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ΣΟΙΠΠΕΑΛ

Credit Union



No 22

Louisburgh 2002

FAITH OF OUR FATHERS.



"Cailis Dé mo chroí:  
Chum sé é de chriaidh  
'S ar altóir an domhain  
Leag sé síos é lóm"

Séamas Ó hAodha

Corpus Christi, 2002, The Square.



# An Coinneal

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NUMBER TWENTY-TWO.

2002

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*All the way from Louisburgh*



*In the past, the very fabric of life in Carrowniskey, in this parish, indeed in the whole of Ireland, was made up with a strong sense of religious faith. For example, you remember greeting people, I certainly do, working in the fields, in the bog, milking the cows, making a churning with: "God bless the work". On entering the house: "God save all here"; Please God"; "Thanks be to God"; "The Lord spare you the health" were expressions in common use.*

*'The family rosary was said nightly. It was second nature going past a church or a graveyard to bless ourselves – in other words – God and the things of God were part and parcel of the way we lived and thought and spoke.'*

**Fr. Pat McNally at the Carrowniskey National School Reunion Mass in Killeen, 8th August 2001.**

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

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*The Editor wishes to thank all the people whose voluntary efforts have helped to produce this 22nd issue, and the many shopkeepers in town who exhibit and sell the magazine.*

#### **A Message to our Friends in the U.S.A.**

*Beir bua agus beannacht. The Editor sends his best wishes to Mary and Bob Richter, our distributors in the USA, and to all our Louisburgh friends. He also apologises for the mailing fiasco two years ago and accepts total responsibility. Please God, the likes will never happen again. The present issue of *An Choinneal* contains much to interest all of our readers and we hope that our USA friends especially, whose patience and generosity are appreciated by us, will enjoy happy hours of reading. The Committee would like to thank Mary and Bob Richter for their full financial report.*

#### **Some Louisburgh sites:**

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[www.louisburgh-ireland.com](http://www.louisburgh-ireland.com)  
[www.louisburgh.ie](http://www.louisburgh.ie)



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- Colum Mc Cann.

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*Being Irish* edited by Paddy Logue is an excellent book of essays from the pens of one hundred Irish people. It's an excellent read, food for the soul and affords time to reflect on what it means to be Irish in these days of Nice treaties and EU agreements. Contact Brian O'Kane of Oak Tree Press for details.

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## All the Way from Louisburgh

### Editorial

To all our readers, at home and abroad, greetings as we publish the first twenty first century issue of *An Choinneal*. We extend a special word from home to all our overseas friends, all of whom have been patient and loyal and approving of our modest efforts in the recent past. *An Choinneal* has been and will continue to be an important part of what we are in Louisburgh.

Therefore, we congratulate our writers and correspondents in this issue. We are as always pleased to accept and publish the memories and works of our parish and we salute the efforts of those among us who daily strive to make our beloved parish of Kilgeever a better place. We have dipped into the past and we are aware of the great age of our parish church – it is in existence since 1862 and stands over the faith of this ancient region. It is a sentinel in these times of rapid change and we commend the setting up of our parish Pastoral Team. First Mass on Sunday is now no more and we reflect in this issue on Second Mass of days long gone.

Memories abound in these pages, of happier and poorer times. *An Choinneal* is, we believe, an important instrument of communication and of record in these days of atrocity and cynical public behaviour. The Age of Innocence has given way to an age of turpitude when even our children are not safe in this wicked world.

And yet there is hope. We commend our readers to a very special section starting on page 95, which reflects the intellectual strength of the students, teenagers and adults, who participated in the Writer-in-Residence Project conducted by the Louisburgh Community Project.

We conclude with an excerpt from the first issue of *An Choinneal* 1959:

*"To all, to every son and daughter of Kilgeever, we hope that this Coinneal will be a light of faith to combat darkness and half-shadows; and, if need be, a beacon by which to swing a ship and to set a compass anew . . ."*

**Editor**  
**September 2002**



## One Hundred and Forty Years

### *Louisburgh's New Catholic Church*

When the inhabitants of the Parish of Kilgeever gathered after last mass on the 4th of November 1855, the catechetical exercises of the day had concluded and James W. Garvey of Tully House was called on to preside. The meeting was told "That we . . . have for a long time deeply felt and deplored the miserable state of the House of God in this Parish, and have suffered . . . having been obliged, for want of sufficient accommodation, to kneel in the open air, in the very mire . . ." The meeting went on to decide that " . . . we do immediately commence the erection of a New Church in this Parish . . ." Fr. Michael Curley, P.P., was asked to "enter into communication with the Most Noble the Marquis of Sligo . . . to solicit a suitable site . . . as well as his lordships kind co-operation and great influence . . ."

Within one week of the meeting, two local members of the Church of Ireland, Hugh Wilbraham of Boathaven Lodge and Campbel Sawers of Old Head House had contributed generously.

By May 1856, the Marquis of Sligo had granted two acres of land, rent free forever for the church, a presbytery, schoolhouse and any other buildings needed, to "be exclusively and forever devoted to pious and ecclesiastical purposes".

On a June Tuesday architect John Butler oversaw the clearing of the site by a crowd of parishioners; the next Sunday saw the congregation on the new site where they were asked to both stand and kneel so that the dimensions fixed would prove sufficient or otherwise for the accommodation of all.

The estimated cost of the new church was £2500.00. By September, Archbishop McHale laid the foundation stone and the year's end saw the priests of the different Deaneries contributing over £200.00.

Fr. Curley was worried in the latter part of 1857. He wrote that the £700.00 by then collected was spent and that he needed a further

£1500.00 immediately. His parishioners were in dire straits and his only chance of success was among the throngs of Irish overseas. "I have come to the resolution of appealing in person to my fellow-countrymen in America," wrote Fr. Curley in October 1858. On his way to the United States, he collected in Ballinrobe, Tuam and Galway before boarding the Steamship Pacific on the 13th October and arriving in New York on the 27th.

Subscriptions in the USA eventually totaled £1150.00 and by January 1860 a very ill Fr. Curley was back in Galway. He arrived home in February. Huge crowds flocked to greet him: "As the procession moved a little further, the first thing to greet the eye was a monster bonfire blazing on the town square. Then the Rev. Fr. Curley was literally besieged . . . The joy of the people was now swelled to a sort of delirium . . . the houses of the whole town – Protestant as well as Catholic – were most brilliantly illuminated . . ."

In the meantime, many of the people were in distress and were in great need of fuel. The winter of 1861 saw widespread poverty and in December a public meeting was convened in the Courthouse for the purpose of relieving the suffering of the poor. A donation of £20.00 was received from Lord John Browne and the collection amounted to almost £50.00. Blankets were distributed in the parish and timber was felled in Old Head.

Sunday, the 7th September 1862 was a memorable day in Louisburgh with the dedication of the new Church. But the debt outstanding was a worry – the overall cost had run to £4000.00. Distress among the poor was sharp. On the previous 20th of May, a meeting of the Catholic Clergy was held in Westport and referred to " . . . the almost uninterrupted rains and dampness of the climate . . . the horrible calamities of the past harvest and winter . . . the destitution of the vast majority of our people . . . their deplorable condition."

By 12 May 1960 when the centenary of the church was celebrated, the re-roofing and interior renovations had been carried out under the then P.P. Canon James Heaney.

The generosity of the parishioners, at home and abroad, was remarkable and Archbishop Walsh quoted the words of Isaiah: "O poor



little one, tossed by the tempest, bereft of all comfort, behold I will set thy stones in order and will lay thy foundations with sapphires”.

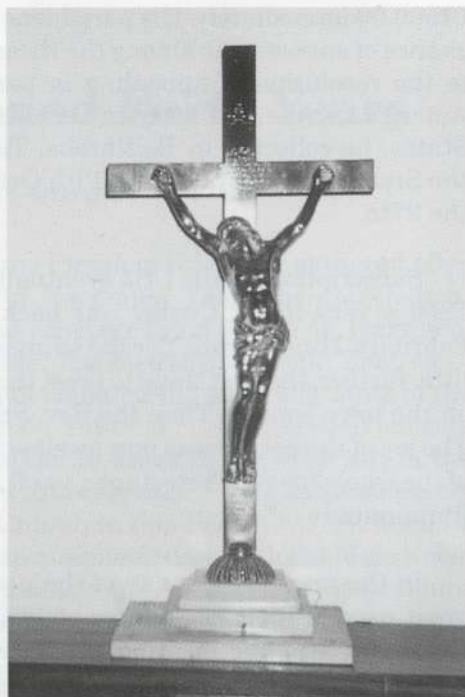
Fifteen years later, on Ascension Day, 8th May 1975, the church was again solemnly blessed and dedicated by Archbishop Cunnane following more recent renovations. These works cost £63,957.00 plus fees. Again, the generosity from home and abroad was noted; for example, a social in Boston realized £1768.67 with another £2,000.00 in anonymous donations.

The most recent chapter in the history of St. Patrick's Church has been the complete clearance of the grounds and the installation of parking facilities. These essential works and others are thanks to the energies of Fr. Mannion, PP and many others.

If Archbishop Mc Hale were to return, he would be pleased. It was he who stated in Louisburgh: “If a church were to fall from Heaven it could find a most appropriate resting place in any one spot of the two acres which have been selected and granted”.

**John Lyons**

Sources: **Connaught Telegraph**  
**An Choinneal, Autumn 1961**  
**An Choinneal, Christmas 1975**



**Crucifix in Sacristy of St. Patrick's Church**

*Inscription reads: “Presented by Thomas Hoban to the Revd. Michael Curley, P.P., for the use of the New Catholic Church, Louisburgh, Co. Mayo, Ireland. New York, U.S.A., November 1859  
Photo: Nicola Lyons.  
From “Louisburgh, A History”.*

## The Parish Link

### Our Parish

**O**ur Country has changed a lot over the past few decades. Most of us have changed with it. For the most part, we enjoy and cope well with our new Ireland. Everywhere around us we see signs of development. Driving this development are many individuals, and groups of great ability, imagination and energy.

Not all organisations are coping well at this time of change. Some, which flourished in the past, are struggling to keep connected with people today. The Church is one such organisation. People are becoming less involved with the Church and their faith. Our Parish faces the enormous challenge of developing a faith that gives meaning and direction to our lives. Many parishioners are trying to meet this challenge by forming Parish Pastoral Teams – Leadership Teams which will look ahead and lead the way to the future.



*Corpus Christi 2000.*

Photo: Padraig Geraghty, Kilsallagh





Corpus Christi 2000.

Photo: Pdraig Geraghty, Kilsallagh

### Pastoral Team Training

During May 2001 groups of volunteers from the parishes of Kilgeever, Partry, Clifden, Newport & Achill attended a number of 'Pastoral Team' training sessions in Westport. The objective of these sessions, which were organised by the diocesan office and presided over by Fr. Eugene Duffy, Western Theological Institute, Galway, was to look at the current realities and challenges facing the church in this diocese and to help us understand the need for a Pastoral Team.

Included in the challenges identified are the rapid **decline in the number of vocations** to the priesthood and religious life and the aging profile of the existing priests. **This calls for increased participation by everyone in parish life.** The mission of the church is not the sole responsibility of the ordained priest but a shared responsibility of every parishioner.

In recent years any discussion of religion in Ireland is sucked into the narrow question of attendance at Mass. Our sessions highlighted the need for **a new vision of 'parish'**.

The parish should not be primarily a structure, a territory, or a

building but rather a place

- where people experience hospitality
- where good liturgies are prepared and celebrated
- where peoples gifts are recognised and encouraged
- where peoples needs are identified and addressed
- where there is a sense of collaboration and cooperation.

Traditionally, the parish priest and curates were responsible for the life of the parish and keeping the vision of Jesus alive. Unfortunately, in the future there will be fewer priests in our diocese. Therefore, the Pastoral Team and each of us as baptised Christians need to take responsibility for our faith, for keeping the vision alive and for putting this vision into practice within the community.

### The Function of Parish Pastoral Team

The **primary goal** of the Parish Pastoral Team is to be a means for the parish to develop a clearer and deeper understanding of the need for all to share in the responsibility to carry on Christ's mission in the world.

To try to achieve this challenging goal the team has the following functions:

- To serve as a channel of communication within the parish and diocese
- To listen to you the people of God, to endeavour to identify the needs, hopes and aspirations of the parish and to set priorities based on these needs
- To reflect on and plan for the future direction in the parish
- To assist the parish to develop and implement an annual plan

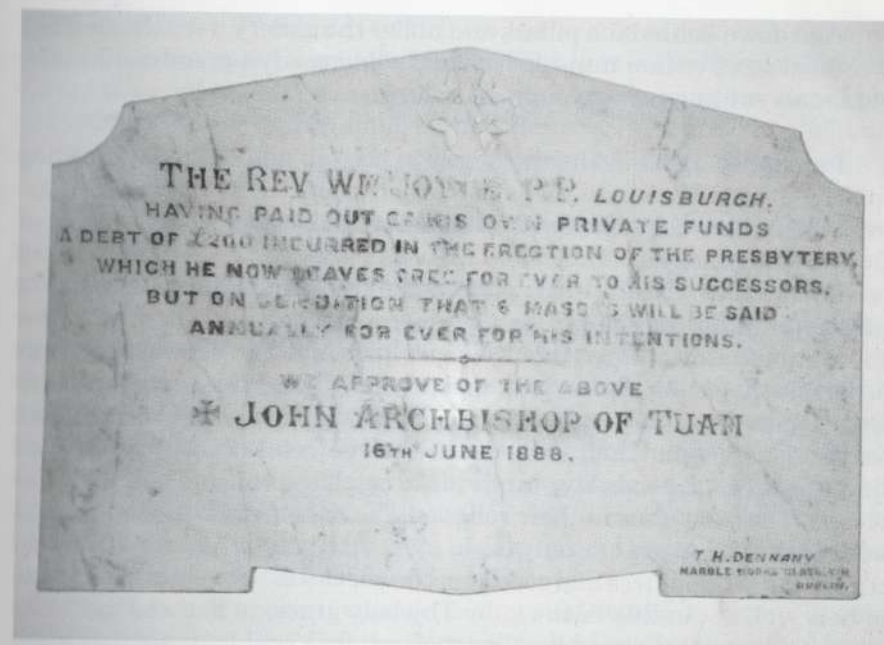
The Team's role is to facilitate and support, not duplicate the valuable work being done by many groups in the parish. The aim is to build on this work and to involve more people encouraging them to share their talents to create a truly christian community.



## Second Mass

I love Second Mass in Louisburgh. It is not that I like celebrating Second Mass any more than another: in fact, what I mean is that, having read Mass earlier, I love to go in again and get lost among the congregation at eleven-thirty. We had an Italian visitor in Mooneen once and I remember how widely his eyes spoke his wonder as he saw the black line of people hurrying in along the Westport road on his first Sunday morning. At the time, it more delighted than disappointed me when he said: "Nothing like this in Italy." But we never wondered at it: it was part of our life. "Sunday," wrote Addison "clears away the rust of the whole week," and so indeed it did – and does – for all of us. So it does for that last car-load arriving at the church gate "with the second bell"; so it does for the young townsman jerking his neck within a tight collar and side-stepping his hurried way through children down along Main Street; so it does for the flustered matron still searching for a penny while "the Acts" are on. Sunday is a day to live for; and the real focal point of Sunday in our parish is Second Mass. It is a family reunion; and my joy is to slip into that family to do with them that Greatest Act of All.

My earliest memories of Second Mass are of the people whom we saw there as regularly as the Sabbath. Somehow or other, it is the old people that I can remember in particular. In the period that I can best recall, there was a precept in vogue: "Men on the left; women on the right"; a rule which – apart from summer visitors and inseparably married couples – was pretty well adhered to. And since we, as boys, were always cautioned to "go up high in the church," I nearly always found myself among a team of old men. Now that I try to analyse it, I feel that the congregation divided itself into three almost distinct strata. Not exactly, of course, for there are always conscientious objectors; but by and large. I am inclined to think, too, that the divisions were on a basis of age. In front were the patriarchs. They were saintly old men, these; – grey-headed, blue-suited, frieze-collared, white fronted, rough-handed, big-knuckled old men who put their black, round, hard hats in front of them; and, now that I think of it, heard Mass with a great faith and with a strong devotion. The memory of them almost fuses with my memory of priests in choir at a High Mass; and their presence seemed so essential that their black hats might well have been birettas. The



*Plaque in Sacristy.*

Photo: Nicola Lyons

middle section, down to the confessional box say, was sacred to serious, middle-aged men – Gardai, professional men, officials, and a solid core of solid farmers – many of whom had to wait until the Acts were over to move up to their seats, but did so with enough confidence to show that a seat awaited them. That or else they tip-toed up the aisle and stood at the seat-end, demanding a shuffling of knees and a dragging of handkerchiefs to allow them in. Below the confessional box were the younger men – always reluctant to come higher – unmarried most of them, and graded from the "Key of Heaven" in front to the cap and beads at the door,

Insofar as the women kept any order – and we always held that they didn't – it was just the reverse of this. On the Epistle side under the pulpit, and just across from the old men, the schoolgirls perched themselves. ("They were goin' on, so they were, all the time!") Midway down the mothers' regiment – town mothers especially. They always seemed to be whispering prayers, so much so that when we played at "reading Mass" and had distributed the roles of priest, servers and choir, if there were any girls left after the seat-ful of nuns, they were detailed to do "the women praying."



And down behind the pillars and under the gallery were the smiling, wrinkled faces within nun-like shawls – “somebody’s grand-mothers” – old ladies smiling to everyone who even glanced their way.

I am a boy again in the third seat at the top and the men are filing in. The dust of the white roads is on their boots; they are perspiring – even steaming – for some have walked from Kilgeever, from Leachta, or from Doughmackeon. They take their same places as infallibly as an orchestra. How vividly I can picture them in their places; looking so much alike that one might be the mirrored image of the other. How their names almost force themselves off my nib! The second bell rings for Mass: they bless themselves: and then I do. They take handkerchiefs from top-pockets and settle them for kneeling. The priest comes down for the Asperges and their shriveled arms are stretched out like withered limbs between the sodality standards to catch the rain of Holy Water as it falls. These men mean their religion! The Acts are read: “O my God, I believe that Thou are one only God . . .” “ . . . that He will reward the good with eternal happiness and condemn the wicked to the everlasting pains of hell . . .” “ . . . in this faith . . . by Thy holy grace, to live and die.” The old people repeat the prayers almost aloud; they could prompt the priest if he were to miss a line. They continue the “Prayer before Mass”; now and again some tired voice picks on one sentence or another to whine aloud: “We humbly beseech Thee that . . . we may always assist with the utmost devotion and reverence. . .” “ . . . we offer It . . . for all who are in high station, that we may lead quiet and holy lives . . .” “ . . . particularly for the congregation here present, to obtain all blessings we stand in need of in this life, everlasting happiness in the next and eternal rest to the faithful departed.” All bless themselves again at the names of the Blessed Trinity and the Mass begins.

A man or two near me has put on wire spectacles and has opened a prayer-book. All are intensely serious and intent on the altar. I climb up to the seat level to look into a prayer-book and beyond a huge thumb I see words like “Graciously” and “Beseech” and “Deign”. But these mean something to them: they are serious, they are praying, they are like statues come alive. They are heedless of me and, meantime, pages turn or decades roll. There is a loud noise of beads on the seats as we strike our breasts for *Kyrie Eleison – Lord have mercy on us!* The choir stands up in front of us and we nearly miss the Gospel. Then, after the Creed, we sit and the choir sings again. There are two pieces, which will always remind me of the old-time Louisburgh choir. One is a hymn to St. Patrick

– *Dúchas Linn, a Phádraic* – which we learned as school children and sang with great gusto in middle-March. The other is the *Regina Coeli* at Easter-time, which was sung by the adults – predominantly men. The strength and power and triumph of their *Resurrexit, sicut dixit, alleluia!* communicated itself to us long before we even knew that it was Latin.

Meanwhile, during the Canon of the Mass, the men are seated but their books are still open and as the midday sun streams in over the pulpit it gives their faces a symbolic glow. If I miss the warning bell or am turned about vacantly, an old arm checks me or nudges me into attention for the Consecration of the Mass. Silence descends on the whole church while the priest bends over the Host. How did these old men behave during this solemn portion? A memory haunts me of their moving lips and rising eyes, and of the hands striking often on their breasts. But it is only a vague memory. Did they pronounce an Act of Faith? or was it the ejaculation of St. Thomas? or was it, perhaps, the cry with which their own grandfathers were used to greet Him in Oldhead, or in Althore, or at Carraig-an-Aifrinn: “Céad míle fáilte rót, a Thiarna!” Little wonder that such ancient, vintage faith would retain its vigour in two changes of earthen jars. Only in later years did I realize that I had been often in the company of saints.

The sermon is always an event looked forward to. “What the people want,” someone said to me many years ago, “is a nice, short sermon at First Mass, and they don’t mind a long one at Second if ’tis interesting.” The old people are very intent on the sermon. Down through the church the middle-aged farmers might steal a wink – tired out with a week’s turf cutting or “wracking” or mowing. On the women’s side, a baby might begin to cry; might even imitate the priest, and its mother would perspire with confusion, and the girls under the pulpit giggle. Away up in the unknown regions of the gallery, boyish men or mannish boys might be engrossed with the gyrations of a wasp about a bald head in front of them. But the old people are intent on the sermon.

The old people are turned sideways in their seats with an elbow on the seat-back and a forgotten foot straggling. And as the sermon works up, their faces wear that exquisite frown of admiration or approval, which is, I think, peculiar to our old people. It meant that they said: “He’s a great priest, God bless him!” It meant that they cupped their bony hands about their ears to lose nothing, much as one shades his eyes to look afar. It meant that they would ask the young folk when they went home:



"Did you hear what the priest said off the altar this morning?" – and so the sermon was brought home in terms of spade, or scythe, or bicycle.

Nowadays, I go to the gallery often and it is hardly a distraction for me to study the congregation below. "Here," I say to myself, "is Louisburgh as we knew and know it; and as we would always have it." Things seem to me to form a river: a river in that they are ever changing; and a river, too, in that the shape of things is unyielding and unchanged. There has been a general gliding movement. We have carried the old men and women to Kilgeever; but the middle-aged have floated up and the young men at the door have married the girls at the front and have drifted into the middle seats. All this has happened in a timeless way: in the telescoping years a Mass-server has been called into the sacristy and has returned with a chalice and a chasuble. But the river-shape remains. It still is Second Mass in Louisburgh and it is in many, many ways the same.

When Mass is over, the same – at least they seem the same – black-clothed women are moving and bowing, like so many Queens of Clubs, about the candelabra; and the faces in the procession outwards are just so many living mortuary-cards of the men and the women I studied as a boy. A happy thought strikes! If nature can reprint such clear copies of our bodies, surely grace can repeat the likeness in a soul? What if we now wear hats that are brown and soft? What if no sidecars are left, anti-aircraft like, "back the town"; no horses moored, currach-like, to the Convent hedge? Christianity can flower in any surroundings: a pure heart – a Christ's heart – can beat as well within a blazer as beneath a báinín; the faith that walks now in a costume can be – *is* – the faith that was swaddled in a shawl. Our second Mass is still part of our 'quiet and holy lives,' where we show the faith in which "we hope to live and die."

Perhaps our reverence for Mass was never kernelled as well in words as by the man – now dead, God rest him! – who was passed on the Tooreen road by another singing gaily on his way to Mass. "You'd think," he said, "that that man was going to a dance, instead of going to Calvary!"

**Leon Ó Mórcháin**

**An Choinneal 1959**

## Father James O'Malley

One of the clerical heroes of the Famine period in western lore is the subject of this article. His name is Fr. James O'Malley and is referred to by James Berry in *"Tales of the West of Ireland."* Berry noted that this priest "was descended from a clan which was rated to be the wealthiest and most eloquent stock who ever figured west of Croagh Patrick."

Nevertheless, there has been a dearth of information in local history with regard to this family of O'Malley from Cahir, a village near Louisburgh, Co. Mayo. The church records of the parish of Kilgeever, to which I had access, revealed such an abundance of entries in the registers of marriages and births in the name of O'Malley, that it is difficult to trace one particular family. I must therefore write what I know from history and tradition and pass on details, which the next generation may build upon.

Fr. James was born in Cahir, the son of "Neddy" O'Malley and Bridget Prendergast of Accony. They had a family of three boys and two girls, James, Edward, Tom, Maire and Nora. A great grandson of Tom, named James, was ordained in 1923 and became bishop of Achonry. Edward married and lived in Cahir. He had two sons and a daughter, Bridget, who married Simon O'Reilly of Shraugh. These were the parents of my mother Kathleen Kelly (nee O'Reilly).

Returning to Fr. James, I discovered that there was no record in the diocesan archives regarding the date of his birth or that of his ordination. We do know



Celtic headstone of  
Fr. James O'Malley, Cahir (at  
Kilgeever Cemetery, Louisburgh).



he worked as an assistant priest in the parish of Began in 1828; between then and 1836, he seems to have returned to his native place. After that, he was transferred to Moore, near Ballinasloe, where he remained until 1841. His next appointment, under archbishop McHale, was Ballinrobe.

It was here he made many friends who were kind to him, especially during the desperate years of the Great Famine. Here he helped three young "hedge school" students. One was named Tighe who later became an important businessman in Ballinrobe. The second student belonged to a family named Gibbons. They were evicted from their home in Tourmakeady about 1829 and emigrated to the USA. They returned around 1835 and settled in Ballinrobe. There they lived until 1852-in a house occupied by a Mr. J.B. Staunton in the early part of the last century. The late Bishop Fergus who was P.P. in Ballinrobe confirmed these facts to me and went on to say that this second student became the famous Cardinal Gibbons of New York. The third student, a Mc McCormack, was later ordained and served as Adm. in Westport.

The Famine devastated the population of Ballinrobe. John Killeen, in his "The Famine Decade", 1841-1851, reported that on his way "to the mountain of Croagh Patrick", we passed some of the most miserable hovels – so bad that they resembled cattle sheds more than human habitations."

In order to alleviate the poverty, hunger and subsequent disease, structures were built in Westport, Ballinrobe etc in order to house and feed an average of 5000 inmates. Fr. James ministered tirelessly to his flock in the Workhouse and among his people, especially when the proselytizers were at their work. It happened that the food kitchens there had lured the Clerk of the church at Partry. When the congregation assembled for Mass on a certain Sunday, The Clerk refused to open the Church. Fr. James, who was to celebrate Mass, handled the impasse prudently and the congregation gained access to their church and Mass. Before the priest returned to Ballinrobe, the Clerk went on his knees before him and sought Fr. James' pardon. This was forthcoming.

Fr. James endured many such stressful incidents. These finally affected his health, even though he remained firm in his faith. It has been recorded that some priests found the work so difficult they accompanied those who fled the country to seek a new life abroad.

In 1849, Fr. James was given the country parish of Crossboyne, with a view to building up his health and spirit again. On leaving his many friends who survived the famine, he was presented with a token of their

affection. He replied suitably and thanked them for their courage and support. In his reply, Fr. James claimed that it was he and not Archbishop Mc Hale who was the author of an Irish translation of Tom Moore's melodies. The Archbishop graciously conceded.

After about a year, Fr. James resigned from the Crossboyne parish and returned to Cahir where his devoted family and neighbours cared for him. Following a prolonged illness, and worn out in the service of the Lord, he passed to his eternal reward in 1859. Archbishop Mc Hale donated £25.00 to Fr. Curley, P.P. to defray funeral expenses. Bishop Mc McCormack of Galway, Fr. James' friend from earlier Ballinrobe days, sent the cost of a suitable Celtic cross to be placed over the grave of his friend.

Fr. James O'Malley's grave is in Kilgeever and the Latin inscription on the base of the cross translates as follows:

*'Pray for the soul of Fr. James O'Malley whose remains are buried here.*

*He managed his labours as a truly great champion.  
He died as he lived, strong in the faith, on the 29th December 1859,  
aged 68 years.  
May he rest in peace.*

**Fr. Vincent Kelly**  
**Westport**



*Members of Louisburgh Centre pictured receiving the Gradam Award.  
Left to right: Fr. Micheál MacGréil, President John Tiernan, Francis O'Malley, Assumpta Fergus (Secretary), Margaret Gallagher, Mary O'Malley, Margaret O'Malley, Fr. McGuckian.*



## A Letter from Patrick Berry to his Father

*Extract of a letter from Patrick Berry, to his Father, Roger Berry, of Innisturk, near Westport.*

State of New York, Oswego, Jan 25, 1832.

My dear Father

Thanks be to God, we are getting on well since we came here; we got good wages since we came here, six shillings a day, York money, which is about 3s.9d Irish. Tradesmen would do well here and boatwrights particularly. It is a prosperous and new town on the lake Ontario, which is the same as a seaport.

This is a good place for a young man who would have no family, and have a good constitution. Sawyers, Carpenters and Boatwrights have from twelve to fourteen shillings a day, York money—our five shillings is eight of theirs; but any man that has a weak family and can live at all middling at home would do ill to come here, so I hope that no person will come here unless he is healthy and single, or has a good strong family. They will not get dollars on the road or for nothing here, and particularly in winter, for there is not much doing in that season, so it is very hard to give an advice—judge from what I say—I would of course be glad to see friends here, but I would not wish to injure anybody.

Let no person at home imagine that a person cannot send a bad account home from this place—that is not the case, for they think too many of us are coming here. The common people among the Yankees are more respectable looking than your Lords and Sirs at home. We eat and drink as well as your master, and every person here does the same.

I remain, dear Father,  
Your faithful and obedient Son,  
Patt Berry.

Source: *The Connaught Telegraph*

## Mayo Schoolchildren Appeal for Return of Nigerian

*From "The Irish Times"*

**W**hat's it like where you come from? a video for schools devised by the Louisburgh Community Project in Mayo, has been nominated for an award from Metro Éireann magazine. As reported recently in this column, Seun Agboola, who participated in making the video, has been deported to Nigeria.

Four children who knew him and the enormous contribution he made to his immediate community in the west from the time of his arrival in May 2000 wrote the following letter to this newspaper in response.

"We are children in Louisburgh National School and would like you to publish this letter whenever possible. This is a story of a Nigerian man called Olawaseun Agboola (22), known to us as Seun or Seán. He came to Mayo in 2000 and was sent home (last month).

"We want to know why this man was firstly put in jail and then sent back to his own country after doing so much for Mayo schools. We think it is an outrage that a man that done no harm should be jailed and sent back to his own country.

"This man came to Ireland with no job, no money, no house and had to live in a hostel in Cong for one year until he found temporary accommodation in Castlebar.

"This man worked voluntarily with children and adults. He participated in parades and intercultural events. He even came to west Mayo national schools to teach us about the African culture.

"We hope that you can find it in your hearts to publish this and we hope that the Irish Government will find it in its heart to let this man free to become an Irish citizen."

Yours faithfully,  
Eoin Torphy (12), Joseph Navin (12), Carmel Keane (12),  
Orla Prendergast (11)  
Louisburgh National School, Co. Mayo.

The above letter is evidence of the Christian charity of Louisburgh's youth. It appeared in local and national newspapers.



## A Man of Two Countries

This essay originally appeared in the October/November 2000 (15th Anniversary) issue of *Irish America* magazine. It was reprinted in *Being Irish*; ed. Paddy Logue, and published by Oak Tree Press. We publish it in *An Choinneal*. For permissions, see Acknowledgements.

*"I have lived so long abroad and in so many countries that I can feel at once the voice of Ireland in anything" – James Joyce, in a letter to Frank Bludgeon.*

A story: In the early 1940s, a young and popular nun from Louisburgh in Mayo – under the dark shadow of Croagh Patrick – was asked to leave her native land to help a struggling church in the Bronx. Reluctantly, she agreed to the move.

When she got to the north Bronx, she found herself peculiarly ineffective. Her spirit seemed drained. Within the community she felt as if she wandered ghostlike. Nothing she could say or do brought peace to what she saw around her. These were hard streets. There wasn't much sky above them. Things went from bad to worse and one morning, in a small convenience store where the young nun went to buy cigarettes, she entered to find the owner slumped across the front counter with a gunshot wound to his head.

The shock of it caused a strange neurological reaction which baffled doctors – the nun went blind.

She walked the local streets wearing dark glasses, her eyes closed tight, tapping a white cane on the ground; being so visible, she soon became well known among the locals. They began to hail her on the streets. After a while, she began to work more closely with them. As the years went on, she became one of the most effective agents of change in the poor Bronx neighbourhood. She developed a gift of humour and wisdom and there were times when even some of the street kids listened to her. The murder rate within a twelve-block radius decreased dramatically and the attendance at church rose slightly. She lived 45

years in the Bronx, never once returning home, until – at the age of 74 – she was given a ticket to Ireland by members of the diocese. She returned to Louisburgh and together with three other nuns she made a pilgrimage, blind, up the holy mountain which had shadowed her youth.

At the top of the mountain, she said to her companions: "How lovely this looks." They turned to her, startled. She had taken off her glasses and she was squinting her eyes against the sunlight.

The women thought they were witnessing a miracle, but the nun just turned to them and said: "I've never been blind. I simply just closed my eyes a long time ago in order to remember all the loveliness I had once known."

She had, in effect, brought herself back to Ireland by becoming blind.

The story doesn't end there, of course. In fact, stories should never end at all. But the Irish nun, at this point, raises a peculiar question. Are we formed by our early weathers? Does the geography of our childhood affect the intricacies of the human heart? Do the peculiar vagaries of our country – our nationhood, if you will – lend a consequence to every single moment of the rest of our lives? Can we shed a country and can we adopt another? Do we operate with a certain blindness when we leave?

It is true that whoever we once were is whoever we now are. We are built up out of our past. The only way we can essentially change our past is by telling stories (or lies) about it.

I have been in the United States on and off now for the best part of a decade. For the first couple of years I took a bicycle around, vagabonding. Then I worked as an educateur in a programme for juvenile delinquents. For the last five years I have lived in New York. For most of that time I have consciously denied any inherent link with being "American", as if I am on just an extended visit, a blow-in, a curious happening. But the truth is, I married an American. I then had an American daughter. Followed by an American son. In an American city. Working on a novel that centred around American questions of race and identity.

All this "American-ness" was suddenly a scaffold to my heart. But what also held me together throughout all of this was the notion that I



never wanted to lose my "Irishness". I have tried to fiercely protect that corner of myself that was my early weather.

Yet recently I have grown accustomed to the notion that I am, in many ways, a man of two countries. I have a foot planted in the dark corners of each. Every year, I try to spend long enough in Ireland in order to rediscover why I left it. I also spend long enough in the States in order to question why I would want to live here. (Overheard recently in a bar. "If you could live in New York you can live anywhere." "Yeah, but why live in New York if you can live anywhere?!")

Possibly the most enduring question for any of us is: Who are we? To be Irish in America is different again. And yet I would argue that the two worlds- – American and Irish – are beginning to converge in significant ways. The world is shrinking so dramatically that the notion of "country" or even a "national consciousness" might soon be brought into question. With the Internet; with emigration no longer an issue (most people don't emigrate any more, they commute); with global media; with our lives becoming jumbles of co-ordinates, it is possible that we can belong to no country whatsoever. It is also possible that we can belong to more than one country.

Which begs the question: How do we define ourselves?

Perhaps through stories.

And the story, as I said, is not quite finished. . . if it was ever begun in the first place.

The nun – after two weeks in her hometown of Louisburgh – returned to the Bronx in order to work with the people she had grown to love. But she realized that her self-enforced blindness had been a currency of sorts, that it had been a sort of spiritual passport into people's lives. She worried about revealing the truth to the people in her area, perhaps losing their support, maybe even damaging their faith.

In the end, she hit on quite a simple solution – she continued to wear her dark glasses everywhere she went, even indoors, but behind the glasses she now kept her eyes open. She began to see the world around her: the doorways, the tenements, the churches, even the grocery store where she had once found the murdered shopkeeper. Her spiritual

mission in the Bronx was stronger and more successful than ever.

Upon retiring, the elderly nun was given the choice of living anywhere she wanted. Instead of either the Bronx or Louisburgh the nun decided that she would make another trip, this time to Guatemala, where, before she died, she was often seen wandering narrow streets, being guided along by a number of children, all of whom wanted to hold her elbow in order to show her the way. She was famous locally as the holy woman with dark glasses who walked around with the constant suggestion of a smile on her face. And she was often heard to say that she had been so long in different places that she could hear the voice of everywhere in just about anything.

### *Colum McCann*

Editor's note: Colum writes: "I used to work for the Connaught Telegraph (many moons ago) and am familiar with many from the Lyons family in Mayo . . . I didn't spend too long in Mayo, but it was my heart-home."

Colum is a native of Dublin and his novel *This Side of Brightness* was shortlisted for the International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award. His newest book, a novella and stories, is entitled *Everything in This Country Must*.

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## Life (wasted)

*Some waste their lives  
Living by the rule  
Always play it safe  
Never skipped school.  
They never fight or swear  
To act kind they think is wise  
They're friendly to all  
But this is just a disguise.*

*For under the surface  
In places you can't see  
They long to rebel  
To act out their dreams.  
To be more spontaneous  
And just do what they feel  
But instead they end up  
Turning Society's wheel.*

**Ross Sinclair** – Sancta Maria College.  
From Writer-In-Residence Project, 2002.



## Going to Westport . . . Going to Westport

*This article, by Peter Garside, was written during his dad's long illness and echoes the many happy times they had as a family in Louisburgh. Peter's mother, Anne, (nee Duggan) hails from Cahir and is sister of Tommy Duggan. The article was made available to us in response to a request from Mary Keane of the Coinneal committee.*

The sound of the train going clickety-clack, clickety-clack over the rails will always mean one thing to us, going to Westport and hence the title of this piece. Two boys, faces pressed to the window of the train as it sped westward, wondering who would be first to see Croagh Patrick towering above the range of mountains and near our final destination.

On arrival, my Mum and Dad, with my brother and me, would be looking for the familiar smiling face of our uncle Tommy (Duggan) waiting to pick us up in his car and drive us the fourteen miles along one of the most beautiful routes in the world to the town of Louisburgh, mum's birthplace.

It all started fifty years ago when Anne, our Mum, met our Dad, Harry while nursing in Cheadle, Cheshire. Subsequently, Dad came over to Louisburgh for the first time and so not only did he fall in love with my Mum, he also fell in love with Louisburgh; and we, my brother and I, also fell under the spell of this enchanting part of Ireland in due course.

Our fondest memories are from the period 1965-1973. My name is Peter and John is my brother. We're from Stalybridge in Cheshire, about seven miles east of Manchester. The farm at Cahir and the sea became synonymous with our first few years of going on holiday. Our days revolved around going down to Carramore, helping on the farm, collecting eggs and sending Curly, the black and white collie, to bring the cows down for milking. At the end of the day, we would sit down and tell Grandma Duggan all the news, while Uncle Tommy would get ready for his evening work in the Clew Bay Hotel on Chapel St. The long summer

days in the fresh air meant we were soon ready for bed, but not before the Rosary was said.

Our dad was a keen cyclist and always made sure the bikes were ready for use. They were always kept in the barn and when John was little he'd sit on the back of Dad's bike; John was five years my senior and when he graduated to his own bike, I took his place behind Dad.

One of our favourite spins was to head up the Cregganbawn, turn off at Tully cross and on to Kilgeever where we'd pay our respects to Grandad Duggan, R.I.P. and then back to Louisburgh and the Clew Bay Hotel where Auntie Evelyn would be waiting with a welcome drink, a pint for Dad and Cidona for us.

Of course, staying on a working farm meant there was always plenty to do. There was haymaking and the bringing of the turf from the bog. The degree of help obviously increased as we got older; haymaking always provided many honest hours of toil and fun, and if we got giddy, a quick reminder from Uncle Tommy soon put us in our place.

And so the years passed. Our Irish and English cousins always came to Cahir and enjoyed the special Louisburgh atmosphere. Dad spent many happy hours playing the piano accordion at the Clew Bay Hotel along with Basil Morahan and Joe Grady. Dad would tell us the next day how Uncle Tommy would be calling "Time" and nobody would take a blind bit of notice.

Then there was the time when Dad played the accordion at the Tavern in Murrisk. Everyone had such a good time that Dad was prevailed upon to continue playing outside after closing time and they carried on singing and dancing under the light of the moon . . .

All too soon we are boarding the train at Westport and waving back down the platform at Uncle Tommy and hoping that there would be a next year and the train would be making that familiar sound as it clattered over the track – Going to Westport . . . Going to Westport . . .

In the course of this year, 2000, and while we were planning this article, our Dad sadly passed away. And so, this article is dedicated to the memory of our Dad, Harry Garside, 1920-2000, who taught us how to enjoy life and have respect for others. May he rest in peace.



## Out in the Wren

The gales of St. Stephen's Day, 1998, swept me down 'Bothar na Smaointe' to the years when I used go 'out in the wren'. I grew up in the townland of Shraugh, two miles from Louisburgh, where when Santa stopped, one graduated to becoming a 'wrenboy/girl'.

There were four in our group, my sister Evelyn, William Mc Connell from next-door and Mary O'Grady from Tully. Our trips were carefully planned: false faces were of cardboard and home-made while empty treacle tins, suitably turned into money boxes, were carefully stored for the big day.

On St. Stephen's Day there was a lot of ground to cover and daylight was in short supply. We left our house in high spirits with a 'be home by five!' ringing in our ears. Old flannel shirts reached down over wellingtons and with old jackets and false faces, our disguises were complete. At Austin Gill's, our first port of call, we gathered around the door and sang:

*"The wren, the wren, the king of all birds,  
On St. Stephen's Day was caught in the furze;  
Up with the kettle, down with the pan,  
Give us some money to bury the 'wren'"*

And if Austin were over in the barns tending to stock, we'd sing all the louder and he'd come over and invite us in and up to the fire. With hand resting on the windowsill, he'd listen to us. He was generous and with a 'God bless ye now' we were on our way.

Through Ballyhip we went and loved to be invited into the kitchens. Aunt Mary (Ball) had a range and she always invited us in to warm ourselves; she'd inquire 'if we came far' but we never minded her finding out our identity as it meant extra money plus a slice of cake or biscuits. O'Reilly's was the last house on that route. We retraced our steps to Maxwell's Road (as we called it). Maxwell's was a busy house with lots of visitors, so goodies and money were plentiful

McNally's was another house that looked out for us. There was always

someone to see us safely across the Cregganroe river. Not that it mattered to us at the time. It was only years later we realized the importance of it.

Dereen we loved, because all the houses were together and they all joined in our party pieces. Again, we got cake, biscuits and drinks. One year we decided to change our route and take in Leachta, which sadly meant we had to give one area a miss. So, it was Ballyhip as far as Duffy's. We did Gurteen and Dereen and then across the mountain path to the Leachta road. We must have been as hardy as mountain goats to cover all that area in a few hours. But Leachta was special.

The first house we called to was "Waterfall Cottage" according to the plaque on the footbridge, which was close to a beautiful waterfall. As we neared the house, a big sheepdog was furious and his barking froze us. His master's voice silenced him and with his head resting on his paws he lay at the doorway and watched. Applause greeted us in the kitchen and the old lady by the fire wanted to know had we come from afar. Our food was delicious and consisted of potatoes and meat but with turnip sprinkled with flecks of oatmeal or herbs. What a flavour! Maybe I was hungry, but the taste of that wonderful turnip is still with me. What a feast!

It was the same story in the next house. We enjoyed the bowls of trifle, the Christmas cake and the cups of tea. The lady by the fireside asked me who I was. I hesitated but she said, 'Aghrá, I won't tell anyone. Sure I never leave the teaghlach'. When I told her I was Cannon from Shraugh, she asked,

'Is that Mary Geoghegan's daughter? 'Yes' was my reply. A big brown purse appeared from nowhere. She gave me a two-shilling piece for the box and a half crown for myself. 'Put it in your wellington', she whispered. 'It's for yourself and tell your mother I was asking for her'. I was over the moon as 2/6 in 1959/60 was big money.

In other houses we sang 'The Old Bog Road' and 'The Boys from the County Mayo' and 'Hang Down Your Head Tom Dooley'. The four or five houses we called to were on the Tully side of Leachta Bridge as we were warned against going above the bridge. 'It's too far! Back we came towards Tully and Shranacloya and we promised we'd cycle the following year in order to cover the whole of Leachta.



At Patrick Kitterick's there was someone to see us safely across the Bunowen river. We visited the three Mc Loughlin houses, all the Kilcoyne homes and O'Malley's. We asked if Lady Harmon lived thereabouts. 'Sure you must know well by now, Willie, where she lives', said the lady of the house. And we thought nobody knew us.

Lady Harmon's was the last house we called to. It was special and different. If the Lady wasn't ready to receive us, we would have to wait. That was the reason we left it until last. Mind you, it was worthwhile waiting. Mary Higgins was lady-in-waiting at the time and she would serve fruit or drinks. I tasted my first banana in that house. Lady Harmon would eventually sweep into the spacious room, sit and listen to us. Each one in our group got a shilling.

Our route was now complete and it was time for the count. One year, we were resting in a circle on a wet sod fence when Mary O'Grady's father told us to come into the house. We paid no heed but Mary's mum did prevail on us to go in. We divided the spoils of the day and hungrily enjoyed sandwiches and tea specially prepared for us. By now, it was after five o'clock, the false faces were in the fire and it was all over.

That year, we got 11/9 each and I had 2/6 extra in my wellington; that was 91 cent in today's money. We headed home, weary and so to bed and dreams of our new found wealth.

### Postscript

Sadly, most of the people we visited have gone to their eternal reward. The most recent to be called away were Annie Mayberry, Annie Maxwell and Eddie Mitchell. May they all rest in peace.

My sister Evelyn lives in Pearl River, New York and Mary O'Grady is in Belcarra, near Castlebar. My best wishes to them and to William whose address I don't have. Is it London? Or Wigan? Let me know, William.

We never did get to the top of Leachta on our bicycles. But we had four great years trailing the highways and byways of our neighbourhood and beyond. This is my first contribution to 'An Choinneal'. I am a native of Shraugh, daughter of the late Mary and Pat Cannon. I now reside in Castlebar.

**Joan Patten (Cannon)**  
**Castlebar and Shraugh**

## The Village Shop

My grandmother, Julia O'Leary has lived to see the changing faces of her birthplace. Born and bred in Louisburgh, she has many fond memories of growing up as a shop-owner's daughter in Kerrigan's Drapery and Grocery shop on the Square. The shop which was owned by three generations of Kerrigans was originally owned by Julia's grandparents, Patsie and Honor, then by her parents, Pat and Sarah and finally it was passed on to their son Johnny and his wife Alice.

The shop originally sold groceries but Julia's grandparents added drapery and dressmaking. She remembers rolls of dress cloth, linen and oilcloth lining the walls. Tea, sugar, wheat, spices and caraway seeds were stored in chests and barrels at the rear. There was a great deal of black cloth, which was very useful as it was worn on Sundays and at funeral. Another busy time in the drapery was when there was a parish wedding. A dressmaker was employed in Kerrigan's. An entry from one of the shop's ledgers and dating from the early forties tells of what people bought and the prices paid:

1 lb of butter, 2s-6d  
6lb of sugar, 3s-0d  
1/2 lb tea, 2s-0d  
1/4 st. meal, 1s-6d  
Plug of tobacco, 2s-8d.

Other entries end with a final balance and written after it, "Paid by 60 eggs" where the person exchanged eggs for purchases. Fair Days and Monday markets were busy times for the Kerrigans. People from surrounding districts came to Louisburgh to sell home produce and purchase the weekly groceries. Outside the Courthouse, (later Staunton's Pharmacy) there was great commotion as neighbours and friends talked over the week's events. At night they gathered in Kerrigan's shop with many sitting on the floor singing or dancing and telling stories.

At age three, she went to school in the Hall in Louisburgh where Irish was taught in the schoolyard as English rule prevented Irish being taught as a school subject. Every day she bought sweets in Maggie



Durkan's sweet-shop and played "jack stones" and i"hop scotch" down by the town's water pump at the end of Chapel St. She fondly remembers the Carramore Races, which with her grandfather she watched from the mouth of the Bunowen River. On Sundays, Julia, with her three brothers and one sister, went on their pony and trap to the Blessed Well in Kilgeever or to Old Head or Murrisk where they'd buy 1/2 bag of apples at a local orchard. At age nine she climbed the Reek for the first time and kept up the tradition for over twenty years.

The War of Independence, 1919-1921, was not confined to Dublin and Munster and the Black and Tans scoured the countryside looking for Irish republicans. Saying the evening Rosary lying on the floor in fear of being shot was a regular experience for the Kerrigans as the Black and Tans would often visit Louisburgh firing shots in the streets while looking for rebels in and around the parish.

My great grand father, Pat Kerrigan, was a member of the Board of Guardians and regularly traveled to Castlebar for meetings. At one such meeting, he expressed an opinion on the policing of Louisburgh to which the Tans took exception. A few nights later, they arrived from Castlebar in lorries. Julia remembers the shouts and the crashing of boots on the street before they smashed their way in and two of them running up the stairs shouting, "Where is he?" They took Pat Kerrigan from his room and dragged him into the street. Three other Tans raided the shop and when shots were heard panic spread and it was feared that Pat had been shot. The Tans swarmed the Square, tied Pat to a cart and forced him to pull it barefoot through the town. They then beat him badly. The family lived in fear and slept in a loft to the rear of the shop until the truce in 1921.

When Julia was in her mid-twenties, she and Garda Pat O'Leary, a Kerry man, were married. They lived in Leenane for twelve years and Julia often cycled the round trip of forty miles to Louisburgh to visit her mother. On their transfer to Louisburgh, they settled in Bunowen where they raised their six children.

**Eanna O'Leary**  
**Sancta Maria College**

The above article by Eanna was first published in the Sancta Maria College magazine, *"Through the Mists of Time"* 1999-2000. Its producers are the Transition Year Students. Eanna is son of Donal R.I.P. and Teresa, Bunowen.

*An Choinneal is happy to include some excerpts from a very interesting article by Laura Keane of Salthill and Bridge St. Her memories too are of an older, perhaps happier, Louisburgh.*

Everyone made a May altar in his or her homes to Our Lady. They would put mayflowers on the altar – little white delicate ones – primroses and so on, and statues – a picture wouldn't do. They would make the altar in the house on a little table. Some people had it outside and they'd say Rosaries; but that was mainly in Dublin because you wouldn't get the weather down the country. It was very important. They recited the Rosary every night. You would hope that people would go back to it again – that little children would bring home flowers and make an altar.

They were happy times, simply lived, and religion was very important. No one would ever miss Mass on a Sunday unless they were really sick and everybody was dressed up – all the shoes would be shone on a Saturday night and they would come in on a Sunday morning with their side-cars or their carts. They would put their horses in our yard and in all the yards; they would some shopping after Mass and have a chat and their day was fulfilled because they saw God as the first thing in their lives.

We had a Canon Healy and we had a gallery in the church and if there was a wedding on we would all go up in the gallery and the canon would run us out. I had a cousin, Nora Joyce – they said she was one of the most beautiful girls that ever left Mayo. Anyway, this particular day she went up in the gallery and canon H. went up and he brought her down. He asked, "What's your name?" and she answered, "Butter and cream!" He chased her up to Grandma Keane's but she escaped.

When the flour was sold it might be weighed, but most families would take a whole bag of wheat meal and of oatmeal. It was stored at the back so that the bar was filled with all this, along with tea and sugar and jams . . . we used to buy lovely fresh brown eggs from farms – from Agnes O'Donnell of Cahir, for example and from our cousin Rose Prendergast . . .

We used to wrap legs of lamb in greaseproof paper and sew/stitch on canvas; it was then marked "Fragile" and sometimes we posted such parcels to Auntie Kathleen in Dublin. That meat was pure and good, no injections then.

Any butcher who killed a beef would first walk the animal through



the town so that everyone could see it and that they were killing something good. These events were rare, only at special times of the year. They would kill pigs too, along with sheep. Their black and white pudding was lovely.

We used to graze cows and sheep. We had milk but we didn't make butter: we bought that in. Paddy and Tom Scott of Lecanvey used to bake the bread and deliver it. Paddy and Tommie Joe O'Malley had a bakery on Main St. which had lovely bread.

### Matches

Boys and girls would have met before this but there was an official meeting between the two sets of parents and themselves and so they could make all the arrangements. It was lovely that the parents were involved. Mostly, they had wedding breakfasts in their own homes, in the bride's home. Family and friends were invited, but only insofar as they could be accommodated. They were simple and happy times.

A girl usually had a dowry, generally in the form of money and its amount was a secret. People then weren't well off financially and so animals might be part of the dowry. But nobody would ever know the amount of the dowry. They might go in and live happily with the parents and there were no such things then as nursing homes; they were taken care of until they died peacefully. The newly-weds would be in their twenties and the matches were usually made on a Fair Day.

On a Fair Day, people might have a small whiskey in the morning to warm themselves up. They'd go about their business then, buying and selling and in the evening, they would socialize. The men would have a drink while the women did the shopping and had a cup of tea in the kitchen. Women did not drink at the bar. I think it's sad today when I see girls drinking pints of Guinness – it's not ladylike! In the old days, they were very ladylike. They might have a sherry or port, but only in the kitchen. Mam would always make tea for them, but sometimes Maureen and myself would do it when mother was busy. We loved doing it because the women were always nice to us. They would have come in the night before the Fair Day from Clare Island or Inisturk and they'd graze the animals on the lands around the town.

### Editor's note:

Our thanks to Laura Keane from whose wonderful memories the above extracts are drawn. We do intend to publish much more in the next issue of *An Choinneal*, as Laura has provided us with a great sense of the old Louisburgh.

## The West Mayo Brigade and the War of Independence – 1919-1921

*Patrick Cannon*



One of the most active of the *Flying Columns* during the War of independence was the West Mayo Brigade which was involved in a number of major battles including the Carrowkennedy ambush.

The first shots of the independence struggle in Westport were fired on the night of 29th March 1919, fatally wounding J.C. Milling, R.M., at his residence on the Newport Road. *The Mayo News* in its editorial of the 5th April stated, "The murder of Milling is the first foul crime of this character that has occurred in Westport".

On the following Tuesday it was announced from Dublin that the Westport district was to be a military area under martial law. Despite martial law, surveillance and questioning by the R.I.C., no culprits were found; but the activities of the volunteers were strictly curtailed.

In September 1920, the West Mayo Brigade of the IRA was organized. The Westport district became a battalion area and the OC was Joe Ring of Drumindoo. At the start of the struggle, the Louisburgh Company had become more or less dormant as some of its more active members had been arrested or had emigrated. Patrick J. Kelly of Carnaclea, Westport was instructed to organize the area. "After a short time approximately 360 volunteers enrolled" (P.J. Kelly in *Cathair na Mart* 1992).

Following a minor scuffle between RIC members and a group of volunteers on a Fair Day (1 July, 1920), the Black and Tans arrived in Westport to augment the RIC. They were drawn mainly from ex-servicemen in England and earned a reputation in this country, which will never be forgotten. They depended on the local RIC for their intelligence regarding IRA membership and operations.



In October 1920, a Brigade Council meeting held at Moyhasten, decided to form a Flying Column and take the field against the enemy as soon as possible. In the following months the military became very active and most of the IRA were on the run. Many raids were carried out by volunteers on loyalist houses and any weapons if found were taken. On the 16th March 1921, volunteers moved to an ambush point at Gloshe near Lecanvey on the Louisburgh-Westport road. The plans failed when the lorry load of Tans were tipped off and never passed.

A new departure was the setting up of Active Service Units in all Battalion areas: reliable men would be available at all times for special operations. Joe Ring formed the Westport ASU and these men were the best trained, organized and equipped. The new structure used military rank: Michael Kilroy of Newport was Brigade Commandant while Joe Ring organized route marches. Edward O'Malley in his *Memories of a Mayoman* describes such a route march in the Cushlough district and refers to Ring reading a dispatch which stated, "The Crown Forces at Westport Quay have a life sized photograph of you. If captured, you will be shot and your body dragged through the streets of Westport".


He also relates that arms were stored at Owenwee. The earliest engagement involved three of the leaders, Kilroy, Ring and Brodie Malone. When walking at Derryhillew, they engaged four armed RIC men, killing Sergt. Coughlan and disarming the others. The next engagement, in April 1921, was at Clogher crossroads, three miles from the town, where the Westport ASU under Ring ambushed three lorries of Black and Tans wounding a number of them.

On the 19th May the combined ASU set up an ambush at Clooneen, Kilmeena on the Westport-Newport road under the command of Michael Kilroy. During the engagement five volunteers were killed and six were seriously wounded. (Vincent Kelly, 1992, *Cathair na Mart*).

The Carrowkenedy ambush was the last major engagement and one of the most important in the West prior to the Truce in July 1921. Twelve of the enemy and including a District Inspector were killed and thirteen, some wounded, surrendered. There were the inevitable reprisals and the homes of Kilroy and Ring were burned to the ground. After the Truce, the volunteers returned to their villages and towns where huge welcomes greeted them.

**Patrick Cannon**  
*Sancta Maria College and Shraugh, Louisburgh*

## Fond Memories of My Many Years in the USA

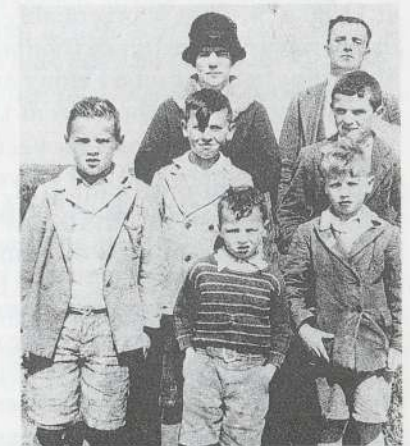
 One August morning in 1947, I had a tearful farewell with my family in Glenkeen. It was a repeat performance at Westport railway station as I said goodbye to the members of my family who came with me. We parted and I was soon on my way to Shannon airport.

On my arrival there, I was informed that my flight was cancelled and the staff advised that I would check the flight schedule next morning. When I telephoned the next day, I was told to go to the airport immediately to catch a Pan American Airlines flight. Sadly, Pan-Am is no longer in business.

In those days there was a refueling stopover in Gander, Newfoundland, where, as it happened and due to the lateness of the hour, we stayed overnight. In the meantime, my sister and her husband waited patiently for me in New York.

In New York I stayed with my sister's family as I hoped for a place at St. Joseph's Seminary; as it happened, St. Joseph's was full to capacity and it was arranged that I attend at St. Mary's in Baltimore, Maryland where most of the seminarians were of Irish descent. I completed my studies for the priesthood at the Seminary of Our Lady of Angels, Niagara University, Niagara Falls, New York.

I worked during my holidays, spending my first summer at St.



*This photo of the O'Grady family, Glenkeen, was taken outside Killeen church.*

*Back: Margaret R.I.P. (mother);*

*Patrick R.I.P.*

*Middle: Fr. James, William R.I.P., Peter.*

*Front: Frank, Anthony R.I.P.*



Patrick's Cathedral in New York. The wages were not sufficient and so I moved on. For three summers, I worked on the New York Central Railway where the work was heavy. I was young and strong and capable as I toiled on a system built by the Irish years ago. The money was very good and I worked all the overtime available at the "time and a half" rate of pay. My co-workers were very pleasant and I invited the entire department to my ordination. They all attended on that wonderful occasion.

The days and weeks and months came and went and ordination day arrived. St. Patrick's Cathedral accommodates about twenty five hundred and it was full to capacity. There were fifty of us ordained on that morning by Francis, Cardinal Spellman. The Mass started at 7.30a.m. and finished at 11.30 a.m. That was probably the largest Ordination class ever. How things have changed since then with very few priests now being ordained! My ordination was on a Friday and was attended by the members of my family who were in the USA at the time plus relatives and friends.

I had about two weeks vacation before flying on to Los Angeles archdiocese where I would serve as a priest. James Francis, Cardinal McIntyre greeted me at the airport and took me to his residence where I enjoyed a pleasant visit and had dinner with him. I served as a curate in several parishes and for about twenty-eight years I was a Parish Priest.

The years rolled by and it was time for me to move on. The parish put on an excellent farewell for me with lots of fine homemade food, a wonderful band playing lots of traditional music and wonderful Irish dancers who delighted all present. There were the goodbyes and good wishes as the parishioners departed for home.

There were a lot of excellent Catholics in the parish and we had a very fine school. It was time for me to move on. As I was driven to the airport, I took one more look at my beloved school and parish.

The above is a brief account of my many years in the United States of America. They were good and happy years. Now I say, "God bless America, the place of hope, land of the free and home of the brave."

**Fr. James O'Grady**



*Hugh O'Grady and Margaret McNamara, Glankeen (centre) on their Wedding day.*

*Also in picture are Nora Berry, Cousin (left) and Hugh's mother Ann (nee Kelly).*

## Epiphany

### Background

*Mrs. Vera Scanlon, ex-supervisor of Louisburgh holiday Cottages, writes of Mary: 'Mother of Kathleen Heaney who joined the St. Scholastica, Duluth, students in 1985. Kathleen was then a qualified nurse, very interested in her Irish heritage, but had not had sufficient information on her Irish ancestors to trace her roots at that time. I readily offered assistance. She returned to Ireland two years later with all the data her Mom had put together meantime and forwarded it to the "Trace Your Ancestry" Heritage Centre at Ballinrobe. This, with further later submissions, was to result in success in tracing her roots and yet another return visit to Ireland in the early nineties to meet her maternal relations in Claremorris town and the Kiltimagh area. I had the pleasure of accompanying her on those very special and memorable occasions . . . one member of the Claremorris family bore a strong resemblance to an aunt of Mary in the USA. The following article has been sent to me by Mary on that extraordinary event which took place on the day of Kathleen's graduation from medical school together with her kind permission to publish same if I so wished . . .'*

**D**o things happen for a reason? Is there a meaning in everything that happens? I am in Philadelphia in my childhood neighbourhood with a few hours to pass before a celebration dinner. It's been 35 years since I lived here, where my twenty-year-old Irish grandmother, newly arrived from Co. Mayo in 1890, settled with her Roscommon husband. They raised their family in a blue-collar neighbourhood but the children moved on to white-collar jobs.

I think back to my earliest known ancestor, great-great grandmother Ann O'Donnell from Claremorris, who survived the Famine, and who would, I am sure, be proud of her heirs of today, teachers, doctors, engineers, whose success stories are scattered across the land.

I look at the church and my old school, impressive stone, massive stained-glass windows. They were proudly erected with the steadfast sacrifices of thousands of first and second-generation Irish Catholic



families. Now the parish serves whites, black Hispanic, Asian, all poor and all yearning for some part of the American dream. We, as kids, chased lightning bugs on summer evenings in the park where we also sledded in the snow. Three kids smoking and swigging from a bottle stare over at us. I feel more and more disconnected with this area.

There is a loud scream; a car has smashed into a pole and a thin, young white woman is hysterical on the sidewalk. She pleads for help, but in this black neighbourhood there is none. We pull over and urge her into the car. Her lips are bleeding and her legs are bruised. We rush to the hospital. I hold her thin body and she bawls, "He'll kill me, my boyfriend will kill me, he'll be so mad." She's on drugs, "for my nerves", and was on her way to pawn some goods. She hasn't much, just a few crumpled dollars stuck in the cigarette pack. She worries about possible scarring and thinks aloud that her parents might help.

"What's their name?"

"O'Donnell," she answers.

"Really! My great-great grandmother . . ." but she blurts out, "Yeah, my dad's Irish, from a town called Claremorris in County Mayo." I am paralyzed and I stop folding the two dollar bills that had fallen from her cigarette box. We might be related. I am excited. After all, Ann O'Donnell was from Claremorris. I tell her.

"Oh yeah? Gee. You should meet my Dad," and she returns to her bruised face.

As I hold the mirror, the Past is present; my mind races to County Mayo in 1890 and back to Philadelphia 2001. This chance encounter conjures up the ghosts from the past and they crowd the present. Why am I here? Why is she here?

We arrive at the Emergency Room and leave her safely inside. In all the excitement, I have not learned her first name.

And then I reflect. Both my father and brother are doctors, I married a doctor and I am in this city now for my daughter's graduation from Medical School. But the images of the distressed young woman invoke memories of my sister who had schizophrenia. In days gone by, such

things were hushed up. I was fifty years old before I knew of an uncle who was institutionalized in a mental hospital. I dimly recall someone saying Ann O'Donnell's first husband was "not right in the head".

How many secrets are hidden in the past? I think of our own generation and the scourges of depression and alcoholism.

Not all of us become successful Americans. But, all of us have Mayo and Irish roots. My thoughts return to the young woman. What conspiracy of fate brings this messenger to me today when I am basking in success and pride?

Her message to all of us must be that we must never forget our roots, be they hidden, stigmatized or shameful. The rich and the poor, the sick and the healthy, they are all there. Past and present and future are all fused.

Kathleen, our new M.D., plans on being a psychiatrist. What ghost of the past or present has been brought to bear on her future? The journey is never made alone.

We raise a glass to Kathleen. I see the young O'Donnell woman and hear her cries. I wish I could tell her how much she brought to this day.

"Remember, remember," she echoes.

I desperately wish her health and happiness.

"Sláinte," I whisper, "I will never forget you. Sláinte."

**Mary B. Heaney**  
**June 10, 2001**



*Dr. Kathleen Heaney on her Graduation Day is presently in residence at The Mayo Clinic, Rochester, MN, USA.*



## Six Months Later

*Brooklyn Heights,  
New York.  
March 11, 2002*

**E**ventide, the remains of the day, the moon gently rising, barely visible midst the brilliant twinkling stars. A pilgrimage of sorts winds its way down to the promenade in Brooklyn Heights. They came by the hundreds, those who live there and those from neighbouring boroughs, curious, silent, somber. Many had witnessed first-hand the carnage of that September morning, a sight so horrific, that shocked the nation and the world, unfolded right there in front of their eyes, across the East River.

Tonight they stood in silence staring across at the amputated Manhattan skyline. All had come to witness the much talked about "Twin Towers of Light" that were to beam forth from that terribly dark void where once the lofty Towers stood tall. A twelve-year-old schoolgirl, who lost her dad that day, had been given the honour of flipping the switch. As the powerful searchlights beamed ghostlike across the sky, she stood silently by and she remembered. Just a kid, like so many others, plunged without warning into adult mourning.

From the promenade, gasps of awe, exclamations, and speculations as to the location: "Weren't they more to the right?"

"Oh, I thought more to the left".

"Wherever!" others tearfully whispered.

Long gone the photographs that had lined the railings last autumn. Beautiful smiling faces of mothers, fathers, sons, daughters, siblings, sweethearts, friends and co-workers. The "Missing" notes with with phone and fax numbers in bold print in a last desperate effort. Rose petals. There were so many roses, bouquets heaped on top of one another, now swept away by winter winds. Melted wax from hundreds of votive candles cleared away as Parks Commission started renovations, planned months ahead of 9/11. The Towers of Light will continue until April 13th, a fitting tribute.

Ground Zero is but a short subway ride away, or a walk across the Brooklyn Bridge. Described by the weary rescue workers as "an open grave," a "chasm," "a seven-storey basement," surrounded by viewing platforms both public and private, they come, or not, looking for what they really cannot say. Closure, maybe, in that open communal grave. Many survivors have managed to cope and move on, while others just packed up and left, leaving behind their hopes and dreams of life in New York City amidst the dying embers of Ground Zero. So many more deeply traumatized by indelible mental images are now in therapy being treated for post-traumatic stress syndrome. 2890 bodies vaporized by terrorists on 9/11/01, a day that was to become the most infamous in American history. Memories of co-workers sharing office space for so many years, some bonding like family. Morning coffee that day with family, discussing dinner plans. To have survived all of this and so much more has exacted a huge toll.

Is the city resuming any sense of normalcy, whatever normalcy means today? There are certainly lots of reasons to hope that the answer is yes. Twenty to forty thousand workers were employed in the WTC. Consequently, the unemployment figures were staggering. Today we read of a reduction in the unemployment lines. Financial and investment companies have relocated uptown or out of town, readjusted and are back in business. The millions of dollars collected by various charities are finally being dispensed. Those who until now lacked the spirit to socialize, are slowly emerging to see a show, movie, lunch with friends. Summer vacations are planned and applications for acceptance at prospective colleges are being sent. There's a resurgence of religion with increase in Mass attendance and participation in church services. Spring brings optimism. Farewell to the weariness of winter, the greyness of the dark days. Colour, daffodils, crocuses, greener grass, trees bursting into blossom and hope springing eternal.

In closing, I am reminded of Shakespeare's Julius Caesar:

*"The evil that men do lives after them.*

*The good is oft interred with their bones."*

So let it be with Caesar. Could the same be said of Mohammed Atta or any of the other terrorists who perished on 9/11/2001?

**Marie Keane**  
*New York and formerly of Bridge Street*



## Around the World on the QE2

*January 6th – 18th April 2002*

On January 7th last, 1600 passengers and 1000 crew left New York harbour on a voyage of exploration around the world in the elegant, opulent and genteel QE2. As we sailed out of New York harbour through the wind, snow and cold we slowly passed "Ground Zero." The ship's horn blasted and a wreath was placed overboard to the strains of "Amazing Grace" in honour, not only of those who lost their lives, but of those too who risked theirs in their efforts to help in the 9/11 tragedy. The QE2 was the first cruise ship to enter the harbour of New York since the Twin Towers disaster.

We steamed on to Fort Lauderdale, Florida, then on to Cartagena, Colombia, the home of St. Peter Claver. The following day, the world's fastest liner squeezed through the Panama Canal in less than nine hours. Next morning, we went ashore and visited the old Spanish Quarters and the cathedral of Panama City.

We cruised to Los Angeles, and then on to Hawaii where we passed by Molokai Island – it was there that Fr. Damian ministered to the lepers. We visited Waikiki Beach and Pearl Harbour. We toured Tahiti and followed the footsteps of renowned French artist, Paul Gauguin. We crossed the International Date Line, going to bed on Sunday night and waking up on Tuesday morning!! On 6th February we anchored at Auckland harbour, New Zealand, where one can view the most outstanding collection of Maori and Polynesian exhibits. After two days we sailed to the South Island and the clean town of Dunedin where glorious Victorian buildings adorn the streets.

We spent three days in Sydney, Australia and I visited Bondi Beach. The night-time view of the city from the Hyatt Hotel is superb. Some passengers went on to view the sleepy, contented koalas and camels. We sailed to Bali and then to the Philippines and Japan where our tour included Hiroshima, Kyoto and Osaka where a Japanese couple from Tokyo came to meet me. I blessed their marriage two years ago on the QE2; they now have a young son – Tomihito.

After a few days in Japan, we sailed into Taiwan/Formosa. Taiwan's population is 22 million and its capital is Taipei. We visited the national palace and the museum which houses more than 60,000 priceless Chinese art treasures.

Hong Kong took our breath away and the Grand Palace of Bangkok was dazzling. Forty-nine children from the Pataya orphanage boarded the QE2 to sing and act for the passengers and crew. Singapore on St. Patrick's Day was rich and disciplined and a unique fusion of cultures. Raffles Hotel stands at the forefront of Singapore's culinary heritage and traditions.

I celebrated Mass on Holy Thursday with the Bishop and fourteen priests of the Seychelles Islands and in South Africa I visited Robben Island where Nelson Mandela was jailed for eighteen years. I called to Nazareth House, which is run by the nuns as a centre for caring for children who are born with AIDS.

After Capetown we cruised on to St. Helena, onetime home of Napoleon; then, crossing the equator for the fourth time, we sailed to Tenerife. I had to fly from Madeira to England for the funeral of a dear friend in Coventry.

I celebrated Mass seven days a week at 5.45pm and a 10.30 mass for the crew each Sunday. All the Masses were well attended and my fellow chaplains were a Rabbi and a Presbyterian Minister. Daily, at 9.30am, we had a Chaplain's hour for people of all denominations and of none to dialogue and ask questions.


Being a priest on a World Cruise and a team member is a challenging ministry in a global and mobile setting. A priest supplies a transcendental dimension in the "hidden ministry" at sea and it is most rewarding in the service of the Lord.

**Eugene Nee**  
**Canon Lt. Colonel USAF (Retd.)**  
**Feenone.**

**Editor's Note:** The above is an edited version of an extremely full account of Fr. Eugene's trip on the QE2.



## The West Mayo Final of 1962

 n a still and sunny September Saturday morning of the year 1962, as I rushed for my bike, my mother was returning from the barn with a can of milk. "Where are you going?" she asked. "I'm going to Josie Lyons lifting oats", I answered.

"Will the bishop be there?"

"What bishop?"

"You have your new pants on you".

That was the first sign of the excitement that was in it. We were to play Burishoole in the West Mayo final the following day and even though we had won all our games all summer, without much ado, now that we were in the final the nerves were high.

There was a square acre of oats on the right side of the road going towards the green field overlooking the lake called Seanbhaile. Seamus, on board the single horse drawn mowing machine, was already slashing down the three foot high crop of ripened oats with Josie sweeping it into sheaves by hand and leaving it out of the way for the machine to pass again. By teatime, apart from a strip down the middle, it was all cut and sheaved. Nora arrived at five with the tea and smiled at our hunger for the sandwiches. The rest and the food brought us renewed energy and the talk was about football. When it came to football, Josie had no equal.

Before we resumed work, we saw a yellow Mini coming down the Colony road, a cloud of dust rising behind it. Its occupants were Noel Sammon, Lorcan Geoghegan and James Gibbons, three of Louisburgh's most prominent players. They were in fine spirits, quietly confident for the morrow. They joked about not giving us a hand with the oats. Josie was uneasy about the weather as he looked towards the west. Noel, the captain, wondered what he'd say on winning the cup. Josie, still with eyes seaward, said slowly and thoughtfully, "Think of someone to praise. Anyone at all. And it's amazing how easy it is once you start".

Then with a smile he added, as if remembering a past experience, "as a matter of fact, some fellows once they get started don't know how to stop". We laughed and they left.

By now the western sky was beginning to darken and right away we started tying. We stooked as fast as we could and it was raining lightly when we were half way through.

A tall man carrying a stick came and said, "I can't help ye with that on account of the back, but if one of ye started capping, I'd hold the ties".

All was done by eight, but the strip in the middle was left looking like a Mohican hairstyle in the middle of the bare yellow field.

That night the wind came up and it was still raining when Austie from Cross picked us up at Roonith Hill. Austie was part of the GAA powerhouse and was furious that the Clare Island players hadn't been brought out the day before. The sea was still too rough but Josie was optimistic.

At Kilsallagh the dark sea was still wild with white breakers all the way across to Achill.

"Not a hope", Austie said more than once. The silent Josie was worried too.

In the meantime, Pat Lannon had gone to Roonagh to wait for the Island players.

There wasn't a word in the dressing room at St. Patrick's Park, Westport.

Then the green and white minibus appeared at the top of the road. All eyes towards it. Someone said, "There's only one person in it". They were all worried. "Who is it?" "Who is it?" It was no Islander. It was Michael Keane. I looked through a small window, more of a peephole indeed. The referee was whistling the combatants to battle. The Burishoole men were tall and fit as they trotted up the embankment. All in white they were. Tom Gibbons was humming Rock Around the Clock as he tapped his boots on the concrete floor. Pat Lannon strove to raise our sagging morale and Noel Sammon's pep talk was just the thing to send us on to the field.

The teams lined up and I was delighted to see next-door neighbour Myles Joe with me on the wing. It was our first time playing together in a major game. We had often practiced together in the clearing between the bank and the whins and the river. We had played with fine men: Willie Fergus, Seamus Needham, Christy O'Malley, Christy Gibbons and the O'Malleys and Gradys from Curra. Martin Joe Keane and Paddy started their football careers with us. In Westport on the day we were



without four of our best players – Winters, McCabe, Burns and O'Toole. The second half saw Austie Fergus take the ball solidly on his chest and clear the fifty-yard line. Lorcan was patrolling there and volleyed it out. I got to it, a step or two ahead of the Burishoole defenders. I looked over my shoulder and saw that Myles was clearly behind the fullback line. This was to be the perfect goal, I thought, as no one could score a goal with such style as he could.

I never made the pass. I was felled, by accident, and as Josie steered me towards the line he advised me to sit and rest for a while "because we have no one else to bring on and we'll bring you out again". I sat in the corner unable to run and took no further part in the game. It was if a pitchfork were stuck in my ribs.

And one of our halfbacks took a kick in the ankle. Our great fullback shipped a bone crushing charge after fielding a ball; he was clearly concussed, I reckoned, but played on and as he switched with our cornerback, Burishoole got a soft goal.

Still, we were only three points down with five minutes to go. One of our forwards scrapped the outside of the post with a blistering shot. From the kick out, Tom Gibbons got the breaking ball around midfield and completed as good a solo run as ever was done on a bad day. No defender touched him as he reached the parallelogram and he was still singing Rock Around the Clock as he passed them by. The Burishoole goalkeeper made the dive of his life and parried Tom's shot.

To make a long story short, Burishoole won, and deserved to win, by five points.

And there wasn't as much as a whisper of wind the next day.

#### The Louisburgh Team

	A. Fergus	
E. McGreal	M. Lyons	D. O'Leary
P. Gibbons	L. Geoghegan	B. Morahan
	N. Sammon	J. Gibbons
T. O'Malley	J. Gibbons	P. O'Reilly
M. Gibbons	T. Gibbons	R. Lyons.

**Tom O'Malley**  
**Feenone**

*Tom has contributed to earlier issues of An Choinneal.*



### Thallabawn School 1931

This photograph which is over seventy years old was passed on to me by my parents-in law Thomas and Margaret Mc Nally R.I.P. Four of their six children are included in the photo, the other two having completed their education in Killadoon N.S.

As the battered and faded photograph is of historical and sentimental interest I decided to have it restored. Artist Edward Ross, 5A Grafton St, Dublin, carried out this task.

Following the resettlement of Thallabawn, the children continued the long trek to Killadoon N. S. for the following ten years. After several years of prompting from the parents the school was erected with the help of the Parish Priest Fr. Thomas Healy.

Una O'Malley has ably recounted this history in an article written to mark the closing of the school in 1975 and published in *An Choinneal*, so there is no need for me to repeat this.

Ms. Mary O Malley (the late Mrs Duffy R.I.P.) afforded my happiest memory of Thallabawn School to me. The school was in urgent need of repairs by around 1955 but she was reluctant to ask the parents for donations, understanding that ready cash was not easy to come by in that time. The resourceful lady asked Fr. Martin if he would allow her to organise a few dances in the school. Much has been written about the



attitude of the priests to the social life of young people in my youth, from objecting to dance hall licences to searching the hedges for courting couples! However Fr Martin proved that not all priests were against harmless fun! The dances were held on a Friday night in order not to clash with "Keanes Hall" Sunday night fixture.

Local musicians supplied the music. Fr. Martin who was our C.C (but acting Parish Priest at the time) attended the dances. When Johnny O'Malley, Gowlan rose to sing 'The night that I slept with my navy boots on' there were a few lowered heads and blushes but the good priest enjoyed it all as he watched the half-sets, and foxtrots that were expertly danced. With the passage of time I cannot name all the children but I see the faces of the Thallabawn families of the time gazing from the photo. Perhaps the surviving members of that era, their children and grandchildren will succeed in naming them.

**Chris Mc Nally**, Roonith Hill

## Captive Imagination

1

*Those taint bars rise to a crest above  
menacingly swing the perch drawn in momentum  
as the sole occupant drops distraught  
sharp soiled sawdust receives the impact*

2

*Taunt trim and upright she stands statuette  
gravity griping at her plum plumage  
the coat cries an instant imagery of colour  
stark staring pupils rebel against the sunkissed light*

3

*Mind matters play cruel to this creature  
captive controls hold no empathy for expression  
intensity invites imagination to be explored within  
the caged bird is now free*

**Ben Ruddy** – Sancta Maria College.  
From Writer-In-Residence Project, 2002.

## The Last Hedge School in Louisburgh

**T**his article, by Richard Lyons, R.I.P., Long St., Louisburgh first appeared in Fr. Kieran Waldron's History of Sancta Maria College, 1986; the photo of the late Mickie Malia and his sister, courtesy of Mrs. Brigid Staunton, Killsalagh, prompts this excerpt.

People of my own generation and the generation immediately preceding mine will remember Michael O'Malley of Carramore who for many years conducted a sort of Hedge School in his own house. Michael of course was more generally known throughout the parish as "Mickie Malia" and over a period of five or six years I had the pleasure of knowing him and attending his little school for a short time . . . Class was held for two hours each night during winter and on summer evenings . . . The fee



Mickey Maille and his sister Kate from Carramore.  
The first of the private tutors (scholar).





*Cregganbawn National School, 1924*

charged was five shillings per month payable in advance and for this you got four nights per week; one attended only on the nights arranged so that those attending could be accommodated around the kitchen table. Others attended on the other nights, or in the case of girls, during the early evening.

You will ask what manner of man was Mickey. First of all, one must know that he was a disabled man in so far as he did not have the proper or full use of one leg and when he sat on the chair this leg was always stretched out in front of him, and when walking he would swing it along in a sort of half circle, always of course using both a stick and a crutch.

In appearance he very closely resembled the onetime English Premier Lloyd George, a head of pure white hair, white side locks and moustache. His steel rimmed glasses, which were chosen from a box of such things in one of the local shops, always seemed to hang precariously on the tip of his nose. He lived with two spinster sisters, Katie and Norah. They kept one cow and calf, sowed a garden and managed to save enough turf for their own needs . . .

Michael O'Malley, the very last Hedge School Master known in the West of Ireland, passed to his eternal reward in November, 1958. May he rest in peace.

## Scissors and Sellotape

### August 1999

Gala variety concert for Cancer Research Fund (account) . . .  
Louisburgh U- 12 team finish joint second in their division.

### September 1999

Fr. Pádraig O'Máille's book, "Living Dangerously: A Memoir of Political Change in Malawi" is launched in Dublin by The Minister for Foreign Affairs in the Malawi Government . . . Austin Lacey wins a family trip to Disneyland, Paris, from Supermacs Ballinrobe . . . Minister for Housing and Urban Renewal, Bobby Molloy, T.D. announces that Louisburgh Community Housing Ltd will receive a grant for £64,000 for voluntary housing.

### October 1999

"Sonas", the Louisburgh Children's Arts Festival provides enjoyment, satisfaction and artistic outlets for local young people . . . Twenty students from Sancta Maria College travelled to Brest, France for the fifth exchange visit to their partner school "Lycée Charles de Foucault . . . Limerick-based exhibition and PR specialists, Europromotions, announced the extension of their display products to include Nomadic Platinum and Nomadic ImageMaker manufactured by Nomadic Display Systems, Cahir . . . Gerard Needham departs for Haiti in the Caribbean to work voluntarily in a Haitian orphanage . . . In a competition for primary school pupils to compose a poem or slogan on an environmental topic, Scoil Náisiúnta Phádraig Naofa takes all four awards . . . Mayo County Councillor Peter Sweeney condemns vandalism at the changing rooms at the G.A.A. pitch, Cahir . . . The "Clean Sweep" campaign to rid the Louisburgh-Killeen area of unwanted scrap metal is an outstanding success

### November 1999

"Cupla Focal" Club resumes their weekly get-togethers . . . Credit Union Poster Competition is won by (U-7y) Niamh O'Malley, Molly O'Toole, Patrick O'Toole, (8-10y) Mairead Gibbons, Niamh Gibbons, Christie O'Toole, (11-14y) Thomas O'Malley, Helena Gibbons, Marian O'Toole . . . Louisburgh/Killeen-Kitale Partnership continues its work



with a Church Gate Collection . . . 21st edition of 'An Choinneal' is launched by its editor-in-chief, Fr. Leo Morahan, P.P.

### December 1999

Leonie Dyar, Moneen, receives an NCVA Business Studies Award . . . Ann (nee McGreal) Ward receives a Crown Salon Award for her Blushers Beauty Centre in Coventry, one of just 29 selected out of 1500 entrants in the U.K. and Ireland . . . West Mayo Scór na nÓg Final is hosted by Louisburgh G.A.A. . . . G.A.A. President Mr. Joe McDonagh visits Sancta Maria College as part of a tour of schools in West Mayo.

### January 2000

Students Council is elected in Sancta Maria College, some members are Claire O'Grady (Chair-person), Alan Moran (Vice-Chair-person), James O'Malley (PRO), Tracy O'Toole (Secretary) and Deirdre Philbin (Treasurer) . . . Austin O'Toole, Kilsallagh, wins first prize in Sancta Maria Millennium Christmas Raffle.

### February 2000

Bank of Ireland and Ulster Bank terminate their weekly services in Louisburgh. The decision is condemned as "a slap in the face to bank customers". . . Ann Marie Maxwell presents a cheque for £5333 to the Louisburgh Hospice Support Group, proceeds of a walk she undertook in Cape Cod, Boston for the Mayo/Roscommon Hospice . . . Lionel Bart's "Oliver", presented by Sancta Maria College, causes audiences to marvel at the genius of Marina Rice, Director/ Producer and at the dramatic acumen of the College . . . David O'Toole launches his A.I. service for the Louisburgh and Lecanvey areas after completing a course in Artificial Insemination of cows in Tipperary . . . Brian O'Malley, Marie O'Grady, Marian Gill and Eanna O'Leary are County finalists in the Mayo Mental Health Association Debating Competition.

### March 2000

A decision is made to hold both a St Patrick's Day parade and a Summer Festival in the town . . . R.N.L.I. hold a fund-raising table quiz . . . Deputy Michael Ring calls on the Minister for Environment and Local Environment to upgrade the Westport to Thallabawn route 'as a matter of urgency'. . . Partnerships Ireland-Africa and Louisburgh Community Project, along with Mrs. Benny Oburu spend five weeks enlightening local children about Interculturalism . . . The 21st visit of the students of St. Scholastica College, Duluth, Minnesota to Louisburgh

was formally marked by a reception in The Weir Restaurant.

### April 2000

An Ógra branch of Fianna Fail is set up for people aged 16-25 in the Louisburgh area, officers are Declan Moran, Padraig Keane, Thomas O'Malley and Aoife Jennings . . . Joe Mac's dart team beat Reilly's of Ballyvary to go through to the Quarter final of the Weaver Cup Inauguration of the first cadets in Louisburgh Order of Malta takes place . . . Louisburgh Transition Year group Eerie Entertainment – Richard O'Toole, Catherine McGreal, Clare O'Malley and Eanna O'Leary – get through to the National Final of the Young Entrepreneurs Scheme . . . Chris Harper opens his Art Studio in Kilsallagh . . . Fr. Pádraig O'Máille, who was instrumental in turning the tide away from 30 years of dictatorship in Malawi, is profiled in a TG4 special, on which he is described as 'a living saint'.

### May 2000

The Killeen Group Water Scheme Committee agrees to start work on the upgrading of the Accony and Killadoon lines . . . Féile Chois Cuain is a tremendous success, with excellent weather and large crowds for classes, sessions, concerts and workshops . . . The children's graveyard at Melli, Furrigal is blessed.

### June 2000

Eleanor Lyons runs in the Women's Mini Marathon for Can-Teen, the teenage cancer support group and raises £490 . . . On the same weekend, James Gibbons of Feenone celebrates his 90th birthday and his wife celebrates her 85th birthday.

### July 2000

A Silver Jubilee Mass is held in the grounds of Holy Family N.S., Killeen, on a beautiful day with ex-pupils, ex-teachers and parishioners joining in the celebrations with pupils, teachers and parents . . . Kathleen Morrison retires from her post as a primary teacher after more than forty five years of service

### August 2000

Tony Chambers plays in Louisburgh Parochial Hall in aid of the Order of Malta . . . Louisburgh G.A.A. Club begin a massive fund-raising enterprise to raise funds for major re-development of the club's grounds at Cahir; first prize for the draw is a Daewoo Lanos.



**September 2000**

A Tea Party for 'Children First', an organisation which helps children receive medical operations, raises £2146. This results in an Albanian nine-year-old getting a heart intervention operation in Belfast.

**October 2000**

Giant magpies begin to appear in Louisburgh N.S. . . . Work begins on public car park in Chapel St. . . . Killeen Traditional Bird-catchers Association prepare to rid the area of giant magpies . . . Sonas 2000, Children's Arts Festival, climaxes with a lively multicoloured street pageant.

**November 2000**

Fr. Mícheál Mac Gréil gives a talk in the Parochial Hall on 'Understanding Irish Attitudes to Friend and Stranger' as part of a series of talks on human rights . . . Louisburgh twins, John and Frank, celebrate their 25th birthday . . . Fr. Gerard Harney is given the Honorary Freedom of the Borough of Doncaster for his services to the community . . . Garda Ian Kenny is appointed to Blanchardstown Garda Station in Dublin . . . Marie Thérèse Gibbons R.G.N. is promoted to Senior Staff Nurse at Northwick Park and St. Mark's General Hospital, London.

**December 2000**

Following the launch of the International Year of the Volunteer, Louisburgh Community Project members voice their support and highlight the work of local volunteers . . . Senior Citizens' Party takes place in Killeen Community Centre . . . Convent is to be purchased as a day care centre for the elderly . . . Louisburgh Ladies G.A.A. Club is formed.

**January 2001**

Minister for the Environment and Local Government, Noel Dempsey, T.D. announces that Louisburgh is to receive an upgrade to the present Sewage Treatment works . . . Louisburgh G.A.A. celebrates its 80th anniversary with a Monster Draw; first prize of a Daewoo Lanus is won by Mr. Timmie Keane, Bunowen, Leenane . . . Louisburgh Credit Union holds its 12th A.G.M. after another successful year . . . Monsignor Michael J. Coyne, Camden, New Jersey, U.S.A. and a native of Aillemore, Louisburgh, retires after more than 46 years of active ministry

**February 2001**

A team from Sancta Maria College is one of four teams to take part in The ESB West of Ireland Competition in NUI Galway . . . 'My Fair Lady' is presented by Sancta Maria College. This, their 7th annual musical, plays to a full house on each of the four nights it is staged . . . Art classes – glasspainting, ceramic decorating, clay modelling – start at the Community Development Project . . . Valentine's Day Tea Party in aid of Kitale is well attended and is a successful fundraiser . . . A handful of local speeding motorists and motorcyclists cause concern . . . Louisburgh is to have a new library at the Granuaile Centre . . . Dovea A.I. Contractor, David O'Toole of Doughmakeon, announces the availability of the service for the current season . . . A Resource Teacher is appointed for the three schools of Killeen, Louisburgh and Lecanvey.

**March 2001**

G.A.A. Club Annual Dinner Dance takes place with all-Ireland winner Claire Egan as special guest . . . St. Patrick's Day Parade, as well as other events, is cancelled because of the Foot and Mouth scare . . . The Feenone team win the final of the Killadoon Village Darts League, with the Cross team as runners-up . . . Grants of £80,000 are allocated to prevent coastal erosion at Bertra beach and Carromore beach and for road protection at Accony . . . Aidan Gallagher, Thallabawn, takes over management of The Killadoon Beach Hotel from Ted and Mary O'Dea . . . Karen Kilcoyne, Edel Tiernan, Helen Gibbons, Paul J. O'Grady and P. J. O'Malley make up the team of winners in the Regional PTAA Junior Quiz.

**April 2001**

Mr. Patrick Nee, born in Louisburgh, is voted 'Hibernian of the Year' by the Ancient Order of Hibernians in Rockaway Beach in the U.S.A. . . . Students of St. Scholastica showcase a farewell photography exhibition entitled 'A Day in the life of Louisburgh' . . . James McNeill opens a new petrol station and grocery shop – 'J. McN's' . . . Presentation of medals to the Junior B team, who took the Junior B title. 2000 Player of the Year award goes to Marcus O'Malley and Young Players of the Year are Stephen O'Grady and Darragh McLoughlin . . . Four Sancta Maria students – Oliver Smith, Rachel Hicks, Edwina O'Malley and Edel Tiernan – are featured in fiction and poetry anthologies, 'Shooting from the Lip' and 'Now you tell One' . . . Edwina O'Malley's poem – 'Stars' – wins first prize in the Junior Category for Young Poets.



**May 2001**

Louisburgh Ladies G.A.A. record their first win when the Under-12 team defeat Mayo Gaels . . . Claire O'Grady, Altóir, a Leaving Cert. student, represents Sancta Maria on the Connaght Senior Girls Interprovincial Soccer team. Claire played in every game for the province in the last three years . . . Louisburgh Community Project and the Cúpla Focal Group organise a commemorative Famine Walk from Doolough to Louisburgh . . . Louisburgh Youth Marching Band is founded . . . Minister of State, Dr. Tom Moffatt, T.D. performs the official opening of Louisburgh Order of Malta Ambulance Corps . . . Patricia Trowbridge, RN, DCHy, resident of Louisburgh, accepts an induction into the International Hypnosis Hall of Fame . . . Banking services survey conducted house-to-house in the parish.

**June 2001**

Belfast poet Michael Longley gives a poetry reading and discussion for the Senior students in Sancta Maria . . . Mr. Leo Morahan launches his book, 'Croagh Patrick – Archaeology, Landscape and People' . . . Tommy Hynes, Lecanvey and Claire O'Grady, Altóir, receive Bank of Ireland 'Student of the Year' awards in Sancta Maria . . . Deirdre Philbin is awarded the 'Best Junior Cert Student' and 'Transition Year Student of the Year' at Sancta Maria . . . A Living Willow Sculpture Symposium takes place on Scott's Island, Louisburgh, using live willow rods and other natural materials . . . Blessing and official Opening of the Louisburgh Housing Scheme for the Elderly . . . Mayo Concert Orchestra/ Castlebar Concert Band perform in Louisburgh Parochial Hall . . . Website for Louisburgh – [www.louisburgh-ireland.com](http://www.louisburgh-ireland.com) – is launched by Colin Brett, Cambridge . . . 6 year old Callie Catherine Scott is a prize-winning Irish dancer and a grand-daughter of the late Patrick J. Gaffney (Louisburgh) and Breege (O'Reilly) Gaffney (Shraugh), from Aurora, Ohio.

**July 2001**

Anna O'Toole, The Sycamores, Louisburgh, is chosen to receive an Irish Permanent High Achiever Award 2001 for her performance on the Electronic Keyboard at the Local Centre examinations of the Royal Irish Academy of Music . . . Louisburgh volunteerism is praised at the 24th Annual General Meeting of Louisburgh Holidays plc . . . Private Aoife Jennings, 'A' Coy (Westport area), 18th Infantry Battalion (Mayo Area) on winning the best recruit prize on the Battalion's Annual Spring Camp . . . Louisburgh Creative Activities Art Club members exhibit their work

in the Derrylahan . . . Dennis McCalmont plays at Scott's Island as part of the Mayo County Council's Summer Music Series.

**August 2001**

Lazy Boys hit the road on their coast-to-coast walk from Dublin to Louisburgh in aid of Aware . . . A reunion of the past pupils of Carrowiskey school attracts many visitors from Ireland and abroad.

**September 2001**

Launch of Louisburgh Sonas 2001 brochure by author Ré Ó Laighléis . . . Derrylahan Pub, owned by Michael T. Durkan, wins the Best Shopfront Award for the Ireland-West region in the National Tidy Towns Competition 2001 . . . 'Old Watering Holes – Mayo to Serabu', a book by Sister Hilary Lyons, a native of the Colony, Louisburgh, is launched . . . Termon Visual Theatre presents "Abisona – a woman's story" a story of an African woman's journey, an intercultural show . . . John Joe McDonnell, Mullagh, for the second year running, wins the all-Ireland Senior Whistling Competition at Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann, Listowel . . . Paul Sammin, Louisburgh (20) is selected as Irish Motorsport's 'Young Driver of the Month' for August.

**October 2001**

Anna Rafferty (23), with Louisburgh roots – her maternal grandparents are Nora and James Gibbons of Feenone – has been appointed Business Development Manager of the Dowcarter Agency in London . . . Dessie O'Malley, Mooneen, is selected on the Mayo Oscar Traynor squad . . . The sun shines on Sonas, the annual children's arts festival

**November 2001**

Nora O'Malley, Kilsallagh, celebrates her 100th birthday at Corandulla Nursing Home in Galway . . . Austin Francis O'Malley, Doughmakeon, is nominated to represent the Mayo region on the new IFA Hill Farming Committee . . . Mayo County Council open new library in the Granuaile Centre in Louisburgh . . . Anne Marie Tiernan, Doughmakeon, and Maureen Nee, Leenane, participate in a Triathlon in Brisbane, Australia . . . Fr. Pádraig O'Malley is honoured with an honorary doctorate presented by President Bakili Muluzi, the leader he helped bring into power.



**December 2001**

Mrs. Maisie Tilsley, Corraggaun, Thallabawn, the Chairperson, South West Mayo branch of MSI, is the winner of the long service award for her fifteen years as chairperson and five years as secretary . . . Successful launch of Louisburgh Youth Marching Band.

**January 2002**

Jim and Ellie O'Malley of West Roxbury, Massachusetts, mark their 50th Wedding Anniversary; Jim is a native of Louisburgh and Ellie is a native of Ballymoe, Co. Galway . . . Graham O'Toole from Bunowen, Cresham Academy of Irish Dancing, is placed 3rd in his Solo Competition at the Connaght Championships in Galway . . . The annual musical staged by Sancta Maria College is 'Calamity Jane' . . . Five Louisburgh men – John Joe Kilcoyne, Michael Sammin, John Kerrigan, John Gibbons and Peter Sweeney – start on their attempt to lose at least 10 stone between them in aid of a school-building project in Haiti.

**February 2002**

Breda Mc Ginn and P. J. Keane depart for Kitale, Kenya, to distribute money raised by Louisburgh/Killeen-Kitale partnership . . . Family fun day takes place at Killeen Community Centre . . . James and Nora Rita Gibbons of Feenone celebrate their 65th Wedding Anniversary . . . Very popular cookery course with John Durkan commences in 'The Weir' Restaurant.

**March 2002**

"Louisburgh Five" Haiti Fundraising continues . . . GAA hope to upgrade dressing rooms . . . Sr. Mary Dunne says thanks from Kitale . . . Louisburgh Community Playgroup go from strength to strength . . . Killeen National School students qualify for the National Credit Union Quiz . . . Mrs. Mary T. Gibbons is appointed Assistant Director of Nursing (Medical & Emergency Services) at Mayo General Hospital.

**April 2002**

Area Engineer Ger Reidy says work is to start on the refurbishment of Bridge St. . . . Louisburgh Order of Malta receive state-of-the-art Ambulance . . . Killeen N. S. only six points behind the winners (Westport CBS Primary) in credit Union National Quiz . . . Sancta Maria College now has up to date computer room with broadband internet connection and skilled computer personnel.

**May 2002**

Jim Corrigan promoted to the rank of Lieutenant, Order of Malta . . . Louisburgh Community Project invites all to open evenings . . . Ciarán Hastings, Dereen, landed a 141b salmon on the Bunowen River.

**June 2002**

Sue O'Toole, Doughmakeown, is elected Chairperson of the Social Inclusion Committee, SWMayo Dev. Co.

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## Juvenilia

*Youth, plays to the world of fiction  
What could be? What is to be?  
Free, memories born of past  
Run by our streamline world  
Fast, recollection of memory  
Brings joy and hope  
Sun free with crimson  
Copes innocent in morning view.*

*Juvenilia, what sounds do you hear?  
Cruel and harsh in their presence  
Fear, to express what you feel  
To bring forth what you know  
Now, we walk the road of life comfortable  
As who we are not who we could be  
As, moon locked in a blanket of darkness  
Flow is not scared to express your existence.*

*Youth, the beginning of the unknown  
Eternal search for the workings of life  
Shadow, of a once being  
Ghost to what the future holds  
Hide, not beneath your cover  
The light is there for those who see  
As, eclipse caught encrusted between two paths  
Show your true self what lies between.*

**Ben Ruddy** – Sancta Maria College.  
From Writer-In-Residence Project, 2002.



## Slán Abhaile

**T**he following parishioners have died in the period covered since our last issue. Our apologies to the family of Mrs Annie Ruddy, R.I.P., who passed to her eternal reward in August 1998, and whose name was inadvertently omitted in our 1999 issue of *An Choinneal*.

### 1999

July	Joseph O'Grady, Tully and Sussex.
August	Eileen Duffy, Woodfield. Michael J. Conway, Carramore and Dublin. Ellen Gallagher, Pulgloss. Canon Eamonn O'Malley, Louisburgh and P.P. Kilmeena. Nora Grady, Barnaubawn and USA.
September	Mary O'Donnell, Kinnock. Ellie Gibbons, Cloonlara Michael O'Malley, Shraugh. John Kilgannon, Corragoun and Liverpool. Austin Tiernan, Doughmakeown and Chicago.
October	John O'Malley, Roonith Hill and California. Mary Prendergast, Bunowen. John Naughton, Carrowniskey.
November	Peter O'Malley, Roonkeel. Philip O'Malley, The Bridge and Salthill. Bridgie O'Hara, (nee Gibbons), Askelane and Wicklow. Martin O'Malley, Thallabawn. Katie Kilcoyne, Crickeen.
December	Michael O'Malley, Woodfield and England. Mary Berge, (nee Morrison), Thallabawn and Liverpool. Martin McNamara, Kinnadoohy and Birmingham. Michael O'Malley, Shrahwee and England. Mary Kitterick, Aillmore.

Canon Peter Morrison, Louisburgh  
and Ballina, P.P. retd.  
Kitty O'Malley, Moneen and Westport.

### 2000

January	Kathleen Nestor (nee Morrison), Trim.
February	Thomas Heanue, Bunowen. Christina Leahy, (nee McDonnell), Louisburgh and Dublin. Tommy Flanagan, Kilgeever and Blackburn. Joe Lyons, Emlagh. Seamus O'Malley, Doughmakeown. Nora Kitterick, Furmoyle.
March	Austin Ruddy, Collacoon and USA. Austin Corrigan, Doughmakeown. Bridget Ann Kavanagh, (nee Duffy), Furmoyle and England. Paddy O'Malley, Aillemore. Jarlath Morahan, Louisburgh and Dunlaoire. Mary McDonnell, (nee McNally), Feenone and Drummin. Nora Prendergast, The Bridge, Louisburgh.
April	Philomena Quinn, (nee Scanlon), Bunowen and Clarenbridge. Michael O'Malley, Aillemore.
May	Mary Egan, (nee Grady), Crickeen and Worcester, Mass. USA. Martin Grady, Murrisk. Sr. Therese O'Toole, Louisburgh and Claremorris. Beatrice Finn, (nee O'Malley), Curracony and Cape Cod, USA.
July	Jimmy O'Malley, Shrahwee. Jack Bennet, Shraugh. Sarah Gibbons, Askelane. Fr. Alex Morahan, Louisburgh and P.P. NSW, Australia. Brian O'Dowd, Falduff and Westport. Mary Mitchell, Dereen.



August	John Murray, Cahir, Clare Island and Coventry. Seamus Durkan, Louisburgh. Margaret Scanlon, Cregganbawn and Ballisodare. Evelyn O'Malley, Furmoyle and Castlebar.
September	Gerry Coen, Ballyhaunis and Louisburgh. Joe O'Malley, Askelane. Bridget O'Grady, Thallabawn.
October	Sr. Mary Joseph Reilly, Collacocon and USA. Bridie Doherty, (nee Philbin), Carrowniskey. Michael Mitchell, Dereen. Michael Gavin, Laughta and Leicester. Austin Scott, Falduff.
November	Josie Moran, Falduff.
December	Sr. Bernadette King, Louisburgh. Patrick Durkan, Askelane. Josie Gibbons, Roonith. Eddie Gibbons, Roonith and Coventry. John Nee, Curradavitt and Coventry. Tommy Coyne, Cross. Alec McSweeney, Cahir.
<b>2001</b>	
January	James O'Malley, Accony. Ted Naughton, Carrowniskey and Sheffield. Kathleen Legge, (nee O'Leary), Louisburgh, Clare Island and Southampton.
February	Margaret Berry, Laughta. Richard Mannion, Killadoon. Nora Quigley, (nee Gibbons), Laughta.
March	Paddy Durkan, Louisburgh and Wales. Austin Lyons, Louisburgh. Margaret Foye, Doughmakeown and Dunboyne. Maureen Boyce, Louisburgh.
April	Maura Philbin, Louisburgh and Dublin. Peter O'Malley, Gowlaun and Manchester.

	Tommy Toner, Cahir and London. Mary O'Malley, Cross.
May	Evelyn Duggan, Cahir. Eileen Ferrins, Furmoyle. Alice Flanagan, (nee Staunton), Thallabaun and Boston.
June	Mary Duffy, Louisburgh. Tommy O'Malley, Derrygarve and New Jersey, USA. Sheila Murphy, Moneen. Bridie Stent, (nee O'Malley), Kinnadoohy and Rugby.
July	Tommie Morrison, Thallabawn. Nora McGreal, Doughmakeown and Boston. John Reilly, Laughta. Beecie Morrison, Thallabawn.
August	Peadar Fallon, Moneen. John Prendergast, Accony.
September	James Garavan, Devlin. James Lyons, Accony. Michael Burke, Moneen. Mary O'Malley, Cregganroe. Sr. Brigid O'Donnell, Cahir and St. Louis Sisters, Monaghan.
October	Laurence Mulvey, Collacocon and England. Ann Murphy, (nee Philbin), Carrowniskey and Magherafelt, Derry. Mary Satchell, (nee Flanagan), Kilgeever and England. Nora O'Grady, Kilgeever.
November	Bridie Gibbons, Askelane. Sarah Maguire, Derryheigh.
December	Eddie Mitchell, Laughta. Frank O'Malley, Cross. Annie Mayberry, Ballyhip. Annie Maxwell, Ballyhip. Nora Lyons, Bunlehinch.



Pat Joe Kirby, Askelane.  
Mary Kate Sammin, Askelane.

**2002****January**

Seán McCormack, Polgloss and S.Carolina, USA.  
William Ferrins, Furmoyle.  
Margaret Philbin, Cahir.  
Jonathan Healy, Falduff.  
Teresa Duffy, Furmoyle.  
Paddy Gavin, Lougha.

**February**

Mary Giblin, Roonith Hill.  
Martin Joyce, Shraugh.  
Anne Marsh, Carrowniskey and Navan.  
Dick Morrison, Killadoon and London.  
Mary O'Malley, Roonagh and USA.  
Annie O'Malley, (nee Kitterick), Cregganbawn  
and Wakefield.  
Catherine Lally, (nee Murphy), Devlin and Boston.

**March**

Brigid Tiernan, Cregganbawn.  
Margaret Shannon, (nee Gibbons), Askelane  
and Devon.  
Patrick McDonnell, Louisburgh and Dublin.  
Peter Corrigan, Woodfield and Blackburn.  
Tommie Burke, Ugoole and Surrey.

**April**

Mary McKeown, Accony.  
Tommie Prendergast, Accony and Birmingham.

**May**

Ita Durkan, Louisburgh.  
Nancy Darby, (nee O'Malley), Louisburgh and Dublin.  
John O'Malley, Roonagh and Clinton, USA.

**June**

Eileen Kerr, Bunowen.  
Tony Berry, Polgloss,  
Sarah Carson, (nee Mc Nally), Thallabawn  
and England.

## Out of the Shadows

### Emerging Secondary Schools in the Archdiocese of Tuam 1940-1969

*By Fr. Kieran Waldron. 203 pages with notes etc.*

*Published 2002 by Nordlaw Books, Barnaderg, Tuam, Co. Galway.*

*ISBN 0-9542640-1-0.*

*Foreword by Archbishop Michael Neary.*

**F**r. Kieran Waldron's own life has been steeped in secondary education, as a student in St. Jarlath's College, as a teacher in his native Ballyhaunis and as a teacher for many years in Sancta Maria College, Louisburgh. *Out of the Shadows* is a timely reminder of the role of the Religious Orders in the post-primary education of the youth of the Archdiocese and adds to our understanding of the hardships endured by so few for so many. The role of the laity is not overlooked in, for example, the unique story of Scoil Damhnait at Achill Sound or in the emergence of lay teachers as Principals in what was up to recent times the preserve – and rightly so – of those who quarried in the harsh economic landscape of the 1940's and 1950's.

Archbishop Joseph Walsh presided over the founding of seventeen Secondary schools in the Archdiocese; he was farseeing in his approach to education, giving the Sisters of Mercy, and many others, the benefit of his wisdom. They took the first tentative steps in towns as far apart as Claremorris and Clifden, Louisburgh and Mountbellew.

The Sisters of Mercy had already established schools at six locations while the Christian Brothers, De La Salle Brothers and Presentation Sisters had Secondary Schools in the Archdiocese prior to 1940.

Clifden would later be a home to the Franciscan Brothers, Dunmore would host the Sisters of the Incarnate Word while the Sisters of the Holy Spirit and the Daughters of Charity would found their schools at Mountbellew and Coolarne respectively.

In his chapter on Sancta Maria College, Louisburgh, Fr. Waldron not only tells the story of Ireland's first Catholic co-educational Secondary School but also describes the attitudes of the time. He refers to the "astonishing twenty nine pupils" who turned up on the first day in 1920; the location was a rented premises on Chapel St. The writer gives great



scope to the Louisburgh story and develops many aspects of his earlier and also excellent 1986 publication, *"Sancta Maria College Louisburgh"*.

*An Choinneal* welcomes Fr. Waldron's *Out of the Shadows*; it is from the pen of this priest-teacher who might be regarded as an honorary Louisburgh man, such was the scope of his labour in our parish during his time here.

**John Lyons**

## Remembering Sion

The morning of 1st May 1954 was cold and rough with a sharp wind from the northeast. Later, it rained but for now the sky was overcast. Word had gone around that Fr. Patrick Peyton would be in Knock to offer Mass and to preach. So, all roads seemed to be leading there from the length and breadth of Ireland.

There was no Basilica there then, and I remember standing in the rain with a massive crowd at the front of the Shrine, listening to this young, eloquent priest.

Holding up a Rosary beads in his right hand, he told of its importance in his life and in that of his parents. He spoke of their lifestyle; they were hard working and prayerful and he told how, on the night before he and his brother left for the USA, the Rosary was said, as it had been every night of their lives. (One of the passengers in Con Ryan's car, that evening on the way home, said, "There was no half-barrel of porter drank at that 'American Wake!'")

Fr. Peyton spoke of his vocation to the priesthood in the USA and how, due to ill health, his ordination was postponed for a year. During his illness, he found great devotion to Our Lady and he promised her that he would spread devotion to her Rosary all over the USA. This he did as time went on and film stars with good singing voices joined his broadcasts; among them were Bing Crosby, Jo Stafford and Perry Como.

So sincerely did he speak that day in Knock that Rosary Pledge Cards were circulated throughout the diocese. People signed them and some even framed them to remind them of the pledge they had made to say the Rosary daily in their homes for the rest of their lives. Fr. Peyton of Attymas, Co. Mayo had instilled in his listeners an endorsement of a sacred custom, which had kept the faith alive "in spite of dungeon, fire and sword".

## Canon Michael Casey

*179, St. Leonard's Road East,  
Lytham St. Annes, Lancs. FY8 2HW*

Mary Whittle of the above address wrote to *An Choinneal* in April and we are happy to print excerpts that will be of interest to all our readers.  
— Editor.

"I have written and recently published a book, "He Walked Tall", the story of Canon Michael Casey, in which you may be interested.

At the book launch in Liverpool, a man buying the book said he came from the area where Fr. Michael was born. When I told him that Fr. Michael's mother was a Durkin from Louisburgh, his father from Clifden and he himself was born at Cloonacool, living at Cliffoney, Sligo, until the age of eight, he was delighted. Apparently he was also from Louisburgh and was sending a book to his sister who, he said, was librarian in your town, in the hope that she could put it in the library.

He added that if I were to go there, I would sell many copies. There were so many people queuing to have books signed that I forgot his name, and when I looked round to introduce him to my daughter-in-law, whose mother comes from Achill, he had gone. Then someone else mentioned your publication."

*Referring to Fr. Michael Casey, Mrs Whittle continues:*

"Without doubt he was a saint, but one with his feet on the ground, and one to whom people of all ages, faiths and none can relate. He drew many of his exceptional qualities as a human being from his roots in "The Old Country", imbibing fresh nourishment from his frequent return visits. For that reason I devoted the first two chapters to his forbears and the place which nurtured and formed them and Fr. Michael."

"I hope the message of this great man's life will inspire every reader."

### Editor's note:

The May 2002 edition of the Lancaster Catholic Voice carries a review by Canon Jimmy Collins of Mary's book, "He Walked Tall – The Story of Canon Michael Casey". Briefly, Fr. Casey was born in Co. Sligo in 1914 and with his family went to Liverpool in 1922. Later, he enrolled for the priesthood at Upholland, served as army chaplain and went to Africa as a Kiltegan priest, where he served for fifteen years. He was nephew of Michael Tom Durkan, Bridge St., his mother was Alice and there were eight in the family: Jimmy, Tommy, Paddy, Michael, Mai, Joan, Susan, Peggy.



## Croagh Patrick

*"Croagh Patrick, Co. Mayo – Archaeology, Landscape and People".*

*Author: Leo Morahan;*

*Publishers: The Croagh Patrick Archaeology Committee;*

*Printers: Berry Print, Westport.*

**F**r. Leo Morahan in launching the volume said: "When Ernest Shackleton was preparing to climb Everest, and people asked him, 'Why do you want to climb that mountain?' his simple answer was, 'Because it's there!' And so it is with the Reek. It's there! It's always a challenge. Man against mountain. This book has taken up the challenge.

"So, my sincere congratulations to all, on having collected into these 164 pages, so much of the historical background, the archaeology, the geography, history, topography, and the whole persisting, sacred ambience of what we know and revere as the Reek.

"Delving into the substance of the book, I have a few personal choices among the seven packed chapters. I personally really enjoyed such features as: the description of the summit itself, and of the recent excavations there; the history and ecological importance of Brackloon Wood; the sad, and now topical, story of the children's burial grounds, the quite superb photography; the listing of all the archaeological furniture that is strewn all around the hallowed countryside, and – something that I always had a fascination for – the wealth and riches of the local place names. You might say that the author has, almost literally, left no stone unturned on that rich landscape. And that every stone has been, as it were, carefully examined and replaced with reverence.

"Perhaps I can be bold enough to make a suggestion – that, now that the author has fine-combed the territory, maybe he can be coaxed to extend the study into the area to the immediate west of the Reek – and make a like study of the parish of Kilgeever – that rich hinterland of passage-graves, megalithic tombs, standing stones, ringforts as well as the pilgrimage sites of Kilgeever Abbey and Well, and Caher Island.

"I compliment Leo and the Committee, the FAS Group and the Survey Team and all who helped to produce this volume about Croagh Patrick.

*León Ó Mórcháin*

## Louisburgh to Sierra Leone

*"Old Watering Hole – Louisburgh to Serabu".*

*Author: Hilary Lyons;*

*Published by: DUDU NSOMBA PUBLICATIONS, Glasgow;*

*First Published: 2001. Price: €10.16.*

**H**ilary Lyons left her native Louisburgh in 1943 on a life's journey which would take her half way round the world, commit her to a foreign culture which she would eventually accept as her own, and fondly see the wheel come full circle with her return to Ireland.

The story of how she left the idyllic west of Ireland, with all its remoteness in the mores of the 1940s, to become a Holy Rosary Sister, then qualify as a doctor, and so on to spend 42 years of her life in Africa, is a moving one.

Now, in her book, *"Old Watering Holes: Mayo to Serabu"*, Sr. Hilary Lyons retraces that story for us and shows that she has lost none of her humour, her memory for detail, or her talent as a story teller, along the way.

She was one of a family of nine, brought up on a small holding where the scarcity of creature comforts was more than compensated for by the warmth of family life, the loving closeness of each for the other, and the happiness of a childhood full of security and support. Life was hard, but her memories are warm, and her recall of the simple, everyday pleasures of rural life will ring a familiar bell over the decades.

Helping in the fields and on the bog; crossing the fields to Killadoon school where Mrs. Maguire introduced her young charges to the Catechism; family prayer in the warmth of the small kitchen; exciting journeys to visit her aunt in Leenane; in short, the life story of every child of the Forties.

At 19 came the big break with home when she left to join the Missionary Sisters of the Holy Rosary in Killeshandra, Co. Cavan. For Hilary Lyons it was the parting of the ways: this was exile without return,



for it was then the rule of orders of religious sisters – and would remain so for many long years – that a sister could never again visit her family home.

On the day she left, her mother was inconsolable, her brothers and sisters uncomprehending (her youngest brother was only two), her father, then over 70, travelled with her to Killeshandra on a lonely farewell journey.

After profession, she was sent to U.C.D. where she qualified as a doctor, and was assigned by her order to Sierra Leone in Africa. She returned to Louisburgh to say goodbye to her family for what she knew would be a last time: she stayed in the Mercy Convent in Louisburgh because the rules would not allow her to enter her own home!

Then came the goodbyes. "I can still see my father's sad eyes looking at me all the time as the car moved away. Was there reproach there? We were never to meet again.

These scenes left tears in my very soul."

After more than 40 years in Sierra Leone, during which she was awarded the nation's highest honour, the Commander of the Order of Rokel, for her commitment to the people, she was forced to leave due to civil strife.

Some years later, she returned there to see the devastation which had taken place, and to try to make some sense of the remnants of her work scattered in ruins.

"*Old Watering Holes: Mayo to Serabu*", is a touching, well-written account of an extraordinary life by a woman who has never lost touch with the values she was born into. Hilary Lyons can feel well pleased with the outcome of her labour of love; the reader will feel uplifted, energised and – not least – entertained by her storytelling.

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*The Mayo News.*

## Seamus and Ita Durkan

*"Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife  
Their sober wishes never learned to stray;  
Along the cool sequestered vale of life  
They kept the noiseless tenor of their way."*

From: *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* – Thomas Gray 1716-1771.

There are times in life when one should take stock of things, have a look at the way one's life is proceeding, whether one's values are as sterling as they might be.

There are times in the life of a parish when its people might re-assess the mores of the community, whether what has been handed to us by way of virtue and decency is still alive in the soul of the community.

On sad days we do re-examine our lives; at the funerals we are aware of the deep faith and love of God in the lives of those who were among us. There are days though, when we might put our lives on trial, so to speak. We might do so privately and reflect on the lives of certain ones we loved. Their ways might be our benchmark.

Might not Seamus and Ita's lives be appropriate for our meditation in these times of financial misdeeds, economic downturns and less than honest dealings in the world of big business? Surely, their sober wishes never learned to stray!

Seamus Durkan was born on 12th March 1922 and Ita Kilcoyne on 2nd July 1927. They were married on 23rd November 1955 and in the course of time became the proud parents of two sons and three daughters. They reared their family well.

The good Lord called Seamus in August 2000 and Ita was called to her eternal reward in May 2002.



*Ita and Seamus Durkin*