

# An Coinneal

1994



No 19







*ALL THE  
WAY FROM  
LOUISBURGH*

# An Coinneal



*An Choinneal* is a periodical of Kilgeever parish (Louisburgh, County Mayo). The oldest parish magazine in Ireland, it appeared in alternate years since 1959.

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*The Editor wishes to thank all the people whose voluntary efforts have helped to produce this nineteenth issue. In particular we express thanks to Frank Dolan, professional photographer; and the many shopkeepers in town who exhibit and sell the magazine without any commission.*

*Because of continuing postal uncertainties we request all our foundation members to acknowledge receipt of this number, even formally. Members' copies are posted on the day after publication. American copies are posted direct from Delran, New Jersey by our agent Mrs. Mary (Dunne) Richter.*

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*We apologise to our overseas readers for delayed delivery. The delay was entirely at this end (see p11-13) - Editor*



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## OUR NEW WRITERS

*Apart from our more established roster of contributors we introduce in this issue:*

*Anne Chambers* is author of: GRANUAILE: THE LIFE AND TIMES OF GRACE O'MALLEY; the biography of Granuaile's son entitled CHIEFTAIN TO KNIGHT; AS WICKED A WOMAN, the biography of the Countess of Desmond, and LA SHERIDAN ADORABLE DIVA, the biography of the Mayo-born soprano, Margaret Burke Sheridan. Publisher Wolfhound Press, Dublin.

*Father Michael J. Coyne, Aillemore*, is a priest, monsignor, of the diocese of Camden, New Jersey, serving in his new church of Saint Elizabeth, Absecon, New Jersey.

*Eamonn Fleming, Ballina*, is of McHale stock of Main Street: his mother is Ita, and his father Ned.

*P. J. Gibbons, Furmoyle*, is a young journalist at present on a working stint in U.S.

*Tony Glynn* is son of a Louisburgh father and an English mother. He lives in Manchester and has visited Louisburgh a few times.

*Martin Heraghty (Harrity), Worcester, Mass.*, is a son of Derrygorrow parents – a cousin of the present Egan family.

*James Patrick Hester*, is a resident of Stickney, Illinois, just southwest of Chicago, Illinois (USA). He is the son of James (Falduff, Louisburgh) and Mary (Cloonmoor, Kiltimagh) Hester. He is a twenty-one year veteran with Delta Air Lines at Chicago O'Hare Airport. He was recently accepted to work on his Doctorate (Ph D) degree in Human Services and received a US Federal Grant to cover the cost. He is a frequent visitor to the Louisburgh area.

*John Lyons, Bunowen*, teaches at Sancta Maria College in Louisburgh. His coming History of Kilgeever Parish is eagerly expected in early 1994.

*John J. McNally, Berwyn, PA*, is a double descendant of Kilgeever parish and proud of the rich traditions of the Jennings and (Mary Anne) McNally tribes!

*Séamus McNally, Westport*, is another of that intrepid clan. Born in the west of the parish, he retains a keen interest in its culture and folklore.

*Seán Ó Dúill, Baile Átha Cliath*, spent much of his youth in his (Gibbons) grandparents' house in Bunowen. An avid folklore researcher, he intends to publish his work shortly. His Irish language writing has a crispness and lucidity which will lure many to begin reading Irish again.

*Dr Michael J. O'Brien, Main Street*, is Proferror of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine and Public Health at Boston University School of Medicine.

*Mike Scott, Bridge Street*, lives now in Huntingdon, England, as a law-abiding citizen who recalls the minor escapades of his youth.

*Kathleen (Loftus) Ward, Bristol*, was reared in Tallabawn, and retains appreciative memories of the teachers, schools and community.

*An Choinneal* committee laments the passing of a faithful colleague, Dick Lyons, whose last article appeared in 1992. We offer sympathy to his wife, Margaret and their family, and are happy to welcome John to replace his father on the committee.



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Continue the good work you are doing for the magazine . . . I have every confidence that a rich tapestry of local tradition and history has been retained by the *Coinneal* for our children right into the new century.

Séamus McNally (Westport)

*\* You have added your own skein to the tapestry this number, Séamus. But we must keep on adding to it from all the wonderful threads that we were given by a generation whom we were so privileged to know.*

I was anxious to write my article for the last issue of the *Coinneal* about a way of life that had remained static for 123 years but suddenly died with the closing of Acconry School. It didn't have to be me but unless someone did, it would become a lost memory. Since 1985 I hoped to write my last article for *An Choinneal* on the enclosed subject . . . The article itself may not come under the terms of reference for a *Coinneal* article. If for any reason you consider it unacceptable, I will be in no way offended. I know there are split infinitives and sentences that would not stand up to parsing and analysis, but does the reader care!

Geoffrey Prendergast (Dublin)

*\* Most readers who knew of him will have now known that Geoffrey did not live to see his last article in print. He was a devoted reader and supporter of this magazine. Fortunately, his contributions now remain in print to sharpen our memory of a really genuine person. May God comfort his wife, Mary, and their family; and bring Geoffrey quickly into his reward.*

I am sorry to be so late in thanking you for the arrival of the *Coinneal*. I really do enjoy it and it brings me back so many happy memories.

John O'Malley (Bunowen) in Queensland

*\* Keep writing to us, Johnny. You know that you are one of our farthest outposts from home; so there is always an extra thrill in getting your message. This time we send you our sympathies from the home parish on the death of Father Tommie in California, who was another ardent supporter of all the *Coinneal* tries to do. Beannacht Dé leis.*

The *Coinneal* is indeed another masterpiece, and long may it continue to be so. I enclose a small donation to help to keep the wheels of the printing machine greased!

Alice Sammon (Islandeady)

*\* Thank you, Alice. You will see at the end of this number as usual, a statement of how our accounts stand this year. The fact that we are usually able to pay off each recurring *Coinneal* at the time of its publication (without having to await the intake from the sales of that number) is in no small measure due to the faithful generosity of people like you. We all send you and the entire Jennings family our deep sympathy at the unexpected death of your dear brother, Frank.*

Enclosed is a cheque for two *Coinneals*, one for me and one for my brother, Frank in Park Ridge. Since I sent in a cheque for \$200 two years ago for the Endowment Fund I expected life membership and a yearly copy, but my address was not updated it seems and I have not received a *Coinneal* for two years so please send me one. I want to re-read some of the articles. I read every word of the last issue in Chicago over Christmas at my sister's and needless to say enjoyed it. I can supply a few updated addresses here, but someone at home in Louisburgh should keep in touch with the families there and get the updated addresses from them whenever they learn there has been a change. At the wake of Michael Gibbons of Askelane (Geoffrey and Mary Kate's son) I saw at least 20-30 people from Louisburgh area that I see only once in a great while like at weddings, wakes or dances.

Brigid O'Malley

*\* Thank you for such an interesting and concerned note, Brigid. I do not think that the Endowment deal held a promise of Foundation Membership; because the membership was closed many years ago at the time of my tour to the emigrant centres seeking help, when the future of the magazine was in real danger. As you know, our emigrants at that time made such a practical gesture that the danger was averted and we have been on fairly secure financial footing since then. In fact this means that each *Coinneal* we produce is now paying for the next issue, instead of trying to pay off the cost of itself. The Endowment Fund is intended to be an investment, the interest from which will, it is hoped, create sufficient annual funds to ensure the continuation of the *Coinneal* into the foreseeable future. However the question you raise will be brought to the *Coinneal* Committee at home and to our friends in the Philadelphia region who first suggested the idea and have since then been loyally devoting themselves to it. Your other suggestion about the updated addresses is one that we should really wish to put into practice. Unfortunately, as you will remember, people at home seem hesitant to give addresses of their relations abroad. We hope that with changing times we can elicit such information and be able to provide it for all our emigrants.*

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## Letters . . .

The *Coinneal* is great. It is great to have the old ones to look back on again. I wish it could come out once a year instead of once every two.

Mrs Ann B. Ryan (Greenwich)

*\*We never lose a chance like this of asking people like you to add to the enjoyment for other readers by writing something, however short, from your family's memories or hopes for the home parish. So get out the pen again, Ann B., and tell us more! At present, we are stretched to have one issue every two years: not that we do not have enough material coming in. If we had full reports from all our active groups in the home parish we could easily produce a Coinneal every year. But the cost is quite high and we would need a bigger market among our people abroad to keep our candle afloat.*

Happy New Year to you and yours from the O'Gorman Clan.

Rose, Orland Park, Ill.

*\*Come now Rose. You must give us more information to make us feel at home so that we can make you and all the clan feel at home with An Choinneal. For instance: O'Gorman? now where did that name break into the Louisburgh circle? or did the name come in by stealth through marriage? and when? and from what village did the original O'Gorman in-law originate? (because O'Gorman is not an indigenous Louisburgh surname.) So in our dialect, what we want you to tell us about Mrs O'Gorman is simply "who is she herself?" A paragraph, perhaps, for the 'Kith and Kin' feature in our next issue?*

Sorry for the delay in sending this in.

Patrick and Francis Gibbons (Chicago)

*\*Welcome both! Just try to get more of your friends who have not yet got, or even heard of, the magazine to send in their orders, early or late.*

Your card and letter have been lying around for quite a while. Tony keeps saying he'll write a letter. I know he won't so I am enclosing a cheque. I really love the *Coinneal*.

Peg O'Toole (San Leandro)

*\*Many thanks, Peg. I share your love for the Coinneal, if not for Tony! Poor man, when he sees this in print he may be so taken aback that he'll write and give us the whole picture, and some Louisburgh lore to boot.*

Enclosed is my cheque and would you please add the following name to your mailing list: Michael

Kelly (Chicago Ridge). He may not be from Louisburgh, but he always looks for the *Coinneal* to read.

Maureen Prendergast (Chicago)

*\*Maureen, if someone lives by the bible, he is a Christian. So if Michael Kelly reads the Coinneal . . . tell him to come on in; he's a Louisburghman by dedication and devotion. Welcome, Michael! And you continue, Maureen, to find more and more converts! Mary Dunne (Richter) has added Michael's name.*

Sorry for the delay in sending on the donation . . . I really enjoyed Johnny Durkan's article on Bunowen. It brought back fond memories of a long-gone youth. My brother, Matt, is dead seventeen years today. Time really flies!

Patrick J. Scanlon, Bronx, N.Y.

*\*You are just one of many who have written or spoken about Johnny Durkan's article, Pat; one of many who, I think, will savour the contribution from the same fluent pen in this present issue. I am repeatedly telling the man that he should now begin on a full-length novel. Mention of your brother, Matt, God rest him, brings me back many schoolday memories of his sayings and doings, many of them staged along the "Island" or down by the Mill-race. One in particular dominates: We were reading "Julius Caesar" in the national school and we were given different parts to act out some scenes on the school floor. In the scene where Mark Anthony speaks over Caesar's body Matt was the Citizen who shouted: "Revenge - about - seek - burn - fire - kill - slay - let not a traitor live". I can still hear in memory his clear diction and see the fierce look which brought Shakespeare's language so much to life for us in a small school on the very western edge of Ireland.*

Received my copy of *An Choinneal* and I loved it. Thank you for not forgetting how much I'd want each issue. Please double check my address.

Lyn Rogers (W 6th Street)

Charlie McDermott's funeral Mass was at St Mary's, Clapham. In the thirties when the village dance-hall was the focal point of the community, Charlie formed a dance band. He was also a useful forward on Louisburgh Junior football teams in the thirties. In those days, the club colours were black with a red band and chest; and later, blue with a yellow sash.

P.J. McNamara (London)

*\*Thanks for the loyal memory, P. J. In this issue Charlie's nephew, Father Micheal Flannery, has written a tribute to him which you will read with interest.*

## LOUISBURGH 200

### Editorial

Nineteen-ninety-five is to be a year of Louisburgh celebration; the bicentenary of the foundation of the town. The choice of date is based on the granting of a charter on November 3rd, 1795 to the local landlord, John Denis Browne, for fairs and markets for the proposed town. The choice had to be in a sense arbitrary because the actual building of the town, let alone the completion of that building, is difficult to pin down in terms of actual dates. A forthcoming history of the parish, being compiled by Mr John Lyons for the bicentennial year, will probably record whatever is known of the sequence of events leading up to the construction and naming of our town. It will, it is hoped, clarify the link with the town of Louisbourg, Cape Breton; and the connection with the family of Howe. The first number of *An Choinneal* (1959) published correspondence with the then Mayor of Louisbourg, Mr Guy M Hiltz, but the Mayor could throw no light on the traditional theory. Another reply, from Mr Ken Donovan, the Staff Historian at the Fortress of Louisbourg, was published here in 1980 and adds to the converging probabilities of such connection. However, no definitive primary source or documentation has yet been unearthed to establish the link beyond question. There are a few salient indicators, however.

In "A Frenchman's Walk through Ireland 1796-97" (a translation of a French original by De Latocnaye) the writer states (p 173):

"I crossed the beautiful bay of Killery, and following the shores of Clew Bay, I came easily to Westport House to Lord Altamount. It was a real joy for me to offer my respects to the amiable daughter of the *victorious Howe*. The little town of Westport has been entirely built by the father and grandfather of the present lord who, following the good examples set him, has *commenced to lay the foundation* of another town to be called Louisbourg (sic). Here he affords shelter to the unfortunates who are obliged to leave the North of Ireland." (italics added). From other sources the probable background to this entry may be blocked in. It would appear that the "victorious Howe" was Admiral Richard, who distinguished himself in British naval service, and whose brother, William, commanded the 60th Foot at the siege of Louisbourg in 1758. A daughter born to Richard on 9 December, 1767 was named *Louisa-Catherine*, and she married the Earl of Altamount, John Denis Browne, on 27 May 1787. The surmised then is (but this still awaits historical confirmation) that the landlord named the new town after Louisbourg, Cape Breton, where his young wife's (Louisa-Catherine's) uncle William had distinguished himself in battle. It should also be remembered to his credit that Lord Altamount had our Louisburgh built as a refuge for those who had to flee Ulster after the Battle of the Diamond in Dungannon in 1789. Surely another, topical, link in the Ireland of 1994-5.

What then do we do to celebrate? Already Louisburgh Community Council have begun to coordinate a programme, and a calendar of events is being pencilled in. This is a daunting challenge for a small community, and reason would dictate that events be spread judiciously over the year. Celebrations should, naturally, suit the tourist season; but there is also need for celebration for the community itself, even by itself. The



immediate present is especially a time for ideas, so that the quality and tone of our celebrations may ensure a dignity of which Louisburgh at home and abroad can be proud. And incidentally, a programme should be finalised as soon as is at all possible so that our people abroad who might plan a visit home would have a full picture of the options. And let it be added, there should be a decent attempt to ensure that, unlike so many of our so-called festivals in Ireland today, the celebrations don't begin, continue and end in an abuse of alcohol! The Cathaoirleach of the local Community Council has wisely asked for comments and suggestions. *An Choinneal* takes the opportunity of presenting a short list of suggestions apart from the already announced events and festivities:

1) Since the actual celebration is of the granting of markets and fairs, could a weekly market be re-established in town, even for the busy summer season? This would entail the hard work of market gardening through the parish, work which would find reward especially in view of the modern interest in organic food. Is it beyond the capability of each farming family to till one bicentenary garden in order to fuel such a practical beneficial project?

2) In conjunction with a University Archaeological Faculty, and with the support of current FAS or Leader programmes, an archaeological dig of one of our many historical sites – for instance the Abbey of Kilgeever;

3) Periodical radio two-way link-ups with our Louisburgh emigrants abroad, especially in view of the present facility from the satellite Astra;

4) A tree-planting project, commercial or decorative;

5) Art or writing competitions or symposia suitable to different age-groups;

6) An in-depth survey into the possibility of establishing any one source of employment within the community for the young people who are leaving the parish as soon as they leave school;

7) A survey of the parish with a view to committing to paper the names of every field, boreen, lake, stream etc in the parish before these names are lost forever;

8) In view of the historical purpose of the town's origin, a cultural, social, and sporting link-up with one community in the North of Ireland during the coming year. Dungannon would be the historically apt choice; but such a move would also celebrate and advance the peace movement now bearing fruit in Ireland. Project for such as G.A.A., I.C.A., Drama Group or such;

9) A collection of indicative artefacts from the different Louisburgh emigrant communities throughout the world to form part of a folk museum, perhaps in the Famine Centre in town;

10) A collection of past essays chosen from the thirty-five years of *An Choinneal* re-published, say, at the cost of a present *Coinneal* as a commemorative booklet for the bicentenary;

11) An opportunity given to the Leaving Certificate students of 1995 to spend a constructive period of work experience abroad whether in Europe, Africa or America, to sample the atmosphere of work and life in other societies; and yet be able to return at the end of that period to undertake their preparation for a livelihood as they might decide.

Whatever projects are eventually decided on will demand energy and commitment on a high level to see them through. Given the low quotient of youth remaining in the community, the pool of available energy is limited compared with demand. For that very reason there will be paramount need for unity of all interests; unity not just of words and wishes but of work and practical dedication.

One final thought is put forward here entirely as a positive contribution to our celebration. Louisburgh may well have been founded in 1795; but Cluain Cearban was there for some time before that; quite some time! When Australia staged its own bicentenary in 1992 its really native people, whom we call aborigines, were quick to add a corrective. They decided to celebrate the two million years of their own proud, pre-Captain Cook culture! Our history and culture did not begin in 1795. Kilgeever, and Teampall Duach Mor and Cruach Phadraic and Althore are no mere eighteenth-century foundations. Even within a few years of the foundation of Louisburgh, on mid-summer day 1802, Patrick Lynch, a music collector for George Bunting, attended at Hugh O'Donnell's (now Morrison's) to write down the extant airs and folk-songs of the community, among them "a great variety of Irish songs . . . many which I had not got before", from the blind piper, Billy Ó Máille. One can ask without prejudice, did the building of Louisburgh town lead to the decline of that culture? And what would the life and culture of the parish be today if the town had not been built? Have we lost something valuable in the name of progress? And is the bicentenary an occasion when we might retrieve our loss!

In fact there is a nationwide movement called Glór na nGael into which Louisburgh might well tap as an exercise in self-identification for this year of celebration. This movement is akin to the Tidy Towns competition which has meant such progress for many of our Irish communities. The main difference is that Glór na nGael honours the communities which get in touch with their roots and live a forward-looking, modern existence while furthering the use of the Irish language. Another project worth considering! As we celebrate let us find and feed the roots that are older and deeper, the very stock of which we are sprung. There might well be an exchange of gifts between our Louisburgh and Louisbourg, Nova Scotia (even between us and the many other towns of Louisburgh throughout the United States and elsewhere) during the year of celebration. We suggest that there might also be an exchange of trees between our community and the little village of Clooncarbane in County Offaly. Just for the sake of roots. So, let us celebrate!

## A PARISH MAGAZINE

### Editorial

A parish magazine is by nature different. If it is at all authentic, it is as different from other magazines as are its people different from all other peoples. It mirrors their lives. This magazine has tried to mirror the lives of Louisburgh people at home and away for some thirty-five years.

It need hardly be emphasized that this is not a commercial magazine. It suffers, of course, from the vagaries of commercial life in its production costs, and has to budget to meet its bills from year to year. But it is an entirely voluntary effort and therefore



depends on the willing cooperation of many loyal parishioners at home and abroad. That is how it should be, and we would not wish it other. Too often a voluntary effort, if it becomes commercial, loses that reservoir of commitment which in so many senses cannot be bought. *An Choinneal* has repeatedly carried tribute and appreciation to all who serve to bring each successive number to the bookshelves. We repeat that now, but it will not, we hope, be thought churlish if we decide to have a few kitchen truths placed before our readers, gently but firmly.

The task of assembling and producing the material for any one *Coinneal* is quite more considerable than might appear to a casual reader or even individual contributor. The two great obstacles to its smooth production are *lack of material* and *late arrival*. There is seldom lack of general material as such, but there is an increasing absence, in this issue as in some recent ones, of that basic kind of material which records the day-to-day events of life in the parish. Articles of reminiscence, of nostalgia, or of suggestion and comment are fine; but there is always need for the core of facts which, because they *are* facts, give meaning and individuality to our lives and therefore to our parish magazine.

Specifically, although there are some nineteen different organisations with active clubs in the community only a mere handful of these have taken up our repeated public (radio and newspaper) invitations to have their year's work chronicled here. This leaves an imbalance in the final product. *An Choinneal* will always try to make up the deficiency in other ways; but to put it simply we do not have a regular rota of paid journalists; and must depend on the good will of qualified parishioners. This was perhaps the most successful year ever in the history of our local G.A.A. club. Our players won a County Junior, County Under-21 and a County Under-16 title and competed very creditably in other competitions, in some instances to the final stage. They deserve, and get, our heartiest congratulations to players officials and trainers. But they deserve more: they deserve that our readers abroad should have a homemade account in this magazine of the victories and how they were fashioned. The real irony will be if we are blamed for not carrying such an account! There are other instances too of how a good year's work by our different organisations have been hidden for want of publicity. We seriously ask that every organisation in the parish appoint a P.R.O.; and on behalf of our readers all over the world we do ask of those who take up that office to send to each recurring *Coinneal* a record of the year's achievements. And to send them in time.

That is the second recurring obstacle to smooth production – the late arrival of material. This year, for instance, the copy date was set for 1 September 1994. That was a realistic assessment of the time needed to have the work done and the magazine on sale for November 9th. There were many who observed that date and who must have long wondered what has become of their contributions. Many others sent in articles, photographs, news items, reports etc as late as six weeks after the stipulated date. That presents us with an almost impossible scenario: what is one to do? cancel the operation for this year? Many, perhaps do not appreciate the amount of work involved in re-writing, typing, printing and proof-correcting, as well as collecting and arranging social data, wedding photographs, parish statistics etc., that is required before the material finally appears in print. And the burden inevitably falls on a few willing people

who have already an over-demanding curriculum of professional or of community work. In simple language, this year's *Coinneal* has been held up for six weeks: the publication that was to be on sale in early November will not now appear until early December at the earliest. The delay has upset our printers (always helpful and gracious) and our distributors, including our foreign agents in America and England.

To put things bluntly, this is not good enough. It cannot be allowed to continue. Not for the welfare of *An Choinneal*; and not for the welfare and even the good health of those who try to produce it. The magazine survived a financial crisis in 1985-6 by the generosity and goodwill of Louisburgh people everywhere. That same kind of goodwill and generosity must be called for again in all who are good enough to write, and in all who are charged with reporting from the various parish organisations, to have their clubs' interests reported; and to have material arrive in good time. Then we can call this a really parish magazine.

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## CEILIÚRADH AN DÁ CHÉAD

Louisburgh celebrates its two hundredth birthday in 1995, based on a Fairs and Markets charter granted on the 3rd of November 1795 to the third Earl of Altamount, John Denis Browne of Westport House (later Marquis of Sligo, 1800) .

A celebratory year is being declared and a calendar of events is being drawn up which, it is hoped, will fittingly mark a significant milestone in the life of our area. Existing Annual events such as the Parish Reunion, Saint Patrick's Day Parade, Famine Walk etc. will be revamped and given a "200" flavour. Renovated areas will be officially reopened with pride, denoting the confidence with which the town faces into the next century. Special events will be spaced throughout the year to accentuate the warm feeling we share as members of the community of this our home place. Historical projects, lecture series, *sean-nós* singing, summer drama, links established with Louisbourg, Nova Scotia, July Festival, Local Authority meetings and the burying of a capsule crammed with indications of what we are now, and which it is hoped will be dug up in a hundred years time (when most of us will regrettably not be there to see!)

The celebrations are being co-ordinated by Louisburgh Community Council, and nineteen parish organisations are working assiduously towards the desired result. Perhaps *Coinneal* readers have comments or suggestions to make. Louisburgh Community Council or any of the parish organisations will be delighted to hear such suggestions and to bring them forward for consideration. So we look forward to hearing from you, and of course meeting you in Louisburgh at some time during 1995.

Donal O'Leary (Louisburgh Community Council)



# A PAGE OF HISTORY

## The Schools in the Parish of Kilgeever: early 19th Century

In the early nineteenth century elementary education of a sort was being provided in Ireland. The Established Church (Church of Ireland) schools were suspect in the eyes of Catholics, but by 1823 the total number attending these schools was in the region of 36,000. The great majority of Catholic children who were in receipt of an education were at the hedge-schools; and these schools gave a good grounding in the "three R's"; by the mid-1820's it was estimated that about 50,000 children, of whom 80% were Catholics, were being taught in the hedge-schools. In 1812 a Committee of Enquiry recommended the setting up of a state-controlled and centralised system of elementary education; the Government of the day did not go quite so far, but provided a subsidy for the Kildare Place Society, which was founded in 1811, to provide a system of undenominational elementary education.

Father Patrick Gibbons became Parish Priest of Kilgeever in 1813, and he soon immersed himself in the educational wellbeing of his huge congregation. Kilgeever parish, which was also called Kilgavower and included Innisboffin, Inishturk, Clare Island, Inishark and Inishdegal, had a population of 10,243 in 1821; the 'mainland' part of the parish carried a figure of 7,151. By 1831 the population of the 'mainland' part had jumped to 9,716, and by 1841 the number of people in Louisburgh town was 448!

By the early 1820's the area had thirteen schools, all Roman Catholic, and all connected with the Kildare Place Society, which was soon to run into allegations of proselytism – attempts to convert Catholic children.

The list is as follows:

Townland	Master	No. of Pupils	Income of Master	Measurements of school room
Lewisburgh	Darby Melvin	70	£9	18' x 12'
Derralahan	John Sweeny	65	£7	
Fallduff	Thomas Malley	50	£6	24' x 14'
Ballyhip	Patrick Malley	52	£5	21' x 21'
Glenkeen	Thomas Sheridan	30	£4.11.0	22' x 14'
Bendurragh	William Kelly	20	£6	No permanent room
Carramore	John Morris	50	£8	27' x 17'
Askalane	Owen Malley	70	£7	21' x 19'
Doughmakeown	Michael McLoughlin	60	£6	22' x 15'
Knockeen	Anthony Jordan	24	£4	22' x 15'
Cloonlara	Peter Cronchan	100	£6	40' x 15'
Devlin	William Conlan	80	£9	40' x 15'
Kinnaculla	Michael Gibbons	70	£6	10' x 10'

Salaries of the teachers were paid by the parents, and it is also important to note that only two of the above schools were built by the Kildare Place Society, i.e. Cloonlara and Devlin. There were also two more schools in the town of Louisburgh: one was

obviously attached to the Church of Ireland and its master, George Tully, had an income of £3, a rent-free house from the Marquis of Sligo, a class of just four pupils in a room which measured 16' x 12'. Teacher Edward Malley in Aughany taught in 'a wretched cabin' while Laughta had no fixed school-house! Michael Brien, a Roman Catholic, was teaching fourteen Catholics and four Protestants in the Chapel.

It would seem that Father Gibbons, P.P., soon became less than happy with the Society because he very quickly applied to the New National Board of Education 'for the annexation of Louisburgh school'. In 1831 Chief Secretary Stanley announced the Government decision to set up the National Board.

On October 31, 1830, Father Gibbons chaired a meeting of the parishioners of Kilgeever in the Parish Chapel. It was unanimously agreed that "a Petition should be sent to both Houses of Parliament praying a revision of the present system of education in Ireland, and that means be adopted for the application of the annual grants for the education of the poor in such manner as may be advantageous to every religious denomination without offering violence to their conscience."

But it was late in 1831 when Father Gibbons made his first application to the National Board of Education. The application was for the annexation of Louisburgh School, already in existence since 1820, to the Board. He stated that there were fourteen schools in the parish, "all under the patronage of the Parish Priest". While the initial application was for Louisburgh school, he also enclosed information on Fallduff, (established in 1822), and on Devlin. Louisburgh school was "under the superintendence of the Parish Priest only", and was "not connected with any society and no aid from any quarter or person except the voluntary contribution of the poor people. Two pounds from the Parish Priest".

In summer there was an attendance of seventy males and forty females; in winter eighty male and fifty females. The school measured 20' by 14' 2" indoors; there were no seats or school furniture, "no books except ordinary elementary books usually used in country schools provided by the priests and parents of the children." The situation in the town of the building housing this school cannot be identified from records available; it was not until the late 1840's that the more permanent school at Long Street was built. The master's name was John Sweeney, – there was no school-mistress, – the master's salary was from £7 to £8 per annum, and school was open from ten o'clock to four each day.

Father Gibbons wrote that the distress in the parish was such that if some addition were not made to the salary of the master he must discontinue; the state of the parish was such that he would not in all probability receive that year "even the poor pittance". The Priest was now also applying for all possible school furniture, books, desks, seats, slates, pencils etc. and in a telling letter he shows the amount of preparatory work already in hand:

"I was prevented by the unsettled state into which this parish has been brought by the awful malady that prevailed in the neighbouring town of Westport . . . from making the desired return to your communication of the 23rd May. I have had the most skillful tradesman in this country to assist me in preparing an estimate of the requisite desks, seats and repairs for the Louisburgh, Fallduff and Devlin schoolhouses . . ."



Part of the estimates were as follows:

11 seats and 54 planks = £0.13.9d

11 desks and 11 planks = £1.7.6d

Sawers fees = £0.12.6d

Nails for seats and desks = £0.14.0d

Master's seat and writing desk = £1.0.0d

Other items brought the total estimate to £9.10.9d

The total estimate for furnishing Devlin school was £11.8.10d, and for Fallduff, £10.8.6d.

Fallduff school was established in 1822; the master in the 1830's was Owen Adams; school attendance was fifty males and twenty females in summer, and seventy males with forty females in winter. The School Registers of all the schools fill the gaps. The Correspondents with the Board of Education were Father Gibbons, with Fathers Dwyer and Ward.

The Board "took into connexion" Louisburgh school in 1832, and grant-aided the teacher's salary to the amount of £8; dates of payment were £4 in March and £4 in September. Up to the 31st March, 1835, the amounts of money allocated as grant-aid towards fitting up and requisites were £6.4.10d and £3.13.9d respectively. On average seventy-three boys and thirty girls attended school in Louisburgh town. The school was inspected on 30 August, 1836, was found to be "very efficient", and a salary rise to £12 was recommended for John Sweeney. Sadly the salary remained at £8 per annum until 1839.

In 1839 the rolls showed seventy-nine boys and thirty-two girls.

But the National Board of Education "struck off" Louisburgh school in 1839, "in consequence of Dr. McHale's opposition to the National Board." It must be explained that while many of the Catholic bishops hoped that the Board's rules would guarantee against proselytism, a minority of the hierarchy, including the Archbishop of Tuam Doctor McHale, (from 1834), had serious doubts about the system. Archbishop McHale was opposed to non-denominational education and was strongly of the opinion that Catholic children should receive an Irish Catholic education. The Presbyterians were of the same opinion vis-a-vis their own. Neither the Irish language nor Irish history were on the curriculum.

Consequently, Louisburgh school was withdrawn from the system in 1839, and would not appear again in official documents until 6th October, 1847, when an "Application to the Commissioners of Education for Aid towards building a School House" was received in Dublin.

The school was to be called "Louisburgh School"; Lord Sligo would grant a lease of three lives or thirty-one years rent free; the name of the correspondent was given as George Hildebrand, Esq. (Agent of Lord Sligo).

Catholic clerical management would not come into effect again until much later in the century.

Bunowen

John Lyons

Sources: Archives Office, Dublin; Census 1821, 1831, 1841; Diocesan Records, Tuam; Parliamentary Papers 1824, National Library; O'Tuathaigh, Gearóid: Ireland Before the Famine, Dublin 1972

## HERITAGE AND YOU

*The following contribution has come to the Editor with the name and address of the writer, but with a request that they not be used. It is our practice to require that articles for An Choinneal should appear in print over the writer's name. That gives the article character and further meaning. However, as may be gathered from this writer's note at the end of this contribution, there is sufficient reason for not disclosing it in this instance. This should not be regarded, however, as any kind of precedent for the future.*

Editor

Dear Editor,

Your editorial in An Choinneal 1992 issue "Who Are We Anyway" is, I'm sure, all correct, and it is important that we take our heritage seriously. However, you seem to suggest that holding on to our heritage should be more important than anything else. While I appreciate your sentiments I believe you missed an important point which, I feel, needs to be addressed for the good of our youth. I wish to address the young people of our parish. In particular those who have decided or may decide to emigrate. My feelings on emigration are not important to this text and therefore I will accept it is a fact (which it is!).

After having spent some time in England and America I have learned a lot about myself and believe that I have something to offer to those who may follow my tracks. I have been employed, primarily, in the construction industry. Most of what I say in this article is my opinion, except when I speak of exploitation - this is fact! Learning about our heritage is, I believe, important; but getting to know yourself and what you want in life is, in my opinion, much more important. When you know what you want you can focus yourself and you will relate to everything around you in a different light. You will be confident and decisive and, in time, you will be successful in your own field. Knowledge of oneself and one's heritage do come hand-in-hand. You are a product of the society from where you came.

As you embark on the "journey" of getting to know yourself you must understand your upbringing (i.e. heritage). How have your parents, siblings, teachers, friends, church, priests, greater community, financial status etc. shaped you? You must have some understanding of why you are the way you are before you develop into a mature individual. When you understand who "We" are, you must then discover who "I" am. Discovering yourself entails asking yourself questions and making decisions; e.g.: If you are a heavy drinker while socializing ask yourself why . . . Is it peer pressure? is it the norm? is it macho? is it the alcohol? or, indeed, is it a part of our heritage? Then ask yourself if this is a habit you want to keep as an individual. (Here are more examples; Why do I go to Mass? Why do I curse and swear?).

Once you have come to grips with "who we are" and "who I am" you are becoming a whole individual. You will be relaxed and confident in yourself. You are now better prepared to enter our cosmopolitan societies where you, as an individual immigrant, should be capable of communicating with people who have no knowledge of your



heritage and have little in common with you except the fact that they live or work in the same area as you. You may find yourself in situations where you'll need to communicate with Indians, Arabs, English, Spaniards, Mexicans, Americans, Irish-Americans, Chinese, Japanese, Canadians etc. Your confidence in your own identity will help you greatly in relating to these people. Your individuality will make you a more understanding person. E.g. When a person of Indian origin doesn't understand what you say, instead of getting frustrated with his/her inability to understand, you will repeat your sentence slowly and clearly realizing that he/she comes from a totally different background, has a different first language, and you can't expect him/her to understand your accent too well. A solid knowledge and acceptance of your heritage combined with your own individual qualities will prepare you for a content and harmonious life in our cosmopolitan societies. Being yourself will, at times, mean dropping some traits of your heritage . . . So be it. You have to be yourself. But be very careful which traits you decide to cast aside.

Now I want to tell you about some of the Irish people that I have met abroad. Sadly many of our people across the sea are exploited by their own people. Irish employers take advantage of Irish employees and, in turn, when the employees become employers they tend to carry on the exploitation. I believe this exploitation takes place as a direct result of these people not taking the time to get to know themselves as individuals. They remember their heritage/home and take it so seriously that they foster a huge nostalgic passion to return. They live in the past (how Ireland was) and the future ("I'd love to go back home"). They are incapable of living in the present. They just want to get back to Ireland. What about the individual needs now, in the present? Why do I want to go back? Has Ireland changed? Have I changed? What do I want from life? . . . Sadly they don't ask themselves these questions. This craving to go home to Ireland brings on the start of a hunger for money. In order to move back to Ireland they figure that monetary wealth is necessary. This craving for the "return" grows and, therefore, money will cloud their judgement in the days ahead. Money is the driving force now. These people become ruthless in their quest to the point where they will exploit their employees (i.e. their own countrymen, our emigrants). The trait of basic decency, of which the editor spoke in 1992 issue, is gone. They exploit their employees in many ways. Here are some of the crimes they commit: . . . They pay cash or gross-wages, thus putting the burden of paying insurance and taxes directly on the employee; they let the employees work in unnecessarily dangerous conditions (sometimes they give them no choice) in order to keep job-costs low and profits high (e.g. dangerous scaffolding); they expect the employees to work over-time for regular pay, etc. etc. . . There are legal statutes which forbid all of the above. These laws are frequently ignored by both the employer and employee; by the employer for reasons already mentioned and by the employee because he/she wants to keep his/her job and refrain from complaining. Maybe some of the employees don't know their rights. The fact that these laws are ignored allows the exploitation to continue.

Many of these exploiters/employers, through their accumulation of wealth, acquire a comfortable lifestyle and, ironically when they do, they decide that they don't want to go back to Ireland's frugality (which is, itself, another misconception). Somewhere along the way their passion for the "return" became passion for the pound or the

almighty dollar. At a very important time in their lives they put their energy into trying to buy happiness (for the future), when all they had to do was look at themselves and get to know their individual needs (for the present). The dream of returning got dropped and now their lives consist of work and money. Some of them never even had a dream; they are just plain greedy. I must say that not all our people abroad are like this. Some of them are strong individuals and have humane qualities. My intention here is to inform our prospective emigrants of some of the problems they may face and to advise them that, while it is important to be aware of their heritage and where they came from it must be kept in perspective. You must discover your personal needs for fulfilment, and where your heritage fits in with your plans.

So I say to you, the young person of this parish, who is going abroad for whatever reason: be at ease with yourself and enjoy every experience of every day. To repeat the editor's quote from Hopkins in 1992 issue: "Glory be to God for dappled things" (and just "Glory" if you don't believe in God). Do not allow yourself to be exploited. Stand up for your rights and don't be afraid to walk your own walk. Always remember; You're Irish, You're from Kilgeever but most importantly . . . *You are You*. Being *You* will prevent you from exploiting others in the future.

Dear reader,

I enjoy reading articles myself and like to see a name signed to them. However, signing my name here may have negative effects for others. Maybe, without a name, you will take the subject matter more seriously . . . it is a serious matter. With you, the young person of the parish in mind, I have written this article with the hope that you will benefit from it. My "journey" is not yet over. Please forgive me for not giving you my name.



*Journey - whither?*

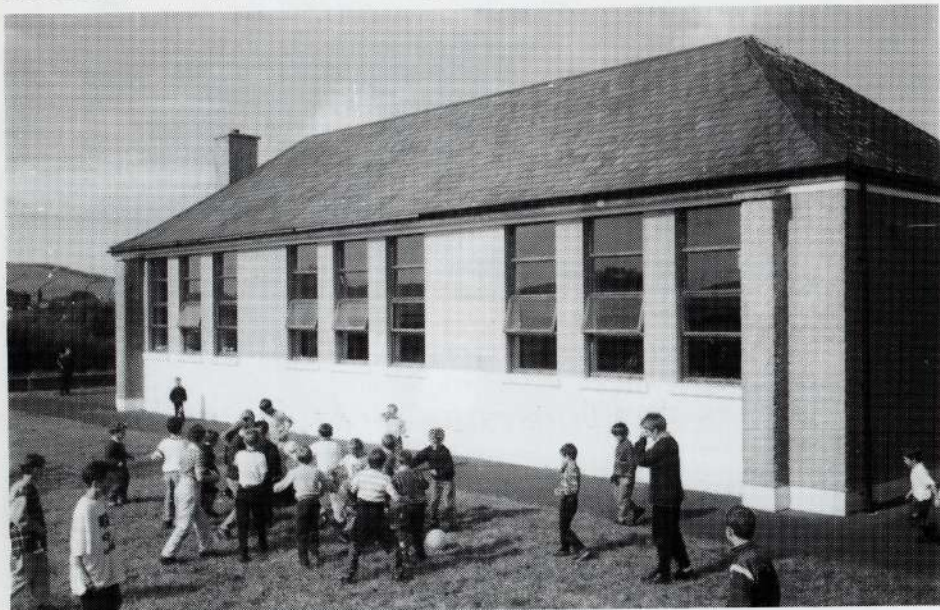


# PROPOSED NEW SCHOOL

Plans are at an advanced stage for the amalgamation of the girls and boys primary schools into one central co-educational school. Up to 1940 there was co-education to a limited degree at primary level the site of the present Parochial Hall: the girls attended school upstairs and the boys downstairs. In the late thirties and early forties both groups moved — each into its own separate building, the individual schools that we know today. The lack of good quality building material during the war years has led to a situation where, after fifty years, both schools are seriously sub-standard.

The site for the new building is the football pitch at the rear of the existing boys school in Tooreen. When the new building has been completed, that present boys school will be demolished to create a playground to the front of the new school.

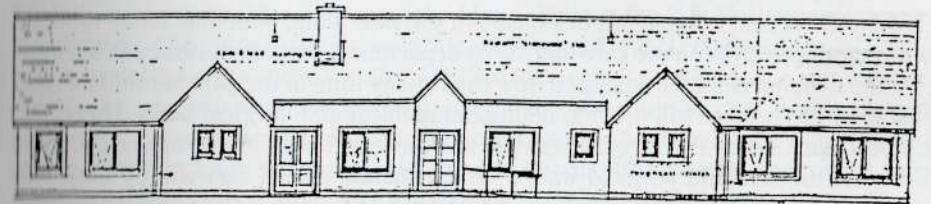
The Department of Education has sanctioned the new building — with four classrooms, a General Purposes room and a library. Though the projected cost is £300,000 a grant of 85% has been sanctioned, leaving a shortfall of £45,000 to be raised by the newly constituted fund-raising committee. This committee has drawn up plans for raising funds over the coming year. As part of that plan, they hope to enlist the help of Louisburgh people, all over the world; and especially the past pupils of both earlier schools as well as the outlying rural schools which later amalgamated with these. Any donations, however small, would be gratefully welcomed by the committee in Louisburgh. If any *Coinneal* reader, having read this news, would like to help our project for the young people of the area, please write to: The Secretary, Fund-Raising Committee, Primary School, Louisburgh.



*Louisburgh boys at play – September 1994.*



*Louisburgh girls at play – September 1994.*



*Proposed new school – elevation.*

***“Oideachas don óige agus uisce don lachain”.***

***Learning should come as easy to the young as  
water to a duck.***



# A COMMUNITY HOSPITAL

My mother, Annie O'Brien, died at the new Mayo General Hospital on June 13, 1994. When I visited her there during her final illness, I was comforted to find her in a new modern hospital and intensive care unit, where, as I observed over the following several days, she received care of quality as high as she might receive in a Dublin Private Clinic or a U.S. hospital, for that matter. She was attended by able and caring nurses from a staff that included many of the daughters of her neighbours and friends from Louisburgh; her care was supervised by Dr. Luke O'Donnell, a physician trained in leading centres in England, who was born and raised in not-too-far-off Charlestown, Co. Mayo.

As I left the intensive care unit on my first visit, and glanced to the right and west, through large sun-filled windows I saw the reassuring and familiar profile of the Reek. It surprised me with its closeness, and it reminded me that I was at home. Then and since I have felt grateful that my mother was cared for with skill and solicitude, not in an alien place, but in her own community's hospital.

I know that many of us in the past have had mixed perceptions of the hospital in Castlebar. The new name Mayo General Hospital is in itself an improvement on the old Castlebar County Hospital. The old name suggested an institution belonging to another town, in which we might be accepted as patients on sufferance. The new name identifies the hospital as belonging to the larger community of Mayo. A name that I would favour still more would be Mayo Community Hospital, to further emphasise that the hospital's mission is one of service to the people of Mayo.

With the recent completion of Phase 1 of the new wing, which includes modern operating rooms, an intensive care unit, X-ray department, outpatient clinic and surgical beds, the hospital is better equipped now than at any time in the past to fulfill its role. Phase 2 of the project will provide additional medical and surgical beds. There will then be a total of sixty-five on each service, and these will completely replace the units on the old medical and surgical wards. A longstanding need that will be met with implementation of Phase 2 of the building project will be a modern Casualty Department or Emergency Room. It is unnecessary to point out to anyone who has attended this department, that this old cramped and badly designed facility does not meet today's standards. Another important component of the Phase 2 project is the provision of a day-surgery ward, that will be designed to accommodate patients having minor elective surgical procedures, after which they can be discharged on the same day. The Phase 2 project was due to begin in 1992, but to the alarm of many, still awaits final approval from the Department of Health in Dublin before it can get under way.

While adequate physical plant and equipment is an essential part of a modern acute care hospital, qualified personnel and the range and quality of the services provided determine the true value of the hospital to the community. The principal determinant of these services is medical specialist staffing. There has been a lot of progress made over the past decade. Staffing by consultant physicians and surgeons is now excellent in most areas.

General surgery is well provided for by three superb surgeons. Mr. Ronan Waldron,

whom I have known since he was a brilliant medical student in Galway, is representative of this group. A general and gastrointestinal surgeon, he is a member of the Waldron family of Ballindine, Co. Mayo, and he has a deep commitment to the hospital and its mission to the community. The senior member of the Surgery team is Mr Joe Johnston, an active member of the Council of the Royal College of Surgeons, and he has provided the leadership that has brought much of the progress and achievements of the past decade. The third surgeon is Mr Paul Eustace, whose expertise includes urologic as well as general surgery.

Obstetrics and Gynecology services are in the capable hands of two consultants, Dr Darragh Corcoran and Dr Seamus Moneley. Pediatrics, long a major untended need at the hospital, now has an excellent unit, which was set up in 1979 by Canadian-trained Dr David O'Keane. He was joined in 1987 by a second consultant Dr. Gay Fox who brought with him expertise in the care of new-born and premature infants (Neonatology). The general Medical service is also very strong now and includes Dr. Luke O'Donnell, whom I mentioned at the outset, whose specialty is diseases of the liver and digestive organs (Gastroenterology), and Dr John Murphy, who has special expertise in illnesses affecting the elderly (Geriatrics). The most recent appointment to the hospital and to the department of Medicine is Dr. Finoula Lavin, a specialist in cardiac and lung diseases, who is a native of Kiltimagh.

Other notable achievements in staffing include new appointments to the department of Anaesthesia. For nearly twenty years this department was manned singlehandedly, ( and very well ), by Dr Aidan Bourke of Castlebar. Now he has two new colleagues, Dr. Mike Thornton, who trained in Brisbane, Australia and Dr. James Mulhill, who received his training at the Mayo Clinic in the U.S. Both these men have specialty qualifications in intensive care medicine, and in fact represent two of only six such physicians in the entire country. I should not neglect to mention the very essential diagnostic specialists in the hospital, whom the patients may not ever personally encounter, namely the radiologists, Doctors Brendan Murphy and Una Mullowney and last but not least the pathologist, who is my good friend and mentor Dr Gerry Solan, and who for good measure also comes from Kiltimagh.

As the staff and administration are aware, there still remain some important medical needs of the community, that are either not being met at all or are inadequately met by the hospital. Orthopaedic services are inadequate because the hospital does not have an orthopaedic surgeon on its staff. This means that people in the community who sustain even uncomplicated fractures, cannot be treated in Castlebar, but must be referred to Galway. Head injuries are another common emergency in the community that poses a problem for the hospital. In the absence of a sophisticated X-ray machine called a C-T scanner, patients with worrisome head injuries must be transported to Beaumont Hospital in Dublin. There should be a C-T machine at Mayo General Hospital.

Another important health care need of the community that is currently not being met is specialized cancer treatment services. While some common cancers, such as large bowel cancer, are often adequately treated and cured by surgery alone, there are other common cancers, such as those of the breast, ovary and lung for which drug treatment or chemotherapy is frequently also required. Patients now have to travel to



Dublin or Galway to receive these treatments. The appointment of a consultant Oncologist and the setting up of a medical oncology unit is, I think, an important priority. Radiation treatment for patients in Mayo is a more difficult issue. Currently radiation treatment is centralized in Dublin at Saint Luke's Hospital, to which patients must travel from the West and other areas, to receive treatments for those cancers for which radiation is useful. These long journeys are a great hardship for people, who are often very ill and discouraged. (I recall how difficult these visits were for my father for the treatment of his lung cancer a decade ago.) Unfortunately, radiotherapy equipment is very expensive to buy and support. It may not be possible to justify such a unit in Mayo, but such a facility certainly should be located at the regional level in Galway, and provision made for the easy access to these services for Mayo General patients who need treatment.

The County Hospital was built in 1938. The *Connaught Telegraph* of Saturday, October 22nd 1938 described the new facility as the most up-to-date in Ireland in its headline of that day. (Incidentally, it also mentioned that the attendance at the official opening included Dr. William O'Grady from Louisburgh). That facility, which was built on the site of the old jail, replaced the unspeakably primitive County Infirmary. It brought a big improvement in medical services to the community at that time. The opening of the new Phase 1 wing, and the improved consultant staffing of the hospital, has created an entirely new prospect for health care delivery in Mayo, which will be further realized with the completion of the Phase 2 project.

The future of the hospital is of vital interest to the West. Its continued success has large economic and social as well as medical implications for Mayo. The hospital employs 500 people from its surrounding communities and the lion's share of its annual budget of twelve million pounds or so, finds its way into the local economy. The capital allocation to complete Phase 2 of the building project will be approximately 5.5 million pounds.

The future of Mayo General Hospital is far too important to be left to the discretion of remote and disinterested central government in Dublin, or to be determined by some obsolete health policy or planning document conceived twenty years ago. Support and practical political action from the community for the hospital and its medical leadership will be necessary to insure that it is provided with the resources for it to carry out its mission now and in the future. The community ought also endeavour to have a meaningful say in what the scope of that mission should be. Sons and daughters of Mayo who live abroad may also be in a position to exert their influence and contribute in some way to insuring that the hospital will reach its full and considerable potential for the benefit of the communities and families of County Mayo.

Boston, Mass., U.S.A.

Michael J O'Brien, M.D., M.P.H.

Acknowledgements: I would like to thank Mr Ronan Waldron, F.R.C.S.I., Mr. Michael Fahey, Administrator of the Mayo General Hospital, and the staff of Mayo County Library for their help in researching this article.

## ORDINATION IN KILLEEN

When I first heard that Brendan Kilcoyne would be ordained in Killeen I rejoiced for the people of the half-parish, and indeed for all the Louisburgh people. My mind immediately flashed back to June 1955 when I said my first Mass in Killeen. I remember the pride of my family and relatives in Aillemore, Cloonty and Cross, I remember the excitement and sheer joy of all my neighbours in Aillemore and the pride of the young people, the school-mates and members of the Killeen Team. I recall how, after my first Mass in Killeen on a Sunday in late June, there was a stampede to the altar-rails to get the First Blessing. I can still see the faces of Tom (Darling) Jennings, Johnny Kitterick, Johnny Toole, Maggie Jennings, Margretta O'Malley and Bessie from the cottage. There was James Mylie, James Grady, and Pat Davitt, all wanting the bragging rights as to who got the blessing first. Brendan Kilcoyne's Ordination would create that same atmosphere all over again, but on a far more exciting scale because on this occasion there was not only going to be a First Mass but the first ordination ever in the Killeen Church. For weeks I waited with anticipation for July 5th to roll around because I, like so many from the whole Louisburgh area, wanted to be a part of history. Brendan had mentioned how pastorally minded Archbishop Cassidy was and that he wanted the ordination in the local community. No long trips to Maynooth, or to Rome where Brendan studied. The ordination was to be a family celebration, and a local celebration. It was an opportunity for the people of Killeen and Louisburgh to stand tall!

I arrived in Killeen on the evening of July 3rd with my two sisters, Sister Ailbie and Chris. Killeen Church has always been a beacon of light and a gathering place for the faithful from Thallabawn and Cregganbawn and every villager in between. This time the Church seemed to stand taller. It glistened in the setting sunlight. The women, men, and children all rose to the occasion. They had put their best foot forward and Killeen Church was shining bright! When I stopped at the church I was joyfully greeted by a whole slew of workers. Dave Gibbons (Cloonlara) was there, so were the Davitts from Curra and their sister Mrs. McGreal from Thallabawn. There was Jimmie Egan (The Teacher) and another school-teacher who is the head teacher in Carrowinskey school and so many more. I saw them raise the Papal Flag and the Irish Flag and I helped them put up bunting that reached from Killeen Crossroad to the little bridge beyond the chapel. Up went the "Welcome" sign facing toward Louisburgh to greet friends and family. Up went the "Good Luck Fr. Brendan" signs. Then the fifty member Killeen Choir arrived to rehearse. All ages from ten to sixty and all from the Killeen Community. It was their last rehearsal and they wanted it to be right. The memory of that evening in Killeen will carry me through many a long night.

Sunday, July 5th dawned beautifully. I and all my family headed for Killeen. I was scheduled to concelebrate the 9 a.m. Mass as it was being said for my Uncle, Tommy Coyne of Aillemore, who had passed away a few months before that. Then a quick breakfast and a stop at Brendan's house to see if he was up. It would be terrible to be late for one's Ordination. Bernadette, his mother, was so cool; but you could see the joy and the inner happiness that flashed in her shy smile. For all those who don't



know the relationship and who Brendan's mother and father are, let me explain: His mother is Bernadette Lyons from Killadoon, Mickey Lyons' daughter and she married P. J. Kilcoyne from Krickeen. After a long illness P. J. died leaving her a widow with three: children Brendan, Catherine and Maria. My brother, Tommy Coyne, who was born and raised in Aillemore and who always had an eye for a beautiful woman, decided to hang around Killadoon when he would come home from England and he eventually married Bernadette, changing her name from Kilcoyne to Coyne.

To get out of their way I decided to head for Killeen Church. The Louisburgh gardai were there already to direct traffic. You see, there was no parking allowed between Killeen Crossroads and the bridge beyond the chapel. You could now see the fires blazing, three of them, and you could see the people and cars coming back the Feenone Road and up from Cross, back the main road from Louisburgh and down from Devlin, Killadoon and Aillemore. The church was beautifully decorated. It looked magnificent but was too small to accommodate everyone who wanted to see the first ordination. The Technical School Hall directly across the road, beside the graveyard, was all set up for closed circuit television so everyone could see history being made!

Brendan arrived at the Church with his Mam and Step-Dad. He really looked calm and peaceful. Then, priests from all over started to arrive. Some old, like myself, and some young contemporaries of Brendan's. The only two I recognised were Father Pat O'Malley from Doughmackeon who was home on sick leave from Africa and Father James O'Malley of Killsallagh, who is retired from America and now living in Lecanvey. I counted about forty of them and among them was the newly appointed Auxiliary Bishop of Tuam, Michael Neary. Around 12:30 p.m. Archbishop Cassidy arrived, greeted everyone, and went out of his way to put everyone at ease. As all the clergy began vesting, Brendan started nervously to put on his alb. It was obvious that he was conscious of the awesomeness of the occasion. At 1 p.m. the church bells rang loud and clear and the long procession started. Following the crossbearer were about thirty altar-boys and forty priests, then Brendan, and lastly the Shepherd himself, Archbishop Cassidy. As I walked up the aisle of Killeen Church in procession, I got a good look at the people. I knew about half of them. It was touching to see the joy in their faces and the tears in their eyes. The choir sounded angelic as they sang *Ecce Sacerdos Magnus*. When the candidate's name was called, Brendan stepped forward and responded clearly – "Adsum (present)", and the ordination ceremony was under way.

During the ceremony I watched the altar-boys and their curiosity. I prayed that God would pluck a few of them and that they would answer the call and continue the long list of young men from the Louisburgh area who have become priests. As a matter of fact at one time Louisburgh Parish had the record in all of Ireland for the largest number of living priests from any parish. I wonder what parish has the record now.

This ordination ceremony brought back memories of my own ordination in Saint John's Seminary in Waterford on June 19, 1955. It is a long ceremony. The laying on of hands by the Bishop was also done by the attending priests – all forty of us. Yet, the whole Mass and ordination ceremony went by so fast. The vesting of the candidate was done by Father Moran, the Parish Priest in Louisburgh and Father Salmon the

Curate. They looked so proud and happy that a young man in their parish had accepted the call and was now being ordained. In the closing remarks, the Archbishop made everyone feel so proud. It was their day, their celebration! It was now time to get the newly-ordained's first blessing. First to receive it was the Archbishop and then Brendan's Mam and Dad, and his two proud sisters, Marion and Catherine. As we processed out of the church, the choir had seemed to hold the best for last and the applause of the jubilant family relatives, friends and neighbours was heart-warming. After a long time outside the Church where everyone seemed to have a camera, the procession of cars headed for Louisburgh and the reception at "The Derrylahan".

It was a long, memorable day, that July 5th: it was memorable for Father Brendan and his family, for the people of Killeen and Louisburgh and for the Archdiocese of Tuam. With all the excitement the ordination I was afraid that July 6th, the day of Brendan's First Mass, would be a let-down. But, as it turned out, I had no reason to fear. The First Mass was scheduled for 12 Noon on Monday, July 6th. That gave all the people a chance to get the cows milked and the other chores done. Weatherwise it was another magnificent day. Twenty-five priests returned to concelebrate with Brendan and to give him moral support. The bright-eyed altar-boys were all there again as was the choir. This first Mass reminded me of other first Masses in Killeen. I thought of the late Father John O'Malley of Cloonty, a cousin of Brendan . . . I thought of Father O'Grady from Glenkeen, of Father Davitt and Father Grady from Curra. I thought of Father Eugene Nee and myself returning to say our first Mass in Killeen. I thought too, of Louisburgh and all the first Masses celebrated there down through the years. When I was growing up in Aillemore and during the time I was going to college, it seemed there was a First Mass in Louisburgh every other year. I recall the Morahans, the O'Tooles, the O'Malleys, the Burkes and Prendergasts; and there were the Scahill and Heneghan families too! What a rich history Louisburgh has! Between the two places of Louisburgh and Killeen, a great contribution was made to the Church.

When we started Mass, Brendan was somewhat excited and maybe nervous, but when it came time for the homily, he stepped forward and did himself proud. I was in a position to watch his Mam, Dad and family and they seemed to have their fingers crossed. I watched, too, the sunburned faces of a proud Killeen people as they hung on to every word. After a loud applause, Brendan was in total command for the rest of the Mass.

The First Blessing was given outside the Church and it was neat! As dozens stood in line for the blessing, the rest walked across the road to the Technical School for the luncheon. The luncheon was all prepared by the people of the Killeen Community and what a job they did! I hung around there for a long time. I tried to meet all my old neighbours in Aillemore and my classmates from Killadoon School. When I left, around 4 p.m., there was still a big crowd there. Nobody wanted to leave, they all seemed to want to continue the party forever!



## THE WEE MAN

### Michael Jimmy Jennings

This story begins in the village of Aillemore in October 1897.

A son is born to James Jennings. He is the fourth of twelve children. It was obvious at an early age that Michael would be different. What he lacked physically he made up for mentally. At the turn of the century the Blake family owned the lodge in Aillemore. The lady of the house was there most of the time on her own and was known as Missus to the locals. She took a liking to Michael. She was very much impressed with his manners and intelligence. Michael spent a lot of time around the house doing odd jobs and running errands. One of his rewards for this was



John J. McNally and Michael Jennings, 1956

access to the library. He took full advantage of this privilege. He was an avid reader and over the years he would read hundreds of books. He could be found in the evening at some hob in the village reading a book and sharing its contents with young and old.

At school he was the envy of his peers. A few times he was bullied into sharing his school work, which in turn got him into trouble with old Master Maguire. After several years the master told him, "I've taught you all I know." University should be the next step. It was not to be. The times weren't ready for The Wee Man for financial and other reasons. During all this time the lady of the lodge recognized his talents in music. He would learn to read music, play the violin, accordion and flute. His tastes ran the full gamut, traditional Irish to classical. Many people influenced Michael's early life – parent, clergy and teachers. Other people also left their mark – Miss Blake, the Salmons of Carramore, "Uncle" Peter and his daughters, Anne and Brigid, who later ran a boarding house and restaurant in Westport.

One of the many stories that I remember he told me was about Carramore during the First World War. It was a Sunday evening and many of the village elders were gathered in the kitchen discussing some major campaign which was being launched by the Germans. As usual, Michael was on the hob, listening to the pros and cons of the German tactics. From time to time he would be consulted to clear up geographical and other problems. You could imagine that you had dropped in on a meeting of the German General Staff in Berlin rather than the humble villagers of Carramore. He loved visiting Carramore because of the many visitors to Uncle Peter's. The *craic* was great.

After the War of Independence, the "Jimmy" Jennings family, among many others, moved to Thallabawn. You would think they had moved to the Promised Land; everyone was so excited. Also during this time many "Yanks" returned home and Michael's musical talents were in demand for the many parties and dances thrown in their honour.

His social life wasn't lacking, for not only did he play musical instruments, he was also a great step-dancer. The nineteen-twenties provided some low points in his life. Emigration was at its highest level, and brothers, sisters and many dear friends went away, among them Patteen "Buggy" Keane. This gave him a feeling of being left behind never to see places he had read about. Anne and Brigid Salmon helped him through these times. He loved to visit them in Westport and stay overnight. He would go to the "pictures" at the Westport cinema. He would meet the many lodgers and visitors at the Salmons. He called the Salmon House "the embassy for the people of the West." It seemed everyone passed through there. On one of his visits, Anne and Brigid surprised him with the gift of a bicycle. He was delighted. He later said it was like receiving a car. He told me it had to be a woman's bicycle since he wasn't big enough for a man's. That Raleigh served him well. I remember seeing it in the fifties awaiting his return.

During the thirties the family prospered in Thallabawn. The family members who had gone to America were faithful; all the slates were cleared, sheep and cattle were bought. My grandfather was kept busy in the forge. Every month the postman delivered the NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC, a gift from Margaret's – his sister's – employer. He would share the magazine and its contents with family and friends. Many times he would retreat to the hills or the "common," tending sheep and cattle, to read and think about the people and places in the magazines. He shared some of these thoughts with his younger sister, Rose, who also liked to daydream. One of the many houses he visited was that of my paternal great-grandmother, Mary Anne McNally. She was the matriarch of the family. She would tell him many stories and personal experiences of the famine. Most of the conversations were in Irish. Many of the older people could express themselves better in the native tongue. Other names he mentioned were the Morrisons, Gallaghers, Frasers, Tommy Affies and, of course, the O'Tooles, and his dear friend, Brigid Galvin. With this name come thoughts of music and dancing.

The thirties brought the end of emigration to the USA. Britain was now the place to go when you had to leave. A new generation left for places like London, Liverpool and Manchester. Among those who left, just to name a few, were Anne, Una McNamara, Rose Jennings, and John and James McNally. After my parents married, they encouraged Michael to visit London. My grandmother was against it. She didn't want to lose her "wee man." Finally, she gave him her blessing. In London he got a job with a courier company as a driver's assistant. Within six months he knew his way around London. For him it was a dream come true. At the many social events he met people from all over Ireland. He loved the dances and the *craic*. He would recall these happy times. There was not much money but everyone shared. In nineteen thirty-nine the war ended these happy times.

Michael, with his sister and family, returned home to the relief of his mother. As the war waged on, Britain was desperate for labour. Michael volunteered, to the surprise of many including his family. His last night was spent with his dear friends, the Salmons. Again his bicycle was mothballed. In the morning he boarded the train for Dublin. At Claremorris the compartment he occupied was filled with a fine-looking group of men speaking Irish. During the journey several remarks were made about "the wee man:" where could he be going? what could he do? He never let on that he was a fluent Irish speaker. As the train drew near Dublin, these young men became nervous. They had



never been away from home; they were wondering how they would get to the boat and then to Coventry. At that time he spoke to them. He told them not to worry. He also was going to Coventry. He had been to London and knew what to do. Needless to say, they were embarrassed but relieved. It seems that Michael was one of the few on the train who had made the trip before. So here was all 4'6" of him being followed by all these young men, some of them over 6'. Before long they were in Holyhead, then on to Coventry. His new home was a hostel. He started to work at the Standard Motor Works along with hundreds more from all over Ireland. Coventry would be his home for the next sixteen years - some of the happiest of his life. Life there became routine with work taking up most of the time. In the hostel he met some characters. Donegal was well represented. He had a soft spot for them. He felt Mayo and Donegal had a lot in common - two large counties in the west with lots of people. He was soon reunited with a dear friend, Anne McNamara, and later on with "The Blonde" - Birdie O'Toole. That is when Thomas Street came into his life. During the war years he would visit his sister, Rose, and friend in Lancashire. His favorite pub was the Rope Makers in Wigan. It seemed that everyone who passed through northern England visited the Rope Makers and its landlord, Paddy King, a Galway man.

People like John Tim Toole, travelling from Scotland, were regular customers. John Tim had many stories, one of which said that tobacco was discovered on the tomb of Christ. It wasn't unusual to hear such rebel songs as "Kevin Barry" and "James Connolly" being bellowed out. His musical talents, especially with the fiddle, were put to use.

The end of the war came, so a trip home was in order. After several weeks at home, he returned to Coventry and new challenges. He had an unusual experience during the retooling of the assembly line at the Standard Works. Massive pieces of equipment came in from the USA. After several months of assembly, everything was ready for production. When several problems occurred, it was estimated it would take six weeks to fix all the problems. The head engineer, an American, remembered seeing a little guy in the workforce of thousands. He had a plan and the "wee man" was part of it. A meeting was held and Michael was shown the problems and the tight working area. Several sketches were made; he volunteered and went to work. Most of the time he was lying on his back in tight quarters only he could work in. The corrective work went so well he was asked to check some critical parts not on the original list. The machinery was turned on and worked fine. The "wee man" was a hero. The Yanks had a celebration in which he took part.

In the late forties, he came close to death while crossing a street in Coventry. He was struck by a large vehicle and dragged several hundred feet. It was a miracle he lived. When his sister, Rose, spoke to the doctors, they told her that his survival was due to his small body being able to fit between the wheels and fuel tank. I believe his mother's prayers and his lifestyle helped too. The accident left many scars including the limited use of his left wrist. He was never able to play the violin the way he did before. His recovery was long and he experienced job layoffs but he never lost faith. He was helped along the way by his family and many friends in Coventry, the most notable being Anne McNamara and the "Blonde" O'Toole.

During the late forties and early fifties more people from home came to Coventry



Christmas 1967.

with names like Mannion, O'Malley, O'Grady, Needham and so forth. A younger generation but great *craic*. Eileen O'Toole was a conductor on the buses. She would make sure Michael would sit at the end of the bus so she could give and receive the latest news. Eileen's hearty laugh would be heard by many. During this time he worked at the Daimler factory and stayed there in 1957. That year his oldest sister, Margaret, visited Britain and Ireland. He spent three months with her. It had been thirty years since he had seen her. After she returned to the United States, he stayed with his sister, Mary-Anne, in Lancashire. He spent two years there and worked for Tarmac Construction. He enjoyed working with a group of young lads from home: Michael Coyne, Thomas Pat Michael, Brian Green and many more.

In 1959 he sailed from Liverpool with his sister and her husband to the United States. On the way the ship stopped at Cobh, a place that many of his friends had sailed from years ago. The trip to America was a dream come true. He was reunited with many of his old friends and relatives. He lived with his sister, Margaret, and her husband in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania. He visited New York City, Boston, Clinton, Framingham and many more places where Mayo people settled. He met people like Anthony "Toby" Jennings, Pat Needham, Ellie Tommy, Michael Flynn, and many more too numerous to mention. The Coventry link was always there. He was reunited with Anne McNamara, Eileen O'Toole and with many people from Donegal living in Bryn Mawr, as well as many who had friends and relatives living in Coventry. A small world!

In 1967 he made his last visit to Ireland and enjoyed it. Many thanks to his cousins, Mary E., Paddy Jennings, and nephew, Joe. Many times Michael and I would meet at a local pub for the *craic*. One time I walked in and saw him surrounded by a group of people whom I later found out were professors from Villanova University. The conversation included Greek mythology, history and mathematics. They were astounded at his intelligence and knowledge and by the fact that he had only had a national school education and here he was holding his own with PhD's! It reminded me of Christ in the Temple surrounded by the Wise Men. The last ten years he lived with his sister, Mary Anne, and her husband, Thomas Walsh.

He told the story about the time in London he applied for a job in the circus and was turned down. He was too tall by half an inch. He would laugh and say that one time in his life he was too tall! He regretted never having got to visit Chicago and San Francisco.

To you people of Coventry, he never forgot ye. All I can say is, ye have a friend in heaven. I'm sure the wee man arrived there June 1983.

I'm forever grateful to God for letting him be part of my life.

My thanks to Father Leo for encouraging me; also Michael Joe Durkan.

Berwyn, PA, U.S.A.

John J. McNally



## WITNESS TO HISTORY

Donald Wallace's grave is right next to the wall of the new extension of the Heritage Centre in Louisburgh, the former Church of Ireland Church of Saint Catherine. You can see the grave from the window. It is almost part of the new extension – as if he is involved some way, approving and just being there. This grave seems to symbolise for me the feeling of the Centre. The Centre is living and new and progressive yet reaching out into the past, the old and the dead. The parish worship with its warmth, integrity and validity despite small numbers, has gone but the building breathes new life and fresh purpose, pleased to serve in a new way.

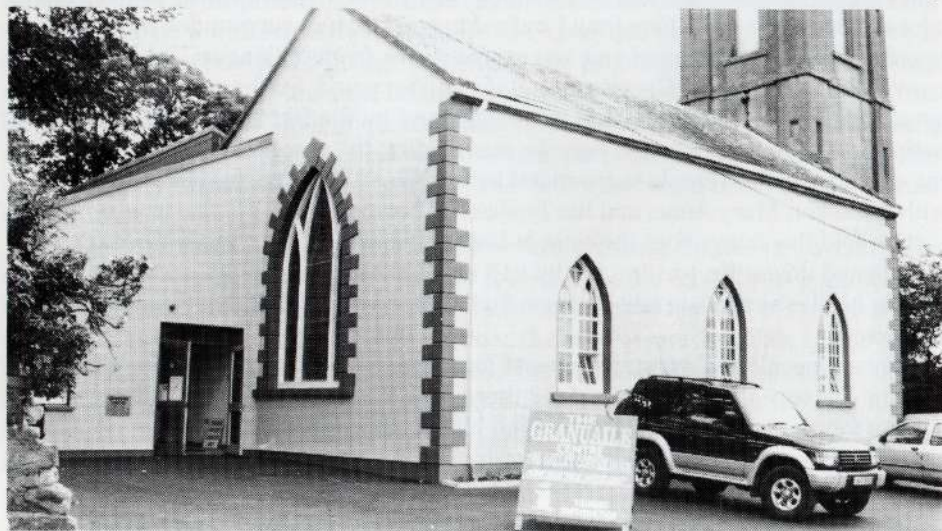
It is still a place of welcome and a repository of memories. The stained-glass window appears on two floors now yet still gives the same glowing light. Looking at the roof beams in the upstairs room, I realise how much I must have looked at them during service times, how familiar they feel although I was never as close to them as is possible now. The old prayer desk brings back fine thoughts of generation of prayers – of those who prayed.

In a way, buildings stand in judgement on what surrounds them and what is expressed within them. The love, the hate, the joy, the anger. All these feelings have been absorbed and are part of the fabric. Buildings are witnesses to the histories we can only read about Saint Catherine's was built before famine days and heard the intense and agonised prayers of the needy, the joy and hope of marriages, of Harvest Thanksgiving.

I hope the heritage centre of which Saint Catherine's is part will stand for truth in its portrayal of history, for forgiveness of past injuries, for praise of past goodness, for reconciliation and healing in this land of ours. It is a good time for this project to be there.

Westport.

Jack Heaslip



## TOSACH BUINN

*At the laying of the foundation stone of the Gránuaile Centre by Mr. Liam Hyland,, Minister for Rural Development. Mrs. Clementine Lyons, Cathaoirleach of Louisburgh Development Company said:*

A Dhaoine Uaisle tá sé de phribhléid agamsa anseo inniu fíorchaoín fáilte a chur romhaibh uile go léir, go Cluain Cearbán. Tá áthas mór orm go bhfuilmíd ag leagan bhun-chloch an fhoirgnimh nua atá dá thógáil againn ins an ionad stairiúl seo. Gabhaim buíochas libh as ucht bhur dteacht anseo chun a bheith linn chun bhur dtacaíocht a chur in iúl dúinn.

Louisburgh Development Company believes in and is very proud of Louisburgh, its culture, its heritage and its history. This company has worked following the inspiration of *Muintir na Tíre*, a guild of which was established here in Louisburgh, in the spring of 1954. It brought with it a vision, an inspiration and ideals which we greatly admired and adopted; and I am happy to say that we still work under that influence, even to this day. We want to show Louisburgh to Louisburgh; to its emigrants and their descendants, and to all who are interested in development; and to show them that to understand and appreciate the depth and beauty of our culture and heritage is fundamental. We are very proud of Louisburgh Community in all its aspects and diversities.



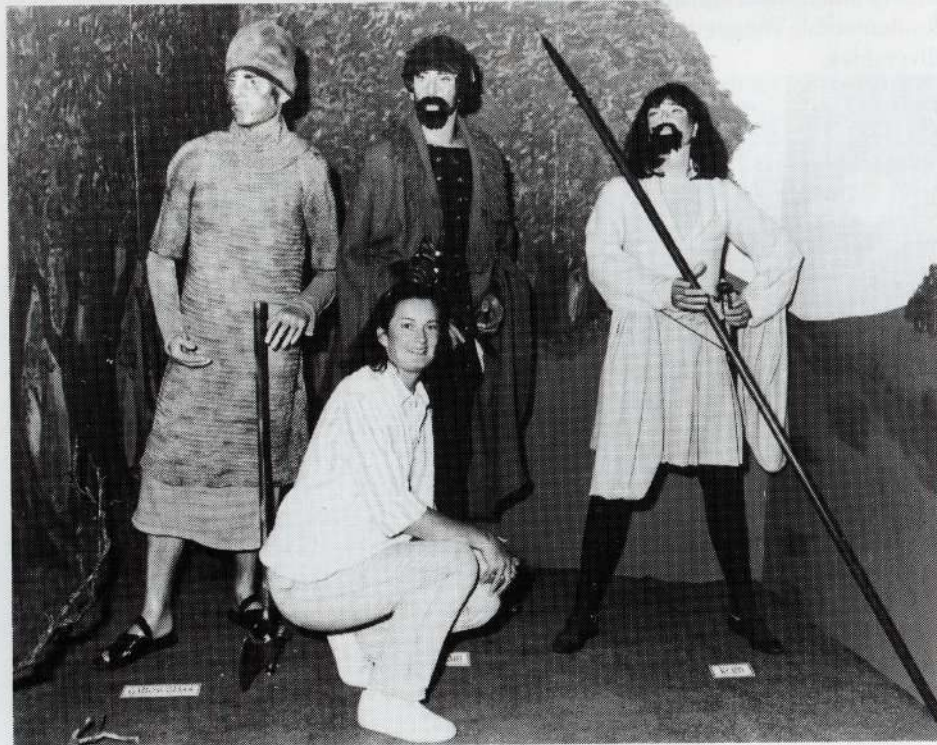
*Opening Day with Minister Liam Hyland, T.D., October 1993*



Our company established the Granuaile Centre here in 1988, and since then it has developed and expanded to include themes of geology, famine studies and Tóchar Phádraic, as well as crafts-shop and a coffee-shop. The building we are starting to-day will further enhance these themes.

Of course we realize that the future will bring problems and difficulties, but we are confident of success, with your help, good-will and co-operation. On behalf of Louisburgh Development Company I thank South-West-Mayo Development Company for their aid to us. I also thank Ireland West and in particular Mr. Seán Staunton for his unwavering backing and support at all times. I thank Mr. Liam Hyland, Minister for Rural Development for travelling to Louisburgh to lay the foundation stone of our new building today. The laying of this stone is a symbol of the building of a new physical structure. I pray that it may further symbolize a new awakening, a re-building of Christian values in our lives here, which will distinguish us from others as a special community. Such values will thrive and grow in the fertile soil of our new attitudes: indeed they will blossom and bear fruit in all we say and do. *Sí Cluain Cearbán mo bhaile dúchais, an "gleann inar tóigeadh mé". Mo phaidir dhúinn inniu: go raibh beannacht Dé ar an obair thábhachtach seo atá idir lámha againn anois, go gcuirfidh sé boradh, fás agus toradh fiúntach ar ár saothar, i gCluain Cearbán.*

Faoi choimirce Dé sinn uilig, agus go raibh míle maith agaibh!



Anne Chambers and friends at the Granuaile Centre, Louisburgh, Co. Mayo

## GRANUAILE DROPS ANCHOR

Daring in adversity and the will to survive are traits epitomised by the sixteenth century legendary figure, GRANUAILE (Grace O'Malley). Such traits are as necessary for survival in Mayo today as they were for Granuaile over four hundred years ago. By adopting Granuaile as a concept and an inspiration for the future and establishing the GRANUAILE CENTRE, the Louisburgh Development Company has embarked on a unique project which has enormous potential for the development of Louisburgh and the surrounding area.

For perhaps too long we have tended to look back on our past in a rather negative way, blaming the historic ills inflicted on us as an excuse for our own inability to face the future with determination and optimism. It is very fitting that it should be Granuaile, the legendary female warrior chieftain by land and sea, who portrayed bravery, courage and the will to succeed in her own life, who now has become the inspiration for the future development of the area in which she lived.

Once the name Granuaile\* conjured an image of an amazon, ruthless and domineering, performing a series of implausible heroics or alternatively as a figure of fiery patriotism whose sole aim was to expel the foreign invader from native soil. When researching my biography of Grace O'Malley however, I found that the factual manuscript material relating to her far surpassed the fictional fantasy that once tended to shroud her memory. For the space of seventy years Granuaile lived in one of the remotest regions of Ireland; and yet she made such an impact on her time that her exploits by land and sea were recorded in the Elizabethan State Papers, reported in the official dispatches of such prominent players as English Lords Deputies Sir Henry Sidney and Sir John Perrot; English governors of Connaught, Nicholas Malby and Sir Richard Bingham, Lord Justice Drury, the earls of Ormond and Desmond to name a few. She was commented upon by such Elizabethan Court notables as Walsingham and Burghley and by Queen Elizabeth I herself. Granuaile is named on the Boazio map of Ireland 1599, the only woman listed, further proof of the extent of her power and the impact she made on the political scenario. Her name became known and feared around the coasts of Ireland; in Scotland, where she led at least two avenging attacks on the Scottish Isles, and as far away as Spain and Portugal where tradition states that she both traded and plundered. In Mayo it was said that 'she subdued the whole country from Asgalan in the west of Umhall Ui Mhaille to Sliabh Carn and from Bearna Gaoithe at Beltra lake to Ballinrobe.'

The factual story of Grace O'Malley is larger than life but so too is the turbulent age to which she belonged. To understand the role she played in history it is essential that Granuaile's contribution be examined within the historical context of her time. The sixteenth century was an age of exploration and exploitation, of wars and intrigues, of armadas and invasions, of glorious empires such as Spain at the pinnacle of their power; and others, like England emerging into an international power. It was the age of such diverse personages as Henry VIII, Anne Boleyn, Thomas Moore, William Shakespeare, Silken Thomas, Shane O'Neill, Edmund Spenser, King Philip of Spain, Francis Drake, Walter Raleigh, Hugh O'Neill, Hugh O'Donnell and Elizabeth I. It was an age that in Ireland witnessed the final clash and eventual submission of the ancient Gaelic order, with its unique but hopelessly outmoded structures and customs, to a



more powerful and persistent neighbour.

The story of Grace O'Malley when examined within the confines of this eventful age emerges not as of a figure of myth or make-belief but as an exceptional woman, vital and daring, who lived life to the limits and who possessed the physical and mental requisites to survive the political and social impediments and upheavals with which she was confronted. A woman who plied her family trade with all the expertise and enterprise it required and who above everything else put first her own interests and those of the remote domain over which she ruled in the never-ending struggle for survival. The final remaining obstacle left to dispel the legendary mist which has clouded her name may be due to the fact that she was a woman. A woman as one of her detractors wrote of her who 'hath impudently overstepped the part of womanhood,' but in so doing stamped her unique imprimatur on history.

The Granuaile Centre in Louisburgh now houses the new Granuaile Exhibition which depicts the life and times of this remarkable woman of history. The Centre incorporates Saint Catherine's Church, kindly made available by the local Church of Ireland community and a purpose-built conference/lecture facility. Through a combination of attractive 3D models, video and audio-visual exhibits, information panels, maps, portraits and contemporary artefacts, the exhibition invokes the life and times of Granuaile in a new and exciting format. The Exhibition will be marketed as both a tourist and as an educational attraction. The conference facility will accommodate other interchangable temporary exhibitions during the tourist centre and in an attempt to extend the visitor season and to generate additional tourist activity in the area, as a top class conference and seminar facility in association with the hotel, B&B and self-catering interests in the area.

The new Granuaile Centre in Louisburgh is the start of a new chapter in the continuing saga of this most extraordinary woman. While the subject of novels, a biography, TV documentaries, dance drama, legends and folklore, Granuaile can be fairly said to have found a permanent residence in Louisburgh, one in keeping with her status as a significant figure of Irish history.

ANNE CHAMBER© 1994

## GRAINNE UAILE

*The name evokes strong memories  
Of a turbulent time long passed  
Of great armies which rallied  
And sailed before her mast  
Of golden hordes internal wars  
Piracy and pillage  
Clan meetings and gatherings  
In every town and village*

*A renowned woman of strength  
Feared and admired  
Her seafaring exploits were many  
Taking each challenge within her  
stride  
Friends and foes a-plenty  
From far-off lands they hailed  
But not one could match the prowess  
Of Mayo's Grainne Uaile*

David Lyons – March 1993

## VSI FAMINE PROJECT

During the two weeks in August last, nine volunteers from all over the world came together to work on a special workcamp project on Louisburgh concerning the Irish Famine. They were: David (India), Erika (Austria), Zoltan (Hungary), Michael (Switzerland), Varpu (Finland), Francesca (Italy), Javier (Spain), Thomas (Dublin) and Siobhán (Carlow).

The volunteers helped to research and map out various sites connected with the Great Famine, and then produced a display board for use in the Louisburgh Famine Centre, which will be of use to visitors to the area.

The workcamp was one of twenty-five projects organised in Ireland this summer. These involved over four hundred volunteers from thirty-five countries helping out on a wide variety of work, from running holidays for mentally handicapped adults in Wicklow to planting out trees in County Cork.

Similarly, hundreds of Irish people took part in workcamp projects throughout Europe (east and west) and North America.



Planning the project – International Conference!



## THE CREDIT UNION

*The efficacy and practical value of the Credit Union movement is recognised worldwide. Recognising the appropriateness of such an amenity in the community, the Louisburgh Development Company shortly after its foundation set about introducing the idea into the parish. From its inception the Credit Union began to be recognised by the community for the practical boon it is, and in its original premises in Upper Bridge Street it carried out its business with growing popularity.*

*Today's Board of Directors includes at least two of the Development Company who first mooted the idea. The Board members are: Eamonn O'Malley (Chair), Pat Prendergast (Secretary), Pádraic Geraghty (Treasurer), Séamus Durham, Tommie Duffy, John McConnell, Geraldine O'Malley, Joe Broderick, James Scott, Pádraic Mannion, Annie B. Casey, Claire Keane, William McDonnell, Mairéad Staunton, Bob Reaney, Seán McEvilly.*

*Its present treasurer Pat Prendergast (Accony) writes about the recent past, the present and the future:*

Thursday, 20th October 1994 was a historic day for the Louisburgh community, a day that proves that the community that believes in itself will succeed, and this is so true for Louisburgh Credit Union which on that date opened its brand new office.

It was the culmination of seven years of hard work, starting with the establishment of a Study Group. After one year's study, Louisburgh Credit Union opened its door to the public, at its rented premises on the Square, collected £1,000 shares in its first month and just kept growing. To-day it has close on 500 members, £300,000 in shares and since establishment has loaned its members more than £1½ million. That is a lot of money to have put in circulation.

Praise is due to all – the Directors and shareholders, but special mention must go to Séamus Durkan, Séamus who sat on three Credit Union Study Groups, the man who saw two earlier efforts fade but was still the driving force in the successful group. It was his dream that it succeed, he could foresee the advantages that were to be had and time has proved him right. Rose Donnellan who has since left our community was with us from the start, elected Secretary of the Study Group and later first Secretary of the Credit Union. Rose is well remembered for her ability at addition: we easily survived without a calculator for our first couple of months because we had Rose, and a column of figures proved no bother!

What of the future? One thing is certain – the Credit Union is going to continue to grow, and its only matter of years until we reach the million mark.

Special tribute must go to the following who worked so tirelessly on our new office, – John Burke, Contractor, for his outstanding workmanship; Declan Geraghty, Electrical Contractor; Chris Harper, for the building's impressive facade; Bob Reaney, who designed and planned the office furniture and layout; Healy Brothers, painters; Austin O'Malley, Carpeting; FÁS Authorities, and in particular the FÁS Workers in Louisburgh (including J. J. Kilcoyne, Supervisor) who were very involved in the early stages.

## THE CRAFTS: THATCHING

Before the 1920's almost everybody in the country-side was born and reared in a thatched cottage. Those who were not, were the descendants of those who had been. Regrettably, now there are hardly any of these mementoes of former comfort and snug simplicity left. Those rare edifices which lasted into the latter part of this century were ones which had been re-roofed and their failing masonry restored, earlier on. Thus they had good rafters of long-lasting timber sawed and planed to order, and are the darlings of "camera-totin' tourists!" In earlier times bog-deal rafters were used. This bog-deal was the root of the pine, the remains of pine forests which once flourished in Ireland. Those long-trailing roots had to be dug up, left to dry, cleaned and then cut into suitable lengths to fit the building. But they got no planing to smooth their rough surface, because, being roots, they had more than an average amount of knots. As knots do not make for easy sawing or planing they were left *au naturale* except for length, but their red-brown sheen looked good, as anybody who has ever seen a piece of dry, clean bog-deal, knows.

While the timber roof was being put on, there were men cutting *scraws* on some hill or mountain-side. The *scraws* were the fibrous skin of land of a peaty nature, and would hold together like cloth but it could not be any thicker than about an inch-and-a-half. It was cut in long narrow strips of about eight feet long and two feet wide, resembling a length of stair-carpet. Great care and expertise were needed in cutting this "easy-to-damage fabric" and it was rolled back as it was being cut until the desired length and breadth was reached. Several of these carpet-like rolls would be made and as their location would not be easy to access, donkeys and horses with straddles would be used to bring them down to the scene of operation below. The rolls would be tied around the middle with strong ropes and hung on the straddle-pegs. Of course it took several trips up the hill to get them down unless the "cavalry" was of a good number!

How did these rolls get to cover the timber roof already in place? A strong stick was shoved across through the middle of the rolled-up scraws and two men, each taking an end of the stick, carried it up two ladders, suitably placed leaning against the side wall. They would begin to unroll at the top of the wall and continued doing so until it was lying flat on the timber, up to the top and across it, for some inches. Having started at one end of the house, they continued unrolling, roll after roll, each one roll over-lapping the other by some inches. That ensured that they would be water-tight when the thatch went on. The scraws themselves were not water-tight: their role as "roofing components" was to hold the thatch, and together they formed a water-tight roof, if properly put on, over the timber. Meanwhile rushes would have been cut and brought to the scene. These were the days of the meitheal – a goodly company of willing helpers! It took a lot of rushes to form the first "coat", as it was called. A good coat of rushes, evenly put on was a good start for a dry roof and easy application



thereafter! The rushes were “pulled” before being put on. This meant taking a handful of cut rushes from the pile and pulling the straggly ones out and setting them in line with the rest until they all lay neatly in one direction, like a well-cut sheaf of oats. Several of these little sheaves of rushes would be tied together and reached up with a hay fork or thrown up by hand to the man who was thatching.

The first line of thatch, about two feet wide, was put on at the top of the side-wall where wall and roof met and joined. This line was the thickest and over-reached the wall downwards by about six inches. It was called the *bun-tsop*, (two Irish words meaning “end of the wisp”) and would be neatly trimmed later. Having started off with the requisite good thick line of thatch at the top of the wall, the thatcher proceeded to place another one a few inches higher up, but over-lapping the first one by some inches. He would do “a bay” at a time about two feet wide, and thus continue from one end to the other of the whole side of the roof. There might be another man similarly engaged on the other side. If not, the one man would have to do both sides and often did.

At one time it was always twisted straw ropes that were used for holding down the thatch. These were called *sugans*, whose name may be prompted by the procedure by which they were made. In later times ropes of Indian origin were used and later still, wire – net wire – which still later gave place to fencing wire – the latter being found the most suitable and easy of application!

The sites chosen for building thatched cottages in the past were more often than not hollows, which would be sheltered naturally from storm, and to add to its safety the thatched roof would be well anchored down, by placing a line of light flag-stones, about one foot long by four inches wide by about two inches thick, over the thatch at the top of the wall and held there; by short ropes if wire was used, or by *sugans* if *sugans* were the chosen tying method.

Experts on this subject may find errors in my description of a former craft which was indisputably a male domain. If so, their description of it could be written in the next issue of *An Choinneal*.

At a concert in Aillemore, my sister Bridie and I sang “The little old thatched cabin on the hill.” Our then parish priest Fr. Mullarkey knew the song and joined in. The chorus is as follows;

*The roof is thatched with straw  
The walls are white as snow  
The turf-fire on the hearth I see it still  
For Ireland's graven on my heart  
The place where I was born  
And the little old thatched cabin on the hill.*

Kinnadoohey

Una O'Malley

## RACING THE TIDE

The built-up excitement of the weeks beforehand was finally unleashed in that bounce from the bed at dawn, and the drawing of the curtains, to see what weather we were going to have for the big day. Perhaps it was the boundless optimism of youth, or the rose-tinted nostalgia of later years, but I can never remember a bad day for the races. For weeks before the anticipation was heightened by other preparations. This was our chance to be owner, trainer and jockey; as donkeys were groomed, raced and compared, to assess each other's chances for the donkey-derby. It was always wise to rise early on the morning of race day. There always seemed to be some bit of hay to be finished, or a cow to be taken to the bull, or some other unwelcome task waiting, before our eagerly awaited departure for the strand would be entertained. But then you saw the people drifting by on bikes, in ones and twos; the motor cars; local horses being taken to the event; and you could be contained no longer.

Choosing the right day for the event was a matter of grave tactical skill for the committee. A knowledge of tides, high and low, of moons full and half, and the interaction of both, was essential. The races were run on the strand between the tides. But a spring tide, that went further out, and was slower to return, gave more time to run the horse-races. Of course after the tide returned the day was far from over. There were still the athletics for children, and a local football match to round off the event. In those innocent times, not so long ago, the awe and excitement of children was still in plentiful supply. Thus the sight of hawkers, with their colourful array of apples, oranges,



Tom (Mary Ann) McNally (my grandfather) with his horse “Blueboy”, winner of the “Killeen Plate” at Carrowniskey Races in 1954.



and chocolates, like an endless feast caused bulging eyes and drooling lips. Even now, the smell of an over-ripe apple – one of the red shiny ones – transports me back to that enchanted day. Music, mostly rousing reels and jigs, filled the air from the far off-duty public address system; an infusion of sound that tingled excited bodies, and set off the rhythmic tapping of heel and toe.

“Put your shirt on McDonnell’s horse in the Farmers Plate,” I heard a man tell my father. And I wondered how even adults would consider putting a shirt on a horse! Everybody was here. I could not recall anybody I knew who did not go to the races. *Nothing* I had heard of – climbing the Reek, nor the Feast of Cana, not even Santa Claus – had the magic aura of the races.

“AND THEY’RE OFF”. The first race of the day. Run between two sets of posts, which would later be used as goal-posts for the football match. So many laps to a race, up and down, up and down, as decided by the committee. Farmers horses mainly, more at home drawing wrack from the shore, or turf from the bog. But there were occasional “town horses”, and perhaps they reflected the more refined aspects of gentility we expected from their masters! There were occasional “spills” too, from a recklessness in the jockeys, bred by the over-enthusiasm. Sometimes stories grew out of these falls, like the claim that one clever jockey had got in close to a competitor and tipped his foot from the stirrup! Between races the men visited the beer tent and ferried drinks (mostly Fanta) to the ladies, who sat on the beach to renew acquaintances and keep an eye on excited children. My mother handed us pieces of the fat hen which she had killed, and cooked the day before. This tasty bite was supplemented by thick cuts of brown bread, and salty butter, washed down with lemonade as a special treat. Sometimes, neighbours who stopped to talk to my father slipped a half crown into my sweaty little fist, and I was allowed to visit the ice-cream truck, roll a penny down a chute onto the numbered table, and hear the man cry: “*On the line the money is mine, in the square you win*”.

But now the tide is turning, and anxious stewards encourage the horses into line for the last race. Children are assembling, on the sandy grassy carpet, called the *dough*. They are eagerly signing up for the foot-races. Then it’s time to finish off with the football match.

All too soon the day runs out, and people start to drift away. The hawkers pack away their wares, the beer tent is folded, and the music dies away. In their wake excited children pick up the odd stray tanner; or, if your luck was in, a shilling. The road home is alive with children exchanging stories, as events of the day are recalled. Parents are in a hurry to get the cows milked. Many of them will travel to town later where the festive atmosphere is kept alive with music in the pubs, and the Race Night Dance in the Town Hall. Tired children drift off to soft, dreamy beds. I dream of riding the winner in the Farmers Plate.

The moon still pulls the tide in relentless ebb and flow. But the hoofs no longer pound the sand and the horse has left the farm. The words of a poem from an old schoolbook, that belonged to my mother, come to mind:

*“Once it was a childish ignorance,  
But now ’tis little joy,  
To know I’m further off from Heaven,  
Than when I was a boy.”*

Westport

Séamus McNally

## “WILL YE NO COME BACK AGAIN”

It is playtime. A comrade, though not a classmate, stands on the same stone today as he stood on yesterday and the day before, eating his lunch slowly and misty-eyed, looks longingly towards his home in the distance. The casual observer could have told me then what I know now; my comrade would never emigrate. More than fifty years later, while eating lunch on the thirty-first floor of a high-rise building in downtown Chicago, gazing absentmindedly across the vast expanse of the waters of Lake Michigan, a vision of my comrade standing on the stone at playtime came before me. Fond memories, saddened by time and distance, came floating back. Unnoticed, I wiped a tear from my eye with my forefinger while a second, camouflaged in sweat, slid silently and inconspicuously to the dusty floor.

A short story in my comrade’s English school book, “The Kincora Readers”, told of a young man leaving the Aran Islands for the great world beyond. It captured the imagination of all in our classroom; and, relating to its content with ease, we were unaware that while many of our contemporaries were “growing up on Fry’s” most in our classroom were being initiated into the traumatic scourge of emigration. Having said good-bye to his grieving mother, Tom – that was his name in the story – slowly and sadly began the short walk down to the waiting Dun Aengus. His dog, Oscar, followed him sneaking along the roadside. We could vividly visualize the rejected expression on the dog’s face when Tom told him to go home. The Parish Priest was there too and gave Tom his blessing. In answer to Tom’s question as to why “fathers and mothers in Ireland raised their children in pain and toil only to see them driven off to foreign lands by the spectre of poverty”, the priest replied “It is the will of God”. Even though the writer is putting words in the priest’s mouth, nevertheless the phrase, used by priests and people alike, was a popular expression used at the time and sometimes even to-day. We wondered then as we wonder now if the answer was unfair to God.

I remember clearly my oldest sister’s return to England some months after the outbreak of World War Two. I had driven her by side-car to Louisburgh to catch the Westport bus on the first leg of her long and treacherous journey on a blustery morning spitting rain from the south-east. As the day wore on, weather conditions deteriorated and by night-fall a gale was blowing. The stacks of oats and ricks of hay in the haggard were thatched and muddled; likewise the dwelling house and outhouses. All outside chores completed, the door was shut and bolted against the ensuing storm. Sitting before a blazing fire we felt secure in the cosiness of a thatched country kitchen. The single-wick lamp, with its fading reflector and the hairpin still hanging on the globe-top, sat idly by on the wall again to-night as it had for many months now.

To-night was different. In the middle drawer of the side-board in the room above, my mother found the two blessed candles blessed on Candlemas Day. Unwrapping



them, she ceremoniously lit one, placed it in the candle-pan and put the candle-pan on the mantelpiece. "Let us kneel down now, in the name of God," she said, "and say the rosary". With our backs to the blazing fire the rosary started. Where my father stopped offering the rosary no one present that night remembers. Thinking it was to check the usual tittering, snickering and skittering that continually went on behind his back every night, each of us struggled to put on their own "not guilty face". There was a terrible silence. The rumbling that sounded at first in the distance came closer and closer until the squall hit the south-east gable with a vengeance. Venting some of its fury in the chimney flue, it pushed down smoke and ashes before it, forcing the flame of the candle far below the horizontal until it almost died. Briefly it came back to the perpendicular. Caught in the back draught it again flickered, dodged and weaved to avoid extinction. Though young, we all knew the flame must not die tonight. After every storm comes a calm; so it was on that night. It would be years later when each member of the family present that night would in turn recall and appreciate why our parents were still praying long after the storm abated. Somehow the boat did survive the stormy waters and the German U-boats prowling close by let the ship pass in the night and my sister did survive the bombings and the terrible years of the war while the ones at home in our house and other houses in the parish watched and waited and prayed. Every Sunday after Mass they would fervently join Father William Heaney in praying the prayer for peace, *"Dismayed by the horrors of war which is bringing ruin to peoples and nations . . . pity the countless mothers now in agony for the fate of their sons"*.

An emigrant acquaintance often contrasted his leaving of Ireland in the twenties with mine and others in the late fifties just before the commercial jet age. He was an only child of ageing parents. Neighbours and friends came that last night to wish him 'God speed' and help to alleviate the pain of his sorrowing parents. In the grey dawn of the morning they said good-bye. With both hands thrust deep in his trouser pockets and one shoulder resting against the gable wall he was joined for a few moments by his father, whose heart was too full to speak.

It was still early morning when he said good-bye to his heart-broken mother still clinging to him as he pulled open the half-door. His father picked up his suitcase and together they walked to the end of the long bóithrín where it met a slip-road to the main road. Gently the father left down the suitcase and shook his hand. "The place is yours," he barely whispered, "if you want it". "They were the last words I heard him speak as the tears rolled down his cheek". From time to time he would rest and look back. Both were still standing where he had said goodbye. At last he was at the bend in the road around which all contact would be lost. He rested once more and for the last time looked back. Both were together now; his mother still shading her eyes from the slanting sun with one hand while clutching tightly the corner of her apron with the other.

"It was then I knew", he said, "I would never see them again". His mother died a few months later and his father before the year was out. A kind neighbour who received the deeds to the land marked their grave. He himself is at peace now; the mandatory eighteen by nine inch slab, put there by a friend, marking his own final resting place.

But my friend was only half right. The more things change the more they remain

the same. The plush surroundings of an airport, while conducive to the physical well-being of passengers, in no way minimizes the heartache of the departing emigrant. After the booking-in has been completed you are free to roam in an air of urgency and anxiety awaiting the final call to proceed to the designated departure gate. Anything worth saying has been said long ago and the void only stimulates idle chat. Suddenly you find yourself inside the glass barrier, still visually united. The corner around which all contact is lost is closing rapidly. Eyes awash in tears and body fatigued with grief, you pause momentarily and look back. With difficulty you raise your arm to semaphore position to wave a feeble final, fond farewell.

Stepping across the threshold of the plane to the strains of *"I wandered today through the hills, Maggie"* or *"I'll take you home again Kathleen"* or *"Will ye no come back again"*, you nod submissively to a smiling hostess who directs you solicitously towards your seat. Pressing your face against the window you look in vain for some familiar shadow silhouetted in the tinted glass, but find none. You think with pity of the parents, brothers, sisters or family who wash out their grief behind that glass barrier. The plane moves and you think "what if . . ." As it races down to lift-off you see the green, green grass of the green fields of Ireland rush past. Only thing to do now is to sit back, close your eyes, bless yourself, leave the flying of the plane to the pilot and the rest in the hands of God.

Dublin

Geoffrey Prendergast



Geoffrey Prendergast, Accony and Dublin, and Paddy O'Toole, Roonagh, showing how to use the flail to thrash the grain from the oats. Heritage Day, Louisburgh, July 17th, 1993.



## KITH AND KIN

### The Harritys or Heraghtys

I would like to introduce to you two of your own whom most of you don't know nor have ever heard of. But the influences of Louisburgh shaped them as it shaped you. The influence of Louisburgh was and is felt in Worcester, Massachusetts, U.S.A. through five sons and a daughter. The influence of Louisburgh will be felt for generations to come through twenty-seven grandchildren and, at present count, twenty great-grandchildren.

Peter Harrity was born on April 12, 1894 to Martin Heraghty and Honor (Gibbons) Heraghty in Derrygarrow in the house (now) of Pat Gavin, according to Pat Davitt of Carrydavitt. Peter probably was baptised in the church beyond Killadoon (the remains are still standing). Honor is buried in Killeen. Peter and his five sisters emigrated in stages (Brigid, Nora and Ann first, then Mamie, Peter and Kate later) to Clinton, Massachusetts. Around here we tell the story of one American Irish asking another "have you ever been to Mayo?" "No, but I've been to Clinton!" Martin is buried in Saint John's cemetery in Clinton.

Pa came in 1905 at the age of eleven. He returned in 1936 and 1972 with my mother. He returned also with his grandsons Peter in 1979, Kip in 1981 and Jimmy in 1983; and in 1985 with his daughter Anne Scott and son James and James' daughter, Patricia King, for the christening of Patricia's daughter, Brigid. Michael King is a grandson of Dominic McGrail from Derrygarrow. Peter was ninety-one years old at that time.

I have come to Louisburgh six times since and each time Pa has lit up and was ready to go even though the doctor advised against air travel because of his age, not because of his condition.

In 1971 when I made my first trip to see the legendary Louisburgh, Pa drew me a map of the area so I could find my uncle Walter Egan's house. When I stopped in John Joe Philbin's to bring a 'hello' from a relative in Worcester, Massachusetts, and to ask for directions, he marvelled at the detailed accuracy from someone who had left at the age of eleven and was only back twice since then. It merely proves that Pa travelled these roads many times in the mind of his memories.

Anne M. Eagan was born June 30, 1901 to Austin and Anne (Scott) Gibbons from near Lecanvey. The house in which she was born still stands near the house her brother Walter built in Derrygarrow. As you know, Walter and his Mary live there with his son James, his Mary and their children Walter, Séamus, Clare and Fenton. My mother's mother died soon after my mother was born and she went to live with the Downers in Westport in a house across from the hotel on the Louisburgh road. Mary Kate Downer Mac Donald is my Godmother. She got a fine education through the Convent until the age of seventeen when she came to Philadelphia, then to Worcester, Massachusetts, where she ran her Uncle Jim Egan's store. She met and married Peter, and the rest is history. They never had met in Ireland even though their houses were on the same road! As you turn off the Leenane Road there are only four houses, Professor Holloway's, whose poetry appeared in the 1992 issue, Uncle Walter Egan's, Gavin's

(Pa's birthplace), and Burke's (Fr. John Burke is a Pastor in the Worcester Diocese). How magnificent is the hand of God who led these two young people half way around the world to put them together.

In 1962 they went to Louisburgh after mother was recovering from years of fighting tuberculosis. I was doubly concerned about her condition when I went to the airport to pick them up upon their return, and I saw Pa and Aunt Kate coming through customs and no sign of my mother. Imagine my surprise when I saw that the younger woman with the rosy cheeks, sparkling eyes and spry step walking between Pa and Aunt Kate was my rejuvenated mother! This mystical, magical curative power of Louisburgh impresses me to this date. World-weary and life-sagging, my sagging spirits have soared nine times in the last four years as I have retreated to Louisburgh.

My mother brought from here a love of the rosary (family rosary was recited every night of my early years) and a love for learning (all five boys got a college education).

I introduced you to two people that most of you never met but all of you know well, for you all have the same spirit. I thank God for them and I thank God for you, too.

Worcester

Martin Harrity

## Is Túisce Deoch na Scéal

I attended two weddings recently in Connecticut, USA or rather I concelebrated with so many Louisburgh exiles as two cousins of mine, Eileen Staunton and Theresa Carroll, celebrated their sacraments of Love. Both girls are grand-daughters of the late John Joe McDermott of McDermotts' Hotel, Louisburgh.

American weddings differ so much from Irish ones. Every detail is planned and rehearsed. Time and effort is given to tie every little trifle into a perfect celebration. All the little things matter; colours and shades, trumpet and bagpipes, music and song, flowers and herbs, pew bows and ambo flower arrangements, hidden little angel-guardians and easy to read missalettes, symbols and signs, posture and presence, and the awesome papal blessing. Procession of mother of the bride, maid of honour, bridesmaids, groomsmen, flower-girls, junior ushers and bride demands attention to avoid becoming a parade. Trifles make perfection but its attainment is no trifle. I felt very proud to witness Louisburgh family attitudes being celebrated so joyously so many miles away and concelebrating as the happy couples celebrated the survival of Louisburgh Christian values through three generations of American life and culture. My little prayer of - "May Mary and her son be with you on your pilgrim Way" - "Go raibh Muire agus a Mac libh ar bhur dtraiill" - tied the couples with the well-wishes of generations of Irish weddings in the past and I hope that my prayer of "seacht sliocht bhur seacht sleachta" links them with many like celebrations in future years.

I visited an uncle of mine - Michael Joe McDermott - before I left for Ireland. Before we parted he took two glasses with the McDermott Hotel inscription from a reserved corner of his glass-case. These were his treasured memories of his old home at Louisburgh. He poured a dram to celebrate our re-union, raised his glass and said



"In times of loneliness, I go to re-read in the Louisburgh *Coinneal* of some years ago your description of my mother's people – the O'Malleys – in an article called "Caoineadh na Marbh". It has a therapeutic value for me". Tears welled up in his eyes as he said "The O'Malleys were a gentle people but I often wonder about the McDermotts". "Is túisce deoch ná scéal" was my only response before our glasses touched to celebrate our meeting and mark our parting. Without realising it, I was being challenged to pen the McDermott connection with Louisburgh to paper and the parting drink was my acceptance of his challenge – the prelude to putting pen to paper.

Patrick McDermott, a native of Tubbercurry, County Sligo, came to Louisburgh via Delphi police-station in the eighteen fifties as a policeman. He married Winifred Henry, a Co. Roscommon girl. Their bones lie today in the old Kilgeever cemetery. They had twelve in family. Ten of this family emigrated to America. The remaining two remained at home due to ill-health. Both of these Patrick John (born 1872) and Katie (born 1874) are buried in Ireland. Two of the ten emigrants returned to Ireland. One was my grandfather, James Henry McDermott. The other, his brother Charlie McDermott, had been a monitor in the old Louisburgh school and had emigrated to Boston, a disappointed man when he failed to be appointed a teacher in that Louisburgh school. He paid a short visit to Louisburgh in 1947 with his nephew, John Joe McDermott. I remember both of them visiting the Louisburgh school that summer and presenting me with a silver dollar on Sports Day. I was in sixth class in the master's room – the late John T. Morahan.

Of the others in that McDermott family, Brigid McDermott married a Kilcoyne husband in Boston; Rose McDermott married an O'Reilly husband in Boston; Mary Anne and Winnie married in Boston – one of them to a Kitterick husband. Of the men, Andy, married in Boston, Joe in New York, Michael in New York, Charlie in Boston and Tommy in Boston. If one can judge by the surnames of their spouses their roots sprung from the Louisburgh area. That family history of emigration was a sad one but it has been mirrored by many other West of Ireland families. The experiences of the famine were still fresh in people's memories and survival was a priority.

My grandfather, James Henry McDermott, was the remaining member of the family of Patrick McDermott and Winifred Henry. He worked in New York and Hartford and he told a story of how he met his long-lost brother. He was strolling down a New York street on a Sunday afternoon and was greeted by another afternoon walker. He



James Henry McDermott

happened to be a lonely Irishman – from the West of Ireland – from the Westport area – from a place called Louisburgh and his name was McDermott! James Henry stretched out his hand and said – I'm happy to meet my long lost brother. *Mirabile dictu* – it was a chance meeting of two Louisburgh brothers in New York.

James Henry McDermott was born in Delphi police barracks in 1858. He was the only one of that family of twelve to marry in Ireland and raise a family there. He married Kathleen O'Malley, daughter of Micil O'Malley and Anne Gill, in Louisburgh Church in June 1900. Her brother, Father John O'Malley, officiated at the wedding and the sponsors were his brother, Charlie McDermott and her cousin, Annie Burke. They celebrated their marriage breakfast in the Leenane hotel. They raised a family of ten, and their bones lie in the family plot in the new Kilgeever cemetery.

Seven of their family of ten emigrated – six to USA and one to England. Una Sarsfield was the eldest and is still hale and hearty at the age of ninety-two in Salthill. Go maire sí an céad! Evelyn married Tommy Duggan and both reside in Louisburgh apart from racedays where they can be seen queuing at book-maker's stands (around the winner's enclosure!). Andy McDermott married Ursula Fox, a County Mayo woman and they resided in the old McDermott hotel before its sale. Andy's response of "November, Sir" (to a tourist's query in early summer. "When do the pubs close in Louisburgh?") is often quoted. My mother, Teckie Flannery and her sister, Josie McDermott had been together in America as young girls but both returned to Ireland when Josie lost her health. After Josie's death my mother went to Dublin and did a secretarial course there to prepare herself to return to America.

My grandfather, James Henry McDermott, must have had a good business acumen. He acquired the police-barracks and developed it into a small hotel for tourists to scenic Louisburgh. He annexed a lodge and had a dance-hall *cum* cinema adjoined to his hotel. He acquired some business premises in Louisburgh. But recession struck and all his business projects and ventures collapsed. Because of the war the hotel business receded. James Henry was forced to emigrate to provide for his growing family. His eldest son, John Joe, had to leave Saint Jarlath's College, Tuam, to seek work in America. He was joined by his two sisters, Josie and Teckie. They earned the passage-money for the next young man, Michael, to emigrate and sent it home to their mother. Their mother changed this plan and insisted that a younger boy, Stannie, be taken from Saint Jarlath's College and sent to work to America with his father. She felt that Stannie was beyond maternal control at home and could benefit from a father's fighter and closer rein. That plan too failed, as Stannie after drawing his first pay-cheques in Hartford with his father, left for Pittsburgh to seek his fortune and independence.

My mother's passage-money was the next to arrive from America and as she had opted in the meantime to work for her uncle, Father John O'Malley, she transferred her passage-money to her brother Michael Joe, and he emigrated. My mother never regretted her decision to stay in Ireland. She married my father, Patrick Flannery, in Milltown and raised six in her family home there. Her brother, Paddy McDermott was married in London to a Louisburgh girl – Anne Geoghegan – and they later opted to settle in America with their family. Paddy, as a younger man, had worked building the walls around the Kilgeever cemetery and on the ceiling of Louisburgh Church where



he claimed he had left his carpenter's hammer! His love and respect for the Church in Louisburgh – living and dead – never waned or wavered till his dying day!

Charlie McDermott was the remaining brother of that family of ten. He stayed in Louisburgh in the hotel for years – had a dance-band going in the nineteen fifties and then yielded to the call of the emigrant boat. He went to London, settled down with his wife, Salome Lynch – another Louisburgh girl – and raised his family in London. He was my god-father and it was appropriate that I should celebrate his funeral Mass in 1992 – presiding as he left the Church at Clapham, London – returning the compliment he had paid to me at my baptism in Milltown Church years ago where he presided at my entry into Church! Is dual cineáltas a chúiteamh!

Life wasn't easy for the McDermotts. Emigration took its toll. Most of our cousins were abroad. We heard of others in the Ballina area – Murphys, Sweeneys, Mullaney's, Barnes – but Ballina was a long distance by road and we lost contact. The McDermott exiles took with them, wherever they went, a great love and respect for Louisburgh and its people and their values. The struggle to survive was difficult but cradle values endured despite the difficulties, and were passed on. Pride in their adopted countries was nourished together with love of their native land. *Dúchas* was never forgotten and it was great to witness this celebrated. The Irish Club in Hartford is a silent sentinel; and sometimes not so silent, to the loyalty of Irish exiles to their homes, their people and their values. The fires of some of these Irish hearths in Ireland have ceased to glow for years due to emigration but it was wonderful to witness these fires rekindled abroad and stoked daily with the inherited values from home of Faith, Love, Loyalty and *Dúchas*. May the warmth and glow and brightness of this flame continue to welcome and enrich us. The sod of Kilgeever turf kept the home fires burning. The values acquired and harvested around these home fires have kindled, fanned and fired that same Kilgeever Faith into a burning flame in many a hearth away from home.

My story of the McDermotts of Louisburgh is a story of emigration. It was a sad story of exile but they built it into a story of success – the success of passing on treasured family, hearth and cradle values to families rooted in Louisburgh; living their lives miles away from Louisburgh but having their homes radiating the warmth and wealth of Louisburgh values.

I will end my story where I began – at my cousin Eileen Staunton's wedding in Hartford, Connecticut, USA on 9th October, 1993. Seven of the Dunmore minor football team who won the County Galway county championship in 1951 were present at her wedding. Eileen's father Jimmy was full-back on that team. We sat together after the meal, our seven heads together picking our 1951 final team oblivious of the forty-two intervening years. We counted that ten of that team were in America on that day and that five of that same team are parish priests scattered around the world today in Perth, New York, London and two at home in Galway. The pattern of emigration has not changed but the numbers of vocations for the priesthood certainly has. Would that these patterns be reversed!

## FLICKERS OF MEMORY

Ireland, to me is a land of mists and shadows. A land on the one hand adorned, and on the other accursed. As G. K. Chesterton pointed out 'all our wars are merry, and all our songs are sad'. They will blame the drink of course; that's the curse! But there is one hallowed little spot in Ireland where life goes on in a dreamy little state and reminds me of the 'Legend of Sleepy Hollow', an American tale. It is where I spent my childhood and that is the little village of Louisburgh, the birthplace of my mother, Ita McHale.

"I remember it well," as the song goes, lying in a permanent state of restlessness beneath the icy blue shadow of the Reek, the place my heart always wanders while in deep recollection. For me it was a matter of the places: there was the Bog Road, a perfect image of the "Old Bog Road" mentioned in the song of the exile. Happy days when bees hummed and the buzz of flies tormenting me, and I ate blackberries alongside that road. And of course the picnics at the sea-side. Surprised by glorious treats, we relished with hunger what no gourmet could produce in the heart of Paris. Yes, these were the days, visiting places like Bunowen, Carramore, Old Head, Keane's and Nicholson's sea. Have you ever climbed Black Hill? Old Head Hill? Kilgeever Hill? amidst the heather and whins, or heard the curlew cry along the sea-shore?

Yes, to me Louisburgh was a place enchanted, almost as if I passed without seeing, but feeling beneath it all the faint shadow of a smile that would light up a face like a candle with a gleam of hope.

And there are memories of other days – of the bog and reeking the turf; of trying to catch frogs; and of the cup of tea with the basket of goodies for the workers. Days also spent along the banks of the Bunowen River, days of idyll. It was not for all the fish we caught! There are a few shops that come to mind: Philbins' – with the *Beano*, the *Topper* and the *Dandy*. All gone now, perhaps, leaving it a deserted village. And Lyons's shop, where one was good for a six-penny ice-cream purchase. Or, Mac's the Bakery, with the fresh sweet-smelling loaves and the thick butter and jam. And memories of course of all the old familiar friends, all fled like phantoms of another age. I've done the stations to the Holy Well in Kilgeever, tramped around that hallowed spot and looked on the ruins of one of the old monasteries in Ireland.

I have memories of films we enjoyed in McDermott's Hall, not perhaps the "Odeon" or the "Savoy", but what a memory of pleasant nights, graduating from the forum to the balcony.

In Louisburgh there was never a house I entered where I was not made feel welcome; and how they played the host! It was more of a treat to me than all the cups of tea or coffee in the Ritz. Yes, I yearn for the days of my childhood, for those people who were quiet, gentle and shy, living under the shadow of the Reek!



## CARRY ME FOR FEAR OF THE BLACK SNAIL

Dúradh liom gur thugas mo chéad chuairt ar Bhun Abhainn nuair a bhí mé leithbhliain d'aois agus go dtugainn cuairt ann chuile shamhradh. Go deimhin ní cuairt a thugainn, ach mo mháthair ag fáil réidh liom ar feadh tamaillín! Ag mo bheirt aintín a d'fhanainn, ag Sarah agus Mary Kate. Sorcha a bhíodh i gceannas an tí. Bhí sí ina máistreas scoile, bhí sí níos máistriúla fós sa mbaile. Bhíodh fuadar mór oibre i gcónaí uirthi. Bhí sí an-láidir ina corp agus ina meoin, agus níor chuir an obair mórán stró uirthi, le linn a hóige. Bhíodh an saol ina rás aici go minic. Choinníodh sí súil ghéar ar a comharsana. Má bhí seacht gcoca féir sa ngarraí agat, bhíodh an oiread céanna aici siúd. Má bhí cruach mhaith mhóna agatsa, bhí an oiread céanna aici. Bhí gach gné den bhfeirmeoireacht faoina smacht aici, ach obair an chapail. Gach seans go mbeadh sin féin aici ach nach raibh a hathair róthuiscineach le caiple, é fhéin. Bhíodh béiceadh, leadradh agus búiril aige-sean pé ait go mbíodh an láir aige. Bé a mhalairt scéil a bhí ag Jack McÉvilly, labhraíodh sé ós íseal le capall agus dhéanadh an capall rud air.

Caithinn na bróga uaim ar dul go Maigh Eo. Bhí an féar go deas faoi na barracíní. Thaitníodh sé liom bheith ag rith ar na cosáin tríd an mhóinéir. Seans go mba deise mé an uair sin ná mar atá anois agus gur thug an bheirt seanmhaighdean taitheamh dom! Liginn orm go raibh eagla orm roimh seilidí agus ba é m'achaini ar an aintín: "Carry me for fear of the black snail".

Pé tús a bhí leis, pé black snail a bhí ag dreannadh orm, níor stop siad dom iompar, ar bhealach amháin ná ar bhealach eile ar feadh daichead bliain, gur tháinig casadh sa roth; gur iompar mise iadsan ar feadh cúpla bliain; gur fhagais m'ualach, go mba ualach múirneach faoin am sin é, ag reilig an Chillín. Ach fainimis leis an scéal.

Bhíodh mo mháthair ag déanamh a cuid oibre ar scoil: bhí deirfúir agus deartháir agam, agus ní bhíodh m'athair sa mbaile riamh. Bhíodh mo mháthair ag achrann le hard-mháistir na scoile i Loch Garman, a bhí, dar léi, ina alcólach; agus ní raibh sí sásta mise, ná mo dheirfúir Máire a scaoileadh isteach ina rang. Tharla Sorcha bheith ag obair i mBaile Átha Cliath ag an am, ina máistreas scoile, agus tharla tigh breá a bheith aici i gCluain Tairbh. Chuaigh mise agus an deirfúir chun cónaithe léi. D'éirigh go maith leis an socrú sin, ar shlíte áirithe. D'fhanamar bliain i mBaile Átha Cliath, an dara bliain i mBaile an Mhóta, Sligeach, agus faoin am go raibh mé dhá bhliain déag, bhí mé ag freastal ar scoil na mBráthar, i gCathair na Mart, agus cónaí orm i mBun Abhann. Bhí mo dheirfúir, Máire, ag dul go Siuracha na Trócaire, i gCluain Cearbán.

Rud a bhí san am sin, ná páistí a chur ar féarach ag uncaíl agus aintín nó ag máthair mhór, agus ní dócha go ndeintear a thuilleadh é. D'fhág an socrú sin agamsa, go mbíodh amhras orm i gcónaí cioca an aintín, nó an mháthair, ba mhó a thug cion dom, nó ba lú a thug cion dom. Bhí an bheirt chomh danartha lena chéile, agus nuair a castaí ar a chéile iad, thosaíodh an raic, an disbeagadh, an sclafairt. Níor thuigeas ag an am gur grá domsa a bhíodh taobh thiar de; agus de réir a chéile chuaigh mo mháthair as aithne orm. Ní thuiginn ina dhiaidh sin di, bhíos fuarchúiseach fúithi go pointe áithrid, agus níor thuig sise cad a bhí ar súil agamsa. Cheap mise gur saol suarach an spríunlóra

Caitlicigh a bhí á chaitheamh aici. Cheap sise go mba bligeárd ceart mé, coileán cruthanta, druncaera gránna.

Ní cuimhin liom mo mháthair am phógadh riamh, agus is iomaí duine eile sa ghlúin chéanna a' déarfadh an rud céanna leat, bhí cruas áirithe sa tsaol ag an am. Bhíodh mo mháthair am lochtadh, agus am cháineadh ró-mhinic, agus thóg sé blianta orm an timní agus an grá a aithint. Mo cháirde go léir, go mba bunmhúinteoirí a máithreacha, insíonn siad an scéal céanna: an bhean a bheith tuirseach tugtha tar éis lá oibre, cúraimí tí gan déanamh, páistí ag pléascadh le fuinnimh tar éis lá iomlán sa seomra ranga, bean bhocht ag imeacht trín athrú saoil, trín menopause, fear céile a bheith imithe in áit eicint, nó gan a bheith ar fáil in aon chur. Agus is scéal é sin a bhéas ag éirí níos coitianta amach anseo, le himeacht aimsire.

Bhí mo shean-athair, James Gibbons nó "Jamett", sa teach againn. Bhí sé ag teip go tapaigh le linn m'óige, cé go raibh mé trí bliana déag sul má cailleadh é. Bhí sé lán de chaint, de scéalta agus d'amhráin, de stair agus de sheanchas a mhuintire. Bhí sé éirimiúil, agus geal-gháireach go minic. Ar éigin má labhair a bhean leis ariamh. Is beag an meas a bhí ag na h-iníonacha air. Bhíodh sé ag aithris "The Bonnie bunch of roses, O", agus ag cur tomhasanna de gach saghas orm.

"How many fat chickens at tuppence a piece  
would purchase an acre all covered in geese,  
and every goose to stand on a foot square,  
and all to be sold at two and sixpence a pair."

Fanann cuimhne lag agam dó féin ag dul amach go cúl an tí, é ag dul anáirde ar an láir, ach ní minic a tharla sin. Theip ar a ghoile, agus d'fhaigheadh sé cúpla Marietta, ar ceapadh futhu ag an am gur brioscaí deasa iad, d'fhaigheadh sé na ceanna céanna ar ais, arís is arís eile, nuair ná h-itheadh sé iad, go dtí go mbídis leaighthe ag an taise, is go dtitfidis as a chéile.

Fuair sé ailse beola, i ngeall ar an dúidin cailce a bhíodh á chailtheamh aige, agus chuaigh sé go Saint Luke's i mBaile Átha Cliath, áit ar leigheasadh é. Níor thugamar aon chuairt air. Nuair a scaoileadar leis, cheap na húdaráis gur duine aonraic é, agus sheoladar don County Home é i gCaislean an Bharraigh, agus bhí sé cúpla mí ann sul a bhfuairamar an t-eolas. Ansan, ar eagla ár náirithe, chuamar suas gur bhailiomaire é, gur thugamar, abhaile é, le Con Ryan is dócha! Ar theacht abhaile dhó, dúirt sé gur cuma leis faoi bheith sa County Home, ach go raibh an bia nib fhéar ann, rud ab fhíor dhó.

Fanann sé im' chuimhne mar dhuine a bhí go deas liom, mar dhuine a bhí an-uaigneach, agus b'éidir cúis mhaith leis sin. Ní raibh creideamh dá laghad aige. Is minic a deireadh sé gurbh fhéar leis a chorp a bheith caite sa lime-kiln ná bheith in aon reilig. Ní cuimhin liom aon phaidir a bheith ar a bhéal choíche, ná aon tuiscint aige ar reiligiún, ar chreideamh, ar shagairt ná ar bhráthair. B'fhéar leis go minic, má thuigim i gceart é, bob ceart a bhualadh ort, ná dinnéar maith a bheith ar bord aige. Uaireanta níor aithin sé cuid na comharsan thar a chuid fhéin, ach fágaimid siúd mar atá sé.

Is iontaí fós an folús uafásach a bhí ina chroí agus ina aigne nuair a chuimhníonn tú go raibh deartháir leis, Antoine McGiobúin, ina mhúinteoir scoile i mBaile Uí bhFiacháin, agus go raibh cáil na cráifeachta air siúd. Bhí fhios ag an saol mór go



ndéaneadh sé troscadh uafásach chuile charghas agus go dtugadh sé ómós speisealta ar feadh na bliana do Chríosta ar an gcrois agus do hAoine an Chéasta. Bé a ghuí féin go gcaillfí é ar an lá sin, agus ní raibh aon íontas ar mo mhuintir nuair a cailleadh é, Aoine an Chéasta, 1956, más buan mo chuimhne. Dúradh go raibh an bheirt deartháir ar chomh-éirim, agus gur cuireadh ar chrannaibh eatorra, cé acu a bheadh ina *monitor*, agus grub é Anthony a bhuaigh. Níl aon fhios agam ar ghoill sin ar mo shean-athair, nó nár ghoill. Thagadh Anthony timpeall uair sa mbliain, le h-airgead a thabhairt do mo sheanmháthair, agus is cosúil gur lena thacaíocht siúd a chuaigh mo mháthair go clochar Thuama, agus as sin go Carysfort, agus is le buíochas don uncaíl a rinne sí an oiread staidéar ar a chreideamh is gur bhuaigh sé an bonn óir le creideamh, 1928, nuair a cáillíodh i ina bun-mhúinteoir. Ba é an chabhair a thug Antoine faoi ndeara dom mháthair cáilíocht múinteora a fháil, gur íoc sise as an deirfúir Sorcha, a bheith ina múinteoir meán-scoile. Mar sin a bhíonn, má thugann tú an chabhair cheart, ag an am cheart.

Mary Kane a bhí ar mo sheanmháthair. An radharc an-dona aici; pianta ina droim go síoraí, fuacht uirthi; í ag imeacht ar fud an tí agus an citeal á úsáid mar mhaide aice; a cuid gruaige fada bán á cíoradh le raic, brioscaí agus cornflour á réiteach dí, agus gach aon achaini agus canrán, agus casaoid uaithi. Tógadh í le Gaeilge go dtí go raibh sí tuairim deich mbliain d'aois, gur leaigh an Ghaeilge thart timpeall uirthi. Dá mhéid a bhí ina n-aighe di, d'fhág sí slán aici gur tháinig casadh eile sa tsaol, go raibh an Ghaeilge á cur in uachtar arís ag De Valera, agus gur cheap sí go raibh a cuid Gaeilge an-luachmhar. Agus bheadh, dá mbeadh an ábaltacht agamsa í a fhóghlaim i gceart.

Bhíodh sí cois teinidh ag gearán cás na mná a phós isteach ar Oilean Chliara,

"mo mhallacht ortsa, a Phaddy Melia.  
nach tú chum bréag domsa i dtúis mo saoil  
Nuair a tháinig scaipeadh orm is toil in áirde  
gur thuit mo chrámha, s' guu réabadh mo cheann."

Cuireadh dul amú ar an gcaílín, bhí Paidí an-bhocht, agus h-insíodh bréaga di:

"nuair a mhol tú Páidín suas go hÉirinn,  
is dúirt tú nach gcaithfeadh Éire uilig a shaibhreas choíchin."

Bhí saol ainnis aici ar an oileán. "Is Aifreann Dombhnaigh nior éist mé ann." Ní cuimhin liom níos mo di. B'fhéidir nach raibh a thuilleadh de aici. Dhéaneadh sí cur síos ar chailleach Chonamara agus ar rudaí eile nach cuimhin liom; ach d'fhag sí saibhreas mór leaganacha agus nathanna cainte agam, nach gcaillfidh mé go deo. Chuala mé faoin "troighthín", faoin "seraft" faoi thuras a thug daoine bochta go Cathair na Mart, go dtí an Tiarna Sligeach, nach raibh ach cúpla focail Béarla ag na daoine chun a riachtannaisí a cur in iúl. "closs, mi ladi" a bhí á lorg. Éadaí a bhí uatha.

Dá mbeadh sí liom anois, bheadh sraith fada ceisteanna agam le cur uirthi. Chuirfinn ceist uirthi go speisialta faoi file Inis Bearnan, Seán Mac Conmara, agus an dán a scríobh sé faoina muintir, Cathánaigh na hAille Móire:

Is a Mhichil Phádraig Ruairi  
Thug tú an bua leat thar an gCaol  
Agus amuigh in Inse Guaire  
Fuair mé tuairisc ar do gníomh  
Anois ó táim 'mo chléireach  
Is gur féidir liom a scríobh  
An dá chineadh a cur le chéile  
Agus dúshlán na hÉirinn á gcur síos.

Ba í sin an fhaicsiníocht, agus ba iad na Máilligh agus na Cathánaigh an dá chineadh. Chuirfinn cheist faoi Dhónall Meirgeach, nó Donall Sealgaire, faoi Aifí Mac Giobúin agus John Kirby, file eile. Bheadh lear mar scéalta aici faoin sibín a bhí ag Pat Phaddy i nGabhlán, faoi na dishealbhaithé agus faoi Bhoswell Houston; agus b'fhéidir faoina bhean a scríobh an leabhar. Seans go raibh aithne éigin aici ar John Tiernan gur scríobh Harold Speakman an t-aiste álainn faoi. B'fhéidir go ndéanfadh sí cur síos ar an Colony, agus ar na colonies a bhí amuigh i mBundorcha, agus faoin tairngireacht a rinne an tArdeasbag Mac Éil. B'fhéidir go dtabharfadh sí eolas dom ar na rudaí sin, ach níl mé aon phioc ró-chinnté dó sin. A mhalairt ar fad, ar uairibh. Ach bhí tuiscint láidir aici ar shaol na Gaeilge san am sin, an fhiosracht, síogaíocht, cuid mhór den bhiadán agus den chúl-chaint atá léirithe chomh h-iomlán agus chomh rábach i "gCré na Cille", ag Máirtín Ó Cadhain. Go deimhin ba í mo sheanmháthair féin a thug eochair an leabhair dom, Cairtriona Pháidín, atá gaibhnithe istigh ag neartanna agus ag laigi an tsean-tsaol. Ba í an tuiscint Ghaelach sin ceann de na bearnaí a bhí idir an tsean-lánún, ceann eile ab ea an easpa fearúlachta agus carthanachta a bhí ar a fear céile, a colseisear dílis feinig. Solas na bhflaitheas don mbeirt acu!

Ach ba í an chaint idir an mháthair agus na h-iononacha an chuid ba shaibhre den tigh. Bhíodh patrúin maireachtála, agus codanna casta moráltachta á phlé acu go minic. Bhí slite cearta le chuile rud a dhéanamh, agus an t-eolas ar fad briste suas ina codanna beaga bídeacha a d'fhéadfadh duine ar bith a chur de ghlan mheabhair, foirmli beaga daingne. Ba í an eochair an bheim a leag siad ar an bhfocal "right" agus foirmli neartaithe lies:

*"It was always said.*

*"Twas always said that that was the right way.*

*He did the right thing"*

(Cé gur minic nár thuig sé cén fáth a bheith ceart) agus níos measa faoin duine a bhrisfeadh dlí.

*"He's not right"* sé sin le rá go raibh sé glan as a mheabhair. Smaoineamh é sin a bhí go láidir sa Ghréig fadó, chaithefé a bheith glan as do mheabhair le comhthuiscint na muintire a bhriseadh. Bhí leas an phobail níos láidre ná toil an duine aonair, agus an té a bhrisfeadh nósanna rhó-mhinic, fuair sé bheith amuigh ón bpobal. Tá bearna mhór de dhaichead bliain ó bhí mé ag éisteacht leis an bplé seo, agus bhí sé ligthe i ndearmad agam, murach i bheith ar fáil chomh láidir i gcuntaisí na bpáistí ón gCriogán Bán, cuntaisí a scríobh siad do Dháithi Mhag Réil sa mbliain 1936. Sampla álainn den saol seo iseadh an t-eolas a thugadar faoi *"Death and Burial"* agus arís faoi nósanna an phósta *"Marriage and Wedding customs"*.

Cúis áthais dom i gcónaí gur chaitheas cuid dem óige in aontíos leo. An té nach gcuireann aithne cheart ar sheandaoine, ní bheidh a fhios aige riamh cá bhfuil a thriall. Tioctaidh an sean-aois air mar námhaid, gan súil aige le gean ná grá ó dhuine ar bith, ach ins an mhéid a dlightear dó ón eaglais, nó mar a mhealladh sé cion agus aire ó dhuine le slámanna airgid. Ach bíonn taithneamh agus áilleacht ag baint le seandaoine. go speisialta má bhíonn doimhneacht agus tuiscint actu. Is ionnta is mó a léirítear an nádúr daonna, an "comédie humaine". Ina súile siúd a fheiceas tú pictúir díot féin. Siad siúd an ceann eile ar an mheá, an suimiú déanach. Feicim gurb é an saol céanna atá romhainn amach, agus nach bhfuil mórán de difríocht idir sean-daoine in áit ar bith.



Amach as saol an bhochtanaís a fáisceadh mo shean-mhuintir, agus cé gur imigh uainn an saol sin in Éirinn, tá na milliún daoine fós faoi bhraca an ainneise, an daoirse choitianta.

Fanann oiread den saol sin im' aigne nach mbím iomlán socair leis an saol nua, nach gcreidim go seasfaidh an saol breá atá againn. Lem' linn féin tá fás fataí agus glasraí imithe den saol ag gnáthdhaoine. Is gearr go mbeidh cuid mhór den bhfeilméarachta imithe freisin agus milliún daoine ag maireachtáil go díreach ar an stáit. Má chuireann tú na reanna rialtais, stát sheirbhísigh, gardaí, múinteoirí agus oifigigh de gach saghas san áireamh beidh milliún go leith ag brath ar an stáit. Dá dtarlódh, i bhfad uainn an anacháin, dá dtarlódh an sórt ruda a tharla sna tríochaidí, go dtiocfaidh lagú éigin ar an gcóras caipitleach, bhéadh titim tubaisteach inár scála maireachtála. Bhéimis inár Zambia de phlimp. Ach glactar leis nach dtarlóidh seo, is cuid dár gcreideamh é go bhfágfar saol na bhfuíoll ag Béarlóirí gheala, agus dríodar an phota ag chuile duine eile!

Agus fanann rian eile den saol sin agam. Cé go dtugaim taitheamh óm chroí do chathair Baile Átha Cliath, agus go gcuireann sé áiseanna agus deiseanna iontach ar fáil dom, fós féin, glacaim leis an gcathair mar shráidbhaile. Diúltaim don fhoirmeáltacht agus don gaillemaisíocht atá á gcruthú sna páipéir Domhnaigh. Diúltaim do lucht polatíochta ar fad. Má chaithim leath-uair ag éisteacht le h-eolaí éigin ag cur síos ar Carravaggio, gabhfaidh mé ag caint leis an doirseoir le fáil amach cad é a thuairim siúd. D'fhéadfadh an t-eolas a bheith ag fear amháin, agus an tuiscint ag fear eile ar fad. Baineann an rud céanna le nósanna agus iompar daoine. An rud a bheadh mícheart i mBun Abhann, tá sé mícheart i mBaile Átha Cliath.

Ach tá sé ag éirí déanach; tá tuirse orm. Tá sé in am na cosa a ní, agus an t-uisce a chaitheamh amach ar an tsráid.

“Chugaibh, chugaibh, a mhuintir amuigh,  
uisce salach, fágaibh an bealach.”  
Oíche mhaith!

Baile Átha Cliath

Seán Ó Dúill



Freewheeling after school, October 1994

## LETTER FROM HOME

Dear Austie,

They're all gone out this morning, the two young ones to the school and the two to the Credit Union and I took the liberty of Eileen's writing pad and little Tommie's biro to send you this scrawl about what's going on. But by the same token, God bless whoever puts in that Random Diary in every *Coinneal* now because it saves me an hour of writing and all you have to do is turn to the page and read all them details for yourself.

Well 'twas a bad year or bad enough anyway with rain. We had only one decent week there in the middle of September; but then if you please didn't we get the finest Indian summer in the middle of October when everyone was gone. It will shorten the winter. You didn't come? But I know well there was something. And sure maybe you'd make it for the Christmas, and you'll have ease when all the others aren't here and as little Mary said to Aunt Brigid when the grand-children were small "a squad of *gasúrs* and them rising the head on you".

Well did you here that they're all gone a-lifting all over the country here – Mayo anyway – for Irish dancing. Céilí I mean not the step-dancing. Like the Walls of Limerick and The Waves of Tory and sets and the Stack of Barley. I'm letting skill on myself now because of course I didn't see them except on TV. But they say there's couples leaving the town every week going as far as Achill and Newport and Belmullet. Believe me, when the Parochial is in full swing there'll be noise on the boards. Short until it's opened up again, I hear.

You heard about James. He's great, considering. But for one so strong and healthy you'd never think. And you know, when he was in the hospital, 'twas here the news came, on the phone. The word was that he was positive; and sure I was delighted; me thinking that positive was good and little did I think until Eileen explained to me. He's shook, though; just sitting up and eating a bit. But sure it's one road we'll all go at the latter end.

And how well you heard about the Risen Women? Hadn't they great courage? There was a fair share of *magadh* and gibing here about the programme – that *Telefís Éireann* was only *rising* them – the risen women, you know! But it was a grand programme to see, especially being from the place; and faith then *Mary Gibbons* and *Eileen Maxwell* and *Brid Sammin* spoke up well. They say it was *Michael Viney* and the wife *Ethna*, was behind it. As luck would have it who should be here the night it was on but Thomas. He's getting a bit feeble on the feet lately, still he comes the odd time. But when he heard that this Horizon course (that's what it's called) was to help women to talk: "Ah, *mo léan géar*," sez he, "are we to believe that women couldn't talk enough up to this!" I was after Eileen to join the course when it began; and sometimes I think since that she's sorry she didn't – with the television and all. But now she's saying that a lot of those courses have a habit of making a big splash and then nothing comes from them when the splash dies down. But lately down a big government grant came, £15,000 we hear, so there's bound to be great things coming up in the future.

Well surely if you don't come home quick you won't think you're in Louisburgh at



all when you get off the bus on the Square. You know that they're counting the town to be two hundred years old in 1995, although the old people used to say it was only finished a very short while in the Year of the French. Anyway the celebration is next year. I didn't hear of any special programme or items arranged. I hope to God it won't turn out like all the others to be a celebration mostly for the pubs. But I was saying you won't know the Square. They have widened the footpaths at the four corners. A taste too wide I'd say myself because the Square was small enough ever without cutting pieces off it. Maybe they'll ban all motor-cars from parking on the Square now. They should.

They have very nice lamp-posts at all the corners – cast-iron pillars and brass lamps; and a row of shorter pillars and nice litter-bins. But a man would want to be sober walking the town at night. And on top of all that there are wooden seats around the Square. They look lovely, but I'd like it better if there was a back to them the way old people could sit back and rest. I was waiting for the bus one morning, going to see them in McBride's Home in Westport, and I tried sitting on them when no one was looking. One of them is fixed on a slant so much that when I sat down never thinking I was nearly pitched backwards on top of my head fornenst Maggie Durkan's. They should straighten it. The Town Traders that got these done. They collected money locally and I suppose they got a grant, too. We didn't hear yet. The Protestant Church, Saint Catherine's, is open now as the Gránuaile Centre and Famine Centre. I went down to see it and it's a credit. I was thinking of the foolish times, bad times, when we were not allowed to attend the funeral of a Protestant neighbour. *John Joe Kilcoyne* is in charge, and no mistake 'tis him that's able. All business. They have life-size images there of Gránuaile and Queen Elizabeth (the old one) and other people from those times. They were wondering that Gránuaile should be wearing a britches that time. We all thought that Mrs. Harman was the first. But she's wearing a long dress where she's talking to Queen Elizabeth.

We had big crowds here for the festival, there in the latter-end of July. With all the rain we had this summer everyone was saying that there would be no tourists but it was a very good tourist year after. Well, Michael was in the town one day during the festival and he saw one little thing that saddened me. Those banners and bunting for the festival were up across the street and this huge lorryload of baled hay went back the town. It was so high the driver had to get out of his lorry, climb up and throw down so many bales and then drive on and collect them again. I'm sure he had an audience, but I was wondering was there any country person in the group, married in the town maybe, that felt the sadness of having a load of bales going out to the West where there was hay ever; and land and men going high for the want of producing the things we need. And sure, *ce'r chás é*, but this policy of "set aside" the government has now, where they're *paying* farmers good money to leave their land idle; and they say they have a camera in the satellite to spy if they are tilling it after. But as Dadda said: "*Faraor géar*, the camera needn't have any fear of catching anyone tilling in this village!" He said it's all like something you'd hear was foretold in one of the old prophecies. Surely it would put you down in the ground with disgust and I don't want to weary you with it. But when I think of you going to the shop longo with the eggs and home-made butter and how pleased we were to get the price of them, I ask myself *where* is all the money

coming from today? Because young and old are spending out of face.

By the same token, will you tell me what's on that president ye have Bill Clinton with the frog he has in the throat. I thought first it was only a touch of a *pióchán*, but it has stuck to him too long now for that. If Hilary was any good she'd have him drinking *carraigín* on hot milk and that would soon shift it. But, *mó léan géar*, I have my doubts that it's not about *carraigín* Hilary does be thinking; and sure there's many a Hilary at us here at home and the *carraigín* bet up on the door at us. Sometimes you'd feel for him the crachure when he's cornered by them journalists like a rabbit by ferrets and him trying to explain, like a *gasúr* that would come running into the house bet. But between hopping and trotting they have all done well with the peace moves for Northern Ireland. And you just watch out now, the buckoes that were all out for violence and arms for the freedom of Ireland *moryah*, even over beyond with ye, they'll soon change their tune now. They won't admit that they were on the wrong track all along; but it will be good to see them getting reason and common Christian sense anyway.

Now I have my bit put through me again and anyway they'll be back from the Credit Union any minute. I'm not telling you what to do with any shilling you have saved, but maybe when you hear of all the Credit Union can do, that you'd consider something. But I'm not telling you your business.

God be with you Austie in all your doings. And we're longing for the day you'll darken the door at us again.

Your Fond

*Mother*



Senior Citizens Committee 1994

Left to right: Marian McNamara, Mary Keane, Tommy Duffy, Teresa Sammon, Mary Burke, Norrie Kitterick, Imelda O'Grady, Sally Davitt, Mary Healy