around the parish, and a bi-monthly chiropody service to visiting the elderly in their homes and in the nursing homes. We also provide a winter fuel scheme and try to accommodate the welfare needs of the people as they arise. We install monitored alarms which provide a sense of security for those living alone or who may have a disability. The highlight of our year is organising the social events which are greatly supported by everyone. We have masses followed by tea and a social gathering and an annual outing, as well as our annual Christmas Party in Castle Oaks House Hotel.

We are grant aided by the HSE Mid-West. The remainder of our funding comes from the annual November sponsored walk organised by the 'Friends of the Care of the Aged', our annual Christmas church gate collection, donations from the Craft Fair and from other parish organisations, business and individuals.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all of those who support us in our endeavours to make life a little more pleasant for all in our parish.

*Christmas
-January
2010
Willie Joyce,
Georgie Joyce
and Paddy
Ryan*



An Caisleán - The Castleconnell, Ahane, Montpelier Annual 2010



*Christmas Party - January 2010
R/L: Anne Linnane, Angela Brennan, Eileen O'Malley, Maura O'Malley.*



*Lahinch - July 2010
R/l: Mary Likely, Fr. Minogue, Colette Thompson.*

Ahane Camogie Club

Ahane recently hosted the inaugural Peggy Duffy Memorial Cup in glorious sunshine in Mackey Park. Over 85 young girls from the ages of seven to thirteen from the three local schools, Ahane, Castleconnell and Lisnagry participated. The girls were divided into two age groups Under 10 (4 teams) and Under 13 (4 teams). Each team played each other once with the top two reaching the final. It was a great to see so many girls enjoying the day and the standard of camogie was a joy to watch. There was nothing between the teams in the final, with a single point separating the teams. The winning team of Kate Herbert, Aine O'Curry, Sarah Ryan, Catriona O'Halloran, Kaitlin Coleman, Amy Ryan, Katie Molloy, Christine O'Grady and Sine Hartigan, were presented with the Cup.

Peggy Duffy was a major driving force behind Ahane Camogie Club, having restarted the Club in 1960 with Fr Murray. Peggy went on to win five County Medals playing with her beloved Ahane and played with Ahane in a Camogie Club All Ireland Final against St Paul's, Kilkenny, played in Castleconnell. Peggy served as Secretary of the Limerick Camogie Board for a number of years and was a selector on the Limerick Junior All Winning team in the 1970's. During this period Peggy trained a number of underage teams in the parish.

Our thanks to the players, schools, parents, referees, organising committee and anybody who helped to make the tournament such a huge success.

Winning Team of the Inaugural Peggy Duffy Memorial Cup:

*Back Row: Kaitlin
Coleman, Aine
O'Curry, Catriona
O'Halloran, Kate
Herbert & Katie
Molloy
Front Row: Sarah
Ryan, Christine
O'Grady & Amy
Ryan (missing
from photograph:
Sine Hartigan)*



An Caisleán - The Castleconnell, Ahane, Montpelier Annual 2010

Ladies Football

- Ahane U11B County Blitz Champions

Congratulations to the Ahane under 11 Girls Gaelic Football Team who won the Limerick County Board Under 11B Blitz held in Mick Neville Park in Rathkeale in October. In a keenly contested semi final Ahane overcome Old Mill on a scoreline of 4 Goals and 3 Points to 3 Goals. In the final Ahane played Knockainey, running out winners by 4 points. Both teams played great football, demonstrating great skills, with Ahane finishing stronger and not conceding any scores to run out worthy winners.

The Ahane heroes on the day were: Aoife O'Halloran, Sinead Callinan, Aisling Herbert, Ciara Macken, Roisin Clothier, Orla Twomey, Sinead O'Curry, Ailish Reynolds, Sine Hartigan, Katie Molloy, Catriona O'Halloran (Captain), Niamh O'Curry, Aine Reynolds and Caoilfhionn Keane. Team Mentors: John Keane, Breda Ahern-O'Halloran, Joe O'Curry and Alice Reynolds.



*Back Row: Aoife O'Halloran, Sinead Callinan, Aisling Herbert, Ciara Macken, Roisin Clothier, Orla Twomey and Sinead O'Curry
Front Row: Ailish Reynolds, Sine Hartigan, Katie Molloy, Catriona O'Halloran (Captain), Niamh O'Curry and Aine Reynolds
(missing from photograph: Caoilfhionn Keane)*

School Photos



Adi Roche addressing pupils of Castleconnell National School



Pupils enjoying working in school garden

An Caisleán - The Castleconnell, Ahane, Montpelier Annual 2010



Castleconnell National School - Fun filled day.



Junior and Senior Infants stepping it out at a Céilí in Lisnagry N.S. during Seachtain na Gaeilge.



5th and 6th Class from Lisnagry N.S. on a field trip to Mulcair River.



Boys Basketball Team - Lisnagry N.S.



*Ahane NS Football Champions 2009-2010
Medal Presentation with Ollie Moran, Ms. Kiely and Damien O'Sullivan.*



Ahane N.S. Newport Athletics Relay Race Champions 2009-2010
Pupils who won 25 Gold Medals and 5 Silver Medals.
Back Row: Eoghan Hussey, Joe Griffin, Adam O'Brien, Liam Conroy, Noel Brennan, Saoirse O'Toole, Niamh Reynolds, Niamh O'Curry, Siofra Keane, Aine O'Curry.
Middle Row: Aine Reynolds, Jack O'Connell, Eric O'Neill, Sean Madden, Ishaan Conroy, Ailish Reynolds, Sinead O'Curry, Roisin Allen, Ciara Greaney.
Front Row: Rian Collins Maher, Conor O'Brien, Kevin Morrissey, Pdraig Harnett, Jennifer Carmody, Ruth Allen, Cian Madden, Anna Nagle, Ava O'Keefe.

Castleconnell Environment Group

Presents

Our Community Playground

Roisin Hartigan decided that the village needed a playground. A social centre for new and old members of the community to meet. With very little thought to the work involved she enlisted the help of her good friends Marion Comber and Clare Hartigan. After a few meetings in Hickey's the Castleconnell Environment Group was formed.

Talks were set up with the Limerick County Council and eventually funding and location were secured. It was specified that the community needed to contribute €20,000

The draft plans for the playground were first introduced to the community at the regatta fun day in June 2006, where we started fundraising with a burger stand, milk the cow, sumo-wrestling, kiddies disco, face painting and much more. We had a great day and the feedback was both positive and encouraging.

Although the core committee was small the dynamics of the group worked. There were other groups with initiative that helped with fundraising ideas such as the tea dances, which were a great success.

The local businesses were also very supportive and were eager to contribute in any way they could.

To raise awareness the group participated in the last three St. Patrick's Day village parades. While adding a huge amount of colour and entertainment the group won prizes each year for their efforts.

When the money was finally raised a local contractor was awarded the contract for the installation of the playground.

There have been many highs and lows in seeing this project completed but it has been a constant joy to see so many young kids enjoy the new playground.

In the future we would love to see some additional amenities for the older children and teenagers.

Castleconnell Environment Group would like to say thank you to everyone who contributed time, effort and financial donations and for having faith in three local mothers.



Playground Committee: Clare Hartigan, Roisin Hartigan, Marian Comber.



An Caisleán - The Castleconnell, Ahane, Montpelier Annual 2010



Tidy Towns Committee: L/R Sean Hartigan, Pauline Bradshaw, Roisin Hartigan, Frances Clifford, Julie McCabe, Vincent Warfield, Linda Hardiman, Paddy Tuohy.



L/R: M. Murphy, M. O'Brien, L. Hardiman, L. Joyce, S. Hartigan, P. Bradshaw, J. McCabe, V. Warfield.



Litter picking in progress

Castleconnell Tidy Towns

Castleconnell Tidy Towns Committee have been very active in the locality this year. You may have noticed the improvements around the village.

The pump at the top of the village was given a new lease of life with a coat of paint and new flower pots placed around it.

New pots were purchased and planted them flowers at the village hall and a flower bed was set under the tree between the “old and “new” hall.

Hanging baskets were adorned with brightly coloured flowers throughout the village and over as far as Chapel Hill.

The litter bin outside the hall was painted and a new map of Castleconnell and its surrounds, with a brief history of the village has been erected outside the post office.

To date, 3 “litter picking” days have taken place with “clean up” of Belmont Road, Forge Road and O’Brien’s Bridge Road. It is worth noting that a total of almost 400 bags of rubbish were picked from all three areas!!! Sincere thanks to all who participated on all or any of the days.

Fundraising events included a Sponsored Walk, a number of Cake Sales and a Church Gate Collection, all of which were generously supported by the Community.

The committee were proud to accept an award from Ballyhoura Development in June of this year for “Landscaping, Wildlife and Built Environment”

Then, in the National Tidy Towns Competition, 2010, Castleconnell was awarded an “Endeavour Award – for the highest percentage increase in points in the Limerick Area”.

There’s lots more to be done! Further improvements are planned for the 2011 application.

The Tidy Towns Committee are delighted that all of us as a community have worked together to ensure that our pride in the village was reflected in the result of this year’s competition and would sincerely like to thank all in the community who supported the effort this year.

Please feel free to contact any of the committee members with any suggestions you think might be useful.

Committee: Sean Hartigan, Vincent Warfield, Roisin Hartigan, Pauline Bradshaw, Julie McCabe, Frances Clifford, Linda Hardiman, Paddy Tuohy, Linda Joyce.

Community Games - Soccer



Ahane/Castleconnell community games U12 boys soccer team had a great run this year and were very unlucky not to go forward to the county finals. Team consisted of Joseph Lavin, Rory Cusack, Peter Cusack, Daniel Minihan, Dara Culliemore, Sean Feeny, Michael Kitt, Adam Myers, Tristan O'Sullivan, Jordan Clancy, Conor Cosgrave, Kieran O'Malley, Darragh Stapleton, Sean Madden, David Kennedy and Robert Homes. First up was a local Derby against Monaleen where Ahane ran out convincing winners at 4-1. Ahane played some very nice football and the result was never in doubt. A walkover against Treatyside meant it was all going to be decided against Bruff in the final match. The teams were very evenly matched and a late goal by Bruff was all that separated the sides at the end with the result 1-0.

Professional Photography



David Gaynor

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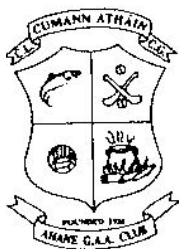
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Ahane National School

As the last term draws to a close in Ahane N. S., we look back on another busy year for all. The 2009/2010 school year began with a new member joining our staff. However, due to severe Government cutbacks and the current economic climate, we unfortunately lost our newly gained teacher by November. Despite this disappointment, the school continued to thrive and develop through the help and support of the entire school community.

Reflecting on the year, many memorable and enjoyable days come to mind. Ahane had fantastic success in sports this year. An early achievement in the first term with the Ahane Football team winning the East Limerick School Football Final began a series of sporting success for the Ahane pupils. Although only shortly with us, Mr. O'Sullivan lent his football expertise to us by joining with Mr. O'Shea and helping to manage the Ahane School Football Team. The team had unbelievable success and beat Oola N.S. in the final. This was a great achievement and the pupils enjoyed celebrating the win for many weeks afterwards. The last time Ahane won this final was in 2000.

Sporting success continued in the school with fantastic results in Athletics, when pupils from 2nd-6th classes won 25 medals while participating in the Newport relay races. In the last term, many girls from 2nd -6th classes took part in a camógie blitz involving Ahane, Lisnagry and Castleconnell schools. This was the first year of the Blitz and was held in memory of Peggy Duffy, R.I.P. This was a lovely day and the girls enjoyed playing and meeting new friends. To finish off the sporting achievements of the year, Ahane went on to win the double, by achieving victory in the East Limerick Hurling Final. This was a great accomplishment for the pupils, many of whom are in 6th class. We are very proud of them. They have gained so much enjoyment and confidence in these sports and they take this with them as they head into secondary school. Special thanks to all the pupils, staff and parents who helped with these sporting events throughout the year. Mindful of the Special Olympics taking place in Limerick at this time, our Principal Ms. Kiely reminded us of their motto 'Let me win. But if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt'.

We had another busy year in our school garden. In the autumn we had a 'bring a bulb' day where all the children brought in a bulb to plant. Unfortunately, due to the hard frost we experienced this winter, we did not get to enjoy these flowers, however a small handful made a late appearance. The cold snap also resulted in the school being forced to close for a week in early January. This was a first in the school's history to have to close its doors however, with the support and understanding of the local community and thankfully a thaw, the school reopened, much to the disappointment of the pupils who were enjoying an extended Christmas break. As always, pupils had many opportunities to

become involved in projects and activities throughout the year. Most notable among these include our annual Christmas Concert, U.L. P.E students working with 5th and 6th classes, Tree Week, Science Day, Sports Day and School Tours.

In the last term we were delighted to have a past pupil return to the school to coach the pupils in hurling. Sean Madden called to the school every week for three months working with pupils from juniors to sixth, teaching and practicing hurling skills with them. A big thank you to Sean for all his hard work, we really appreciated it.

Some pupils in Ahane had a visit from one of our parents, Mr. Fitzgerald. He called to discuss a recent charity building trip he had made to Haiti. Mr. Fitzgerald spoke to the pupils about the work he did over there, showed the pupils photographs and answered their many questions. This year also saw the school gain two new interactive whiteboards. This was a very insightful experience, which the pupils really appreciated. Sixth class were confirmed on February 3rd in Castleconnell. First Communion took place on May 8th in Ahane Church.

As another school year draws to an end, we wish our sixth class all the best as they leave, and we extend a special thank you to all the families, friends and neighbours who helped us throughout this busy year.

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Séamus Harnett

Sheila Cagney has been teaching traditional Irish music in Ahane National School for over 25 years. During this time she has introduced hundreds of children to the beauty of our traditional music and the joys of playing a wide range of musical instruments.

One of these pupils is Séamus Harnett. Séamus began attending music lessons with Sheila in September 1999. As with all her pupils he started on the tin-whistle. Having achieved a reasonable standard on this instrument he progressed to the wooden flute in 2001. He is very proud that the famous flute maker Brendan McMahon, who has passed away since, made his first flute.

The wooden flute is quite a difficult instrument to master but Séamus made very good progress over a short period of time. His first national success came at Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann in Clonmel in 2003 when he won a gold medal in the Under 12 Trio competition playing with Niamh Keegan (also from Ahane) and Siobhán Rafferty (Hospital). This was followed by his first solo gold medal in Letterkenny in 2004. By now Séamus was attending lessons with the accomplished flautist and member of Liadan, Catherine Clohessy. Catherine has had a very positive influence on his musical development and continues to be his music teacher to this day.

Further successes followed both individually and with Anna Sheehan (Bruree) and Edmund Gubbins (Lough Gur) with whom he has won duet and trio All-Irelands. This year the All-Ireland Fleadh was held in Cavan and it was a particularly successful one for Séamus. He won gold in the trio with Anna and Edmund. He also won the Whistling competition. However the icing on the cake was his victory in the solo flute competition. He was really proud to accept the NCO's Plunkett Barracks, Curragh Command Trophy which features a veritable Who's Who of flute players in Ireland today.

Séamus is not the only musical member of the Harnett family. His brother, Gearóid, won an All-Ireland medal for the Bodhrán in Tullamore in 2008. He also played the concertina at this year's Fleadh in Cavan. His other brother, Pádraig, won a medal for whistling in Cavan this year. He has also started to play the button accordion.

This musical family are very honoured to play hurling for the famed Ahane GAA Club. They are very grateful to Sheila Cagney for her trojan work in introducing them to Irish music and enabling them to achieve such high standards.

Long may the Harnett boys continue to play sweet music!



Evenings of Fun and Blitzes

The Ahane U8's category caters for children from age five to eight: there are in fact three groups covered by the u8 umbrella - U6's U7's and U8's. The emphasis is on fun and skill development. Playing with their friends and making new friends is also of prime consideration to these young hurlers and footballers.

U8 Hurling and Football 2010 started in April and continued for six months until the first week in October playing every Wed night at Lisnagry National School. On the busiest night we had 60 enthusiastic and talented children on the pitch. Training was cancelled only one night due to bad weather so the summer was not as bad as we might remember or else our U8's are hardier than we thought.

Even though it is non competitive no hurling or football training session would be complete without "the match" at the end. This adds to the fun. Each training session ends with a match alternating weekly between hurling and football.

In addition to the matches at the end of each session we had some "friendlies" with our neighbouring clubs and also participated in Cross County Blitzes arranged by the Limerick County Board. These "Go Games" blitzes were held monthly between April and September and we fielded two teams every time we participated. This was particularly gratifying to see during the school holiday period when families have other commitments. We are very appreciative of the parents who made the time to take their children to matches and training.

The u6's are making great progress and we can already see stars in the making. They need to continue to practice at home during the winter and ask Santa (if its not too early to refer to the "C" word) for some sliothars and hurleys.

The u7's will be the big boys on the block next year and are ready for the challenge.

The senior u8's will be progressing to play with the under 10's in the next season and are looking forward to it already having played some friendlies with them towards the end of this season.

The under 8's are very valuable Ahane club members. They were very strongly represented at the La na gClub day on May 9th. Trying to "Milk the Cow" found some of them vowing never to give up till you get the last drop- a valuable trait to have on the playiing field.

Our thanks to all the parents coaches and children who made the season a happy and successful one. We wish the children all the best over the winter months and look forward to more evenings of fun with them in the club in the future.



US participants in End of Year Blitz at Ballybrown

Back Row: Joe Tanner, Eoghan Kenny, Jack Keane, Sean Freeny, Mark Hickey, Conor O'Brien, Mark Donnellan, Kevin Morrissey, Tom Marsden, Aidan Carroll.

Front Row: Robbie O'Leary, John O'Donoghue, Evan O'Leary, Adam Murrhly, Peter O'Donoghue, Zach O'Connor, Josh Mullane, William O'Leary.

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Community Games Futsal

2010 saw a new first in Community Games History. We entered a Futsal team for the first time. Futsal is a cross between indoor and outdoor soccer using a smaller ball which does not bounce. It requires lots of skill on the part of the players with only 5 players on a team. Players like Ronaldo from Portugal grew up playing futsal on the streets and it is said this is where all the players got there amazing skills on the ball.

Our Futsal Team for 2010 was Harry Healy(capt), Peter & Rory Cusack, Daniel Minehan, Sean Feeney, Gearoid Hartnett, Mikey Power and Joe Lavin. Coach/Manager: Elaine Joyce.

The boys did extremely well and reached the Munsters in UL. To reach the finals they had to overcome Southill, Treaty side, Monaleen and Hospital. It was a tremendous accomplishment for the boys to reach the Munsters in their first year of playing for Ahane/Castleconnell/Mountpelier Futsal Community Games. Even though we were not successful at the Munsters and were beaten by Ennis in Co. Clare the boys played very well and the Clare side went on to represent Munster in the All-Ireland Community Games.



An Caisleán - The Castleconnell, Ahane, Montpelier Annual 2010

Castleconnell: The School That Rocks!!

The 2009/2010 school year has been a busy and exciting one for the pupils, staff and parents of Castleconnell National School. Despite the recession and the cutbacks in education, the spirit of partnership which ensures that our school is a vibrant school community is still very much in evidence and has ensured that our pupils continue to receive an exceptional primary school experience.

During the past year parents and Board of Management collaborated to ensure to that our school building is well maintained. We have renovated and redecorated our school hall and the public areas of the building. In addition to this our school library was officially opened at our 6th class graduation in June by Mr. Alan English, editor of the Limerick Leader.

During their time in primary school it is important that young people learn to reach out to those less fortunate than themselves and to learn that they can a make a difference in society and the world at large. To this end our pupils have engaged in several fundraising events during the year and donated considerable sums of money to Multiple Sclerosis Ireland and Concern for the Haiti Earthquake Fund. One of the highlights of the year was the visit of Adi Roche of the Chernobyl Children's Project. Our pupils presented her with a cheque for over €1,000.

In terms of caring for our world, our school was awarded the third Green Flag for water conservation and we have begun preparations for our fourth Green Flag. The theme for the fourth Green Flag is 'Travel' and we have begun our "WOW" project, where pupils, parents and staff walk on Wednesdays. Care of the environment was also our focus when our pupils became involved in the Tidy Towns project in the village.

Sporting activities, as always are a priority for our school community. This year we were delighted to welcome coaches from Ahane GAA Club, who ran a hurling skills programme for pupils from 1st to 4th class. In addition to this coaching, our participation in basketball, football and camógie was very successful again this year. Our school sports day was an outstanding success and our pupils were also very successful at the Limerick City Sports held at the University of Limerick Sports Arena.

Our school choir is going from strength to strength and we were awarded first place in the Limerick Festival of Church Music again this year. Our

pupils also participated in the Lyric FM Choirs for Christmas competition. In addition to this, we were delighted that our pupils were afforded the honour of enriching the liturgy with their beautiful singing at mass in the church in the village several times during the year.

In terms of innovation, our school remains at the forefront of developments in teaching and learning with the use of interactive whiteboards in all classes and a state of the art computer room. Pupils are also involved in using technology to present their work in the form of power point presentations and photo-stories.

Finally, our school community took on two special projects this year. Firstly, pupils in first and fifth classes, together with their teachers, built and planted our school garden. It is hoped that this project will be extended in the coming school year.

Secondly, every child in the school was involved in the recording of our first school CD "Castleconnell., The School That Rocks".



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How Castleconnell Got Its Name

Caislean Ó gConaing, got its name from the Ó gConaings who were the predominant clan or tribe in the local area, they held sway here until they were displaced by the famous O'Brien's of Thomond. Brian Boru, for instance was one of them and then you had King Dónal Mór O'Brien, famous for erecting the Cathedral of St. Mary's in Limerick and also the Cathedral in Killaloe, both of whom were originally Catholic, now in Protestant hands. He is also credited with the erection of the chapel on the Rock of Cashel.

The Castle in Castleconnell was not originally there in those times, although some of the residents lived around there. A nephew of Brian Boru was actually murdered in that castle, by the soldiers of King Dónal Mór of Limerick who feared he was going to succeed to the title of the King of Thomond, so he had him killed.

Later times when the invaders came the O'Brien's were displaced, then the powerful De Burcas or Burkes took over and were given title Lord of Castleconnell, by English Kings and one of them was given a grant and a title to build the castle in Castleconnell, the ruins of which are there to the present day. This castle was in good condition until the arrival of Ginkle and the Williamite forces around 1551. They seized the castle and drove out the legitimate owners of the time. They held it for some time until they in turn were forced to depart by local Gaels and the castle was taken over by Irish forces again for a time until 1690 and the first Siege of Limerick.

That year a detachment of troops were sent out from Limerick to seize the Castle but the attempt failed and they withdrew. Then in 1691 a second and a more powerful attempt was made and after fierce fighting over two days, the castle was eventually captured. It took £600 at that time to destroy the castle, which was a tremendous lot of money. It had been a very fine castle and what remains today in ruins, is just a very small portion of the original castle. It really gives no impression of what it originally looked like in its full splendour and glory.

Over the years, new townships were developed, to the north of the village we have the area called The Spa...this was originally a very famous place because there was a noted spa there, especially in the 17th C. Castleconnell was one of the first areas in the county to be planted by the English. Williamite soldiers and their descendants settled down and established themselves here. Large beautiful residences with high walls were built as Castleconnell was seen as being in a fairly firm position to defend. These

families came to reside here and their sons and daughters were sent out to the Continent....The Grand Tour of the Continent, it was called and they spent some time out there and came back with wonderful lavish ideas of architecture and we can see evidence of this in some of the lovely buildings still in the area such as the Georgian residences and mansions.

At that time, the De Burcas or the Burkes were the principal family and most important employers in the area. They owned most of the territory around and they actually established the Spa. Gentry came to Castleconnell to fish and brought friends and relatives along with them as the river was famous for its salmon fishing. It was known at one time in the 17th C as the 'Millionaire's Playground', because of all the wealthy visitors to the area. Later, of course, the Shannon Scheme diverted the water from Castleconnell but the fishing was still very much in evidence and fishermen came regularly from Germany, England and France.

The natives settled down under their landlords around the place. Many emigrated to places like Canada, America and Australia. Those that stayed made the best they could of it. Even though it was a heavily planted area, a tradition of Gaelicism thrived here and a large section of the community kept up the Gaelic traditions, customs and the language. There were so many Gaelic speakers here at that time that in 1870 a priest called Fr. Hennessy, who was fluent in the native tongue, from Macroom in Co. Cork was sent to Castleconnell.

Davy concluded his interview by giving his opinion on the characteristics of a typical Castleconnell man 'Upstanding Irishman...hard man of the soil and fond of his own traditions and culture, own music and song and of course the Gaelic games, especially hurling'

Excerpt from a radio interview between Donnacha O Dulaing and local historian Davy Quaid R.I. P. in 1976.

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The very wet winter of 2009 led to the most severe flooding for many years. The cause of course, is global warming with all its negative effects on our weather and of course it must be true as it never happened in the past! There is however another truth.

My story is set in the year 1957 or 1958. Normally, by school re-opening in September, farmers who we helped during school holidays, had the hay saved and packed into barns or built into a reek and covered with rushes to protect the valuable feed from the weather, until the grass stopped growing and it would become the only feed to keep the cattle alive through the winter.

However, this was not a normal year. The hay which had been laboriously saved using only pitch forks for all but the cutting was finally built into wyne. The problem starts there. Hay which was not properly dried /saved before wyning, overheats and rots or in extreme cases can catch fire. When overheating happens the only way to save the crop is to knock down the wyne, scatter the hay and allow it to dry properly, then re-wyne and hope for a better result. Not alone had all this hard work to be done by hand but we had to walk around the meadow looking for the least wet spot to place our forkfuls of hay. All the hay was eventually resaved and kept the cattle alive through the winter. The resaving of the crop happened that year when schools had reopened so it must have been some time in September. The old people called it an Indian summer. The fields or meadows are like a sponge holding water, they can only hold so much and then we get run off and floods. What we did not realise when resaving the hay was that we were so close to the worst flooding in living memory. Weekends were then as now, a time to relax and play. This weekend was different, in that it rained all day Friday and Saturday. So what? You might ask. No problem, unless you lived on the bank of the river Groody, as we did.

The Groody rises in Caherline Bog and meets the Shannon at Plassey, draining all the land from Caherline to Drombanna before passing our house on its way to the sea. Our house was not only on the riverbank but was hemmed in by the main road to Tipperary/Waterford with the Groody bridge as the only outlet for the flood water.

We went to bed as normal on Saturday night but were not prepared for what greeted us on Sunday morning. Our house was surrounded by water, the

Groody had risen by two feet overnight and we were in trouble. Neighbours came to look but could do nothing to help us. Noel Bridgeman, our next door neighbour, who lived on the opposite bank of the river, wearing Wellingtons, carried my sister and I on his back to the bus which in those days took people to Sunday masses in the Augustinians. Mass times served by the bus were 8.45, 10.15, 12.00 and there was also mass at 11 o'clock. I can clearly remember standing room only at 10.15, 11.00 and 12.00 masses, but that is another story!

When we returned from mass, Noel carried us back to our house and we just stood there excited and frightened by the sight we were looking at. My mother, Mary Jo Nash, who hailed from Gardenhill, Castleconnell had not gone to mass and had lifted everything moveable off the floor just in case. There were talks of filling sandbags, we had access to the 10 stone bags but where would we get the sand?

Hour after hour we waited and prayed, but the water level did not change. Neighbours suggested calling the fire brigade but it was questioned as to what effect such a small pump would have on this massive amount of water. At about three o'clock, with no change in water levels a neighbour, Mattie Hanly who owned land one field behind us that was not flooded because his riverbank was higher than ours, offered to get gardai permission to blow the riverbank with gelignite and allow his land and adjoining fields to flood in an attempt to prevent our house flooding.

A few hours later my mother got very excited and said that the levels were falling, she was right and our house was not flooded. Naturally, post mortems were held after the floods receded. Mrs. Bridgeman, Noel's grandmother who had lived in the same house for decades had never seen flooding to that level.

Within a few years the annual cleaning of the Groody which had been done by two men with drag hooks ended and a proper dredging and widening took place. The widening meant the removal of large poplar and sally trees which had grown over the years, this had a side benefit for us as free firewood. Just to prove that you cant make all of the people happy all of the time, fishermen complained that the once great trout fishing was gone forever. They were wrong. Yes, the flooding happened many times since but our house was never flooded. I am too old now to believe that I will ever again hear the phrase "The worst in living memory".

Tom Lynch
Mountshannon

Community Employment in Castleconnell

Community Employment has been a feature of Castleconnell for a number of years now. Supporting various voluntary organisations in the area, the variety of work carried out by C.E. workers includes the following:

- Tidy towns, (street cleaning, emptying bins, building and maintaining stone walls, flowerbeds).
- ACM and ACMKIDZ: (we supply C.E. staff to run the ACM office and childcare workers for ACMKIDZ as well as cleaning staff for the centre).
- Ahane GAA: (we second one worker to maintenance work in Ahane GAA clubhouse)
- Parish Hall (caretaker for the hall including bookings and maintenance work)

A recent addition to the C.E. Scheme has been the E.G.F. (European Globalisation Fund) Dell and Dell associated companies special fund.

We have presently four EGF staff with a high level of expertise in the I.T. field. We have allocated two of these staff to I.T. support in ACM including maintenance of the Internet café, various other projects within ACM and website updating among other tasks.

One person has been allocated to a parish office under the auspices of Fr Kyne and operates from an office beside the sacristy.

Another person has been allocated to sports administrative duties shared between Ahane GAA and Castleconnell Rowing Club. He operated from Ahane GAA Clubhouse.

The C.E. Scheme is making a huge contribution to life in Castleconnell as well as to the participants. We are indebted to FAS for its continued support for the scheme in Castleconnell. Without that support, the various works carried out by the participants would remain to be done by volunteers and some could not be carried out at all. Unfortunately, FAS does not cover the full cost of running the scheme and some items of expenditure have to be funded by the community. We always welcome donations from the public and the business community in trying to keep the scheme in the black. We hope the community appreciated the work carried out by the C.E. participants in keeping the area clean and tidy, the work behind the scenes at ACM and the other work carried out for the voluntary organisations.

Pat Dempsey

In 2010, Castleconnell/Ahane/Montpelier Parish was saddened by the passing of four of our former priests, all of whom had served here over the past forty years or so. They included Fr. Rory McInerney, Fr. Paddy Lynch, Fr. Liam Murray and Fr. Diarmuid McCormick, all of whom are remembered over the following pages.

Fr. Liam Murray

Fr. Liam Murray died on Thursday, May 6th at his home in Killuran, O'Callaghan's Mills, Co. Clare. News of his death was met with great sorrow by the people of the parish. He was born in O'Callaghan's Mills in 1926 and had studied for the priesthood at St. Patrick's College, Maynooth where he was ordained in 1952. He then served in the Diocese of Brentwood and returned to Ireland after four years there doing parish work. He was appointed Curate in Killanena in 1956 until 1960 when he became Curate in Whitegate, Co. Clare. He arrived in Castleconnell in 1965 and served here for four years. During that time Fr. Murray, ably assisted by Peggy Duffy among others, set about resurrecting Ahane Camogie Club and was instrumental in the Club bringing many honours back to Ahane. Indeed, even when he was appointed as Curate in Cloughjordan, Co. Tipperary, he still kept in touch with the happenings in Ahane. In 1986, he was appointed Parish Priest of Coolmeen/Cranny, Co. Clare and returned to Mountshannon/Whitegate as Parish Priest there in 1989. He remained there until his retirement in 1998, but continued as Assistant Pastor in that parish for his remaining years. Fr. Murray served as a priest for the Killaloe Diocese for 58 years.

Ar Dheis De go raibh a anam.

Fr. Paddy Lynch

The death of Fr Paddy Lynch in the Regional Hospital, Limerick on Wednesday, June 2nd 2010, was greeted with much dismay and sadness in the Parish as he had been so well liked and respected during his time here.

Fr. Paddy was born in Doora, Co. Clare on 24th of February 1920. He was educated in C.B.S. Ennis and studied for the priesthood at St. Patrick's College, Carlow where he was ordained in June 1945. His first appointment after ordination was in Cardiff, Wales and he returned to Ireland to become Curate in Killimer, Co. Clare in 1946. He was then appointed Curate in Ballywilliam, Co. Tipperary in 1955 and in Mullagh, Co. Clare in 1959. In 1964, he was moved to Ballynacally, Co. Clare and served there as Curate until he came to Castleconnell in 1969. He served here as Curate until 1976,

when he was appointed Parish priest of Doonbeg Co. Clare. During his time in this Parish, Fr Lynch made many friends and is remembered as a quiet and unassuming man, who served his parishioners well. He had served for 65 years as a priest and his gentle manner and genuine interest in people endeared him in the various parishes where he served. He retired in 1995 and moved to his native Doora as Assistant Pastor to the parish of Newmarket on Fergus, Co. Clare.
Suaimhneas síoraí tabhair dó a Thiarna, agus go lonraí solas suthain air.

Fr. Rory McInerney

On June 30th 2009, after a long illness, the death of Fr. Rory McInerney was greeted by a deep sadness to all who knew him.

A proud native of O Callaghan's Mills, Fr. Rory was educated in St Flannan's College with whom he had the distinction of winning a Harty Cup medal in 1954. [Donal Houlihan, Spa, was also a member of that team].

He was ordained in 1961 and in September of that year was assigned to the Dromore diocese[Co. Down]. He actually arrived in Co. Down with the Sam McGuire cup as Down had won the All Ireland the previous day. In 1968 he was transferred to Emmigrant Apostolate in Birmingham before returning as curate to Castleconnell in 1971. As there was no priest's house available his first priority was to find accommodation. Mrs. Veale, who lived opposite Lisnagry N.S. provided a room for him until he "got fixed up". This became his home until 1976.

From his first day in the parish he involved himself in the community, visiting houses, schools and hospitals on a regular basis. The needs and interests of the people were always to the forefront and his kindness, empathy and advice were greatly appreciated. His unassuming manner led to a particular relationship with the sick and the bereaved - his great qualities of gentleness and kindness shone through in their darkness.

Being a noted hurler in his youth he became involved with Ahane G.A. A. club where he made many friends. His main focus was Bord na nÓg and many will remember being packed into his car when there was a transport crisis-a regular occurrence in those days. He also found the time to assist the pupils in all the primary schools, Rosary Hill Secondary school and St Vincents. In 1975 he was appointed Chairperson of the very first Board of Management of Lisnagry N.S. It was with great sadness he left the parish in 1976 to minister in Ennis. In 1993 he was appointed parish priest of Tulla but due to illness in 2003 he was admitted to Carrigoran nursing home.

During his final years there it was amazing how many people from the parish - and indeed from Ennis, Tulla and the Mills - went to visit him. He was always blessed that his own family - brothers, sisters and extended families - were a tower of strength to him particularly during his final years.

Socially Rory was great company, a great conversationalist, always good humoured and full of life. He was a noted golfer being pipped at the post for the Captain's Prize in Castletroy Golf Club on one occasion. He loved his game of cards - knew the value of the ace of hearts - when to play it and more important when not to. The successes of Clare in 1995 and 1997 brought huge personal satisfaction.

Sagart uasal, séimh, macánta ab ea Ruairí a thug aoibhneas agus saibhreas croíúil do gach éinne a bhí baint acu leis. Solas na bhflaitheas dó agus tá leaba tuilte go maith aige i measc na naomh.

Paul Kennedy

Fr. Diarmuid McCormick R.I.P.

The people of Castleconnell/Ahane/ Montpelier were deeply saddened to hear of the death of Fr. Diarmuid McCormick who died in Limerick Regional Hospital on Friday, July 2nd 2010.

Fr. McCormick was born in Clonlara, Co. Clare on November 16th 1932. He was educated in St. Flannan's College, Ennis and St. Patrick's College, Maynooth where he was ordained a priest on June 22nd 1958.

Following his ordination he was appointed on Temporary Mission to the Diocese of Brentwood in England and he chose to remain there in ministry for twenty five years. He then served as Curate in East Ham, London and was later appointed Parish Priest of South Woodford in London. He served these parishes well and made many good friends there as was evident by the attendance at his funeral.

He returned to Ireland in 1983 and was appointed Curate in Castleconnell/Ahane/Montpelier. He was a quiet man who loved nothing better than to spend a couple of hours fishing in his beloved River Shannon. While in Castleconnell, he made a special point of visiting the sick and elderly. His role as Chaplain in St. Vincent's was one in which he took a particular interest. He had a great affinity with the children and adults with special needs and also the staff there.

In 2000, he was appointed as Curate in Kilkishen, Co. Clare where he went about his priestly duties with dedication and commitment, continuing with his ministry until his illness and subsequent death.

Fr. McCormick will be remembered by his parishioners as a good, caring and devout priest with strong principles and ideas, which he was not afraid to defend to the utmost.

Ar Dheis De Go Raibh A Anam Dilis.



In Memory of John O'Sullivan

The Joyce family of Stradbally gathered in May 2010 to remember Mary's husband, John who died in January. John and Mary were married for fifty years and loved to come home to Castleconnell as often as they could, with their three daughters, Carol, Mary and Frances. John loved the fishing here and enjoyed catching up with friends.

He will be sadly missed by all his extended family and friends.

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A Busy and Fulfilling Year at Lisnagry National School

All members of Lisnagry National School including pupils, parents, teachers and friends had another very busy and fulfilling school year in 2009/2010.

As we look back over the year now, there were many outstanding events and many notable visitors to the school. Roisin Meaney, a famous author from Limerick came to visit and spoke of her work as an author during a very successful Book Fair week. Clan Tuama theatre group paid their annual visit in January with their production of Deirdre of the Sorrows. We all enjoyed the various activities organised for Seachtain na Gaeilge. We had a concert and a visit from a well-known Seanachai Eddie Lenihan who told interesting stories to the classes. At the end of the week we had a big ceilli which everyone enjoyed. It was a huge success. “Béatha teanga í a labhairt”. The highlight of the year for many was the visit of Munster hero and Lions Captain Paul O Connell during Sports Day. He spoke to the children about the importance of healthy eating and keeping fit. The children’s excitement was immeasurable, not to mention some of the staff!!

Once again, sport dominated the lives of many children in another eventful year. The school took part in every event possible, hurling, football, badminton basketball, cross country, chess, handball, quizzes etc. The girls won the City League basketball trophy beating Milford while the boys were narrowly beaten by Roxboro in the City League Final. The girls’ camogie team had a very successful year qualifying for the final in the Gaelic Grounds. The girls lost to Crecora after an epic contest. During the year we were also successful in the Credit Union Quiz. While we had many winners on the sporting front, participation was the key note.

This year also saw the introduction of the school assembly where each month a class took charge of showcasing their talents and presenting their news to everyone. This proved a very worthwhile experience in developing the children’s self confidence and creativity. Another very worthwhile committee was formed this year. The healthy eating committee encouraged everyone to eat more fruit and vegetables and did spot checks for the year to promote healthy lunches and a healthy lifestyle. Winners of the healthy eating Quiz were then treated to a trip to Milanos where they got a tour of the restaurant and even got to make their own pizza!

Lisnagry National School has certainly embraced the technological age with the introduction of interactive whiteboards in all classrooms this year. They are a fun, exciting and innovative way of enhancing the children’s learning experience.

The pupils of 5th and 6th classes went on a field trip to the Mulkear River. Prior to the trip, members of the Mulkear Life project team came to the school and did workshops with the children. This was a very enjoyable and worthwhile initiative for everyone involved. The children learned all about the flora and fauna of the Mulkear River habitat and also the importance of outdoor ethics, promoting responsible recreation through education.

During the final weeks of the school year members of the Killaloe Coast Guard unit visited the school and presented a workshop for the children all about water safety. The unit set up all their equipment for the children to see. The teachers were even challenged to a race to put on the diving gear. It was both a very important and enjoyable experience for everyone.

We are very proud of sixth class who did a very successful fundraising event for Haiti. They did tremendous work and took part in a variety of activities, baking and selling cakes and organizing sports competitions throughout the school. Over €1000 was raised and a huge thanks goes to everyone who contributed to this very worthy cause.

At the end of another school year we reflect on all our achievements and consider the challenges we face in the coming months most notably the establishment of our new school library and the construction of our new classroom. It's a very exciting time for everyone as Lisnagry School goes from strength to strength.

Staff of Lisnagry N.S.

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My Rose of Limerick Journey

Last year at the end of August before starting my first year of teaching, I spent four wonderful days in Tralee at the Rose Festival. I had the most amazing time and was totally blown away by the Festival. The highlight of my couple of days in Tralee was without a doubt the two nights in the Dome, it was such an amazing experience and seeing my friend Siobhán O'Reilly (The 2009 Luxemburg Rose) on stage was so special. My friends and I got to share the whole experience with Siobhán and her family which was really lovely and rather than just being a spectator, I felt part of the experience. Leaving Tralee, I had been totally bitten by the Rose bug.

When I heard that the Limerick Rose Centre was looking for girls to take part in the 2010 Limerick Rose selection, I jumped at the chance. I think being in Tralee in 2009 really pushed me to go for the Limerick Rose. Being a Rose is something I have always wanted to do. When I was in college, I had filled out an application form for the Limerick Rose but something in the back of my mind told me the time wasn't right and I never went ahead with it. This time I had no doubts in sending off my application form and was looking forward to what lay ahead.

The Limerick Rose selection was all I could have wished for and more. As part of the Rose selection we had to organise our own escort, fortunately my cousin, Brian Collins was happy to escort me. The process began with an induction night which informed us of what was going to happen. I felt excited and a little anxious. Our next big event was a press night in the Southcourt Hotel. I think we all felt like mini-celebrities that night getting our photos taken and walking into the room on the arm of our escorts. The

reigning Limerick Rose, Sharon Kennedy, spoke to us all on how her year had been and it was obvious that she absolutely loved every minute of it. It sounded amazing and being a Rose seemed like a wonderful opportunity.



During the Limerick selection we had a social night, an individual interview and a group interview as well as a rehearsal for our on-stage interview and party piece. I wanted to do a party piece but was unsure of what to do. I am a primary school teacher working in Gaelscoil Uí Ríordáin in Cork and Irish has always been a huge part of my life. I knew that I would love to do something fun that incorporated my love of Irish and that is why I decided to do the Haka in Irish. I think my brothers were a little apprehensive that I was going to look ridiculous on stage doing an Irish version of the Haka but I decided whatever way it went, it would be different.

I was really lucky that my school in Cork were so accommodating and let me hop into the car and head home to Limerick for different events that led up to the selection. Time really flew by and before I knew it, I had my dress and was getting ready for the big night. The selection night was a great evening and really entertaining. My family, friends and boyfriend all came out to support me and it was great to know that I had so many people behind me. Charmaine Kenny, the 2009 Rose of Tralee, was there on the night and my friend Siobhán, the Luxemburg Rose accompanied her. Charmaine is such a lady, a fantastic public speaker and overall a lovely person. It was so nice to meet her and to be in the presence of a Rose of Tralee. At twenty to one in the morning, I was the last girl to be interviewed on stage. As the time for my interview approached, I got a little nervous but was looking forward to getting on to the stage. Ed Meyers who acted as MC put each of us at ease straight away and I enjoyed every second of my time on stage. As for my party piece, it seemed to go down very well and I have to say thanks to all the Limerick escorts for taking part in the Haka with me. Totally on a high after my time on stage, I headed home looking forward to the next night.

This year Limerick was choosing its 50th Rose and I feel the committee put on a most amazing show. As well as the selection night, they also held a Golden Jubilee Rose Ball which was superb. Now that the on-stage interviews were over and done with, all of us finalists could sit down and really enjoy our night. The Ball was a great success and was attended by former Roses of Tralee, Dianne Hannagen and Muirne Hurley. Dianne and Muirne looked stunning and were so friendly, it would be a lucky girl who would become a member of the long list of lovely Limerick Roses! I admit that as we formed a semi-circle in front of the stage to hear who would be crowned the Limerick Rose, I became a little nervous. The girls in the Limerick Rose selection were such a great bunch and I had many great chats and laughs with them throughout the process.

I don't think I will ever forget the moment when my name was announced. It was one of the best feelings in the world! One of the first things I did was to turn my head to see my parent's faces and they were in as much shock as

I was. From that moment on, the night became a whirlwind. As I was being crowned the Limerick Golden Jubilee Rose, Cormac Hurley sang the Rose of Tralee as he had done for his own daughter Muirne, in the Dome in Tralee in 1994.

Over the next few days, I have never seen my phone so busy with texts and congratulations flying in. Our house phone was constantly ringing and I even got a mention at mass on Sunday morning! That Sunday was like being on cloud nine. However, it was quickly back to reality as I had to return to school on Monday morning. That Monday was a little different though, as now I was going back as the Limerick Rose. My class were so excited and the teachers were in and out throughout the day to hear all about my special weekend. Some of my class had even gone on the internet to see if I had won. It was great to be able to share the experience with my class and school.

Once reality had sunk in, preparations began for the Regional Finals in Portlaoise in June. Sadly, not all of the Irish Roses can go straight through to Tralee and must instead go through Regional Finals. I spent the June Bank Holiday weekend in Portlaoise and had the most brilliant time. The Regional Finals are run like a mini Rose of Tralee Festival with a Civic Reception, a vintage car parade, visiting local attractions and spending each night getting all dressed up in ball gowns. It really gave all of us a taste of what Tralee would be like. The girls I met were so lovely and each one of them was deserving of a place in Tralee.

I learnt that you can always rely on the people of Limerick to come out and support you and I feel that my support was second to none. I walked out on stage to 'Limerick You're My Lady' being belted out by all my family and friends. It was such a special night and a great experience. Unfortunately, of the six Irish girls that were chosen in Portlaoise, I wasn't among the finalists.

Throughout this whole Rose experience, the best advice I have been given is 'to be yourself' and reflecting back on my time in Portlaoise that is what I did. I don't have one single regret and have a fantastic year ahead of me as the Golden Jubilee Limerick Rose. I am so proud of the fact that I am just a normal, everyday girl from Ahane who has been given this amazing opportunity to represent my County and City. I suppose the biggest thing I have taken from my Rose journey is how lucky I am to have such a wonderful family, boyfriend, friends, parish and Rose Committee around me. To all of you, I can't thank you enough!!!! To be honest, I was disappointed not to get through to Tralee but my Mam always says had I got through to Tralee, 'the parish of Ahane would have emptied out' and knowing that, who could ask for more.

Brid Richardson

One Hundred Years Ago

It was 1960. I was working on A.I. calls near a little village called Screen in Co. Wexford. I was a stranger in a strange area. I stopped and asked for directions from an old man who was trimming briars with a billhook on a hedgerow of a bohereen. He was about seventy years and looked very old in my eyes then.

“Where are you from?” he answered my query with a question of his own

“Co. Limerick” I said

“But what part?” he queried

“Castleconnell”

“Oh my God 1910-----and Castleconnell of the hurling men”.

The briars could wait. He laid aside his billhook and started talking. I felt like the wedding quest in Samuel Coleridge’s ‘Rime of the Ancient Mariner’ and was enhanced by his beady eyes and skinny hands.

Limerick, he began to tell me were “fronted” by Castleconnell and they played Wexford who were “fronted by Castlebridge in the All Ireland Hurling Final of 1910”. In those days the team that were county champions the previous year formed the backbone of the county team, therefore the honour of fronting the county team fell to Castleconnell in Limerick and Castlebridge in Wexford. For a month leading up to the game, conversations around the villages of Screen and Castlebridge were dominated by the big game. Limerick were preceded by their reputation-they already had disposed of two great teams, one from Kerry and the other from Cork, in the Munster Championship. Captained by a man of extraordinary skill and strength, John Tyler Mackey, Limerick were red hot favourites to take the title. By coincidence, there was also a Mackey playing on the Wexford team that day, my hedge-trimming friend with his beady eyes and skinny hands had an uncle playing that year.

In 1909 the G.A.A. was twenty five years old. New rules were enacted at Congress that year to tidy up the game of hurling. The number of players was reduced to seventeen (the previous number was twenty-one) uniformed coloured shirts or jerseys were introduced and the size of the goalposts and the height of the crossbar was standardised. Of particular significance was the introduction of the square ball rule---a rule that has both hindered and helped many a player since.

Father Kavanagh, a newly ordained priest said a very early Mass on the morning of November 20th 1910 before the Wexford supporters travelled by train to Amiens Street Station. Wexford were seeking their first All Ireland, Limerick had already captured one title in 1897 when they were “fronted” by Kilfinnane. Having a final as late as November was not unusual in those days, it wasn’t until several years later when the first Sunday in September became the date of hurling’s big day. The station was agog with excitement with plenty of banter, ham sandwiches and mustard were very much in demand. Then to Jones’s Road for the big match. Ten thousand people paid three hundred pounds to see the game. The Limerick team was led onto the pitch by Tyler Mackey, a powerfully strong, fit man. Shouts and cheers “Up Garryowen” and “remember the broken treaty” resonated around the pitch.

Limerick won the toss and elected to play with the sun on their backs for the first half. They made incursion after incursion on the Wexford goal but were repelled time and time again. Neither team lacked skill, speed or stamina. Tyler Mackey the barrel chested Limerick captain was doing Trojan work, but it was Wexford that prevailed in the first half. I still remember the passion in the hedge trimmer's voice of fifty years ago recounting a game that was played a further fifty years before that. Wexford, he beamed scored six goals in the first half to Limerick's three goals and a point.

Limerick however, mounted a serious comeback in the second half and pulled back a few goals. In a cliffhanging final ten minutes, D. Conway of Castleconnell let a cracker of a goal fly onto the Wexford net only to see it disallowed because of a new square ball rule. More controversy at the other end when a Wexford goal stood despite claims that the referee's whistle had blown. That Wexford goal was the final score of the game and Wexford held on to victory by seven goals to six and two points.

The old man stood leaning with his back to the hedge and recited a couple of verses of an old lay capturing the moment.

*In stepped the Limerick captain before they started to play,
And unto his well trained hurling team those words to them did say,
Behold your proud Munster where the lordly Shannon flows,
Remember Patrick Sarsfield and the Broken Treaty Stone.*

*The boys from up the Treaty stone loudly they did cry,
'Tis a touch of Ballyneety for the Wexford hurling boys,
Garryowen and glory went ringing to the sky,
Remember Ross and Gorey was Wexford's battle cry.*

*The pig ring boys they gathered round and each and all did say,
There are thousands of spectators here all anxious for the fray,
With their banners proudly arching as round the park were going
Come the Limerick hurlers marching and the band playing Garryowen.*

The old man reached for his billhook and started adroitly to trim the briars. Like one that had been stunned, I went on my way, gobsmacked at his memory---as clear and sharp as his billhook.

The Castleconnell representatives on that 1910 Limerick hurling team were as follows: John Tyler Mackey (captain) Sean Carroll, Davy Conway, Mick Sweeney and Mick Dannagher. I have taken those names from Sean Murphy's book **COME ON AHANE THE SPUDS ARE BOILING**

I also wish to thank another Murphy Michael from Gouig. He gave me the idea to pen those few lines as a tribute to men from Castleconnell who played their hearts out, in Jones' Road just like Matt the Thrasher in Kickhams Knocknagow for the glory of the little parish one hundred years ago.

Paddy Tuohy

21 YEARS IN BUSINESS

Whisps Hair Salon in Castleconnell first opened its doors on the 2nd of January 1989 at 9.45am (I was late)!!! My first customer was waiting for me. The salon was then situated between the Worrall's Inn (owned by Sean and Ena Walshe) and McDermott's Butcher's Shop which was then run by the late Johnny, Anthony McDermott's father, who was also my landlord. The name WHISPS was thought up by my mum after much consideration.

The salon was very small. It was decorated in pink and grey and there were two cutting stations. Despite the fact that from the outside it looked as if the roof was going to fall in, I was very very proud of it. I borrowed the money to start my business from my parents Peter and Pam Skehan (interest free)!!!

I spent two very happy years there and business was booming. The country was coming out of the last recession, so a bigger salon was eventually needed, and as luck would have it the perfect premises became available. I bought it because at the time it was only £20 more per week to buy it than to rent it. It was the best move I ever made as after re mortgaging it twice I managed to pay off the mortgage.

WHISPS HAIR AND BEAUTY SALON was born, my sister Jackie joined the team for a while as a beautician but Castleconnell was not ready for such an innovation, so we eventually decided to concentrate solely on hairdressing.

I am very fortunate to have really great girls working with me. Sinead, Grainne, Colette and I make up the present team and over the years a few other really lovely girls have come and gone. These include Sinead O'Sullivan (who now has a salon in O'Brien's Bridge), and Tracey Kelliher from Scanlan Park, who left a few years ago to raise her growing family. Having two Tracys working together was often confusing so I was christened 'Old Tracy' so for that reason alone I think one Tracy is enough!!!

We have shared very happy and also some sad times here at WHISPS. Each of us has our own speciality in the hairdressing field and the girls are very popular with their clients.

When we opened the new salon we got a goldfish and we held a competition in the local national school to come up with a name. "JAWS" lived in WHISPS for over 8 years. At that stage I decided that he must be sick of living in the confines of a goldfish bowl, so I bought him a tank with bubbles and a light, but he wasn't impressed and well . . . that was the end of JAWS.



Colette, Gráinne, Tracy and Sinéad

We are in business now for 21 years since last January. To celebrate, we are holding a raffle every month for our customers. We are now offering a small range of hair accessories for wedding upstyles etc and while you are waiting, we have up to date magazines and a good selection of nail varnishes to while away the time. Tea, coffee, or a herbal tea are always available and on a good day, if we haven't eaten them all . . . a biscuit!!!!

At WHISPS we love Christmas and there is always a wonderful atmosphere in the salon. We consume a tin of Roses a day and several Bailey's coffees during the month of December. Xmas Eve is a great day. We start really early and work a half day. Our customers, who come every week for a blowdry, are treated to a free one as a thank you, and if we've sold lines for a raffle it is drawn on that day as well.

We always try to sponsor local charities and clubs, the biggest one being the boat club auction. We give a voucher to the value of 900euro for one blow dry a week for a year. The same lady has been bidding for it every year. Thank you Liz, I always worry that no one will want it!

WHISPS and all the staff would like to thank all our customers both past and present for making our working life so enjoyable. We love people to pop in when they are passing. We even have a couple of customers who sweep the floor and fold the towels and make tea for other customers, it's such a friendly place.

I would like to thank my own family and friends for supporting me all these years, and the local people for making a “blow in” feel welcome. I would also like to thank my husband Kevin, and children Caoimhe and Nicky for putting up with me working late nights and weekends. Thank you also to my neighbours and fellow business people in the village, especially Letty and Paddy and Mary Guerin who always listen and offer good advice. Finally, I want to thank my old boss Hugh Campbell and his wife Bernadette and all the staff of the Crescent where we all had a ball and where my career in hairdressing began.

**THANK YOU
TRACY**

Ps. some comments from satisfied customers:

‘Great staff’, ‘convenient’, ‘accommodating’, ‘best barbers in Limerick and a great cup of coffee!’

*When you’re feeling low
Give WHISPS a go
Wash away your blues,
Red, black, brown or blond,
False or true.
Sit back, relax, with tea and chat,
As the staff – blow dry---your cares away,
And make you happy for the rest of the day.*

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The Ash Cloud

*'Twas in the spring of 2010, we were all very sad
The country was banjaxed and things were looking bad
The economy was in freefall for the bankers were corrupt
And a volcano up in Iceland decided to erupt.*

*When first we heard the news, we thought it was a joke.
How could we be affected by a puff of Iceland's smoke?
Reality was dawning as the days were passing by
And we knew we were in trouble when the planes refused to fly.*

*Our weekend breaks were cancelled: our holidays were too,
We were banged up at airports and we didn't know what to do.
Some headed for the ferry, for panic had set in
While others rang the Liveline, some counsel for to win.*

*Disquiet and confusion were common all around,
The airlines were in tailspin for their fleet were on the ground.
They were getting very worried: they were running out of cash
And 'twas little consolation to blame a cloud of ash.*

*And just when we thought that the dust was going to clear,
The weatherman tells us it could last another year.
To make flying plans therefore, for now would seem unwise
For they can all be disrupted by the cloud up in the skies.*

*We thought we were invincible with our vulgar wealth and cash,
But we got a sharp reminder from a great big cloud of ash.
Our holidays we must forego: our dreams we must renounce,
To a volcano up in Iceland whose name I cant pronounce.*

Kay Murphy

THESE WE REMEMBER

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

Michael Roche, Oola, formerly Ballinacourty
Maura O’Gorman, Annaholty
Mike Carey, Cappamore, formerly Wood Park
Philip Nolan, Grange Upper, Lisnagry
Catherine Hyland, Bog Road
Esther Hammond, Foyle
Breda Brown (nee Ryan), formerly Wood Road
Margaret Kelly, Drominboy
Brendan Sheridan, Cois Sionna
Jerry Ryan, Gouig
Alice Hoen, Garden Hill
Patsy Harvey (nee Sheppard), Birdhill
Joe Cahill, Bridgetown
Breeda Frewen, Garden Hill
Mary Ryan, Newport
Brendan Flannery, Naas, formerly Clonlara
Jim Houston, formerly Lisnagry
Margaret Ryan, Ballyvarra
Henry Mulcahy, Kilcommon, formerly Lisnagry
David McCarthy, Dooradoyle
John Coughlan, Murroe
Patrick Haugh, Montpelier
Sadie Owen (nee Nash), Storkport, England, formerly Garden Hill
Fr. Liam Murray, Retired PP Whitegate, formerly CC Castleconnell
Sr. Eileen McCarthy, England
Andrea McMahan, Mountshannon Road
Fr. Rory McInerney, former C.C., Castleconnell
Richard Leszensky, Forge Road
Nora Adams (nee Conway), England, formerly Ballinacourty
Fr. Paddy Lynch, Former CC Castleconnell
Helen Mackey (nee Herbert), Castleconnell
Noel Murphy, Silvemines, formerly Coolready
Michael Ryan, England, formerly Montpelier
Fr. Diarmund McCormick, Kilkishen, formerly CC Castleconnell
Paddy O’Driscoll, Cork, formerly Garden Hill
Paddy Lee Castleconnell.
Gary McInerney, Ballina
Niall Doyle, Dooradoyle



WELCOME NEW BABIES



Oisin William Byrnes, Castleconnell
Niamh Christine Ann Slattery, O'BriensBridge
Glen Christopher Guerin, Murroe
Kate Elizabeth Hassett, Knockbrack
Kate Eileen Moore, Montpeiler
Cadhla Mai Hartigan, Rivers
Saora Elizabeth Purell, Herbertstown
Yasmin Duhig, Parteen
Chloe Ann Donnellan, Shower
Cian Patrick McCarthy, Mountshannon Road
Elsa Meabh Dundon, England
Aoibhinn Eileen Ni Haodha, Cork
Thomas John Madden, Castleconnell
Samuel David Collins Slemon, Murroe
Millie Aideen Nolan, O'BrienBridge
Noah Miguel Ryan, Garden Hill
Daniel Michael Quinn, Knocksentry
Una Noinin O'Donovan, Belmont Hill
Conor James Knight, Coolbawn Meadows
Harry David Kavanagh, Lisnagry
Cormac Thomas Ryan, Garden Hill
Eilish Catherine Hourigan, Lisnagry
Darragh Cormac Redfern, Bunkey
Sophie Alicia Crump, Ballinacourty
Jayden Matthew Ryan, Scanlan Park
Riain Peter Gill, Inis Cluain
Sophie Cora McCarthy, Castlerock
Annabelle Ellen Keane, Scanlan Park
Michael Ryan, Lisnagry

Sam Daniel Lynch, Clonlara
Darragh John Buckley, Monaleen
Donnchadh Eibhear Eugene Oslakovic, Stradbally North
Ryan John O'Connell, Scanlan Park
Katelyn Bowler Coolbawn, Meadows
Finn Patrick O'Gorman, Coolbawn Wood
James King, Castlerock Grove
Eadaoin Bridget Ryan, Annagh
Amy Donna Joyce, Castletory
Sarah Cusack, Knocksentry
Ellinna O'Connell, Coolnahilla
Sean Michael Howard, O'Brien's Bridge
Max Lee O'Connell, Lisnagry
Saora Karen Geraghty, Scanlan Park
Taylor Harrison, Gouig
Mitchell Michael Slattery, Fairyhall
Cara O'Sullivan, Lisnagry
Andrew Thomas Lynch, Newport
Ava Joanne Walsh, Dublin
John Patrick Farrell, Ballinacourty
Ewan Connolly Coulter, Castlecourt
Abigail Helen Lynch, Castleconnell
Roybn Mary Bradshaw, Castleconnell
Davie Desmond Cremin, Castletory
Molly Ann Lonergan, Derryhasna
Aoife Aaoha Markie, New Zealand
Tony Frank Malone, Derryhasna
Fia Nora Linnane, Biddyford
Megan Sarah Clifford, The Spa
Sam Daniel Hogan, Coolbawn Meadows
Cian Daniel Cronin, Coolbawn Wood
Riona Norah Riordan, Ahane
Aleisha Anne Enright, O'Briens Bridge
Eve O'Donovan, Castleconnell
Ena Aliel Hoen-Galvin, Garden Hill
Ryan Byrne, Annaholty
Eamon Anthony Patrick Whelan, Lisnagry
Eoghan Mark Caffrey, Castleview
John Joe Hartigan, Drominboy
Aine O'Callaghan, Garden Hill
Emma Cate Bourke, Coolbawn Wood

Aiobhin Maria Ryan, Inis Cluain
Thomas Gerard Conway, Castleconnell
Coralee Marianne Doherty, Cedar Wood Grove
Callum James Duhig, O'Briens Bridge
Caoimhe Helen Barry, Castlerock
Abigail Hope Easton, Castlerock
Emil Oisin Szczepanik, Castleconnell
Michael Patrick Hourigan, Montpelier

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WEDDING BELLS

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



Matthew Tenebaum, England and Tracy Louise Collins, England
John Patrick Burke, Kilmallock and Martine O'Brien, Castletroy
Eoghan Hearne, Castletroy and Irene Timmons, Tipperary
Diarmund Skehan, London and Suzanne Waller, London
Philip Maher, Monaleen and Siobhan O'Dea, Mountshannon Road
Aidan O'Rourke, Castlerock and Ruth Bourke, Castlerock
Daragh O'Dwyer, Grange Upper and Maeve Sheeran, Castleconnell
Patrick English, Killeely and Caoimhe O'Flynn, Killeely
Garrett Dundon, Dublin and Jessica Stone, Dublin
Declan Fitzgerald, St. Patrick's Villas and Ruth Heavey, Killeenagariff
James Nolan, O'Brien's Bridge and Patricia McGrath, O'Brien's Bridge
John Patrick Mulcahy, Bruff and Catherine Louise Mary Ryan, Lisnagry
Colin Ellis, England and Alma Gallagher, England
Michael Ryan, Raheen and Deirdre Corbett, Annacotty
Edward Madden, Castleconnell and Susan Murphy, Parteen
Patrick Lynch, Caherconlish and Margaret Tanya Power, Caherconlish
Kieran Buckley, Newport and Patricia Jones, Knocksentry
John McCarthy, Dublin and Aileen McGivern, Dublin
Michael Courigan, Annacotty and Orla Fahey, Annacotty
Gerard Healy, Murroe and Catherine O'Malley, Murroe
Denis Kelly, Dublin and Aine Laffan, Clyduff, Lisnagry
Bernard O'Shea, Laois and Lorna McNamara, Dublin
Shane O'Rourke, Ennis and Denise Keane, Ennis
Cliona Ni Eidhin, Newgarden and Brian Sharkey, Carrigtohill

Winter of '94

*If I could chose to live or die,
I think I'd choose the latter,
There's so much water everywhere,
Nothing seems to matter.*

*There's water pouring in one door,
And floating out another,
I'd use a mattress for a boat,
But I haven't got a rudder.*

*The ducks are on my window sill.
Frogs mating on my bed,
The hens have left the hatching barn,
Now they're nesting on my head.*

*The floods are rising everywhere,
Far as the eye can see,
Is there anyone out there,
Who will come and rescue me?*

*Dear God above, send Noah down,
To build another Ark,
To save me from a watery grave,
Where I'm floating in the dark.*

Mary Kerr

(First published in An Caisleán in 2005).

Flannery Brien's Ass

*Have you heard of Bill Dowdall or Wallace's ass,
Or Dinny the Bowery from Paddy Bills's cross,
Or that rogue of an ass that belongs to Pat Shyne,
Sure he couldn't hold a candle to Flannery Brien.
Now this ass couldn't be tackled without a long handled fork,
And at kicking the car he'd do six asses' work.
He was fed on the best of peeled skins at each male,
Sure he'd gobble them up and he'd wag his ould tail.*

*He was musical too I'll have you to know,
You could hear his sweet voice up in Ballymackeogh.
He'd run down the scales from high G to Z
And he'd bawl ten times more if a tinker was dead.
No fence in the parish his thieving could stop,
Not a fifty foot wall paved with glass at the top,
But he'd climb and over with the greatest of ease,
And devour all the cabbages, beans and the peas.*

*When full to the muzzle he'd then try a flower,
All the pansies and daisies he'd go and devour,
He'd a particular relish for geraniums,
But he always wound up with rhododendron dums,
He'd go down to the chapel and climb over the gate,
Not a shrub in the yard but he'd go and he'd ate.
And when Dan would come out for to hit him a poke,
He'd land his heels in his chest and he'd think 'twas a joke.*

*Now to get rid of this ass we must form a plan,
Let us all be united each boy to a man,
And the next time a tinker comes round by the way,
We will sell him and have him sent over the say,
If he dies on the passage and don't reach the Cape,
No need to tell you we're not going to wear crepe.
But if all goes well and he lands on the shore,
He can stop there forever with Paul Kruger the Boar!*

(Anonymous) Submitted by Bob Hogg

One Hundred Years in Mountshannon

In 1909 my great grandparents, John McDonagh and his wife Mary Anne (nee O'Shaughnessy) moved to a farm in Mountshannon, Lisnagry, Co. Limerick which they obtained through the National Land League after they were previously evicted from their own farm in Croagh, Co. Limerick.

They had eleven children in total, six daughters Margaret, Delia, Ann, Mary, Helen and Catherine and five sons, Edmund (Ned), Stephen, Michael (Mick), John (Jack) and Patrick (Pat). Unfortunately Helen and Catherine both died in early childhood.

Some of the children were born in Croagh and the remaining were born in Mountshannon, with the majority having gone to Richill National School (now known as Lisnagry N.S.).

The oldest son, Ned made his own stamp on the parish by being one of the founders of our local GAA Club, Ahane. Apparently Ned and the other founders at the time came upon old rugby jerseys for their team and the same colours and stripe are still worn today. Two of the McDonagh brothers Ned and Stephen were on the first Ahane team in 1929, while Mick my grandfather had his place on the 1933 team which won the Club County Senior Championship.

Stephen owned a food/hardware store in Gerald Griffin St in Limerick which is now Cross' Funeral Home and he also worked for the Department of Agriculture as a warble fly inspector.



*McDonagh
family and
friends
enjoying an
outing from
Mountshannon*

Of the remaining four daughters, Mary the fourth born was the only girl to marry. She married a man by the name of Michael Sheehy and she moved to Michael's family farm in Pallaskenry.

My grandfather Mick married a girl called Catherine Noonan, my grandmother, better known as Kate. The Noonans and the McDonaghs had been family friends for many years. Mick worked for CIE as a lorry driver and they had four sons, John, Michael, Patrick and Kevin. They lived in Ardnacrusha, Co Clare.

My father John spent most of his childhood with his uncles in Mountshannon and he attended Richill National School. Even though Michael, Patrick and Kevin were reared in Ardnacrusha they still have such fond memories of their childhood in Mountshannon.

For such a large family, Mick my grandfather was the only one of his siblings to have children of his own. Coincidentally Mick, our grandfather, who had unfortunately died before any of his grandchildren were born has five grand daughters and four grandsons, which means another generation on there are still only four males to carry on our family name.

The mid 80s brought the end of a generation when Mary, Delia, Stephen and Ann, the remaining children of John and Mary Anne passed away within a short time of each other.

To date, my father John, the eldest son of Mick still lives on the family land with my mother Margaret. My sister Sandra and myself are both married and are rearing our children on the land where their great, great grandparents once farmed. Our children are the fifth generation of McDonaghs to live in Mountshannon.

Michael, the second eldest son and his wife Laura reside in the original family home where they have reared their four children and where a hundred years ago my great grandparents settled and reared their family. They surely didn't realise when they arrived in Mountshannon in 1909 that future generations of McDonagh would still be here residing in this beautiful part of our county one hundred years later and be so proud of our family name.



*Four McDonagh brothers
L/R: Patrick, Kevin, Michael
and John.*

Norma McDonagh

Pat Carey

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Castleconnell Historical Society

Notes

The Castleconnell Historical Society had a very successful year, holding talks from Oct '09 through May 2010.

The season was kicked off in Oct '09 with a talk by Gerry Kingston, a Castleconnell native, but now residing in Dublin. Gerry gave an interesting talk based on the Census of 1901.

In Nov, the lecture was given by Fr. Liam Ryan, Prof. Emeritus of NUI Maynooth. Fr. Ryan's topic was 'Rural Ireland – Social Change'.

The topic of the December talk was 'Tom Clarke – The Life of an Irish Felon', this was delivered by Laura Walsh, a native of Galway, who is completing an M.A degree at U.L. Laura has a unique connection with the 1916 period of Irish history, in that her grandmother actually fought during the Rebellion, as opposed to merely taking a supporting role.

The first talk of the New Year 2010, was given by Tom Donovan, from Clarina, Tom's topic was 'Murder at Mountshannon Estate', this talk drew the largest audience of the year, as it was on such an interesting and local topic.

Tony Browne, the well-known local historian, gave the Feb talk. This took place on Valentine's Night and in honour of the night, the talk was based on 'The Showband Era' and also took in the local 'Ballrooms of Romance' e.g. Dromkeen, and the Jetland, and the various bands who played there.

The March lecture was given by John Reynolds, John is a Garda Sgt who is in charge of the Garda Museum at Templemore, and his topic was 'Pilgrimville - The Templemore Miracles'. To most attendees, this was an unknown event in Ireland's past & John gave a wonderful, illustrated talk, which went down very well with those present.

The Hon Secretary of the Castleconnell Historical Society, Elaine O' Malley, gave the April lecture, the topic being 'The History of St. Joseph's Hospital Limerick in the 19th century.' In spite of technical difficulties which arose when the projector etc. wouldn't work, Elaine rose to the occasion & gave a tremendous talk which was much appreciated by her audience.

Our final talk was in May and this was delivered by Tom Twomey, the well-known historian. Tom's talk was titled 'The Murders of the Mayors of Limerick in March 1921'. As usual, Tom gave a terrific talk which provided for many questions from members & friends.

Fieldtrip:

Our Outing in June concluded the activities of the society for the 09/10 year. We travelled by coach to Clonfert, taking in Clonfert Cathedral, where we had a talk from Christy Cunniffe, who is renowned as the expert on the location. We then travelled on to Loughrea, where we had a marvellous picnic on the bank of the lake, followed by a tour of Loughrea Cathedral. Our final stop was at the ancient ruins of Kilmacduagh where Henry Nash provided a guided tour.

Arriving back at Castleconnell, we headed to Herberts Pub, where Bláithin laid on a tremendous spread for us; a fitting end to a great day.

In October and following on a phone call from Mr Patrick Rainsford of Laught, a group got together to discuss the repositioning of the Memorial Fountain erected near the former Quiltys Pub, now Finnegans, by Lady Clare of Mountshannon, in memory of her son.

It is entirely due to Mr Rainsford's commitment and tenacity in following up on the whereabouts & condition of this monument, that the parishioners & passers-by will again get to enjoy the fountain.

The group, comprising Patrick Rainsford, Tom Clifford, Gerard Murphy, Irene Cullen, Pat Tuohy & Mary Gleeson, met with the Limerick Co. Archaeologist, Paul O'Keeffe, to suggest an appropriate location for the Monument. Sheamus Hassett & Turlough Herbert also had an input in the selection of the location. A position between Tom Clifford's house and the Hassetts' old house was selected as being a location where most people could see and appreciate the beautiful stonework of the Monument. Mr Kelly made contact with the area engineer & the selected location has also been approved by him.

We look forward to having the Memorial Fountain re-erected in the near future in a location where it can be appreciated by future generations.

The Historical Society meets each month in the back room of Hickeys Shannon Inn, where Paddy makes us very welcome. At each meeting, we have speakers on a variety of topics and if you would like to join us, you would be more than welcome. The next two lectures will be held on 16th Nov and 14th Dec. Beidh Fáilte Romhat.

Mary Gleeson
Castleconnell Historical Society PRO

Sarah & Nicole Lavin

Another great year in Athletics for the Lavin sisters Sarah and Nicole.

Sarah started the season winning the National Indoors 60m & Hurdles, then went on to represent Ireland in the European Youth Olympics Trials where she ended up 9th overall in the 100m. She went on to win the National Outdoor Championships in the 100m, 200m & Hurdles. She then won the National Junior 100m and on the same weekend won the 100m and hurdles at the Tailteann Games.

At the School International held in Glasgow Sarah won silver in the 100m & hurdles and at the Celtic Games she finished her season in winning the 200m and hurdles. She was also given the Munster and National Star awards.

Her Sister Nicole also had a great year winning two Munster gold in the 80m hurdles and 250m hurdlers and then went on to winning the All Ireland in the 250m hurdles.



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Castle Golf Society

20 Years A Swinging (1990 to 2010)

Twenty years after our foundation in the autumn of 1990, it's opportune to reflect and to look forward. From an original membership of 30, the society grew to a high of 75 in recent years, providing an excellent platform for local people to meet, play and socialise. Indeed, we have travelled far and wide throughout Ireland, England and Portugal over the years in search of a good test of golf and opportunities to make new friends. It is a source of great pride to the founding members that the society not only has become a nursery for many aspiring golfers keen to try the game, but more fundamentally has become a powerful vehicle for many newcomers who have moved to the village in getting to know their neighbours, developing lasting friendships and enhancing the fabric of our community.

This year Ger Keehan is our 20th Captain and is maintaining the excellent tradition of previous captains (beginning with Brendan Murphy in 1990) in guiding the society to new challenges. In 2001, the committee proposed the election of a president ensuring yet another eagerly awaited outing in our calendar and Liam Freaney has proved to be a first class president in the 10th year of this position.

Other notable milestones came and went over time and have included the drafting of our Constitution in 2000, bi-annual trips to St. Anne's Golf Society in Keighley, Yorkshire, the introduction of society tee-shirts in 2001, Captain's Prize weekends away, the development of a website and our first ever trip to the sun to Portugal in March 2007. In more recent times challenge matches have been a feature nearer to home and have resulted in the society testing itself against both the Mulcair and Annacotty societies with a social dimension in Sullivan's Bar, Newport and Black Swan Annacotty, or the Shannon Inn, Castleconnell. Golfing standards have risen significantly within the society since its inception, indeed many members have joined golf clubs, and several have featured on winning teams and on the podium in individual club competitions. The much sought after target of a hole-in-one at a society event has proved elusive over the years and while there were near misses, it finally arrived courtesy of Mike Reddington during Willie Reddy's President's Prize in Mitchestown last year. Strict monitoring of handicaps (a great talking point) ensures that prizes move around the members and a visit to the website will confirm same.

The website www.castleconnellgolf.com features a range of information and advice for members and visitors, including fixtures, membership list,

results, handicaps, committee members, a buy and sell section, our constitution and good golf guidelines.

Indeed some of the most notable comments that our golfing fraternity can identify with include:

- *“It’s easier to get up at 6am to play golf than at 10am to mow the lawn”*
- *“Golf is the perfect thing to do on Sunday because you always end up having to pray a lot”*
- *“You can hit a two acre fairway 10% of the time and a two inch branch 90% of the time”.*

Twenty years on and the plan is to continue to “shift a few divots” both nationally and internationally. Congratulations and commiserations will continue to be freely doled out in local Castleconnell hostelries where we hold our committee meetings and presentations. Membership applications can be downloaded from our website as we are always on the lookout for new talent to add to the society’s growing reputation.

While Mark twain might have considered a game of golf as “a good walk spoiled”, it is safe to say that the Castle Golf Society Members will look forward to many more years “a swinging” and think of it more as per Bob Ryan “a passion, an obsession, a romance, a nice acquaintanceship with trees, sand and water”.

Past Captains

1990/91	Brendan Murphy
1992	Pat Skehan
1993	P.J. O’Gorman
1994	John Hardiman
1995	Seamus Keane
1996	Derek Flanagan
1997	Terry Comley
1998	Patsy Ryan
1999	Ger Keane
2000	Willie Reddy
2001	Liam Freaney
2002	Ger Carroll
2003	Tim McCarthy
2004	Larry Culhane
2005	John Hayes
2006	John Quigley
2007	Chris Halliday
2008	Paul Brennan
2009	David White
2010	Ger Keehan

Past Presidents

2001	Brendan Murphy
2002	Pat Skehan
2003	P.J. O’Gorman
2004	John Hardiman
2005	Seamus Keane
2006	Terry Comley
2007	Patsy Ryan
2008	Ger Keane
2009	Willie Reddy
2010	Liam Freaney

Brendan Murphy

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Musical Notes From The Irish Harp Music School

The past year has been an interesting and challenging one but thanks to a wonderful community and a dedicated team of teachers the school goes onwards and upwards.

For the first time we missed the local St. Patrick's Day Parade as we were flying the flag for Castleconnell by leading the London one which included a performance in the House of Lords and a private meeting with the then Prime Minister, Gordon Brown. Later that day, we joined fellow Castleconnell citizen Pat Shortt in further celebrations at the Irish Embassy! In the week before St. Patrick's Day, we provided a number of workshops and concerts to schools and the Irish community in London and have been invited to open a branch of our school there.

Meanwhile May saw the school representing Ireland in the European Union Music Schools Festival in Austria, enabling participants to meet and work with teachers and students from all twenty seven EU countries. Back home, exam results have again been outstanding particularly in Junior and Leaving Certificate.

Time does not stand still and this year another new instrument begins- Cello and in addition we welcome Elizabeth, a harp teacher from France who will spend a year on secondment...Meanwhile, the Traditional Music band under Denis Liddy goes from strength to strength giving students the opportunity to play together for enjoyment. Two other groups have got under way-Choir with renowned singer/director Aisling O'Gorman and a Woodwind Group with Patrick Olssen. This time next year we hope to have established our own orchestra.

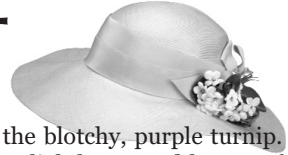
Best Wishes to "An Caisleán" from

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THAT HAT



She picked up her hat and placed it carefully on top of the blotchy, purple turnip. She tilted the brim at a rakish angle and looked into the slightly crossed lumps of coal that stared belligerently back at her.

“It suits you” she muttered with a wry smile. “It probably suits you better than it suited me”. The turnip smiled back at her, a lopsided grin with perhaps just a hint of a sneer from its cupid’s bow carrot sliver lips which framed two and a half golden yellow teeth roughly gouged out with a rusty handleless kitchen knife.

With its arms outstretched crucifixion style it looked as if it might have considered embracing her, but then, had second thoughts.

The hat looked out of keeping with the old grey woollen coat roughly tied with baler twine and the bloated orange rubber gloves that gave a defiant if confusing message. The left glove gave a distinct “thumbs up” while the right one a slightly hesitant “two fingers”.

She remembered the last time the hat had had an airing. Come to think of it, it was the only time it had airing! It was captured for immortality in all its glory in black and white on that beautiful sunny day, the 25th of July 1970.

She was 24 and he was 24 and a half. He wore a new suit bought in Kingstons of Patricks Street, Limerick. It fitted perfectly, 32 inch waist and 32 inch leg length. His tie picked up the tiny green fleck in the cloth and more importantly the vivid green in his smiling eyes.

She wore a butter cream brocade suit, size 12 with the buttons taken in!

It was a wonderful day, even if the hat had come along for the ride!

It had drooped its way throughout the ceremony, flopped down the aisle and flattened her hair so badly that it had had to stay in situ!

The yellow ochre velvet ribbon had toned beautifully with her golden roses yet the hat failed to endear itself to its owner. NOW, she would tell the woman in the shop her exact feelings, NOW she wouldn’t be bullied into such a Worzel Gummage creation, no matter how fashionable, NOW she would have told “them” in no uncertain terms that she would have preferred to have worn a chipped enamel chamber pot on her head than this droopy melted bucket.

From now on the hat would come into its own, it would frighten off the marauding magpies, intimidate the blackbirds and repel rampaging rabbits from her newly sown vegetable patch, it would earn its keep.

“You Owe Me one” she muttered.

Later that day, as the clouds drew in she was seen scurrying across the lawn with a very large golfing umbrella, with the Anglo Irish Bank logo proudly prominent on its light blue background.

She tied it into position and ran back into the house, she had killed two birds with one stone. She had scored a “Hat trick”.

Barbara Hartigan

O'Brien's Bridge Community Group

Old Anchor Find

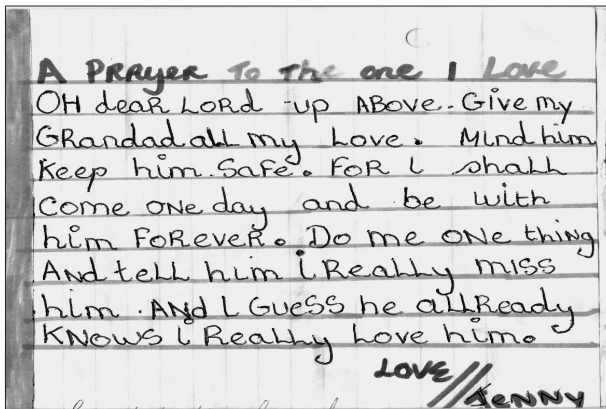
In 2008 a very old anchor was found on the bed of the river at O'Brien's Bridge. The position of this very old anchor, which was located above the bridge and just out from The Capstan, would suggest that there was a very strong connection between both Artefacts.

This anchor was over six feet in length and five feet in width with a wooden stock and it is important to note that these wooden stocks were phased out at the end of the eighteenth century. It's almost now certain that this anchor was, along with the capstan used as a device to haul the barges up through the navigation arch in O'Brien's Bridge during the The Killaloe To Limerick Navigation. If this is the case, then it's a very significant find indeed. Further research will also need to be done on the importance of some bollards on the bed of the river, which have iron rings attached. A large chain has also been found at the same location.

We have carried out extensive research with the appropriate authorities such as The National Museum and The Heritage Council and they have decided that they have no problem with us displaying the anchor in a public place within the village area, on condition that a shelter be built to house the anchor. This shelter would be intended to protect the anchor from the elements especially rain. The Anchor will also require a special protection wax for preservation reasons.

We will need to provide an information board on the important heritage value of the anchor and the capstan. These along with all the other artefacts that have now been recovered in the area make O'Brien's Bridge and Montpelier a place rich in waterways heritage.

Michael Murtagh, Chairman



*A little girl's prayer
for her Grandad
who has died.*

O'Brien's Bridge Community Group

Playground Opening Event

The opening of the Playground in O'Brien's Bridge turned out to be a real festive occasion. The sun shone and it was a glorious day in the riverside village. The villagers from both sides of the river joined together to celebrate their own brand new Child Development Facility.

Mr. Andy Conlon served hot punch on site from the nearby Village Bistro and this provided a very welcome and personal touch to the occasion at this very festive time of year. Andy later supplied ice cream to all the children present. Santa, of course was also there handing out sweets and giving the event a real Christmas flavour.

Their local Public Representatives also turned out in strength to celebrate with their constituents on the day. Deputy Timmy Dooley was present along with local Councillors Tony O'Brien, Paschal Fitzgerald, Cathal Crowe, Pat Hayes and Clare's First Lady The Mayor of Clare, Madeleine Taylor-Quinn who performed the opening ceremony. Councillor Mary Jackman, Limerick County Council also crossed the river to join in the celebrations.

The Mayor congratulated the local Community Group for the excellent facility which they had provided for the children of the locality, and Clare County Council for their excellent funding programme for playground development in County Clare. She also praised Catherine O'Hara, who was also present for her management as Community & Enterprise Administration Officer of this funding programme.

The Mayor made special mention to the children from across the river in Montpelier and gave them a very warm welcome to County Clare and congratulated the parents from both villages for their great community spirit which had always served both villages so well and which always bonded them together as one great community.

She also thanked the E.S.B. for their very generous sponsorship and Cavanagh Playgrounds for the first class facility which they had installed.

Mick Murtagh
Chairman

The Waterways Heritage Of O'Briensbridge and Montpelier

O'Briensbridge had been on the main water-road from Limerick to Dublin from 1799 until the last trading boat passed through in June 1929. Limerick's stout came through O'Briensbridge; boats carrying turf from Macnab's bog in Montpelier crossed the river to the upstream end of the Plassey-Errina canal, on their way to supply the Limerick Distillery; Daniel O'Connell is said to have travelled to Westminster this way- and the route was plied by the intriguing NONSUCH, Charles Wye Williams's 80 foot horse-drawn passenger boat, with lifting bow and stern sections to enable it to fit into shorter locks.

Until 1799 the rapids in the lower reaches of the Shannon- notably at Killaloe, Doonass and Corbally- had meant that (as Thomas Dineley wrote in 1680) 'the merchants (of Limerick) are forced for the space of near half a score miles to convey their goods by Land-carriage as far as Killaloo, city and Bishoprick; where they may be reimbarcked in boats of burthen'. However, the Limerick Navigation Company's waterway from Limerick to Killaloe bypassed most of the obstacles.

The waterway was in five sections. The first, now known as Park Canal, was an artificial cut with two locks from the Abbey River to the Shannon; it bypassed the rapids at Corbally. The second was a one-mile stretch of the Shannon upstream to Plassey. The third was the Plassey-Errina Canal with six locks; it rejoined the Shannon at Errina downstream of O'Briensbridge. The fourth was the stretch of river from there to Killaloe and the fifth was the canal at Killaloe, with three locks, bypassing the rapids and ending at the Pierhead.

O'Briensbridge sits on the fourth stretch, which is nowadays cut off from Killaloe by the ESB's Parteen Villa weir. It was never an easy stretch for boats, partly because of rapids at Parteen (ineffectually bypassed by a shallow running canal) but mostly because of the fall in the river at O'Briensbridge itself, the shoal on which the bridge was built and at first, the absence of a towpath under the bridge.

In 1807 the Grand Canal Company's agent in Limerick thought that the passage through O'Briensbridge was particularly dangerous because of the strength of the current and the height of the water in winter. He said that John Brownrigg had in 1804;

fixed a cable by means of a large Rock sunk in the Shannon above the Bridge with a large Buoy chained thereto, that the Cable was led through the Arch, and had a small Buoy at the termination, all of which was found to answer the purpose of warping the Vessels up the stream against violent Currents in

the Arch of the Bridge.

At this time the navigation arch was the fourth out from the Clare side, which meant that there was no towpath along which horses could pull the boats. Boats going upstream were expected to haul themselves up and boats going downstream to let themselves down, but few had large enough crews; they also lacked windlasses and hawsers. Many boatmen were reluctant to use the navigation, especially after two boats sank there. And even when, in 1826, John Grantham was offered one year's toll-free passage for his new-fangled steamer, the problems at O'Briensbridge (on which he had written a report in 1822) caused him to suspend the service in January 1827.

Thomas Rhodes reported in 1832 that vessels were delayed at O'Briensbridge because they had to be:

warped up through the arches by a capstern (capstan), which is placed upon a pier projecting into the river 50 feet; and by means of a block affixed to a floating buoy in the river, leading in line with the large or fourth arch: A rope is dropped through this arch and fastened to the vessel, and being already attached to the capstem, she is by eight or ten men (according to the resistance of the water) hauled through the arch{...}.

He proposed extensive alterations to the bridge, and it seems that Charles Wye Williams caused the two inner arches to be made into one, with a towpath: however, the capstan was retained. In 1843 the quay and weir at World's End, Castleconnell, were built and in 1844 an extensive quay and lay-by were built at O'Briensbridge.

All of these works were designed to help the operations of Charles Wye Williams's Inland steam Navigation Company (later merged into his City of Dublin Steam Packet Company, which was already running scheduled steamers between Dublin and Liverpool). At a time when some people were taking money out of Ireland, Williams (a Dublin man) was investing large amounts in the country, and he was strongly backed in Westminster by Daniel O'Connell and his supporters.

Williams set up the most impressive transport routes of the early nineteenth century, which was probably the longest in these Islands. His Shannon Estuary steamers carried passengers and more importantly, agricultural produce (some in towed barges) from Kilrush, Tarbert and other ports to Limerick. From the port, his barges were worked up the river to the canal harbour: Williams rebuilt Baal's Bridge, replacing four arches with one, to make this possible, and his name is still on the bridge to this day.

The barges (called lumber boats) were probably horse-drawn from Limerick through O'Briensbridge to Killaloe. From there the steamer Lady Landsdowne towed the barges up Lough Derg, collecting more at Williamstown and carrying on to Portumna. In the early years, a bar blocked progress by Lady Landsdowne and passengers transferred (in the middle of

the lake) to a smaller steamer, which also took over the tow up to Shannon Harbour. From there they were towed, probably by horse, to Dublin, where the contents (including livestock) were loaded on Williams's steamers, carried to Liverpool and when the railway was opened, on to Manchester. Other produce and livestock (including cattle from Ballinasloe) were picked up along the way.

The remarkable operation can be seen as an early instance of the globalisation of the Irish economy. Irish agricultural produce was exported and British manufactured goods were imported. The coming of the steamers was what made a large-scale Irish livestock trade possible. Williams was a major innovator in steam navigation: when his iron steamer Garryowen survived a grounding during a storm off Kiltrush, ship owners around the world were convinced of the strength of iron ships. Williams's own experience and reputation were such that he was welcomed as a founding director of P&O Line.

Limerick and Clare and to a lesser extent Kerry are fortunate in having a very rich assemblage of waterways artefacts, many of them easily accessible. They include piers on both sides of the Shannon Estuary, Nimmo's Bridge and Baal's Bridge in Limerick and the canal harbour. There are public walks along both sides of the Park Canal and both downstream and upstream of its confluence with the Shannon. But how many people taking the walk up to Plassey-and noting the cattle access bridges, the milestones, the abandoned barge and the navigation marker-realise that they are walking on the towing-path of old Limerick Navigation?

At Plassey itself, the old mill had its own lock off the river. A milestone shows where the old ferry crossed; it was replaced by the Black Bridge to allow towing horses to cross the river; that bridge still bears on its parapet on the Clare side, the marks of the tow ropes. It was damaged by the floods of 2009, but its repair and re-opening should be tackled as a matter of urgency, to allow walkers to continue up the towing path to Gillogue.

The public walks are interrupted at that point, and Waterways Ireland might be asked to open the towing path from Gillogue to Clonlara. From Clonlara the O'Briensbridge community has made walks along the towing path up past Errina Lock, which was formerly the only triple-chambered lock in Ireland (it was later changed to a double), and its bridge with tow-rope marks on it.

The walk continues along the canal to the Shannon and then upriver: Mona Lodge, on Macnab's Bog, can be seen on the far side of the river, with a quay at the end of its own small canal system a little distance upstream. There are several cattle crossing bridges, interesting because they have low walls on one side (perhaps for the tow-rope) and high walls on the other (perhaps to stop the towing horses falling off the bridges). O'Briensbridge itself has its

quay, its bridge and the capstan above the bridge, with the walk extending upstream to Parteen Villa Weir (itself of historic interest at this stage, although it did cut off O'Briensbridge and Castleconnell from the rest of the Shannon).

From there to Killaloe , the old navigation is under water, but Killaloe itself has many artefacts of historic importance, from the dry dock at the Pierhead down the canal to the lock, then down past the eel shed, the gods store and Charles Wye Williams's former marble mill; another local industry he set up. On the far side of the canal is the old dock yard with a sideways slip and other artefacts.

Some of the systems used along the old navigation (the cattle access bridges, the capstan) seem to be unique in These Islands: others have counterparts elsewhere but are nonetheless interesting: the milestones, the quays, the locks. But the link between the components of the Limerick Navigation is not widely known, while the further links to other parts of the Williams route seem to have been forgotten altogether.

Yet this route links four counties of the Shannon Development region and provides the backbone for an industrial heritage zone that, with very little investment, could become a major tourism attraction. Even a few signposts and notice-boards, calling attention to the links, would be a start.

Brian J. Goggin, September 2010

Bridge

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Taken from the Files of the Limerick Leader 1910

January

The ceremony of turning the first sod for the foundation of the new Central Technical Institute took place yesterday at 12 noon on the site of the proposed building, at the corner of O'Connell Ave and Roden Hill. Members and Officials of the Corporation and of the Technical Committee attended.

The Annacotty Co-Op Society tendered to Mr. Ed Hynes, a respected member of the Bord, sympathy on the death of his brother.

The weather has been an incessant mixture of frost, snow, rain, sleet, hail and storm. The result has been much sickness and despair.

February

Annacotty Co-Op Creamery Society weekly Committee Meeting held last Friday, Rev. D. O'Driscoll (Chairman). Attendance included D. McMahon, J. Nunan, Ml Coffey, T. Lane, J. Butler, Mr. Fant from the Dept. of Agriculture also attended.

Snow storms in Limerick, Clare and Kerry.

The Clonlara-Castleconnell Bridge

A Proposal and funding were in place since 1909 for the construction of the above bridge, however, a dispute arose over the proposed location of the bridge and many articles and letters appear in the Leader regarding same. Here is a short excerpt from one article:

To the man who stands outside and looks on at the warfare which is going on between Castleconnell and itself, Clonlara and itself, and Castleconnell and Clonlara, there is something more than comedy in the strife of the contending parties. There is also deep and serious tragedy. The suggested Conference if attended by all parties would solve the problem, as no one wishes to allow the Shannon to send souls to their account, unhoused unanointed and unannelled, as it has done, with no less than thirteen souls in the past fifty years. There was no further mention of the Castleconnell-Clonlara Bridge during the rest of the year 1910.

March

To Stop Hair Falling Out

There are doubtful few of our readers who do not suffer more or less from falling hair-the forerunner of baldness. While there are several causes for this annoying condition, it is mainly due to the dandruff germ, which by penetrating the hair root destroys its vitality and relaxes the muscular tissues which protect the hair sac. If permitted to remain undisturbed the germ soon destroys the hair root and permanent baldness ensues. To destroy this dandruff germ we know nothing so effective as to mix 3 ozs Bay Rum, 10oz of Lavona, and half a drain of Menthol Crystals rub into the scalp morning and night. Caution: Owing to the peculiar hair growing properties of this preparation readers are advised not to apply where hair is not desired.

April

Looking for a Wife

Sir,

I would take it as great favour if you could recommend a wife to me, as I am declining in years and have no-one to comfort or take care of me. I am 55 years of age and can afford to keep one, provided she will not be extravagant. If you could get me one about 40 years of age she would suit best. I have never in my life been married and am now ready to contract to same.

I am yours very truly,

Annacotty Co-Operative Creamery

The new creamery at Annacotty is nearing completion, and the shareholders have decided to supply the milk to them on Friday next.

May

On Friday night a cat climbed up a large tree in front of St. Munchin's Church, and remained there at a giddy height all day, Saturday and Sunday. Not knowing how to get down all efforts to induce it to descend failed. The tree branch was cut on Monday evening and cat and branch came crashing to the ground to the excitement of a large crowd. They had assembled to watch the rescue. The cat, having gained the ground and being more sensible than the crowd went quickly home where it received a warm welcome.

Snow has fallen at intervals since morning in West Limerick. The frequent showers of sleet and hail have rendered the atmosphere intensely cold.

June

Fashionable Marriage

Castleconnell, the pretty little village by the Shannon presented an animated appearance yesterday on the occasion of the marriage of Mr. Robert Marshall (grandson of the late Mr. Tom Nevins) to Miss Binty Storey of Frankford Kings County. The beautiful parish church was prettily decorated with evergreen and flowers and aroused the admiration of all who were present. Mr. Marshall is very popular since taking up residence at Mountshannon House. The marriage ceremony was preformed by Fr. McInerney, Parish Priest.

Earthquake Shock Recorded at Mungret

A heavy earthquake shock was recorded on our instruments on Thursday morning. It is thought that the disturbance extended fairly close to us, probably within some hundreds of miles. Rev. W. O'Leary, Director of Mungret College.

July

Limerick v Kilkenny

On Sunday last the Limerick team travelled to do battle against the famous Kilkenny selection. Kilkenny (All Ireland Champions) left home obviously expecting that an encounter with such small fry as Limerick was going to be a picnic. Just as the match was about to start the rain poured down and the teams had to take shelter. Eventually, a slight clearance tempted the Kilkenny boys to invite Limerick to a "practice match". The match started with Kilkenny full of confidence and ended with Limerick 5 goals and 3 points, Kilkenny 1 goal and 1 point. That's the worst of starting for a picnic when the other fellow is thinking of one also.

Castleconnell players were: J. Ryan, J. Mackey (Captain). J. Carroll. D. Conway, J. Leonard, P. Vaughan, M. Danagher, M. Sweeney, B. O'Connor.

Plea for good weather

His Grace the Archbishop of Dublin has sent a letter to the clergy asking them, in view of the unreasonable condition of the weather to insert in the mass a prayer for fine weather.

August

Strange Monster in the Shannon

Great excitement was caused in the city yesterday by the appearance of a huge porpoise in the Shannon. The animal, which was pursued for hours along the river with guns and gondolas, made its escape at about 6 o'clock and was not seen since.

Theatre Royal Solo

The Theatre Royal Henry Street was yesterday put up for public auction. The building was erected in 1841 and was first used for circus purposes. Over the years it has undergone many improvements and alterations. The property was sold to Mr. P.E.O'Donnell, Solicitor in trust for the sum of £1020 and fees.

September

Thunderstorm

A heavy thunderstorm passed over Limerick city yesterday at 2 o'clock and continued for over an hour, loud peals of thunder, accompanied by vivid flashes of lightening and a heavy downpour of rain were prevalent. No damage to life or property occurred. At Ard Na Crusha, one flash of lightening struck a field and cut the land as if a plough was drawn along it. The lightening then travelled along a ditch on which there was a paling and severed one post completely. A number of sheep were grazing on the land at the time, but none were injured.

Tempted by Cakes

At Friday's city Petty Sessions, a young fellow from Lady Lane was charged with the larceny of a small box of cakes from Woodhouse & Co., the youth when arrested was in possession of the box and admitted to taking it. The defendant said he was passing down the street and being tempted, took the box of cakes. The case was adjourned for three months.

October

A Horror of Funerals

Charles Dickens the great English novelist had according to his son, who lectured in Dublin on Monday night, on the life and works of the distinguished writer, a horror of attending funerals. He never attended one if he could help it. In his last will he requested to be buried early in the morning privately. One hearse, one mourning coach and nothing else. There were only five people present at his funeral- his executor, his two daughters and his two sons.

Castleconnell Hurler Injured

Owing to an injury recently received during a hurling contest "Tyler Mackey" will not be on the Limerick representation next Sunday. He is one of the most popular, able and scientific hurlers in the county. His absence is to be regretted.

November

Obituary

The death of Mr. Michael Herbert, brother of Mr. Joseph Herbert the popular and highly esteemed Gael has evoked feelings of deep regret in the neighbourhood. The funeral took place this evening to the family burial ground in Castleconnell. The chief mourners were Messrs. Joseph, Thomas, Patrick and William Herbert (Brothers). Rev. Fr. McInerney P.P. Castleconnell officiated.

Lusitania

The Lusitania which sailed from Queenstown to New York on Sunday night, carried 5,200 sacks of mail constituting a new record.

Great Rejoicing at Ahane

Congratulations to Castleconnell's second team on winning the Junior Championship against Kilmallock last Sunday. There was general rejoicing in Ahane (where the major portion of the team hails from). On Sunday night when the victors returned home from the final county contest the Ahane Fife and Drum band under the able conductorship of Mr. E. Lawlor paraded the districts where the leading hurlers reside. The nights rejoicing included playing a selection of National Airs at the Cross of Laught.

The players included the brothers Vaughan (3) Collins (2) Richardson (2) Callinan, Ryan and Fenton.

December

Obituary

The funeral of the late Mrs. Enright of Shannon View, Castleconnell, took place on Monday afforded by the large gathering a striking testimony to the respect and esteem enjoyed by the deceased and her family. As proprietress of the Shannon Hotel, Mrs. Enright was well known and esteemed by visitors from around the world who had come to Castleconnell, either for fishing or touring trips. Her kindly interest in the welfare of her neighbours endeared her to all locally.

Christmas in Limerick Striking Evidence of Temperance

A striking evidence that the temperance movement has got a firm grip in Limerick, is furnished by the fact that since last Friday there have been only two cases of drunkenness before the City police court. In one the accused was a tramp, so that in reality there was only one case from Limerick all through the holidays. The defendant was fined ten shillings and six pence or fourteen days in prison.

J.O.S.

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MURDER AT MOUNTSHANNON

As the eighteenth century drew to a close and a new century beckoned John Fitzgibbon (1748-1802), Earl of Clare and Lord High Chancellor of Ireland, was at the height of his power. The 1798 rebellion had been ruthlessly suppressed and the Union of Great Britain and Ireland was about to be ushered into being, through the connivance and subterfuge of the Earl and some of his Parliamentary colleagues. One of the symbols of the Earl's newfound status was his large mansion, Mountshannon House and 900 acre demesne, situated adjacent to the Limerick to Dublin highway, a few miles outside Limerick and close to the village of Castleconnell. Silver Oliver of Kilfinnane, County Limerick, built the house and had occupied it by 1750. In the mid-1760's, the Fitzgibbon family of Ballysheedy, County Limerick, acquired it. The imposing mansion and demesne was one of the finest in Limerick, if not in the whole of Ireland.

It was therefore all the more shocking for the local population to hear the news that James Allen, chief steward to the Earl of Clare, was murdered in his bed, at Mountshannon, on the night of Thursday, 20 October, 1799. The following day, the Mayor of Limerick, Frederick Lloyd, acting as coroner, visited Mountshannon with a jury to investigate the murder and survey the crime scene.

The Limerick Chronicle reported the attack on Allen in graphic detail. The attackers "got through the window of the deceased's bedroom by means of a ladder and after strangling him in bed with a cord and beating out his brains, threw him from the window into the shrubbery (where a quantity of blood was conspicuous) after which they tied him neck and heels with a hay rope and conveyed him to the river about a mile distant, where they deposited him and where he was discovered on Friday morning".

The fact that Allen's employer was the Lord Chancellor elevated the crime to national prominence and the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland lost no time in issuing a proclamation offering a "reward of £200 for each and every of the first three persons, who should be discovered, apprehended and prosecuted to conviction". Eight days after this outrage, eleven servants and workers at Mountshannon were arrested and lodged in the City Gaol on information that some or all of them being an accessory to the Allen murder. John Waters, the porter to the Earl of Clare, was arrested the following week by Hugh Dillon Massey and put in gaol on the same charge. At this stage a lot of arrests had been made but still nobody convicted, so the local gentry around Limerick and Castleconnell subscribed over £575 to a fund which was intended to encourage the people to come forward with

sufficient information to enable the perpetrators be brought to justice. The combined rewards offered had the desired effect, as a fortnight after the reward offered by the Earl's neighbours appeared in the newspapers, four men were arrested.

James Liston, John Noonan, James Noonan and Michael Vaughan were charged on oath with the murder of James Allen. George Evans Bruce and Joseph Crips lodged the men in gaol. The report of the arrests included a message of congratulations to the public as "the clearest evidence on oath was given against the four men".

The trial of Michael Vaughan and brothers James and John Noonan was held on 5 April, 1800. The three men confessed their guilt and the trial lasted four hours. The jury retired for two minutes before returning a verdict of guilty for all three prisoners. The men were then sentenced to be executed.

Two days later on Monday, 7 April, the three condemned men were taken by Sheriff Lloyd and a detachment of the Lancashire Dragoons to the house of James Noonan on the high road near Mountshannon where a gallows was erected on which the three culprits made their exit into the hereafter. Their bodies were brought to the County Limerick Infirmary to be anatomised, as prescribed in their sentence. On this same day, the last day of the Limerick Assizes, the fourth prisoner, James Liston, was tried and convicted and subsequently executed at Gallows Green on Saturday, April 26th, 1800.

During the reporting of the murder of James Allen and the subsequent trials, there was no reference made as to why James Allen came to such an unfortunate and violent end. The motives of the men who were alleged to have confessed to the crime were not questioned or speculated on. When the news of the murder of his steward reached the Earl of Clare, he and the Countess of Clare took leave of the King, in the drawing room of St. James' Palace in London and returned to Ireland on Thursday, 22 November, 1799.

However, in a letter to Baron Auckland written from Dublin on 14 January 1800, the Earl relates how anxious he is to investigate the murder of his steward and find out the cause of it, hoping to be successful in both. He explains that:-

"A villain who had been a domestic servant in my father's house and mine for thirty years, a very few days after I left home in September last, headed a gang of rioters who attacked a farmer in my neighbourhood at midnight and scourged him with nettles and white-thorn bushes till he submitted to swear that he would sell them milk at a price which they chose to put upon it: and to enable them to carry this exploit into execution, this savage stole two brass-barrelled blunderbusses from my a

house with which my steward met him and another of the gang, who was a tenant of mine and constantly employed as a labourer about my house, either going on the whipping expedition or returning from it: and well knowing that he would apprise me of this outrage and that they were the two parties concerned in it, on my return home, they determined to murder him. Two gentlemen, their friends, from pure love of blood agreed to assist them in it and I have the four now in custody I hope with evidence of their guilt sufficient to ensure their conviction”.

As soon as the four men were arrested and remanded for trial, the Earl and Countess of Clare left Mountshannon and did not return until 4 June 1800, when the whole sordid business of exacting retribution for the murder of their servant was concluded.

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A Patriot and A Gentleman

Sean Edmonds was born at the Spa, Castleconnell in 1913. He was one of a very large family born to Bill and Mary (nee Carroll) Edmonds and his family background was staunchly republican. His father was Principal of Castleconnell School and his mother who was a sister of Sean Carroll (Founder of the Mid Limerick Flying Column during “The Troubles”) was an assistant teacher at the same school.



From a very early age, Sean was aware of Ireland’s history both national and local. He was four years old in 1917 when Countess Markievez came to Castleconnell to speak about the Easter

Rising. She stayed at his home and he asked her for her boy scout’s hat, which she wore to honour Fianna Eireann, a boyscouts organisation that she had founded some years previously.

During “the Troubles”, Sean’s home was one of the safe houses used by “the boys” on the run from the enemy.

There are many local stories from this era, too numerous to mention in this article. Suffice it to say that Ireland’s political and military struggles, both local and national were a backdrop to Sean’s whole childhood. In 1926, when he was 13 years old, he and one of his brothers were sent to Scoil Eanna in Dublin. Founded by Padraig Pearse, it was run by Pearse’s mother and sister, Margaret (later Senator). Eamon De Valera was a frequent visitor to the school, but he never addressed the students nor visited their quarters.

During Sean’s time in Scoil Eanna, he nearly died during a flu epidemic. He was very weak for a long time during which he lived with the Pearse family. Mrs. Pearse, a serene snowy-haired lady treated him very kindly. During these boarding school years, holidays were a welcome respite and when at home Sean, two brothers and two sisters (all of whom were good musicians) often entertained the many guests who visited the family. He and two siblings played the violin, while the others played the piano and cello.

Sean completed his secondary school education in 1933 and returned to live in Castleconnell. He spent a number of years after that working with his uncle Richard, whose estate he later inherited. During these years he also took part in many plays and shows in Hartigan's Hall, which were run by his older brother. He developed a huge interest in Irish history and was always trying to understand its very complicated nature.

In 1942 he left Ireland and went to work in a foundry in Birmingham. He spent only a short time there and got to know many English workers. There he realised for the first time, that their cause was the same as the Irish one. All through history, the common enemy was the oppressor, not the ordinary man and woman. One night, an English worker expressed a wish for a simple uncomplicated account of Irish history, and Sean's book *The Gun, The Law and The Irish People* became such an account, many years later.

He then went to work as a chauffeur for Lord Horlick (Founder of the Horlicks beverage) and his family. His sister Amy was nanny to the children and they brought them to Castleconnell on holidays a number of times. Sean eventually left England and returned home to Ireland. In the early 1950s he secured work with *The Limerick Weekly Echo* and at last he began to follow his true calling, journalism. He wrote the Castleconnell Notes and many other pieces and was regarded as a top class journalist. Then in 1955, he was appointed assistant editor of *The Tipperary Star*. He was to spend the rest of his life living and working in Thurles, Co. Tipperary.

His brother Joe married Dilly in 1956. Dilly remembers Sean with great fondness. "He was a regular visitor to our house and he was great company. I was learning to drive and one sunny Sunday he, instead of Joe, accompanied me and two of the children on a practice run to Broadford. We pulled in by the side of a low hill. Sean took his violin and a tape recorder and walked up the hill followed by the rest of us. He played some beautiful tunes there while the children held the tape recorder to tape the music. It was a magical afternoon and we never forgot it. Go ndeana Dia trocaire ar a anam".

The Editor of *The Tipperary Star*, Mr. Michael Dundon, remembers Sean as "a very fine journalist and a true gentleman".

His greatest accomplishment was the publication of his book, *The Gun, The Law And The Irish People*, published in 1971 by Anvil Press. The book covers the period in Irish history from 1912 to the Arms Trial in 1970. This book was recognised as a standard reference work on the period. Unfortunately, it is now out of print. More's the pity as it is a very fine read with a strong local content.

Sean lived in a flat in Thurles for many years and worked contentedly for *The Tipperary Star*. Eventually, his health began to fail, until he was no longer able to leave his flat. He retired, but continued to write articles for the paper under the pseudonym "Glen Rover" and his colleagues collected them from him for publication.

He finally passed away at the early age of 67 years in 1980.

An excerpt from his obituary reads as follows:

A man of great humility and understanding, his tastes were simple and his thoughts profound. He enjoyed a stimulating conversation and was a respected figure in the eyes of his adopted community. He was also an accomplished musician whose first love was the violin. A truly patriotic man, Ireland will be the poorer for his passing, and his precise and informed comments will be missed from the columns of 'The Tipperary Star'.

Ar dheis De go raibh a anam.

Thanks to Dilly Edmonds, Paul Edmonds, John Hyland and Michael Dundon. Edmonds, Sean, *The Gun, The Law And The Irish People*. Dublin. Anvil Press. 1971

Joan Ó Siochrú

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Sisters

I was eleven years old, and we had arrived the night before to spend one month in a holiday home in Spanish Point, near Miltown Malbay County Clare. We were to stay for the month of July in a rented house overlooking the sea right on the front. Dad would only have two weeks holiday so it was agreed that he would travel down for the weekends and return for work on Monday morning, leaving my Mum, my Granny, myself and the dog to fend for ourselves.

It was the first morning and I was awoken by the sun streaming in through a crack in the curtains and the unfamiliar sound of sea gulls crying. I tiptoed out of bed careful not to wake any one!

This was the start of a great adventure and I was rearing to go!

Tea shirt, shorts and sandals and I was off to explore the magic that had been hidden due to our late arrival the night before. We just had an inkling of the general lay out from the rosy glow that emanated from behind the horizon “red sky at night. Shepherd’s delight”.

What excitement, what an air of anticipation!

I smuggled our dog Tiger (my very best friend), muzzling his excited yelps and crept out into this new day, in a new place full of the spirit of adventure. I imagined myself straight out of an Enid Blyton Famous Five novel. The fact that the other four were missing was a mere detail!

The beach was long, wide, unblemished, pinky gold with shining reflections on the wet sand as the tide vacated its space. Behind it the sand dunes edged it with pale blue-grey grasses all bent with their backs to the warm wind.

Tiger ran up and down the beach chasing sea gulls, yapping in gay abandon. I skipped and ran and splashed and made my mark on the pristine sand. The place was completely deserted. It was my very own personal desert island.

I was heading for that point at the end of the beach where the rocks invaded, the cliffs overhung and the river entered the sea mixing fresh and salt waters.

I saw a tiny figure in the distance, heading my way.

As we drew nearer it looked like a boy of my own age. Had I found my very own “Man Friday?”

We passed with sideway looks, half smiles and but no conversation!

I walked on, but Tiger had other ideas. He bounded up with boisterous enthusiasm and instantly made friends.

I kept going, then decided to turn back only to find that the figure had turned too and was dawdling so that we might pass again!

Tiger was working overtime with all the diplomacy of George Mitchell.

“What’s your name?” “Paul”

“Where do you live?” “I’m on holidays with my cousins.”

“How old are you?” “I’m eleven” “I’m eleven too”

“When is your Birthday?” “April, when is yours?”

“Oh my God, I don’t believe it!”

“What date?” “April 2nd!”

“You’re kidding, mine is the second too!”

“Do you get those stupid jokes about having just missed Fools Day?” “All the time!”

“Can you believe it, we are TWINS!”

We walked home together, sharing statistics.

We were both only children and we were friends!

We had each other, we were soul mates and to this day nearly 54 years later, we are friends!

We confide in each other, we give unasked for, advice, we compare cholesterol and blood pressure levels! We have attended our parent’s funerals, make copious phone calls and we have met at least once a year to note inwardly how old the other is looking!

Paul confided his greatest secret that first day before we parted to have breakfast. He was actually, a “she” in denial!

A real live Tom Boy!

Not only had I got myself a “TWIN” but I had also got “A SISTER”

Five years ago, together, we cut a combined 60th Birthday Cake, and like the soldiers on the Normandy Beaches, our 11th year chance meeting was retold over and over and yes.....

WE WILL REMEMBER!

**Barbara Hartigan
November 2010**

A Christmastime Reflection

*On Christmas day while strolling, through fields, where as a youth,
I roamed in blissful innocence, unafraid, inspired by truth,
It seemed to me a whispering, came drifting from the sky,
Speaking of those young wild days, when I was but a boy.*

*Back through all the years, there came, those games we used play,
When each moment had a happening, every hour, of every day,
When the Cowboy and the Indian deftly stalked the land,
When Robin and his Merry Men used to lend a helping hand.*

*O'er the Shannon's ebbing waters, buddies cast a hopeful line,
There with Mother Nature carefree hearts would fair entwine,
With the laughter and the banter, echoing in the air,
A legacy to youthfulness, to life without a care.*

*As soldiers, we fought battles amongst the hanging trees,
Tore our clothes, cut our hands, and sometimes skint our knees,
As twilight sneaked upon us, we marched on home as one,
Reminiscing on our fun-filled day, and battles lost and won.*

*With my Christmas dream concluding, I reached the old ruined mill,
Thoughts of halcyon yesteryear, dispelled by the winter chill,
I stood and watched the waters, resolutely rush and flow,
And pondered on a fireside with a yuletide friendly glow.*

*As winter cast its darkened veil upon the frosty ground,
I walked on home, alone, content, I knew that I had found,
Here in this quiet haven, time has stood quite still,
Where memories live on in time, I hope they always will.*

**Jack Byrnes,
O'Brien's Bridge**

An Extraordinary Man

Picture if you can the river at Castleconnell, before the advent of the Shannon Scheme and before the footbridge was erected there. The Shannon had an expanse of water 300 yards wide and reached depths of 40-60 feet in some places. Its beauty and majesty held a dark side. It was a dangerous stretch of water that not only commanded respect from those who used it but skill, courage and strength to navigate it in its many moods, in darkness and in storm, in flood and in fog. This is where the expertise of the Castleconnell boatmen was invaluable. From the early 18th century right through to the construction of the footbridge, Castleconnell had a ferry service on the river Shannon. This service was operated by many local families including the Enrights and the Bourkes. The most famous of these boatmen was the legendary Tom Enright (known as Tom Pots) who lived at Chapel Hill. Born in 1818 into a family of ferrymen Tom learned the boatman's craft at a young age. He was a skilled expert at manoeuvring his boat by the time he was well into adult life, and was much sought after by locals and visitors alike. Despite the fact that he went blind in his middle years, he could still pilot his boat and passengers across Castle Lough with a skill that confounded many a visitor. The locals however, never gave his affliction a second thought and trusted his ability and uncanny sense of direction completely. He was never short of passengers and he never had the slightest mishap nor lost control of his boat, nor indeed missed his landing stage, thus justifying their faith in him. He could navigate the crossing expertly whether in darkness, fog or in broad daylight. He could also recognise people by the sound of their voices even if he only met them once. A visitor to Castleconnell who had used the ferry and got to know Tom Pots, made a return visit many years later. The visitor asked Tom if he remembered him. "Indeed I do Mr. Williams, you're welcome back", he said. Tom Enright continued to ferry people to and from the Castleconnell and Clare sides of the river until well into his 70's and when he retired it was not because of sightlessness but of failing general health. Tom Pots Enright died in October 1895 at the age of 77. He was truly one of the Shannon's most extraordinary and gifted boatmen.

J.O.S

From *Village by Shannon*
Joe Carroll (RIP) & Paddy Tuohy

An Caisleán - The Castleconnell, Ahane, Montpelier Annual 2010

Castleconnell Rods

The fishing rods which have made the name of beautiful Castleconnell famous the world over, whenever the white sportsman seeks to lure the denizen of the stream from his home, are gaining new honours for the little angling village and the firm which is responsible for the quality and manufacture of the rods . . . Messrs Enright and Son. At the forthcoming Dublin Society Horse Show, Messrs Enright will exhibit samples of their manufacture in the central hall, ground floor, stall no 44, where lovers of the gentle craft will find specimens of the finest work of the fishing tackle artificer. Amongst the recent records established with Enright rods are the taking of the largest Mahseer yet killed in India. The fish which was landed in the present year scaled 91 lbs. The record Kableyoney was also killed this year in South Africa with a 13 foot Enright rod and weighed no less than 130 lbs., while the best salmon taken this year fell to an Enright rod in the home waters of Castleconnell. It is also interesting to note that the fly casting records of the world were broken at Paris during last March by the rods made by the Castleconnell firm.

The above news item was taken from the *Nenagh Guardian* of August 21st 1909 and was reproduced in the *Nenagh Guardian* of Saturday August 2009 entitled *The Guardian from Times Past*.

Paddy Tuohy

Whisp's

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Castleconnell, Co. Limerick.

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Late Night Opening by Appointment

- Celebrating 21 years in Castleconnell -

O'Brien's Bridge Community Group

O'Brien's Bridge National Loop Walks

The O'Brien's Bridge National Loop walks are fast becoming one of the most popular Loop Walks in the country and are introducing a steady inflow of visitors to the area both on a daily, weekly and annual basis. These visitors would be local, national and international and are a very welcome development and should help towards the sustainability of villages of O'Brien's Bridge and Montpelier.

When one considers that up to 500,000 people visited Ireland last year to avail of walking holidays, we can see how O'Brien's Bridge Walkway, which is one of the most beautiful walks in the country can exploit this growing activity.

The walkway, which runs all along the banks of the Shannon and the Errina Canal is away from public roads and traffic and is an isolated, hidden paradise of peace and tranquillity where the walker is in deep touch with nature.

The section of walkway along The Errina Canal is presently being upgraded with surface stone which when completed, will make it the Jewel in the Crown of Loop Walks where it will be possible to walk from O'Brien's Bridge to Clonlara wearing your Sunday shoes or indeed your household slippers!

These upgrade works are being funded by Fáilte Ireland who has along with Shannon Development now promote the Loop Walks on the International market.

A map and further information can be downloaded from the Shannon Development or Fáilte Ireland websites.

Mick Murtagh, Chairman

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

The bar with the personal touch
For good drinks and comfort

Food

I love food! All kinds of food!

I believe you eat with your eyes so this choice is inspired by a painting!



I can see it hanging on the wall, in its old gold frame, lit by a passing ray of light. It was a painting of a loaf of bread sitting on a rough chopping board, beside it a halved tomato, and a lump of cheese.

You could smell the oven baked crust, so fresh that it flaked and crazed, with that “just out of the oven” sheen.

The background colours reminiscent of Rembrandt’s Vandyke Brown, Burnt Sienna and Raw Umber with hints of Yellow Ochre just to lighten the gloom, Old Masters colours that give a sense of distance, warmth, mystery, atmosphere.

The picture drew me in and reminded me of the doorsteps of fresh pan loaf the O’Byrne’s maid used to hand out the window at about 5 o’clock, to the panting group of Cowboys and Indians after a hard days play. Thick slices of butter coated bread with Marmite! I would stuff in this treat then waddle home to push my Mum’s latest creation around the plate!

The painting was priced at four hundred pounds, but where would I hang it? There were numerous other things that I needed and the frame was not quite right! I kept returning to smell the bread and admire the picture.

You could have a real fresh loaf and a full tomato every day for a full year I reasoned with myself, before I finally walked away.

Many years later, I remember the picture and regret that I didn’t invest.

The artist, Kathleen Welsh, was a tiny little woman in very high heels, often with a rakish beret, on the side of her head. She had talent to burn, but she had a sad secret that consumed her.

Kathleen died on the 5th of October 2006 she was found in a dark alley at the back of very exclusive restaurant in Dublin, clutching a crust of bread and an empty wine bottle.

Barbara Hartigan, 30th November 2008

John Gilhooly

Lisnagry is once again basking in the reflected glory and honour of one of its young men's achievements. John Gilhooly, the eldest of three children of Helen and the late Owen has been appointed chairman of the Royal Philharmonic Society in London, one of the two oldest music societies in the World.

John is a past pupil of Lisnagry National School, and Ard Scoil Rís and has a degree in History and Political Science from UCD. He continued with his love of singing which had been nurtured by his former teacher in Lisnagry, Nuala Egan and greatly encouraged by his parents, Helen and the late Owen, to pursue classical vocal studies as a tenor under the tutelage of Jean Holmes in Limerick and Dr. Veronica Dunne at the Leinster School of Music and Dublin City College of Music.

There is a great tradition of opera singing in John's family, his maternal grandfather had a huge interest in it and this tradition has been passed on to John and his siblings, Owen and Noreen, both of whom have also studied under Ms. Holmes. Owen is now a well known professional singer and although Noreen presently has decided not to take to the stage professionally, she is also a trained singer.

For the past four years John has been artistic and executive director of one of the world's greatest concert halls, Wigmore Hall in London. In that role, he is responsible for staging over 400 concerts every year and although he is the youngest leader of any of the world's great concert halls, he takes it all in his stride. He spends a lot of time travelling to places like Vienna, New York and Berlin auditioning and has been on the council of the Royal Philharmonic Society for the past few years.

This new appointment will place John in a very prestigious position as the Society, which is under the direct patronage of Britain's Queen Elizabeth, is celebrating its bicentenary in 2012. As well as ministering to the creativity of its members which are composed of both professional musicians and music lovers, the Royal Philharmonic Society also provides benevolence and support for those involved in the music world.

John's enthusiasm and energy for the challenges ahead is clear and everyone in the parish sends their congratulations and good wishes his way.

A. Berkery

Evergreen Rambling House

The Evergreen Rambling House has completed another very successful year.

During the year we took part in the Castleconnell Festival and at the invitation of Limerick County Council Arts Council, we held a special "Culture night" on 24th September 2010.

During the past twelve months we have also had two very enjoyable meals in Tí Sean in December 09 and in Herberts in May 2010.

The Rambling House continues to be very successful with great camaraderie among its members. The strength of the Rambling House is that each performer is equal- No Stars - just a group who enjoy storytelling, recitation, song and gentle music.

Thanks to everyone for their loyalty and support and a special thank you to the people who keep the wheels turning.

We welcome new members.

Peggy Tyrrell

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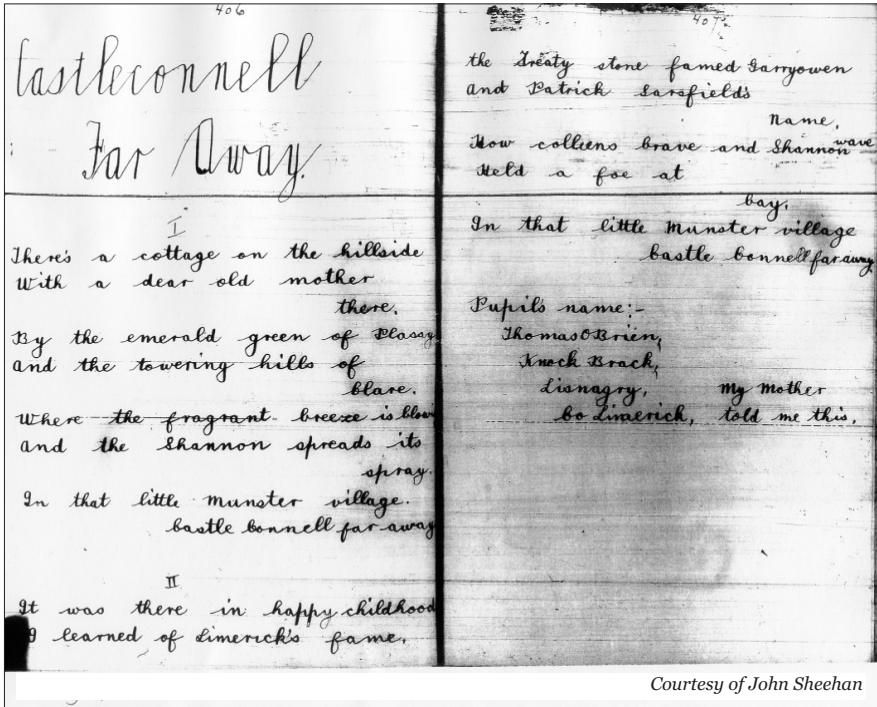
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Acknowledgements

The Committee of "An Caislean" 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.
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