The Kerry Magazine

PUBLISHED BY THE KERRY ARCHAEOLOGICAL & HISTORICAL SOCIETY

White Starline Passenger’s Cobh

RMS Titanic Boarding Pass

Letter dated April 7, 1912 which was dispatched from RMS Titanic

Virginian Pilot Reports on the sinking of RMS Titanic

Issue 23 (2013) LUACH €8
Another year has flown by and we are about to launch Issue No. 23 of *The Kerry Magazine*. This year’s magazine contains 21 articles (including what has become known as “our schools’ project”), with subject matter ranging from “The Earls’ of Desmond and The Tower of London” to “The Age of Industry in Dingle Port 1880-1940”.

As always, we have endeavoured to include commemorative articles. This year’s big anniversary was the centenary of the sinking of RMS Titanic on Sunday, April 14, 1912. The catastrophe is marked by the publication of an article entitled “Currow Remembers the Sinking of the Titanic”. Written by Con Dennehy, this piece relates to Julia Barry a 27-year-old Currow-woman, who perished when the liner sank.

The major sporting event of 2012 was the London Olympic Games. This was the third time that London has hosted these games, the first time being in 1908, when Michael Collins of Currans competed in the Free Style Discus Event at White City Stadium. Michael’s sporting achievements are remembered in an article, written by two of his grand-nieces (Helena Daly and Marie O’Sullivan) under the title “Michael Collins, Currans: A Forgotten Kerry Olympian”.

Continuing with our policy of publishing synopses of certain lectures, this issue of the magazine contains an article by Tracy Collins entitled “Nunneries in Ireland and the Middle Ages: An Archaeological Overview”.

During the period March-June 2011, 50 fourth and fifth class pupils at Fossa National School, Killarney participated in the Kerry Archaeological and Historical Society Outreach Programme (which on this occasion was a folklore collecting project). They were set the task of identifying 11 topics (of interest to themselves), on which they would like to question people of their grandparents’ generation. The topics identified were: clothes, farming, food, games/pastimes, holidays, home, religion, school, shopping, transport and the weather. The children then compiled a questionnaire, of between 15 and 20 questions, on each of the 11 topics. Grandparents of the participating children were invited to the school to be interviewed on these topics. Three grandparents kindly agreed to participate: Mrs. Joan Brosnan, Mr. Finian Ford and Mr. Charlie Talbot. Full details of how the programme was structured, together with those involved in the project were published in Issue No. 22 of *The Kerry Magazine*. Ultimately, the children wrote essays based on the interviews. Therefore it was decided to select one from each category. Five of these were published in last year’s magazine and the remaining six appear in this, the current issue of *The Kerry Magazine*.

Regrettably, one of the grandparents interviewed Mr. Charlie Talbot died earlier this year. We would like to extend our sympathy to his family on their sad bereavement.

*The Kerry Magazine* is published annually in December. Anyone wishing to submit an article for consideration by the editorial committee for publication in Issue No. 24 should do so by June 30, 2013. We welcome short articles (maximum 2000 words) from both academics and non-academics, on topics related to any aspect of Kerry’s rich and diverse cultural heritage. Contributors are also requested to submit appropriate illustrations with their articles and a brief autobiographical note for publication in our contributors’ list.

I would like to express my gratitude to various individuals, contributors, members of the editorial committee, Aislinn Ni Mhanach, Bríd O’Shea, John Conboye, Walsh Colour Print, staff of Kerry Library, in particular Olive Moriarty, Michael Lynch and Kerry County Librarian, Tommy O’Connor.

Marie O’Sullivan,
*The Kerry Magazine*, Hon. Editor.
THE KERRY ARCHAEOLOGICAL & HISTORICAL SOCIETY

CUMANN SEANDÁLAÍOCHTA IS STAIRE CHIARRAÍ

The Kerry Archaeological and Historical Society, founded in 1967 has as its objectives, the collection, recording, study and preservation of the history and antiquities of Kerry.

Activities include lectures, outings to places of archaeological and historical interest and the publication annually of both a Journal and Magazine – each of which is issued free to members.

Kerry Archaeological & Historical Society
Web-site and Facebook

www.kerryhistory.ie.

The web-site is a useful source of information and includes, a schedule of upcoming events, access to the Society's index of publications and practical details such as contact information, membership forms etc.


In addition to our web-site, we launched a Kerry Archaeological and Historical Society facebook page during 2011, which complements the web-site.

Membership Subscription Rates are:
Individual €30
Family €40
Student €10
Institution €60

To join, send the appropriate subscription to:
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Kerry Archaeological and Historical Society
Kerry County Library, Moyderwell,
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Fáilte Uí Cheallaigh roimh ar aon, a chairde dhíl. Tá sé de phribhléid agam mar Uachtarán ar Chumann Seandálaíochta is Staire Chiarraí tús a chur ar cuí na bliana anócht.

A Cháirde, you are welcome to the Annual General Meeting of our Kerry Archaeological and Historical Society. As this is my first year to be honoured as your President, I thank you all for coming and in your name acknowledge the hospitality of Tommy O’Connor and his County Library Staff for opening their doors to us once again.

As a society we are committed to collect, record, study, promote and preserve the history and antiquities of Kerry in a variety of ways. As you know, these include our talks and walks, our two publications, together with our well used web-site and Facebook page. We also receive numerous queries from many enquirers whom we do our level best to serve. It is a labour of love. We are amateurs who love “the Kingdom” and I think it is fair to say that we all strive to work in a professional manner to live up to our society’s mandate.

The glory of this society is the broad spread of our membership from some 12 countries across five continents including members in 18 of the 32 Counties. I was fascinated by Tony Bergin’s report on the web-site in our “Kerry Magazine” telling of some 1,200 new monthly visitors from 31 countries and averaging 10,000 hits per month or 330 each day. I would love to learn more about our visitor from Tuvalu. As a society we always welcome serious counsel and constructive criticism in the right place and the right time as legislated already by our Constitution.

“Muna bhfuil tú dílis don áit arb as tú agus dod mhuintir féin beidh tú suarach mar duine”. The old proverb reminds us of our dúchas – “unless you are proud of your native place and your kith and kin you will be the lesser for it”. In this regard the continuing Outreach Programme now in its 5th year is making fine strides. It warmed my heart to note Charlie Talbot – the Aghadroe farmer and exceptional Fossa oarsman, revealing the past to his young listeners. Or “Mrs. Brosnan replying to our question about apartments and flats by stating that there were no apartments back then!” Take young Rory Williams aged 11 years preferential option for the youth Finian Ford had enjoyed in County Meath. “I would prefer to be growing up in the past. Life was much simpler; you could drive and own a gun at the age of 12 and there were no televisions so you went to dances and céilís which were much more enjoyable.” Folklorist Seán Ó Súilleabháin or was it Bryan McMahon were spot on when they reminded us all that “a bad pencil is better than a good memory”. In an era of impoverished political planning which endangers the teaching of both the Irish language and the study of History, we realize the vital importance of the work of societies and groups like ours and particularly all the Kerry committees with like ideals. In this very context I welcome the increase of interest in local history and publication of more and more local books/magazines as recorded in our magazine. I welcome the news of funding for the restoration of Killarney House and the news of the proposed Kerry Gaelic Culture and Sport Centre planned for Killarney.

Our most recent Heritage Award went to Valerie Barry to whom we sent our best wishes. We also send our best to all members who may be ill (like former President Canon Jackie McKenna). Míle buíochas to all committee members “who keep the show on the road” so to speak: editors Marie and Isabel and teams, programme organizer Jerry and all our entrusted council members and officers. To all who accept our invitation to come as guest speakers or field outing leaders, as well as all who host us right across the land we say “go méadáí Dia bhúr stór”. Maureen has been a true stalwart too as has Emmet (who has stepped down from his more hectic involvement with us).

Marion Geary sent a card to acknowledge our expression of sympathy on the death of John R.I.P. For those of us who journeyed with them to Spain and Portugal we pause to remember all members who have gone to their eternal reward especially over the past year. Leaba i measc Naomh Chiarraí na Ríochta go raibh acu. So, as Catullus wrote, “Ave atque Vale” – Hail and Farewell.

“Go mbeirimid go léir lán bheo ar an am seo arís.”
On April 16th Archbishop Dermot Clifford unveiled a plaque to commemorate Archbishop Thomas Croke, (first patron of the Gaelic Athletic Association,) at the site of his grandmother’s residence in the Square, Tralee. To mark the occasion Archbishop Dermot Clifford delivered a very interesting address, which is published in its entirety in the current issue of the magazine. The erection of this plaque was a long-held ambition of the society and it is good to finally see it in place. Thanks are due in particular to our past President, Kathleen Browne, our current President, An Canonach Tomás Ó Luanáigh, to the Kerry Board of the G.A.A. and to Tralee Town Council.

The Annual Mass on the feast of St. Brendan took place in Our Lady and St. Brendan’s Church. As in previous years pupils from Listellick National School attended with their teachers.

The Heritage Award for 2011 was presented to Valerie McKenzie Bary. Valerie first joined the society in the early 1970s and until recently was a council member and a member of the editorial sub-committee of The Kerry Magazine. She is the author of numerous articles on Kerry History as well as a book entitled Houses of Kerry. Her award is well deserved.

The web-site ‘kerryhistory.ie’ is proving to be very popular. We have been getting “hits” from around the world. Membership application forms are being downloaded from the web-site. E-mails are being received from people in U.S.A. and Australia looking for information on tracing ancestors etc. A report on the web-site is printed on page nine of the current edition of the magazine. Order for back issues of the Journal are also being received via e-mail. Payment options for these orders now include payment via PayPal. This will be very helpful to members living outside the country. Now that payment of fees can be received online, I hope that our membership will increase. Tony Bergin has worked very hard to set this up. I am very grateful to him for this work and for updating the web-site on a regular basis. We would encourage those who have access to computers to have a look at the web-site from time to time.

The society now also has a Facebook page.

During the past year members of the council distributed the magazine to bookshops around the county and we are delighted that we had sales from this effort. We hope to continue this in the current year.

We are all aware of the cut-backs in spending in the Public Service. This has effects locally. I wish to thank the Kerry County Librarian, Mr. Tommy O’Connor and his staff in Kerry Library, Tralee for their continuing support of the society. Without this it would be difficult if not impossible to carry on our activities. We continue to co-operate with local and national bodies, e.g. The National Library, The National Archives, Muckross House, Siamsa Tire, St. John’s Centre, Listowel and Listowel Literary and Heritage Centre. The input of the Local Authority Archivist, Arts, Heritage and Gaeilge Officers is much appreciated.

I offer our sympathy to the families of the deceased members who passed away during the year and to members who were bereaved in the year.

Finally, I would like to thank the following: President, An Canóích Tomáis Ó Luanáigh, fellow officers, Council Members, Editors, Contributors, Lectures, Field Outings Guides, Press, Printers, our Auditor, Kerry Library staff and all who contributed to the success of the Kerry Archaeological and Historical Society during 2011.

Go raibh mile maith agaibh,
Maureen Hanafin,
Kerry Archaeological and Historical Society, Hon. Secretary.
We were given a wonderful insight into life in years gone by during grandparent’s day at our school. Mrs. Brosnan, Mr. Talbot and Mr. Forde visited to share some memories from their childhood and they had some really fascinating stories to tell.

Judging from what we have heard this week, I do not think I would have enjoyed living as a child at the time our grandparents were young.

For starters, there were very few shops, no annual sales and very few days spent shopping for clothes. As a big fan of fashion, I would find the lack of shops very difficult to tolerate. With only three shops in her local village, Mrs Brosnan hardly ever went shopping. Clothes were passed down from generation to generation and food was usually home grown and made.

They never went to the cities to shop and made do with what they could purchase in the few local stores. Many people had what were known as tic books in the shops which allowed them to get goods on credit and pay when they could afford to.

When our grandparents were young they did not need to buy many groceries as they grew and made much of what they needed and kept animals to slaughter when they needed meat.

Sweets were very scarce back then but Easter eggs were popular every year when Lent was over.

The most popular sweets were Peggy’s Legs and although the name might sound funny, I bet they tasted great, especially when treats were in short supply.

Molly O’Mahony (Age 12)

SCHOOLS IN THE PAST

We interviewed Mr. Talbot and asked him questions on the topic “Schools in the Past.”

I was surprised when I heard that boys and girls didn’t wear a uniform to school. Mr. Talbot said that he started school when he was four years old. I was astonished when I was told that he only had twelve pupils in his class and there were only two teachers in the school. We have thirty two pupils in our class and we have ten teachers. This is a big difference!

We also found out that he spoke English and not Irish in school like I expected. He only spoke a bit of Irish when he was learning it. I thought that Irish would have been spoken a lot more in class in the past. The children studied five subjects, although he didn’t say what these subjects were. I am guessing that they were English, Irish, Maths, Geography and History. They also said morning and night prayers. This is something that we do each morning also so it is nice to see that we have continued this tradition.

We asked Mr. Talbot if he could remember any school rules. He told us that they are similar to the rules that we have today. I was surprised to hear that because I thought that school back then was a lot stricter.

The children also got homework when Mr. Talbot was in school. I would be very surprised if they got as much homework as we do! The only difference in homework between the past and the present is that we get homework every night whereas Mr. Talbot only got a small amount each week.

We asked him if he ever got hit with the cane. We were glad to hear that he never did. The children never had school trips or mid terms. Their school started at nine in the morning and finished at three in the afternoon. When we asked him about football, he told us that nobody played football. I was very surprised to hear this because I often heard that people never let a football out of their hands in the past.

We asked Mr. Talbot what he did after he left primary school and he told us that he went to the Community College.

I had a really enjoyable day and I learned so much about schools in the past that day. My favourite memory of the day was hearing that they didn’t get a lot of homework. I also liked the way we continued the tradition of saying morning and night prayers.

Nicole O’Riordan (Age 12)

BLAST FROM THE PAST

We asked Mr. Ford our questions and I for one was very surprised with some of the answers we got. I was dumb founded when he told us that the first time he visited Croke Park was when he was in his twenties. When we asked him about his favourite footballer, he told us that it was a Kerry man named Tom Long. I was amused when I heard this because Mr Ford was a Westmeath man. This made sense when Mr Ford told us that Westmeath never won the Sam Maguire! That really surprised me.

We asked Mr Ford about the first time that he saw a television. I was shocked when he informed us that he was in his twenties when this event occurred. It was all in black and white back then. He also told us that there were no sporting organisations like community games or after school activities when he was a child. There were no sports competitions held during school either. I guess you had to make your own fun. Apart from hurling and football, they also played rounders and handball at school. Girls always played with the boys.

What struck me the most about toys in the past was that all the toys were wooden and made mostly in Ireland. Nowadays, the majority of toys are made abroad. I was equally surprised when he told us that his family only had one radio and this was kept in the kitchen. His family normally listened to Radio Eireann and this station broadcasted in the G.P.O in Dublin. I found this very interesting because I learned a lot about the G.P.O when we were learning about the 1916 Rising.

Mr Ford’s favourite singer/musician was Frank Sinatra or Billy...
Crosby, I have to admit that I have never heard of either of these people in my life! People had to walk everywhere. The only people that had cars were the priests and the doctors. People often read as a past time. It was hard to read at night because all they had was a candle. Also, the library was seven miles from Mr. Ford’s house so people just swapped books with other families. People went to the “pictures” (a small cinema) and celils and regattas. Mr Ford never went to a regatta as the nearest lake to him was very far away. The pictures and regattas are still popular but celils are not as popular nowadays.

We all enjoyed the day the grandparents came to the school. I felt especially proud because two of my grandparents came. At the end of our questioning, Mr. Ford asked us if we would have liked to live back in “The Golden Years.” Most people said that they would not have liked to live in the past because there was no television and you had to walk every where. However, I think that I would have liked to live in the past because life was a lot simpler back then.

Katie Talbot (Age 12)

**THE WAYS OF THE OLDEN DAYS**

We asked Mr. Talbot about farming in the past and I was surprised to hear that on a sunny day they got to leave school to go home and save the hay. Mr Talbot told us that it was always hard work while helping on the farm. For example, during the winter you had to work on the farm for two hours in the dark and in the summer you had to work for up to six hours when you didn’t have school. Mr. Talbot told us that he can remember that there was a huge snow storm once and he couldn’t work on the farm. He told us that the summer was the busiest time of the year to work on the farm because all the crops started to weed.

On Mr. Talbot’s farm, they grew vegetables such as cabbage, turnip, onions, potatoes and lots more things. They owned cattle, horses, pigs, dogs, sheep and chickens. They milked the cows by hand until 1906 when a milking machine was introduced to farming.

I think farming in the past was hard work but I think I would still have preferred farming back then. I would have liked to grow up on a farm in the past. However, some people might disagree because there is a wider range of farming equipment nowadays and there was twice as much work back then.

I have learned a lot about the past from these grandparents that came visiting us and I would love if they could come back to visit us again. It was a very enjoyable experience.

Shane Dennehy (Age 12)

**IN THE PAST**

My group researched ‘Religion in the Past’ and we interviewed the knowledgeable and entertaining Mr. Ford. He answered our interesting questions and he did a brilliant job. We learned a lot about the past in that hour.

When it was our turn to ask our questions we were surprised to find out all of their masses were in Latin! Men and women were separated at mass. Men sat on the right hand side and women on the left. I thought it was unfair that only boys were allowed serve the masses. Mr. Forde recalls having to either walk or get a pony and trap to mass. He recalls mass being on once a week and the church being in the shape of a cross.

Lent was very strict in their house and when they made the promise of giving something up they had to stick to it. If a visitor brought sweets they were put into a jar and were not to be touched until after Lent but by then they were all stuck together and soggy. However, they would eat them anyway because they were such a treat to get.

Mr. Forde told us that when the Priest was saying mass, he turned his back to the congregation. He told us that they studied religion for half an hour. He told us that if the priest asked a question that you did not know the answer to, you would be in a lot of trouble. He also told us that they regularly said prayers for a good harvest. They said the rosary every night together. The gift that they received on receiving their Communion was usually a half crown. Mr. Ford can recall making a Christmas crib in school out of carved wood. While we listened to others, we found out a wealth of information. It was probably the most interesting hour of school that I can recall. Sometimes, Mr. Ford’s answers were painstakingly slow and he always repeated the exact same thing no matter what the topic. However, Mr. Ford had us enraptured with his information and knowledge of the past. It was a wonderful experience and everyone really enjoyed it.

Olivia O’Donoghue (Age 13)

**THE GOOD OLD DAYS**

Mr. Ford, Mrs. Brosnan and Mr. Talbot came to our classroom ready to answer all of our questions about life in the past. We were all really excited to learn about the differences between our grandparents’ childhoods and ours. Most of us thought that it was going to be practically the same, but Mr Talbot proved us wrong.

He said that all of the children at his time were delighted when it was a sunny day as they got to go home to save the hay. He also mentioned that there was a massive snow storm and a crazy amount of wind back in 1946 that actually covered Aghadoe in snow. You couldn’t even see Aghadoe. Imagine that! With all of that snow, they couldn’t do anything on the farm or go anywhere. They couldn’t even go to the shop for a few days. The weather was the worst in Ireland for as long as he could remember. The busiest season on the farm was spring when all the animals were being born.

While we were learning from Mr Talbot, my other class mates were learning how to kill a pig by slitting its’ throat. More of my class mates were learning what people in the past wore in summer and winter. They were informed that they wore no shoes in the summer.

It was good fun learning about what happened back then. Our childhoods are definitely way different to their childhoods.

Conor Murphy (Age 13)

Pupils photographed outside Quill’s House at Muckross.
MÚSAEM CHORCA DHUIBHNE, BAILE AN FHEIRTÉARAIGH (BALLYFERRITER)

Isabel Bennett

Is i nGaelacht Chorca Dhuibhne atá Músaem Chorca Dhuibhne lonnaithe, sa seanna-thígh scoile (a tógadh sa bhliain 1875 - séadachomharthta ann féin!) – 13 km siar ó nDaingean in iarthar Chorca Dhuibhne i gcCo. Chiarraí. Ceantar saibhhris is ea é ó thaoibh na seandálaíocha de – leis na mílte séadcomhartha, na tráonna, na staibh, agus an ceol traidisiúnta. Ins an músaem gheobhaidh tús eachtait ar gheolaíocht, ar sheandálaíocht agus ar staur na leithinis.

Músaem Chorca Dhuibhne, www.westkerrymuseum.com, is situated in the village of Baile an Fheirtéaraigh (Ballyferriter) in the Corca Dhuibhne Gaeltacht. The museum has been promoting many aspects of the heritage of the local area since first opening as a Heritage Centre in 1986, under the auspices of Oidhreacht Chorca Dhuibhne, which is, in turn, a subsidiary of the local development co-operative, Comharchumhain Forbartha Chorca Dhuibhne. Situated in the old school building in the village, it has a small but pertinent display relating to various aspects of the heritage of the area, with a particular emphasis on archaeology and history. The exhibition panels are bilingual, but the exhibition text is also available, in booklet format, in French, German, Polish, Spanish and Norwegian. The museum is usually open during the Easter holiday period. From June to September it is open seven days a week. One can view the exhibition by appointment at other times of the year.

Some of the artefacts on display are on loan from the National Museum of Ireland. These include items from the Riasc excavations and the promontory fort/siege site of Dún an Óir. Both sites are quite close to Baile an Fheirtéaraigh. The Dingle Peninsula has a great density of ogham stones, six of which are on display in the museum, together with several cross-inscribed stones.

Our most eye-catching artefact, however, is probably a soup pot, or “Boiler”, which was used in this area during the period of the Great Famine – its size, and significance, never ceases to amaze visitors of all ages.

In 2001 the museum became involved in a pilot study which went on to become the Museums Standards Programme for Ireland (MSPI). This is managed by the Heritage Council. Músaem Chorca Dhuibhne achieved Interim Accreditation under that programme in 2008. We are currently working to achieve Full Accreditation, which is a major challenge considering the small staff employed in the museum, but we are always optimistic!

The museum is constantly undertaking new projects, some specifically relating to the museum and its collection, others promoting the heritage of the local area. This includes our frequently-updated website, available in several languages, www.westkerrymuseum.com, our Facebook pages and worksheets on various topics (the museum itself, the monastery at Riasc, Pilgrimage and Dún an Óir), available for our visitors, young and old.

Other initiatives have a broader, more tourism-oriented remit. These include a series of leaflets illustrating various pleasant walks that can be undertaken in the area, the majority starting and finishing at the museum. We have also spearheaded an initiative with An Díseart, in Dingle, and Ionad an Bhlascaid Mhóir, Dún Chaoin, whereby a discount voucher is available for visitors to these venues. More recently a bilingual sculpture trail leaflet, Conair Dealbhfadóireachta Iarthar Dhuibhneach/Dingle and West Sculpture Trail, has been published and is available locally. In addition, further information about the various pieces of sculpture illustrated in the leaflet is now available on our website.

Músaem Chorca Dhuibhne.

From time to time travelling exhibitions are hosted in the museum, to augment the permanent display. In 2012 a new exhibition on the Whales and Dolphins of the Dingle Peninsula was launched. This exhibition was developed in-house in association with Nick Massett, of the Irish Whale and Dolphin Group. His work and photography make up much of the content of the exhibition, which was designed by Paul Francis, who had previously been responsible for our permanent exhibition. Paul has also worked with us on designing our worksheets.

All the above schemes would not have been possible without grant-aid from various organisations. We are particularly grateful to the Heritage Council, which has over the years provided much assistance, both financial and practical. Músaem Chorca Dhuibhne is also indebted to the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (and its earlier configurations), which has been very generous to us under the “Scheme to Assist Local and Regional Museums”. Recently assistance has also been obtained from Fáilte Ireland and the Heritage Office, Kerry County Council.

Our parent organization, Oidhreacht Chorca Dhuibhne, runs Irish Language courses for adults. It also organizes many activities and classes for young and old on various aspects of the culture of the area. Bíonn na cúrsaí seo ar siúl ar feadh na bliana, ach is í lár Lúnasa a thagann an slua is mó.

National Heritage Week occurs in mid-August each year. At this time the museum organises a Heritage Walk to participate in the event. The entrance fee is also waived for a number of days during this week. Other events are also organised to coincide with the country-wide activities.

During the winter months, the Café space is in constant use. This part of the museum doubles as a community centre, where music, cooking, Irish language and other classes are held. It is also utilised by book clubs. Furthermore, the space is frequently used for meetings and other events. In fact, the Café is probably busier in the winter than in the summer!

Although small in size and limited in budget, we at Músaem Chorca Dhuibhne feel we have achieved much and are always open to new opportunities and initiatives.
ideas. We are always delighted to welcome new friends to our Facebook pages:


The curator, Isabel Bennett, is an archaeologist by profession, who initially came to West Kerry to work on the Archaeological Survey of the area. She is delighted to assist visitors with queries they might have in relation to nearby archaeological sites. There is no denying that the Dingle Peninsula is one of the richest areas that one could visit should one wish to spend time seeking out monuments. The archive of the Archaeological Survey of the Dingle Peninsula (which was carried out in the early 1980s), is available for consultation (by appointment) in the museum. It consists of detailed individual files on all of the sites described in the publication and more, together with slides, black and white images, ordnance survey maps, original site plans and other materials.

The museum is at its busiest during the summer, tourist season. It works in conjunction with its parent body, Oidhreacht Chorca Dhuibhne, www.oidhreacht.ie, to organise appropriate events for the many adults who come to the area to improve their knowledge of the Irish language. These include tours to archaeological sites in the area led by the curator. The museum bookshop stocks material relating to the culture of the area, but also many publications which might be beneficial to those with an interest in the Irish language. Light refreshments including home baking are served in the café.

Further details of opening times, or any other queries you may have, can be obtained from the curator at info@westkerrymuseum.com, or by ringing +353 (0)66 91 56 333. We can be contacted by post at: Músaem Chorca Dhuibhne, Baile an Fheirtéaraigh, Trá Lí, Contae Chiaraí.

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Tour of Medieval Tralee, led by Gerald O’Carroll, August 12, 2012.
NUNNERIES IN IRELAND IN THE MIDDLE AGES: AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL OVERVIEW

Tracy Collins

Ancient churches and nuns are very common features in the Irish landscape. They represent Ireland’s fervour for Christianity, which was introduced to the country sometime in the 5th century, most likely through contact with the Roman world. Rome had adopted Christianity as its “official” religion and it spread quickly through the Empire and beyond. History tells that it was St. Patrick who first brought Christianity to Ireland’s shores, though it is likely that there were several missionaries. While it is men who are popularly associated with this work, some women are also known to have helped spread the new religion, as nuns.

Very few have tried to identify female medieval monasticism in Ireland and their nunneries. Archaeological evidence is extant for some. They can date from c. AD400-AD1540, (that is from the earliest evidence of Christianity in Ireland to the Dissolution of Monasteries begun by Henry VIII). The study of medieval monastic archaeology has flourished particularly in the past 100 years or so. However, monasticism has generally been perceived as a mainly male pursuit to the exclusion of women. Research into female monasticism in Ireland has barely commenced archaeologically and the study of what has been termed this “Other Monasticism” has been left largely to historians.

There is a strong monastic tradition in Ireland and archaeological remains of medieval monasteries are found throughout the country. When visiting the early medieval huts of foundations such as Church Island or Reask County Kerry, or the later medieval monasteries like Lislaghtin or Muckross County Kerry, Askeaton or Adare County Limerick, the picture of an ordered and austere monastic life of a group of monks comes to mind. However, it is also true that many of the less well-known and less well-preserved of these sites may in fact have been monasteries for women – or nunneries.

Monasticism first originated around the Nile Valley, when individuals or small groups separated themselves from society in order to get “closer to God” and to strive for perfection. The ideals of this desert monasticism (so-called because many chose to live isolated in the desert) were well in place by the early 4th century AD, when ideas of monasticism began to spread towards Ireland. A significant number of these desert monasteries housed women or mixed communities of both men and women. Women as a distinct group were present at the origins of monasticism, which quickly spread. Christianity and the monastic ideal took hold rapidly in Ireland for a number of reasons and also included women.

It is recorded that St. Patrick’s chosen centre of Armagh had two nunneries. Although now no longer visible, its female monastic communities were known as Temple–na – Ferta and Temple Brigid. Most of the early nunneries are only known from written sources such as those known collectively as Saints’ Lives. Some of these documented sites have been identified to localities and, in some cases, have extant archaeological remains. Many female saints are credited as monastic founders. Perhaps the most well-known is St. Brigit (Brighid) of Kildare, but there are many others, such as St. Ita (Ida) of Killeedy, County Limerick, St. Gobnait (Gobnaid) of Ballyvourney, County Cork, St. Monenna (or Dairearca) of Killeley, County Armagh, St. Aithracht (Attracta) of Killaragh County Sligo or Samhthann of Clonbroney, County Longford. Many of these female saints, along with others, are credited with founding several nunneries throughout the country. The archaeological remains of some of these early nunneries are sometimes difficult to locate in the landscape for a variety of reasons, such as past destruction, erosion or their re-use over long periods of time, particularly as graveyards.

Historical evidence suggests a variety of female religious in medieval Ireland: clerical wives, pilgrims, mystics, hermits (such as anchorites), and probably to a greater extent – particularly in the later medieval period – female orders of nuns. The religious vocation is but one reason why a woman may have entered a nunnery and other reasons may have included not wishing to marry, following a religious life as a career choice or being widowed. Rarely, women may have been put into nunneries against their will. Generally women from the upper classes of society entered, as a “dowry” had to be paid to the nunnery. It has also been recorded that some women may have entered a nunnery for short periods of time throughout their lives, but without taking vows of poverty, chastity and obedience.

Nunneries from c. AD450-1140 would have looked very different from those of the later period c. AD1140-1540. The early sites were likely to have had an enclosure or a series of enclosures, made of earth, stone or timber and would have contained a rectangular church or churches, a burial ground and smaller circular huts for accommodation. More important sites would have had high crosses, round towers, holy wells, bullaun stones or shrines. Many of these sites are particularly well-preserved in the west and south-west of the country as they were constructed in stone. Some of these sites may have sustained mixed religious communities of men and women, providing pastoral services and prayers.

In the 12th century, the Church was reformed and overtime continental religious orders like the Cistercians, Augustinians, Dominicans and Franciscans were introduced. Both the Anglo-Norman settlers and native Irish lords patronised these orders. The majority of nunneries founded at this time were Augustinian. Unlike the earlier period, monastic orders were strictly segregated, though both monasteries and nunneries looked very similar. Enclosure was particularly important for nunns of the later period and in theory they were not supposed to leave the confines of their nunnery, while lay people were generally not permitted to enter. The larger nunneries had their
church and buildings arranged around a central courtyard, known as the cloister. The buildings included a dormitory, a refectory and a kitchen. Other rooms were used for guest accommodation (hospitality was an important function) and administration. Burial occurred in a special burial ground, usually on the northern side of the church. In more important nunneries burial might spread to the interior of the church and even to the cloister walkways.

Some nunneries, such as St. Catherine’s Old Abbey County Limerick, Molough, County Tipperary and perhaps Killone, County Clare would have shared their church with the local community as the parish church. In these cases the nuns would have been strictly separated from both the priest and the lay congregation. Many smaller nunneries do not seem to have used a claustral layout and may have used a small simple church with attached domestic accommodation, in a “non-cloister” arrangement, as can be seen at Errew and Inisheer, County Mayo, Ternonkeel and Drumalgagh, County Roscommon.

There is no formal architecture specific to nunneries in Ireland and no single architectural feature can positively identify a nunnery from another religious house. Nunneries were constructed using the same building techniques as the male monasteries, most likely by travelling stone-masons. It is likely that the patron (the person who donated the land and paid for the construction) controlled much of the design, while maintaining the arrangement of buildings for appropriate use by the nuns.

Establishing and patronising a monastic foundation gave prestige and kudos to the family who did so. Secular and religious politics and power went hand-in-hand and many families donated land and money to a monastic house in order to maintain strong links with the Church and smooth their way to Heaven. It is popularly thought that it was more profitable to patronise a male monastery, which in general may have yielded more power and influence. Therefore, the question immediately arises as to why families chose to patronise a nunnery? Studies of nunnery foundations in England suggest that it was the lower local gentry who founded modest religious houses including nunneries, which included both men and women patrons. Similar patronage patterns have emerged in Ireland. Furthermore, it has been convincingly argued that nunneries had different functions to that of male houses, so much so, that they cannot be fairly compared on the basis of size or wealth.

The survival of medieval nunneries has been previously underestimated. It is now suggested that there were nearly 120 (49 Early Medieval and 65 Later Medieval), with many more possible sites. These were clearly not all in use at the same time and some sites may have been re-used over a long period. Three of the better-preserved Later Medieval Nunnery sites are located in Munster; Killone near Ennis, County Clare, St. Catherine d’Conyl near Shanagolden, County Limerick and Molough near Clonmel, County Tipperary. These are the only three sites where the cloisters are still visible. All these nunneries were Augustinian. It is thought that Molough was founded on the site of an earlier nunnery and there is an ogham stone there testifying to this early date.

There has been little dedicated archaeological research undertaken on nunneries in Ireland. Excavations at Faughart County Louth, the reputed birthplace of St. Brigit, were undertaken in 1966. Excavations in the 1980s for a gas pipeline scheme uncovered some outlying features of the important Later Medieval Nunnery of Grace Dieu, County Dublin. To remedy this lack of archaeological investigation the writer undertook excavations at St. Catherine d’Conyl. This nunnery is thought to have been established sometime in the 1240s by ancestors of the Earls’ of Desmond, who later became its patrons. The excavation revealed that there was a change in the layout of the ranges of buildings around the cloister and that burial occurred within its church, within the cloister walkway and outside the nunnery complex. This evidence included men, women and children. This would fit with the historical evidence that the church was once used as a parish church. It is likely that some of the female burials represent nuns who were part of the religious community at St. Catherine’s.

St. Catherine’s revealed several ex-situ architectural fragments of windows and doorways, one of which exhibited a mason’s mark (a mark carved by a stone-mason so that his work could be identified) and an incised ship on the wall plaster of the church. This is a rare new find, the first at a nunnery and only one of ten places in Ireland where this type of embellishment occurs.

This overview is based on archaeological research on nunneries in Ireland throughout the Middle Ages. The research has helped to illuminate the nuns themselves and how they interacted in their landscape with other monasteries, towns and castles and the people who lived there. Until the excavations at St. Catherine’s, there had not been a dedicated research excavation of a Later Medieval Nunnery in Ireland. More has been revealed about nunneries and the religious women who inhabited them through this archaeological analysis. Nunneries can now take their place in the long tradition of medieval Irish monasticism.

**Endnotes:**


MICHAEL COLLINS, CURRANS: A FORGOTTEN KERRY OLYMPIAN
Helena Daly & Marie O’Sullivan

Michael Collins was born in Curranas, Farranfore, County Kerry in 1879. He was the second eldest of eight surviving children (four sons Timothy, Michael, Jeremiah, John and four daughters, Ellen, Mary, Ann and Kathleen) born to Michael Collins, Farmamanagh, Curranas and his wife Mary Brosnan, Ballinahinch, Ballymacelligott. Michael Collins, senior, was a publican and farmer. The family lived in what is now Riverside Inn, Curranas. In the early 1900s Michael (Mick) and his brother Jeremiah (Jerry) went to work in London. Michael gained employment with the Pearl Life Assurance Company. Jerry worked for the British Civil Service.

The four Collins brothers were outstanding sportsmen, winning trophies at all local sporting fixtures. The eldest Timothy entered the priesthood. Unfortunately he died on October 17, 1901 (age 23 years) a year prior to his ordination following “a wetting” which he sustained, whilst returning to his home in Curranas from a sports meeting.1 Jeremiah (Jerry) was an accomplished sprinter and long jumper.2 While in London in the early 1900s, he competed in athletic events and trained with Tottenham Hotspurs at White Hart Lane. Following his return to Kerry he was invited by Austin Stack to train the Kerry senior team for the re-play of the Croke Memorial Final against Louth in 1913. Jerry Collins introduced the collective training system (in which he participated in London) to Gaelic football. He trained the successful Kerry 1913 and 1914 All Ireland (Gaelic Athletic Association) Senior Football teams. Jerry also trained the 1913 Kerry Junior team. He received a GAA All Ireland Medal for coaching. Jerry was one of the men who pioneered greyhound-racing in Ireland and was a Founder-Director of Shelbourne Park Greyhound Stadium, Dublin. In fact he continued to judge at Shelbourne Park until five years prior to his death in 1967 aged 85.3 The youngest brother John (Jack), also a splendid athlete was handicapper and starter for the National Athletic and Cycling Association (N.A.C.A.) until his death in 1939.4

Once established in London, Michael became a member of the Polytechnic Harriers. Whilst records of payment of his membership fee date only from 1907, the Club estimates that he may have been a member prior to that year. As his 1905 throw is listed in the “Poly” rankings, which would not normally be the case unless he was a club member on the date of the performance.2 He was placed 3rd in the Amateur Athletic Association (AAA) Shot Putt in 1905 and 4th in 1906.6 His personal best was 11.35m (37-2¾), which he threw at Stamford Bridge in 1905 to win the AAA Bronze medal. He still features in Kingston & Polytechnic Harriers Top 50 All Time Ranking lists for Shot, ranking in equal 44th place with Chris Mann, Crystal Palace, 1975 and Felix Hatton, Tooting, 2006. All those ranked above him post-date 1948. His best discus mark does not appear in their records. He is also noted among the “Lost” Great Britain Internationals. 8 Amongst the archives of the Polytechnic Harriers, is a listing of Michael Collins paying a subscription of £12/6 in 1907-1908 and 1908-1909. 9 Their records indicate that at the time Michael Collins lived at 9 Radley Road, Bruce Grove, Tottenham10 at which address his brother Jerry also resided (as evidenced by his business card).

Michael Collins was one of twenty-one “Poly” boys recorded in The Polytechnic Magazine, June 1908 as having been selected for the 1st London Olympic Games of 1908.11 He competed in the Free Style Discus event at White City Stadium on July 16, 1908.12 Here he was 22nd of 42 in order of participants from 11 nations, starting with qualifying throws at 10am and the final taking place straight afterwards.12 Each competitor was allowed three throws after which the top three from the six qualifying pools were allowed a further three throws. Michael Collins did not qualify for the final and is listed under “other competitors” as Michael Collins United Kingdom.14 The event was won by Martin Sheridan, from Bohola, County Mayo, Merritt Giffen, USA and Bill Horr, USA, winning distance 40.89 m. He was in the same pool as Giffen, who at end of first round was ahead with 40.70m but in the deciding round Sheridan triumphed. Michael Collins is also listed as an entrant for the classical Discus Greek style event on July 18, 1908.13 Although he was originally drawn in section six, there is no record of him competing in that event. He did not compete in the shot put.
In addition to prize winning medals, all participants in the 1908 Olympics received a Commemoration Medal, competitors badge and a certificate. Michael Collins’s Commemoration Medal is today held by his only surviving daughter Sr. Louise (formerly Eileen) Collins. Its authenticity has been verified in a letter from the British Olympic Association. This was recently provided to one of the authors of this article (Helena Daly) by his granddaughter together with a photocopy from the Official Olympic Report for the 1908 games listing Michael Collins among “other competitors” in the Free Style Discus throwing. His Olympic competitor’s badge, which was red, white and blue on a white linen background, framed and inscribed on the back is remembered by family members, but unfortunately appears to have been misplaced.

The Irish athletes who participated in the 1908 London Olympics faced great difficulty in being accepted as Irishmen, because they competed as members of the United Kingdom team.

The decision to merge Ireland, England, Scotland and Wales into one United Kingdom team did not meet with the approval of many Irish competitors. They argued that Ireland should compete as an independent nation a proposal rejected by the organising committee causing many to withdraw. Amid fears of an Irish boycott, a compromise was reached. This saw Irish competitors entered on the official athletic programme as GBR if living in United Kingdom and GBR/IRL if living in Ireland. Michael Collins competed for GBR as at the time as he was living in London.

By 1911, he had returned to Currans and was living in his family home. He later inherited a farm from his father at Ballindroichead, Currans. Michael married Helena Hussey, Ballygree, Currow. They had six children Michael, Bertie, Mai, Sheila, Eileen and Nancy. Following Helena’s death on January 23, 1922, he subsequently married Catherine Doyle, Whitfield, Beaufort. No children were born of this union. Michael Collins died on February 23, 1959, aged 79 years. He was then described in The Kerryman as “one of the country’s best weight throwers in the early decade of the century.

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Endnotes:
1 Kerry Sentinel, October 19, 1902 (Obituary).
3 The Kerryman, July 1, 1967 (Obituary).
4 The Kerryman, July 15, 1939 (Obituary).
5 Personal communication with Mr. Peter Waddington, Polytechnic Harriers on July 1, 2011.
6 www.sports-reference.com/olympics/athletes/co/Michael-collins-1html
7 Waddington, P : Kingston and Poly Top 50 All Time Rankings Lists Men’s SP &DT www.kingstonandpoly.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1070&Itemid=1
9 Polytechnic Harriers Subscriptions 1905-1912: Records of Polytechnic Harriers 1896-1985, University of Westminster Archive Collections (UWA PHA/2/5/1), www.a1m25.ac.uk/cats/15/5183.htm
10 Polytechnic Harriers Subscription 1905-1912, Records of Polytechnic Harriers 1896-1985, University of Westminster London Archive Collections (UWA PHA/2/5/1) www.a1m25.ac.uk/155183.htm
11 The Polytechnic Magazine, June 1908, Records of Polytechnic Harriers 1896-1985, p.62 www.a1m25.ac.uk/cats/15/5183.htm
13 Mallon, B. & Buchanan, I: The 1908 Olympic Games Results for All Competitors in All Events with Commentary, p. 92.
14 The Fourth Olympiad, op.cit.,
18 Ibid.
19 McCarthy, K (2009), op.cit.
20 Ibid.
21 The 1911 Census, www.census.nationalarchives.ie/
The centenary of the ill-fated RMS Titanic was commemorated in Currow on April 14, 2012, when the local community unveiled a monument to the memory of 27 year old Julia Barry, a local woman who perished when the liner sank. This ceremony was witnessed by her nephew Frank Barry, Dublin, who tearfully remarked “I thank God that he spared me to be in Currow today to remember my late aunt, Julia Barry who has been so much in our family’s heart and prayers for many years”.

Julia Barry was the 15th child born (in 1885) to Michael Barry, a stone-mason and his wife Julia Prendeville of Currow. Prior to the Great Famine of 1845 a small nest of houses lined the road on the Currow village side of Dicksgrove Cross. The Barry’s occupied one of these houses, their family having lived there for a number of years. In the summer of 1846 many people were employed by the local landlords, the Merediths, to build a wall around their magnificent estate. To enable this wall to be built, alternative dwellings were provided for the families, whose houses were situated along the proposed route. The Barry’s moved to a house opposite the “Priests Lake” on the outskirts of Currow Village. It was in this house that Julia Barry was born. Like many young people of that time, she was forced to emigrate at a young age and went to America. In 1912, she returned home from New York (where she worked as a housekeeper) to visit her family. Her address prior to this visit was 14 West 32nd Street, New York City. Julia boarded the Titanic at Queenstown as a 3rd class passenger. Her ticket number was 330844. She paid £7 17s 7d for this ticket. Julia Barry had planned to sail on the Celtic, but the prospect of an earlier arrival and the distinction of being a passenger on the largest steamer in the world, tempted her to sail on the Titanic. She wrote a letter to her brother, Edward Barry, of Yonkers, telling him of the change in her plans. Mrs. Thomas Cuffe, of 148 Livingston Street (Julia’s sister) first learned that her sister was on the Titanic when she came across the name “Barry” in the passenger lists’. The following day she received a letter from her brother saying that their sister was on the luckless steamer. There was no trace of Miss Barry when the rescue ship, RMS Carpathia, docked in New York. Mrs. Cuffe and Mr. Barry searched all of the New York hospitals where the injured from the Titanic disaster had been taken but they failed to learn of their sister’s fate. Locked gates separated 3rd class passengers from the rich and famous and it was in this area that Currow-woman Julia Barry found herself on that tragic epic voyage to America.

The last surviving Titanic passenger Millvina Dean from England died on May 31, 2009 aged 97 years.
The Great Famine “An Ghorta Mhóir” was indeed a calamity in Dingle and on Leithinis, Chorca Dhuibhne. Yet what followed was a new awakening in the human spirit of its people and in their quest for a better future. Their motto became “Is Feidir Linn”.

In my opinion, the development of Dingle’s fishing industry became a major factor in this resurgence. The Royal Irish Fishing Company (initiated by the Quakers) of the 1850s began this process. With larger more modern fishing vessels and with new methods of processing and curing their fish the new “professional fisherman” of Dingle became a reality. The emergence of new Government initiated bodies e.g. The Dingle Harbour Commissioners’ of 1885, the erection of a Dingle Lighthouse (at the harbour’s mouth in 1887) followed by the building of a new larger coastguard station in the 1890s supported this drive at local level. The input and support of the local major landlord and landowner (Lord Ventry) in these projects must also be noted.

The road infrastructure on the Dingle Peninsula west of Tralee was totally inadequate with many people still using ancient mountain tracks and pathways to travel. The subsequent establishment of the Tralee to Dingle narrow-gauge railway was welcomed. Though emigration continued, the population of Dingle town was increasing. This was reflected in the expansion of the town westwards along the sea front. The pier was lengthened and widened at various times, new shops and houses appeared in tandem with economic growth and social development. A number of town Gaelic Athletic Association teams were established, together with other social clubs and groups including The Gaelic League. Tennis, golf, music, a drama society, temperance hall and cinema were added to the amenities of the area. Such expansion required bricks, cement, glass, timber, iron, slates and a myriad of other commodities. The cheapest and most profitable method of importing these bulky goods to Dingle and its hinterland was by the sea.

The parallel development of Dingle’s commercial port and fishing industry in this period must be noted. Both depended on each other for survival and expansion. Fishing (especially mackerel fishing) developed from being solely a marginal economic activity to becoming an important source of employment. Prior to 1880, Dingle harbour was frequented by seasonal mackerel fleets from the Isle of Man and Ireland’s East Coast Ports. The glut of mackerel experienced by Dingle’s fishing community in the 1880s necessitated the erection of some dozen fish sheds in the locality to facilitate processing and exportation of the fish. New trade and employment necessitated new business houses and new products for the consumer.

Fish entrepreneurs like Patrick Devane, Patrick Houlihan, Tom McKenna, John Kavanagh, Joe O’Shea, John Long, James Long, T.M. Ashe, Michael O’Sullivan, John J. McKenna, James Ashe, Daniel Griffin and Patrick McKenna emerged to make Dingle one of the main mackerel exporting ports on the west coast of Ireland. Emigration began to wane as women also obtained employment in the fishery, instead of the low paid domestic positions in which they were traditionally employed. Tralee and Dingle merchants noted the needs of the developing industry, the opportunities this presented and provided the services. Government aid agencies e.g. The Congested Districts Board assisted with loans and grants for fish curing and harbour expansion. The concept of a fish canning operation in Dingle was investigated by an American Company – Pickerts Co. This endured for some eight years from 1910 until 1918.

From the 1850s the South Western and later the Rio Formosa plied a steamer service between Cork and Dingle, with calls at many intermediate ports such as Kinsale, Schull, Bantry, Kenmare and Valentia to name a few. This concern was purchased by The Clyde Shipping Company of Glasgow in 1877 and the service continued by the S.S Fastnet. The Clyde Co. leased a cargo store in Dingle
at the pier-head and this is noted in local folklore as the “Clyde Gate”. It offered the Grand Coasting Tour of the South West coasts of Ireland, on the S.S. Valenta, a return cabin journey to Dingle from Cork costing 22s.6d. Undoubtedly, this weekly service from Cork to Dingle sowed the seeds of an expanding tourism industry in the remote south west and the intercourse of ideas and developments. Trade goods and machinery were also imported into the peninsula for farmer and merchant alike, e.g. sugar, tea, soaps, candles, ported, ales, wines and spirits, hoops of iron and wood for the fish merchants. Having being subsidised (to the tune of £500 per annum) by the Congested Districts Board for many years, this service ceased trading to Dingle in April 1905.

A weekly coastal steamer service was operated to Cork. This was later expanded to Limerick and eventually to British Ports particularly those involved in the coal trade. Coal was cheap and easily transportable from west coast British collieries. Salt arrived from France and the UK. Similarly, small independent companies e.g. T.N. Russell & Sons, Limerick and Shaws, Limerick exported flour to Dingle, while pigs, wheat and herrings were imported from there.

The harbour witnessed the arrival of the Scandinavian timber ships from 1910 onwards. These transported wood for homes, farms and businesses and regular grain and flour consignments for the town’s two mills. Though it was short lived, hundreds were employed in all aspects of this commercial resurgence.

Tralee merchants Mr. Robert McCowen & Mr. R. Latchford also became involved in the Dingle port expansion at this time. Latchfords established a store on Dingles Main Street, which finally closed in the 1970s, when it was purchased by local businessmen, P. & T. Fitzgerald.

Latchfords also operated a water-powered grain and timber mill at Milltown on the harbour perimeter. Cargoes of timber were often lashed together and ferried across the harbour to be cut and dressed at the mill as required.

McCowens also operated a store depot at the pier head at Dingle. Their ships the S.S. Derrymore (built 1889) and S.S. Kerrymore (built 1905) ran a regular return Fenit – Dingle service in the pre-World War I era. Similarly, the Limerick Steamship Co. operated a service incorporating Dingle-Tralee-Fenit and various smaller ports along the Shannon estuary and hinterland in the same period, with their vessels S.S Maigue, S.S. Luimneach and the S.S. Lanarohne, regular callers to the port.

John Atkins & Co. Ltd., Cork established a large hardware concern on Dingle’s Main Street in 1884. This shop sold the goods (coal, machinery and general cargo), which were brought to Dingle on-board the weekly steamer service (secured by the Clyde S.S. Co.) between Cork and Dingle. Coal was unloaded by steam winch and large coal buckets. Each importer had his own crew of Dockers, whom he employed on a regular basis. Merchants often shared a cargo of coal. On its arrival at port, horses and carts were used to transport it to their respective coal-yards around the town.

T. & D. McKenna’s yards bordered on the sea-front, enabling them to ship goods on the nearby Tralee and Dingle Railway Line. Theirs was an extensive concern with coal importing, rolling mills and flour, manufacture, fish curing, timber yards, pig production and a hardware concern.

The level of trade through the port meant Dingle became well known throughout Western Europe and the UK. As well as coasters and sailing vessels, fishing craft from Spain, France and the UK, were regular visitors. The returning empty ships ferried thousands of barrels of locally produced mackerel to these countries and on to the immense markets of the East Coast of the USA. Indeed between October 1, 1909 and September 30, 1910, 19,161 barrels of pickled mackerel were shipped from Dingle.

Yet this intertwined dependence of Dingle port on commerce and fishing stocks was not to last. As the 20th century progressed, new factors came into being, that led to its demise; emigration, World War I, the 1916 Rebellion, The War of Independence, The Civil War, an American tax on imported barrelled mackerel from Ireland all played their part. These together with the Economic War, the decline in fishing stocks and subsequent fishing vessels deterioration, all led to the slow destruction of a once vibrant and thriving port. The railways and road transport slowly took the coastal trade, with its eventual demise post World War II.

Dingle Harbour today is a picture of serenity and peace. It is much favoured by tourists, adventure and nature lovers, walkers and photographers, sailors and divers. We are pleased to see them all and they are most welcome to our area. It is said that “landscape is history in slow motion” gone are the images and artefacts of this one industrious and busy port, e.g. the harbour pilots and light-house keepers, the Tralee and Dingle Railway Line, the fish curing sheds and flour mills, the “Clyde Gate” and McCowen’s Store. Gone also is the Colony Gate, the fish hucksters, Latchford’s and Atkin’s stores, the Creamery Depart, the Coastguard Station and Mickey Long’s ships chandlers. The old red sandstone slipways and pier gas lights have also disappeared, as have the Dockers, winch-men, sailors, and fishermen who made Dingle an international port between 1880 and 1940.
THREE MAPS OF CAHERSIVEEN IN THE
EARLY 1840s
Arnold Horner

INTRODUCTION

Situated beside the once-throbbing Mount Pleasant Sorting Centre, the hub of London’s mail system, the British Postal Museum & Archive is the unlikely location for a manuscript map with an interesting insight to Cahersiveen around 1840. The archive has some 333 plans of Irish towns and villages that were made during 1837-1850 to display, usually by a line drawn in red or black, the limits of the area eligible for the free delivery of mail in each town. The engraved and printed six-inches-to-one-mile (1:10,560) maps then being compiled by the Ordnance Survey (OS) of Ireland usually provided readily-available plans with sufficient detail for boundary lines to be drawn. Some 50 of the plans nonetheless used other map bases, perhaps because the OS maps were unavailable or had not yet been completed (the first surveys were in north-eastern counties in the early 1830s, progressing to Kerry in 1842, with Kerry finally published in 1846). While a few in this group were traces from the OS and a few used unfinished OS proofs, others were roughly drawn anonymous plans. A further ten, including two for Kenmare and Cahersiveen, were private surveys, some with significant detail. The Kenmare plan was compiled by “David O’Connor (land surveyor)” in 1844, that for Cahersiveen - the focus for this article - was by “James Bourke C.E. [Civil Engineer]”. Undated, but probably compiled in the early 1840s, the Cahersiveen plan is at the large scale of one inch for every ten Irish perches (1:2520). Perhaps from an original survey or derived from some early OS work, this plan has several features not on the contemporary OS maps, including an enigmatic “proposed site of new town” in the Carhan Lower area east of the main town.

EARLY MAPS OF CAHERSIVEEN

Earlier maps show the site of Caher or Cahersiveen with very few buildings. A description accompanying a 1775 map of the Trinity College estate in south-west Kerry notes that Cahersiveen:

...is occupied by one James Primrose an Under Tenant who has built two Slated Houses on it, Ditched and Divided the Land and made many other Improvements on it, which he has done as he says Relying on the College Protection. The Glebe... has a Glebe House, and the only [Protestant] Parish Church in the whole Barony, the Church is in a very Ruinous Miserable way.

A generation later Alexander Nimmo, in his 1811 bogs map of Iveragh barony, also shows a small settlement, but the Catholic chapel now appears near the church, both being reached from the main road via a nascent street with some buildings (the present Old Market Street). Fascinatingly the manuscript version of Nimmo’s map shows two ferry routes from the north bank of the Valentia River “across the water”. The location for a post office from 1811, Cahersiveen was taking shape, yet at the 1821 census it was still small, with just 205 inhabitants (by comparison Killorglin had 592, Kenmare 625, Milltown 1165, and Dingle over 4500).

In the 1820s and 1830s, however, better communications, further new public institutions, and perhaps also speculation Valentia might be an Atlantic communications terminal, resulted in a development surge. A new pier and quayside were constructed, and the difficult landward connection was transformed when Nimmo re-built and realigned large sections of the road between Glenbeigh and Kells Bay. Several sources describe how the town grew, including Lewis (1837). In 1815 there were only five houses in the entire village, but within the last ten years it has rapidly increased, and consists of one principal street, stretching along the main road, and of two smaller streets branching from it at right angles, one of which leads down to the quay, and the other to the upper road or old village of Cahir, which consists only of mud cabins. The houses on the new road are neatly built and roofed with slate; the town has a lively and cheerful appearance; the approaches are all by good roads kept in excellent order, and great improvements have been made in the neighbourhood...

Other features included a small subscription reading room, an agency of the National Bank, a new police force, a bridewell, a fever hospital and dispensary, a national school, the parish church and the “R.C. Chapel” (“a handsome building”). East of the town, flour mills had been erected in 1828 at a cost of £6,000. Here too lay “Bahoss” [Bahaghs] “the newly erected mansion of Charles O’Connell Esq”. At the 1841 census the town had over 200 houses and nearly 1500 inhabitants. The near-contemporary OS “Name Books” counted some 140 craftsmen and traders, plus nearly 70 apprentices, in over 20 different activities. This growing town appears on the maps of James Bourke and the Ordnance Survey.

CAHERSIVEEN ON THE EARLY OS MAPS

The beautifully engraved and printed six-inches-to-one-mile County Kerry Sheet 79 map, issued in 1846, shows Cahersiveen on the eve of the Great Famine (Fig. 1).

Streets named are Main Street, Battle Street (later Bank Street, then Railway Street, now O’Connell Street) and High Street (now Old Post Office Street). Main Street had developed eastward from the
juncture with High Street to just beyond “Courcys Cross” (where Banks’s shop is today), but as yet there was little extension westward. Additional to features recorded earlier by Lewis, this map shows a hotel, the court house, a convent, the post office, the market house, a fair green and a tan yard. The main private house named is Spotiswood Villa on Battle Street, called after a south Kerry landlord family of the period. Two other buildings, Glebe House and Cahersiveen House, are labelled in ruins. Eastward in the townland of Carhan Lower, a national school and a race course appear. Two ferry crossings are shown along the river, and also a new permanent link to “across the water”, Barry’s Bridge (then “in progress”).

Additional to this published outcome, another map of Cahersiveen is part of an OS series of hand-drawn, unpublished town plans made between 1830 and 1848. Annotated as “plotted and drawn in six days by Michl. McCormick (C.E.)”, the Cahersiveen plan is signed by R.J. Stotherd, Captain Royal Engineers, on November 16, 1842. Coloured and at a scale of 20 inches to a statute mile (1:3168), it omits street names but otherwise usually portrays the town in more detail than on the smaller printed map. Public buildings, in red, include the police barrack and the dispensary, while the market house (at a site now near the car park entrance) is labelled “Old R.C. Chapel now Market Ho”. Other structures, in pink, include two forges, and the (animal) pound near the market house. At least eight wells are shown, whilst a circular feature near the hospital is named (in gothic letters for an antiquity) “Cahersiveen fort”. With its large scale, this map can display the outlines of individual buildings, making it possible to see the centre of the developing town in clarity (Fig. 2).

JAIME Bourke’s Map

Although at a larger scale, Bourke’s map lacks some of the OS town plan detail, omitting most field boundaries and generalising buildings as pink blocks. Nonetheless, some of its identifications of streets and buildings are distinctive (Fig. 3). Main Street and High Street are named as on the OS, but the west end of the former is “Well Street” while the east becomes “Square”, then “New Main Street”. The branching roads to the Quay and the market house/church are Strand Street (the OS Battle Street of 1846) and Church Street respectively, while “Old Chaple Lane” links the Main Street to the market house from the point where a small lane today leads to the town car park. Other names are “Summer hill crescent” (now part of Barr na Sráide/Top Street), “Old Road” (paralleling the main road east) and “New Road” (the present Reenrusheen Road).

Near the town centre a small “parish pound” is distinguished from an adjacent larger “pound”. A timber yard close to the quay is at the site later the “dale [deal] yard” and now occupied by the boys’ national school. The bridge is absent (a clue suggesting the map is around 1840). Like the OS plan, trees/formal elements appear around Spotiswood Villa (which is left un-named). But other very distinctive features of the map are well to the east in Carhan Lower (also left un-named) (Fig.4). Here, as on the printed OS plan, the national school is marked beside trees on the north side of the main road. However, unlike the OS, the “residence of the parish priest” is named south of the road. The race-course to the north is omitted, but along a “new road” (also marked but un-named on the OS) in its general area are the words “Proposed Site of New Town” and, beside a cruciform building (that has a different orientation and is un-named on the printed OS), “Proposed new Chaple”. According to the OS Name Books, the chapel had been funded by Daniel O’Connell, the proprietor of Carhan Lower. Never roofed, it was left unfinished after a new chapel had been erected in Cahersiveen.

CONCLUSION

Just as little appears known about James Bourke – he was at Day Place, Tralee, in 1846 and he planned some fairly minor works for Daniel O’Connell at Derrynane in 1845. The story behind the proposed new town initiative is elusive. Was it linked to the Carhan Lower chapel, part of some project that – except perhaps for the 245-pupil national school of 1833 - was abandoned as
Cahersiveen surged? Or could it have been part of some elaborate attempt to extend the limit of free postal delivery to take in Carhan Lower? More about the scheme may lie among the thousands of surviving O’Connell records. For the moment, however, the London postal archive map alerts us to its existence. Like its OS counterparts, James Bourke’s map adds something distinctive to our information on pre-famine Cahersiveen. These interesting maps of the 1840s feed into what may be the first really detailed town plans, drawn more than a decade later and now in the Valuation Office in Dublin.

Endnotes
1 Thanks are due to (1) the British Postal Museum for their friendly assistance and for their permission to publish from their Cahersiveen map, (2) Paul Ferguson of Trinity College Dublin Map Library for providing an image of the OS printed plan, (3) Aideen Ireland and the Director of the National Archives of Ireland for facilitating photography of the Ordnance Survey town plan of Cahersiveen, and (4) Pat O’Leary, Glen, for some very helpful comments.
2 British Postal Museum and Archive, P 21/03/03, Town Maps: Ireland. The full list of maps can be accessed at www.catalogue.postalheritage.org.uk.
5 For example Tallow, County Waterford, was produced in 1842 at a scale of 1:600 (50 feet to one inch). (Post 21/740).
6 Post 21/610.
7 Post 21/494.
8 Maps of the Estate of the College by Richard Frizell 1775, No. 4 Cahersiveen. Trinity College Dublin Library Muniments Room.
10 Dublin Evening Post, November 24, 1811.
12 Shortly to become part of the Iveragh workhouse.
13 OS Name Books, Parish of Caher, p.48.
14 Andrews, J.H.: History in the Ordnance map… pp.26-33. Manuscript plans were made of five other County Kerry towns: Ardfert, Dingle, Killarney, Listowel and Tralee.
15 National Archives of Ireland, OS/140/Caherciveen/1842.
16 Slater’s Commercial Directory of Ireland, 1846, p.323.
17 NLI Ms 13,633 (2), Description of proposed additions and improvements to Derrynane House by James Bourke, May 12, 1845.
18 Two hand-drawn town plans of Cahirsiveen at the scale of 1:1056 (a) undated, probably 1850s, (b) by James Peacock, 1868. These maps show the outlines of individual buildings and have much greater detail than those described here.
Lady Arabella Ward was regarded as one of the great beauties of late-18th century Anglo-Irish society. The daughter of William Crosbie, 1st Earl of Glandore and Lady Theodosia Bligh, daughter of the 3rd Earl of Darnley, Arabella was born in October 1757, the youngest of four surviving children. She was especially close to her brother John Crosbie, “brotherkin”, who later succeeded to the earldom, and to her older sisters, Anne and Theodosia. By the time of Arabella’s birth, the Crosbies had replaced the Fitzmaurices of Lixnaw as the pre-eminent landed family in North Kerry. Arabella spent her childhood at Ardfert Abbey, outside Tralee, a much loved family home that had “ill-contrived” late-17th century house progressively enlarged over the generations. The house played host to a never ending circuit of visitors, one of whom included Arabella’s kinsman, Dean Crosbie. A cranky character, he nevertheless liked to play the pipes, albeit with “very convenient position for her correcting hand”. Old O’Neil, the well-known Tralee school-master, once remarked, “there is not a lady in the land wants a governess more than Miss Arabella”. This inadequate education was the main reason why Arabella insisted that her own daughters received a thorough schooling.

Arabella’s father encouraged a lifelong interest in horticulture in his children. Ardfert demesne was run as a profitable model farm, stocked with Kerry cattle as well as with sheep. The demesne was renowned for its magnificent trees in particular ancient oaks, elms, beeches and weeping willows. Judicious planting amidst the ancient Franciscan ruins adjacent to the house evoked a general air of melancholy. Unlike many other demesnes which were naturalised in the late-18th century, the Crosbies retained the earlier formality of Ardfert, with its straight avenues and terraced bowling green, surrounded by clipped lime hedges. Indeed, so high was this hedge that the steward had a special machine built for cutting it. Near the house, the family maintained a “fruitery” in which choice apples were cultivated for cider. Hops were grown to ensure a ready supply of beer, the latter an obsession of Diana, Lady Glandore. William Crosbie experimented with growing melons and other exotic produce and encouraged his children to grow their own flowers and vegetables. Arabella’s brother John wrote glowingly of his crimson auriculas (primulas) and double jonquils. Later in life he kept up a lively correspondence with his sister about the acquisition of new plants:

I have at last succeeded about the catalpas plants. Lord Lansdowne has promised to give me some so you must let me know to whom in Cork I shall direct them. I saw a tolerable sized tree at Bowood but not in flower.

Arabella would sometimes suggest planting schemes for Ardfert:

I think you want beds of roses & lavender & I should put them in the place we used to call the little bowling green. I think it would contain three; I [would] make them round, thickly planted with rose trees, standard honeysuckles & lavender. They perfume the air & look delightful just as if you had thrown down a quantity of flowers on the grass.

Emphasising his attachment to Ardfert, Lord Glandore later erected an urn to the rear of the little bowling green inscribed with the words “Unwilling to change my abode”. The children were surrounded by a coterie of pets with the daily excursion to Banna beach (where the family had a beach hut) during the summer months a riot of hounds, ponies, children and nurses. Favourite included their two dogs, “Major” and “Duchess”, in addition to their ponies, “Booby”, “Slingo” and “Iveragh”. The family also maintained a Dublin town-house and often holidayed at various English resorts such as Bath and Bristol Hotwells. In 1782, Arabella accompanied her brother John on a visit to Spa in the Ardennes. They later proceeded into France where they were presented to Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette at Versailles, the second time John Crosbie had this privilege. A decade earlier in Vienna on his grand tour, he had impressed the Empress Maria Theresa in identifying a portrait of her youngest daughter, then Dauphine.

In February 1783, Arabella married her first cousin, Edward Ward, second surviving son of Bernard Ward, 1st Viscount Bangor, of Castle Ward in County Down. Castle Ward, overlooking Strangford Lough, was a place Arabella knew well from childhood visits as her aunt, Lady Anne Bligh, was Bernard Ward’s second wife. Although the 1st Viscount and Lady Anne eventually separated, their contrasting personalities were immortalised in the construction of Castle Ward which like Janus has two faces, one “Gothick” and one classical. While Arabella was to a degree a pawn in a dynastic alliance, it would appear that the marriage was relatively successful to begin with, she referring to her husband as ‘Hussakin’ and he calling her ‘Bobella’ her family nickname. A reserved man, whose most frequent response (according to his wife) was to snort, Edward Ward, was at the time of his marriage in possession of an estate worth approximately £1,300.
Life at Castle Ward was simple with a minimum of etiquette and few rules. Arabella, despite her privileged existence, was in many respects dealt an unfair hand. Her family life and desire for financial security was compromised by her husband’s debauched lifestyle. Edward’s premature death in 1812 was seized upon by his brother Robert as an opportunity to derive additional benefit from Castle Ward while Nicholas still lived. Robert petitioned the court to increase Nicholas’s allowance and to give him full use of Castle Ward along with 200 acres of the demesne. In effect, this would negate Arabella’s £750 awarded to her after her husband’s death and see her and her children effectively excluded, despite the fact that Arabella’s eldest son was now heir presumptive to Castle Ward. Arabella, however, “in the manner of the Fitzmaurices” did not hesitate to contest Robert and claim what she rightly considered her children’s inheritance. She took up possession of Castle Ward from where she wrote “(Nicholas)...prefers the solitude of his own chamber” and that his present allowance was “ample for...giving him every comfort in life”. She also set about putting the demesne in order, with his brother over Castle Ward and over the guardianship of their elder brother made life at Castle Ward untenable.

After the birth of their last child, the couple basically lived apart (albeit not estranged) with Edward living mostly at Castle Ward where he dabbled in baking and selling bread amid other schemes. Meanwhile, Arabella lived at Sandridge Lodge, a small rented country house near Bath. Her daughter once wrote, “Papa is still in Ireland. He does not say a word about returning and Mamma has been advised to look out for a second husband”. Although she sometimes mocked her husband’s ineptitude, Arabella was never as embittered as her widowed cousin, Letitia, Lady Clonbrock who celebrated her husband’s demise by having a piper play every night the tune of “Let Earth cover him, we’ll dance over him.” Life at Sandridge was simple with a minimum of etiquette and few servants. Arabella’s chief joys were listening to her children play music and gardening, “the bowers of woodbine & roses which I have planted round this house & which perfume every corner of it have now double fragrance”. Flower gardens were primarily seen as a female diversion throughout this period albeit given John Crosbie’s interest, clearly not entirely so.

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undermined by the robust health of the insane 2nd Viscount, her own eldest son’s mental illness, Robert Ward’s intransigence and Edward’s insouciance.\textsuperscript{25} Her death allowed Robert Ward to act much as he pleased. He subsequently installed the 2nd Viscount in a small house in Downpatrick, and proceeded to remove most of the contents of Castle Ward.\textsuperscript{26} Robert is also credited with making at least three failed attempts to take the life of the unfortunate Nicholas.\textsuperscript{36} Arabella’s beloved eldest son Bernard died in 1816, followed by her second son William in 1819. It was only when her third son, Edward, who eventually succeeded his uncle as 3rd Viscount in 1827, took full possession of Castle Ward and the family estate, that the hopes and ambitions of his mother were finally realised.


**Endnotes**

1. Anne Crosbie, married William John Talbot of Mount Talbot, County Roscommon whose son Rev. John Talbot-Crosbie would eventually inherit the Glendore estate after the death of the 2nd Earl.
2. The Fitzmaurices, Earls’ of Kerry, were the pre-eminent family in the county until the death of the 2nd Earl in 1747. Arabella’s grandmother was the daughter of the 1st Earl of Kerry, a lineage emphasised when a relative remarked that Arabella had “the manner of the Fitzmaurice”.
4. Arabella Ward to her brother John Crosbie, c. 1790 (N.L.I., Talbot-Crosbie Papers, PC 188).
6. Arabella Ward to her brother John Crosbie, July 13, 1812 (N.L.I., Talbot-Crosbie Papers, PC 188).
7. Arabella Ward to her brother John Crosbie, May 16, 1812 (N.L.I., Talbot-Crosbie Papers, PC 188).
8. Ardfert demesne supplied butter, milk and beef to the household (including an annual kill for the local poor).
10. Arabella Ward to her brother John Crosbie, July 20, 1793 (N.L.I., Talbot-Crosbie Papers, PC 188). The reference is to William Petty-FitzMaurice, 1st Marquess of Lansdowne (1737-1805), who was closely related to the Crosbies.
11. Arabella Ward to her brother John Crosbie, January 15, 1801 (N.L.I., Talbot-Crosbie Papers, PC 188). In 1880, Arabella sent a sundial pillar from a Bath stone-cutter to Ardfert, which was later set up in the walled garden.
12. Dr. Casey from Tralee was charged with the children’s health and amid a constant fear of smallpox, had them inoculated in 1762. 13 David Lauder to John Crosbie, May 27, 1762 (N.L.I., Talbot-Crosbie Papers, PC 188).
14. John Crosbie to William Crosbie, December 2, 1774 (N.L.I., Talbot-Crosbie Papers, PC 188). Dauphine was the title reserved for the wife of the heir to the French throne, the Dauphin.
17. Ibid. the 1st Viscount had included a proviso in his will that if Edward or Edward’s son should succeed to the title and its appurtenances, then Edward’s younger brother, Robert, would inherit nearly all Edward’s current estate.
18. Ibid. Under their marriage settlement, Edwards settled a jointure or pension of £500 on Arabella. He also set aside the sum of £6,000 for the benefit of younger children. However it was agreed that should Edward eventually inherit the title and main family estate, Arabella’s jointure would be increased to £800 with the provision for younger children raised to £12,000. Part of this latter sum would include Arabella’s dowry of £5,533.
19. It is not clear whether Nicolas resided in Castle Ward or in its predecessor, the Queen Anne house also situated within the demense. The latter house was demolished in the 19th century.
21. Arabella Ward to her brother John Crosbie, April 26, 1812 (N.L.I., Talbot-Crosbie Papers, PC 188).
24. Arabella Ward to her brother John Crosbie, September 8, c1803 (N.L.I., Talbot-Crosbie Papers, PC 188).
25. Arabella Ward to her brother John Crosbie, July 16, c1790 (N.L.I., Talbot-Crosbie Papers, PC 188).
26. Arabella Ward to her brother John Crosbie, September 29, c1795 (N.L.I., Talbot-Crosbie Papers, PC 188).
29. Arabella Ward to her brother John Crosbie, January 15, 1801 (N.L.I., Talbot-Crosbie Papers, PC 188). In 1880, Arabella sent a sundial pillar from a Bath stone-cutter to Ardfert, which was later set up in the walled garden.
30. Arabella Ward to Diana Crosbie, May 13, 1813 (N.L.I., Talbot-Crosbie Papers, PC 188).
32. Draft letter from Arabella Ward to Stewart King (P.R.O.N.I., Ward Papers, D2092/1/11).
33. Ardfert Abbey was destroyed by fire during the Irish Troubles and little now remains of this unique ensemble. Castle Ward along with its beautiful 820-acre walled demesne with walking trails, exotic gardens, stunning vistas across Strangford Lough and picturesque farmyard was handed over to the National Trust by the Ward family in the 1950s. Its serenity belies the various family disputes over its possession. It is open to the public from March to September each year.
34. Ibid., p.70.
Tralee is the bustling capital of County Kerry and a popular tourist destination. However, few visitors realise that hidden beneath the attractive Georgian streets and houses lies the remains of a secret honeycomb of medieval streets and alleyways which once made up the fabric of a now vanished medieval town. Even fewer people know that Tralee was a walled market town with several castles, a Dominican monastery, a busy trading port and a population of up to 1,000 townspeople living in timber framed houses.

Like many other Irish towns, Tralee owes its origins to the Anglo-Normans who arrived in Ireland in 1169. By the early 13th century the FitzGeralds, an ambitious and powerful Anglo-Norman family, had conquered and acquired almost all of the fertile low-lands of what is now Limerick and North Kerry. To consolidate their power a colonising infrastructure of towns, castles, monasteries and roads was created. Tralee was Kerry’s first town, founded by John FitzThomas FitzGerald in 1216. It was the principal town of the FitzGeralds and functioned as their administrative headquarters for nearly 400 years.

The place name Trá Lí – the strand of the river Lee – predates the arrival of the Anglo-Normans and offers a clue as to why Tralee was founded at this very site. Two navigable rivers and its location close to the sea made it perfect for trading and commerce. The proximity to Ratass and Ardfert was another contributing factor – both were important monastic settlements within a ten kilometre radius of Tralee and may have functioned as “proto-towns”. As centres of trade, craftsmanship and population they would have provided the FitzGeralds with a perfect basic infrastructure to piggyback onto.

Throughout the Middle Ages, Tralee’s fate was inextricably linked to the FitzGeralds. When they rose against England in the 1580s during the Desmond Rebellion, Tralee was burnt several times as part of a scorched earth policy and completely destroyed. All evidence of the rebellious FitzGeralds and their legacy was deliberately wiped off the face of the earth - medieval Tralee vanished from sight and mind.

Kerry County Museum’s unique Medieval Experience, brought medieval Tralee back to life 20 years ago, in an expert reconstruction based on archaeological, architectural and documentary sources. John Bradley of NUI Maynooth tracked down and utilised every available piece of information on medieval Tralee and filled the remaining gaps with evidence from similar Anglo-Norman towns. The result is stunning: a vanished medieval town brought back to life complete with sounds and smells. Visitors enter the town through a gate and walk down ‘Burgess Street’ – the main thoroughfare of Geraldine Tralee.

Over the past 20 years, archaeological surveys and excavations revealed more parts of the jigsaw puzzle of the vanished medieval town. Most importantly, the exact location of the Dominican Priory, a landmark building and spiritual centre of the town, has been identified. The excavation of the medieval priory inspired a new, interactive exhibition at Kerry County Museum: Bone Investigators. The gruesome title alludes to an interactive skeleton dig for children and also to the brutal death of a medieval murder victim whose bones show more than 20 injuries left by swords and battle axes. Ambushed, killed and beheaded, the body was hastily buried near the Dominican Priory more than 500 years ago.

Also on display in the new exhibition is a series of architectural stone fragments from the Priory site which bear witness to the lifecycle of the monastery, from its foundation in 1243 to its ultimate destruction in the 1580s. However, not all of the emerging stories speak of death and destruction. One of the stones bears a stone mason’s mark, a unique signature of someone who built Geraldine Tralee. The stone was part of a supporting column from the church of the medieval Dominican Priory in Tralee, dating from the mid-1200s and is part of monasteries, masons and medieval murder – tales from medieval Tralee

Claudia Köhler

OF MONASTERIES, MASONs AND MEDIEVAL MURDER – TALES FROM MEDIEVAL TRALEE

FitzThomas FitzGerald in 1216. It was the principal town of the FitzGeralds and functioned as their administrative headquarters for nearly 400 years.

Artist’s impression of the Dominican Priory in Tralee around 1500, extending over a five-acre site, it was one of the most substantial priories in Ireland.

Medieval Tralee was laid out along a main street known as Burgess Street, which is possibly the present High Street.
of the Priory’s initial building phase. These columns supported one of the principal walls between the main body of the church and a side aisle. Similar columns can be seen at the Franciscan Friary at Ardfert, 10km north-west of Tralee.

So what can the stone tell us about the man behind the mark? Although we cannot name the mason who left his mark on Tralee’s Dominican Priory nearly 800 years ago, it is possible to imagine him based on historical sources. Our mason was probably English and may have travelled to Kerry for work soon after completing his seven year apprenticeship as the country was experiencing a building boom at the time. He earned around two pennies per day and his dinner - good pay, but far less than what he could have earned in England. His life was itinerant, travelling from one job to the next, wherever his highly valued skills were in demand. Although working under the general direction of a master mason, he probably used some of his own designs for smaller details. By measuring the width of the chisel marks, we can actually tell that the mason used a very fine 4mm blade to finish the stone made from locally quarried Old Red Sandstone. He would have incised his mark at the work bench before the stone was put in position. Subsequently, the mark was concealed by plaster - so why did he bother to make it? Pay is a possible answer. Masons were often paid on a piecemeal basis rather than receiving a regular wage. On a busy construction site a mason’s mark was an important means of identifying your work. Alternatively, the mark may denote that the stone had passed the master mason’s inspection – a case of medieval quality control.

At present we could walk through the town completely unaware of the medieval archaeology beneath our feet. Perhaps the town’s approaching 800th anniversary in 2016 will inspire a dedicated heritage trail. Where would it lead us? Let’s use our imagination and go for a stroll through medieval Tralee…

We start at Heaton’s (formerly the Munster Warehouse) on the Mall, at the center of the modern town. This is the site of the Great Castle of Tralee, one of several castles and fortifications which once protected the town. From Heaton’s we look up Ashe Street to catch a glimpse of the medieval parish church on the site of St John’s church. It’s location on the outskirts of the medieval town might be explained by the fact that this church may have started life as a hospital founded by the Knights Hospitallers. Let’s continue our excursion and walk down the Mall towards High Street across an imagined bridge as medieval Tralee had two rivers, besides the Lee, which are now underground. The cluster of narrow, crooked streets around the Garda station is likely to be the site of the medieval town center. High Street may even have been the main medieval thoroughfare “Burgess Street” with shops on either side, leading up to the market cross where public punishment entertained the townspeople. From here, we head past the modern Dominican church to the Brandon Hotel and the Town Hall on Princes’ Quay, the site of Tralee’s medieval port with ships from England, France and Spain unloading salt, wine and iron ore and loading them with timber, hides, fleeces and salted fish. Sailors head for the nearby Inns which also served as guesthouses. To complete our journey, we now double back a short distance and turn right at Jim Caball’s bike shop onto the Abbey Street car park. Few people parking here realise that they are standing on top of Tralee’s medieval Dominican monastery. Adjoining the main church was the burial chapel of the FitzGeralds’, who were the Priory’s main benefactors. The foundation of the Priory in 1243 tells us something about the prosperity of the town – unlike the Franciscans, their fellow mendicant brothers, the Dominicans were quite choosy about where they settled down. The arrival of this influential religious order suggests that Tralee was a well-established market town by the middle of the 13th century, well capable of supporting a community of approximately 20 friars. Our stroll through medieval Tralee ends here at the side of the vanished Priory but who knows what secrets archaeological excavations will uncover in the future?
The Earls’ of Desmond dominated the political, economic and social life of Munster from the appointment of the 1st Earl in 1329, until the death of the rebellious 16th Earl, Gerald Fitzgerald in 1583. The relationship between the Desmonds and the Crown forces of England was a volatile one, culminating in several rebellions and even the imprisonment of some of the Earls of Desmond in the infamous Tower of London. This article aims to offer an insight into the turbulent lives of the Desmonds who faced incarceration in the Tower of London, explaining the reasons for their imprisonment, in addition to the outcome of their internment.

The Tower of London has a long and remarkable history. It was constructed from 1066-1087 and acted as the chief stronghold of William the Conqueror. It later became a potent symbol of state authority. During medieval times the Tower was recognized as the country’s principle state prison for the incarceration of those men and women deemed to be a threat to national security. The Tudor Period was a time in which Catholics and Protestants fought for religious supremacy. It was during this chaotic period that members of the Fitzgerald Desmond family were imprisoned in the Tower.

Following the Norman “invasion” of 1169, large tracts of land were granted to Anglo-Norman families such as the Fitzgeralids (also known as the Geraldines) for their loyal services in battle. They built castles to secure their newly acquired lands. The most important castles of the Fitzgeralids’, included those at Shanid, Askeaton, Tralee and Castleisland, “the heads of the two principle branches of the family were the Earl of Desmond and the Earl of Kildare” (Orpen, 1911-20, 111).

During the medieval period the Crown had little choice but to leave Ireland under the control of the various Anglo-Norman lords such as Desmond, Ormond and Kildare. These lords were loyal supporters of the Crown and ruled parts of Ireland in the name of the King or Queen of England. They frequently held courts and discussions within the Pale (area of English administration and control in and around Dublin). By the 14th century, following years of inter-marriage with the native Gaelic-Irish; many of the Anglo-Norman families became integrated into Gaelic society, language, literature and culture. They soon became Anglo-Irish in nature. This situation led to much anxiety and concern for the Crown. In 1537 Silken Thomas, Lord of Kildare was executed having declared himself direct opponent to the King of England. This led to a period of great unrest and distrust between the Geraldines and the Crown forces, resulting in the imprisonment of some of the Fitzgeralids’ in the Tower of London. For generations, the Earls of Desmond controlled an independent lordship in Munster. However, by the middle of the 16th century the English aimed to expand their control outside the Pale. The establishment of the provincial presidency in Munster in 1569 aimed to abolish the numerous independent lordships in Ireland and replace these lands with new protestant settlers.

These Anglo-Irish lords were regularly involved in skirmishes with one another. The 16th Earl of Desmond, Gerald Fitzgerald was implicated in a prolonged conflict with his rival the Earl of Ormond. Finally in 1565 a bloody battle was fought at Affane, County Tipperary. As a result Gerald Fitzgerald, known as the “Rebel Earl” was imprisoned in the Tower of London. Aware of the fact that together with his brother Sir John, he was to be sent to prison in London, he chose his first cousin, James Fitzmaurice to take control of his earldom. He asked him “to oversee the collection of his rents and services, both for the administration of the earldom and to pay for his mounting expenses in London. Gerald and his brother departed Ireland for London in December 1567” (McCormack, 2005, 110).

During his captivity in London, Gerald was required to explain in court the cause of his conflict with Ormond. He was forced to compensate Ormond and to renew his loyalty and allegiance to the Queen. By 1572, Fitzmaurice was in negotiation with the Crown forces in Ireland, stating that he would cease the rebellion on condition that Gerald would be released from his captivity in London. “Following his release, Desmond would have to balance the needs of a nervous government with the turbulent state of Munster” (McCormack, 2005, 125). Referring to the Desmond brothers, records held in the Tower of London state the following:

He [Gerald] was captured at Waterford and committed on the 17 November 1567. Still a prisoner in April 1570, later removed to milder custody under Sir Warham St Leger, whence released in March 1572-3. Killed by Daniel Kelly on 11 November 1583 (Tower Records, 214).

With regard to his brother Sir John, the records state “Earl of Desmond’s brother captured at Waterford and committed at the same time. Still a prisoner in April 1570; later moved to milder custody. Nothing more known” (ibid).

It is difficult to deduce the conditions which Gerald and Sir John endured in the Tower. Records prove that some prisoners (depending on the crime) were treated better than others. The buildings within the Tower associated with prisoners include: Beauchamp Tower, Salt Tower, the Queen’s House and the White Tower. Surviving examples of prisoner’s signatures can still be seen engraved on the walls at Beauchamp Tower and Salt Tower. The signature of Thomas Fitzgerald, Baron of Offaly and 10th Earl of Kildare, can be seen in Beauchamp Tower.

It is important to note that not all prisoners died at the Tower, the majority were released, after a ransom was paid or when they were no longer seen as a threat to the government of the day. Such was the case in relation to the Desmond brothers, who were released in March 1572, after six years of imprisonment, on condition that they avoid further conflict with Ormond and agree to follow the commands of the Crown in London.
During Gerald’s incarceration in London, the first Desmond Rebellion (led by Fitzmaurice) broke out in 1567; it was short lived and was quickly quenched by the Crown forces. The second Desmond rebellion lasted for over four years from 1579-1583. During this time the notorious Sir William Pelham was placed in charge of the Crown forces in Munster. Pelham and his followers are reputed to have attacked several castles “killing all of the defenders, including women and children, as well as carrying out a scorched earth policy to reduce the inhabitants that supported the Desmond’s to famine conditions” (Carroll, 2004, 28). This harsh method was undertaken to deprive Desmond and his followers of vital resources to fuel their cause, while also making a bold statement and example of those who dare attempted to defy the Crown.

Pelham was later joined by Thomas, the Earl of Ormond, the sworn enemy of Desmond. In 1580 Ormond was accompanied by Sir John Perrot who aimed to finally crush the rebellion. In the same year it is recorded that “all of the country between the Earl’s house of the island [Castles Island] and Tralee (was) on fire, burnt by the rebels, and all the houses in Tralee burnt and the castles razed, saving the abbey” (Cal. Castleisland and Tralee (was) on fire, burnt by the rebels, and all the houses in Tralee burnt and the castles razed, saving the abbey” (Cal.

In September 1580 Fitzmaurice arrived at Smerwick near Dingle, with a sizeable force of over “700 Spaniards and Italians” (MacAnnaidh, 2005, 94). The rebels quickly reinforced the coastal fort of Dun an Oir and prepared to fight the Elizabethan forces. However, following heavy bombardment from Admiral Winter and Lord Grey, the rebels surrendered on certain conditions. Grey accepted the terms but later rejected them and immediately ordered the execution of the surviving rebels.

Desmond was now deemed an outlaw in Munster, along with Fitzmaurice, who survived the massacre at Smerwick but was later killed by an old enemy named Burke. Desmond then “raised a considerable force and managed to carry out a type of guerrilla warfare, harassing the English forces wherever they marched” (Carroll, 2004, 30). Finally on the November 11, 1583, the Earl of Desmond was captured as he camped in the woods of Glanageenty, near Castles Island. Gerald was immediately recognised and beheaded by a man named O’Kelly on the orders of Owen Moriarty. His severed head is reputed to have been taken and displayed at London Bridge, while his body is believed to have been buried in secret at the small graveyard at Kilnanama in Cordal.

With Gerald dead, the English now aimed to take full control of Desmond’s lands in Munster and allocate them to wealthy English protestant settlers. During this time Gerald’s son James was held captive in the Tower of London. This plantation however was challenged by several Gaelic clans who were prepared to die for their cause and beliefs. The records in the Tower of London state that James Fitzgerald (Gerald’s son) was:

- Held by the Irish Government from 1579 (aged 14) and delivered to the Tower in 1584. He remained a prisoner for sixteen years, thereby earning his nickname “The Tower Earl”. Released and restored to the forfeited title on 1 October 1600. Went to Ireland but returned to London in 1601, where he died later that year (ibid, 243).
- While Gerald’s son was held captive in London, another key figure James Fitzgerald (Gerald’s nephew) emerged to challenge the plantation of Munster. He became known as the “Sugán Earl”, a nickname ascribed to him by the English who “regarded James’s efforts as futile and called him a sham or strawrope Earl” (Finn, 1999, 41). In 1598 he joined O’Neill, Earl of Tyrone in battle against the Crown. He was imprisoned in the Tower of London on three different occasions. The first occasion was in 1601, when the records state:

- “...sometimes mentioned as MacThomas [FitzThomas]. Assumed the title on joining Tyrone’s rebellion in 1598 and waged war in Munster for three years. Captured in a cave near Mitchelston by the White Knight, Edmund Fitz-Gibbon, on 29 May and committed 26 August 1601 accused of treason. Moved to the Fleet prison [a severe prison in London] 9 May 1603, probably to avoid his gaining benefit of the coronation amnesty (ibid, 271).

In relation to the second imprisonment the records state “returned 10 August after three months in the Fleet prison. Sent back to the Fleet prison 29 September 1603” (Tower Records, 272). With regard to the third and final imprisonment, the records state:

- “... returned 25 December after three months in the Fleet. Moved to the Gatehouse prison 6 March 1603. Must have returned later as it is reported that he died insane in prison in 1608. The chapel register records the burial of ‘Desmond’ on 28 April 1608 (ibid, 273).

Prior to the first imprisonment the “Sugán Earl” was held in London and granted him the title ‘Earl of Desmond’, though he was not granted any lands (McCormack, 2005, 197). James the “Tower Earl” was unwanted in Ireland and soon returned to London “where he died alone and in poverty” (McCormack, 2005, 197). According to Finn (1999) the “Tower Earl” was also called “The Queen’s Earl” (Elizabeth I was his godmother). It is said that on his return to Ireland, the Desmondites flocked to his banner, only to reject him when on the first Sunday after his return he attended the Protestant Church in Kilmallock, County Limerick. He quickly returned to London and died in the Tower in 1601 (Finn, 1999, 41).

Following the death of the “Tower Earl” and the “Sugán Earl” in London, as well as those of the Sugán earl’s brother and nephew on the continent, the history of the Geraldine earls of Desmond came to an end” (McCormack, 2005, 110). After the demise of the renowned Desmond Geraldines in Munster, the path was clear for the plantation of Munster by new protestant English settlers. All that survives today to remind us of that by-gone era and the lives of the Desmond Geraldines are the remnants of their spectacular castles that dot the Munster landscape.

Endnotes

CARDINAL SAMUEL STRITCH OF CHICAGO
Bryan MacMahon

Samuel Alphonsus Stritch was Archbishop of Chicago from 1940 to 1958, and was created Cardinal in 1946. He was the son of Garret Stritch of Ballyheigue, who emigrated to America sometime in the late 1860s. The unusual surname is possibly of Norman origin but one romantic theory traces it to a Ricardo de Strochio who is said to have come to Ireland from Genoa in the 10th century. The name was very strong in Limerick, where they were a prominent merchant family. Numerous Stritches are recorded in a list of mayors, starting with Nicholas in 1419. The first of the family in Ballyheigue was a teacher in the new National School at Bouleenshere in the mid-1830s.

Family lore has it that Garrett had to flee Ireland to avoid prosecution for his role in the Fenian Rising of 1867, but there is no other evidence to support this. He went first to Louisville, Kentucky, where a cousin lived. There he met and married Katherine Malley, who was American-born, from an Irish family. Garret moved to a job in Sycamore Mills, Cheatham County, Tennessee, and the family finally settled in Nashville, where Samuel was born in 1887. He was a child prodigy, moving very rapidly through school and college, and gaining a degree in 1903 at the age of 16. He studied for the priesthood in Rome, where he was ordained in 1910. He was still under the required age for ordination, so a special dispensation had to be obtained from Pope Pius X, who said “Stritch is young in years but old in intelligence. Let him be ordained”.

In 1921, he became Bishop of Toledo and the youngest bishop in America; he was thirty-four and was referred to affectionately as “the boy bishop”. He was very well liked and unassuming, and always retained a great love for his beloved south, to which he often returned. “There is but one thing that makes me more proud than that of being Irish and that is of being a southerner”, he said on one occasion. He wrote to his mother from Rome on St. Patrick’s Day 1907, remembering his father who had died in 1896:

This feast makes me think of papa – oh, how enthusiastic he was after coming home from Mass, he would give each of us a new shamrock. Do you remember, he would sing the old country song ‘Remember Boy, You’re Irish’ and then he would whistle it. His thoughts were often in a cottage across the sea. I remember how he would invariably tell some little words of his boyhood – some little part of his Irish life or speak of the great Irish heroes, never forgetting to add that they were the greatest the world had ever seen.

His next appointment was as Archbishop of Milwaukee in 1930. As this was the period of the Great Depression, he postponed building projects in order to expand the charitable work of the diocese to meet the urgent practical needs of people. In 1940, he was transferred to Chicago, the largest archdiocese in the U.S., with nearly two million Catholics. His profile among the US hierarchy was rising rapidly, and he was named a Cardinal in 1946. In Chicago, he set up specialised services for young people, for the deaf and blind and for alcoholics. He had always been interested in the conditions of minorities and he received an award in 1950 for his outstanding devotion to the cause of Christian education; in 1956 another award was for bettering race relations and the cause of brotherhood. One labour leader called him “a champion of the working man”. He took a keen interest in the problems of immigrants, and the Italian government awarded him its highest honour, the Grand Cross of Merit, in recognition of his work on behalf of Italian immigrants. After the uprising of 1956, he also welcomed Hungarian refugees, and his work for them was gratefully acknowledged.

VISIT TO BALLYHEIGUE

On his way home after a visit to Rome in 1957, Cardinal Stritch spent some time in Ireland, culminating in a visit to Ballyheigue. His cavalcade was led into the village by Ballybunion pipe band, and he was formally welcomed by Fr. James Enright, P.P. in St. Mary’s Church. He exhorted the congregation:

Be true to your faith and in these days of much materialism don’t forget there is no solution of the world’s problems until the world comes to understand, like you do, the dignity of the human person at the foot of the cross.

He was pleased to meet many of his relatives in the area.

Cardinal Stritch’s visit to Ballyheigue in August 1957 was rich in symbolism, it stirred the hearts of people who had seen many sons and daughters emigrate. Chicago was the preferred destination of many Ballyheigue emigrants, and few of those ever returned before the 1960s. The same sense of pride and validation which swept the country during the symbolic visit of President Kennedy in 1963 was experienced in that village six years earlier with the return of this emigrant’s son, who had risen to a position of great prominence in the United States. Cardinal Stritch spoke emotionally of his visit,
showing that his skill at winning an audience was equal to that of any Kennedy:

There are times when the heart fights with the intellect and makes it difficult to express your innermost thoughts. Today is one of those days for me. I come here among you, the son of a Ballyheigue man, who through no fault of his, more than eighty years ago left Ireland – because he was too Irish.

I come here today to verify again the picture of Ballyheigue my father gave me when I was a little boy. The day before he died he took me and my next brother - the two youngest in the family

– in his arms and he dreamed. He dreamed of Ballyheigue. He told us of his home; he told us of the golden strand, and he told us of the old thatched schoolhouse. He was dreaming, but he painted a picture that has always remained in our hearts, and I think both my brother and I had one ambition – to come here and see if this picture was only an exile’s dream, or a reality.

We came and saw that he had not painted half the beauty of the landscape that is here. So I come to you today, not only as this Kerryman’s son - the son of this old Ballyheiguer – but as a Cardinal of Holy Church.

The report in The Kerryman stated that:

… this was the greatest and the proudest day in the history of this popular seaside resort. The farmers left the fields, and they, their wives and children, from the oldest to the youngest, crowded into the gaily be-flagged village. They came in motor cars, lorries, tractors, horse, pony or donkey carts, on horseback, bicycle, motorcycle – and they walked. Hundreds came from Tralee too in excursion buses and in motor cars.

In March 1958, Cardinal Stritch was appointed Pro-Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, the first US citizen to be appointed head of a congregation of the Roman curia. However, he was 70 years old, and had no wish to leave Chicago; the appointment was seen as an unwelcome honour and even a tragic error on the part of Rome. He accepted the position only out of an obligation of obedience: “Ambition is for young men”, he said, “I am going to Rome at the call of Peter”.

So it was in an atmosphere of grieving rather than celebration that he set out to travel by ship to Italy. He suffered a blood clot en-route and a team of American surgeons operated on him when he arrived in Naples. His right arm was amputated, but despite appearances of a good recovery, he had a stroke and died on May 27, 1958. His body was brought back to his beloved Chicago and he was buried in Mount Carmel cemetery in Hillside. At the huge funeral a priest said: “This is the greatest demonstration of affection for any man ever witnessed in Chicago”.

Cardinal Stritch was a gentle and courteous man with an unpretentious and easy-going manner and he was popular among his people. The New Catholic Encyclopaedia summarised his character as follows:

Short of stature and always slightly Southern in manner, Stritch impressed all who knew him with his kindness, piety and intelligence. He was an eloquent orator who could extemporise by drawing on the large store of knowledge that he kept replenished by constant reading and discussion. Although a gifted administrator, he disliked being confined to a desk and accepted numerous invitations to public functions. While he had a penetrating mind that quickly grasped all aspects of a problem, he was often slow to arrive at a decision. His fatherly, gracious concern for each individual won him the loyalty of his priests and people.

There are several institutions which carry his name today, including Cardinal Stritch University in Milwaukee, Stritch School of Medicine in Loyola University, Chicago, and the residence used by American clergy visiting Rome is named Villa Stritch.

The cardinal’s grandfather Thomas lived until 1896, when he was 104 years of age. One happy consequence of the fame of Samuel Stritch is that Tennessee State Archives in Nashville now hold Stritch Family Papers. Among them are letters written from Thomas in Ballyheigue in the 1870s and 1880s, which contain a rich trove of information on the Stritch family and on local affairs.
PUCK FAIR IN CINEMA AND TELEVISION

Seán Moraghan

Puck Fair, Killorglin, has been well reported in newspaper articles and books. Less well known is the fact that the fair has featured in a variety of films and cinema newsreel reports.

The fair takes place annually from August 10-12. It consists of cattle and horse sales, street stalls, music and carnival events. Famously, a male goat is paraded through the town, and crowned as King Puck. Then he is raised aloft a 50ft tower overlooking the crowds of visitors, farmers, dealers and Travellers.

SILENT FILM

In August 1916, the Film Company of Ireland (FCOI), featuring actors from the Abbey Theatre, shot a handful of short silent films on location in Kerry. Among them was A Puck Fair Romance, a one-reel film about a Traveller and an artist who meet at the fair, each believing that the other has a piece of land. The FCOI had been established in Dublin in March 1916. It was part-owned by James Mark Sullivan, who had returned from America for the venture, his family having emigrated from Killarney when he was a child. The first films made were what would now be called romantic-comedies. The Kerry films were shown in Dublin cinemas in 1917. Afterwards they were re-distributed informally on the east coast of the United States, but sadly they have since vanished.

In 1917 a newsreel series called Irish Events was established in Dublin, which screened in cinemas throughout the country. It included a silent film of Puck Fair in August 1917, as well other events which occurred during the year such as the Galway Races, all being shown in early 1918. The Puck footage probably lasted only a minute or two; again it does not survive.

SOUND FILM

Newsreel attention did not focus on the fair again until the 1930s. Then, and thereafter, it was an object of interest from British companies. British Movietone News showed Puck Fair is Held in County Kerry in late August 1933. The one-and-a-half-minute black and white film continued with a commentary over scenes of the goat cage being hoisted onto the platform, a successful horse deal, and a close-up of a woman smoking a pipe. The same company made Puck Fair at Killorglin in 1935, although this one-minute film carried no sound and it may possibly not have been issued commercially. Scenes included an absolutely packed street, the horse fair, an elderly woman in a shawl making her way through the fair and the caged goat being driven along on a lorry and being given his crown. These films do survive and currently can be searched and viewed at www.movietone.com.

In the Spring of 1944, Ulster actor and writer Richard Hayward released a film called In The Kingdom of Kerry, which included scenes of Puck Fair. It ran for 20 minutes and was black and white. (Hayward is better known for writing a book with the same title.) The Irish Press disliked the film:

...his final scenes, with much stress on the silly ceremonies at Puck Fair and an elaborate insistence on showing us the face of a puck goat, butting in ridiculously every moment as if he were the national emblem of Kerry, and his fanatic urge to pick out the most outlandish characters that grace that pagan Mardí Gras, made the whole film top-heavy in favour of the absurd. While a small number of printed accounts of Puck appeared in book or magazine format during and shortly after the Second World War period, the fair does not feature in film again until the 1950s. In 1953 Universal Irish News showed Ancient Puck Fair as part of a six-item programme. The newsreel series was an offshoot of the United Kingdom based Universal News, instead filled with Irish material for cinemagoers here. Details are hard to determine, but the item was probably only of a few minutes’ length. Its archive is unknown. Gaumont British Newsreel made an 8-minute segment, Puck Fair & Carnival at Killorglin, in 1958, which features the crowning of a white goat, the crowds and sideshows. In 1960 the Rank Organisation newsreel series Look at Life made the 8-minute colour Fairs Please, featuring the activities at various fairs in Britain and Ireland. Puck Fair featured “gypsies”, but most likely Travellers, as well as scenes of the goat being chased on the mountain, and of the parade. The film was shown in the Oisin Cinema, Killorglin, in May 1961. The latter two films are available to the film trade via Independent Television News (ITN) Source.

An isolated example of American interest in the fair occurred when independent film-maker Harry Dugan shot scenes, in 1953, for the colour travelogue The Spell of Ireland. Dugan had envisaged a torchlight closing procession at the fair, to close his film, but was unable to convince the organisers. The film premiered in New York in May 1954, and it had some later distribution in Ireland, showing in cinemas including The Astor, Listowel, in February 1960. It is not commercially available.

The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation made a film about Ireland, Horseman, Pass By, which was broadcast on St Patrick’s Day, 1964. It includes scenes of Puck, but these were reported to be largely pub scenes of customers drinking and singing. A copy is held by Library and Archives Canada.

IRISH TELEVISION PROGRAMMES

Irish television broadcasters started attending the fair during the 1960s. Ulster Television (UTV) filmed the event on August 11, 1963. Details are few, and it is unclear when, or if, footage was broadcast. UTV returned again on August 10, 1966 and filmed 25 minutes of footage, which was used for A Whack at The Puck, shown in September. The first UTV film is held by ITN Source but the archive of the second is unknown.

Radio Telefís Éireann (RTE) attended the event in 1965, broadcasting a feature item for its magazine-style programme Newsbeat on August 12, 1965. At the same time, footage also seems to have been taken, which went to make a second 30-minute programme for the series Discovery, broadcast on October 11, 1965. The programme focused on Kerry County Council’s quarantining of the Travellers outside the town. It forms a rare filmed portrait of the Travellers themselves at Puck Fair, complete with traditional barrel-shaped wooden caravans. Two small excerpts can be viewed on the EU Screen website www.euscreen.eu. A four-minute clip, Travellers Must Camp Outside Town concerns the above controversy. The seven-minute clip, Puck Fair, forms one of the most complete of the several visual presentations of the fair made over the years. It shows mountain scenes with Seán O’Shea (who for years provided the fair with its goat) and an interview with the girl-queen of the fair. There
are also shots of tourists motoring into the town and horses being led through the streets, together with close-ups of the goat being caged and tied, led through the town and enthroned. “Three cheers now for the Puck!” commanded the master of ceremonies at the close of the film. The Sunday Independent disapproved of scenes of pint-drinkers standing two-deep at pub counters, complaining that RTE never showed “luxury lounges where Irishmen drink whiskey, beer and lager in the utmost decorum in comfortable surroundings”. Dr. Seán O’Suilleabhain (of the Irish Folklore Commission) explained that four Irish fairs are known to have animal symbols, the others being Cappawhite, County Tipperary, Mullinavat, County Kilkenny and Greencastle, County Down.

A Finnish TV programme of Irish scenes, which reportedly featured a large segment on Puck was broadcast by RTE in the first week of October 1965 as part of the series As Others See Us. The RTE nature-observation series Amuigh Faoin Spéir featured a 30-minute programme on the fair, broadcast October 22, 1970. All of the above material is in black and white.

Gathering Day at Puck Fair 1951.

COLOUR FOOTAGE

One of the first colour television programmes to film the event was ITV’s current affairs series World in Action. Catalogue information indicates a broadcast date of August 1, 1969, suggesting filming took place at the fair the year before. Scenes taped were of children playing on fairground rides (those of Bird’s Amusements, who had attended the fair since the 1940s), the parade, the crowning of the Queen, three girls performing Irish dancing, and the cattle fair (“with groups of cows tied up to drain-pipes and shop fronts”, according to the synopsis). Only some of these scenes may have made it to an edited broadcast. The footage is available commercially through ITN Source.

British Movietone News made its final visit to the fair in 1972, with Puck Fair – in Colour. The voiceover commented that the town’s population of 1200 swelled to a 100,000 for the duration. Footage included a lorry carrying the Puck Goat travelling across the bridge towards the town, accompanied by a pipe band. It also includes shots of a young woman chosen as the “Lady of the Laune” crowning the animal. Again, this can be viewed at www.movietone.com.

In the 1970s, Bord Fáilte sponsored two promotional films of tourist events in Ireland which included the fair (although, peculiarly, the organisation had an ambivalent attitude towards it at the same time, not promoting it as an attraction for visitors, and not funding it as it did other local festivals). In 1972 it made the 20-minute Events in Ireland, featuring scenes of Puck, among other Irish attractions. In 1974 it made Happy to Meet...Sorry to Part, for the promotion of Ireland in the British market. Familiar Irish tourist sites and leisure activities were shown, accompanied by music from Celtic rock band Horslips. The final scenes features Puck Fair. Another state-sponsored film to feature Puck was An Bodhrán, made in 1974 by the Department of the Gaeltacht. Copies of all three of these films are with the Irish Film Archive, Temple Bar, Dublin.

Puck was shot for scenes for Irish director Thaddeus O’Sullivan’s feature On a Paving Stone Mounted, released in 1978. It starred Gabriel Byrne among others. The story concerned Irish emigrants to Britain. It examined their memories of Ireland, contrasting them with the reality. This film was made in black and white. Despite being financed by the British Film Institute (BFI) Production Board and despite the BFI’s admirable record of re-releasing obscure films, it remains unavailable.

Hail King Puck is a documentary study made by student Sarah Binning in 1990 for her Master’s Thesis in Visual Anthropology. A film catalogue summary explains that the film shows “how the fair is changing into a carnival for tourists and suggests that the travelling people are no longer welcome”. It is held at the Department of Social Anthropology, University of Manchester.

In August 1996, RTE recorded and broadcast a 30-minute documentary on Puck, one of a series of nine mini-documentaries on well-established Irish festivals, for the Nationwide series.

Channel Four broadcast a programme on Puck Fair entitled Ireland’s Only King, in July 1988. The same TV channel also showed a 25-minute documentary, Puck Fair, which was then released as a retail video in 1998.

People travel from all over the world to visit it. Music, dancing, horse fair, cattle buying and selling, it all takes place at Puck Fair. Will you meet your sweetheart, or have your fortune told by the ancient travelling people?

A copy of the video is in the Local History section of Kerry County Library.

There may be other examples of Puck Fair in film, but the above illustrate a firm interest in the fair as an unusual event and a visual spectacle. Plenty of original footage would thus seem to be available for screenings of historical material. Better still, footage might go towards a comprehensive visual history of the celebrated event.

Acknowledgements: Thanks to the staff of the Local History Department, Kerry County Library.

Endnotes
www.irishnewarchive.com
www.itnsource.com
www.movietone.com
www.movietone.com
www.tcd.ie/irishfilm
Grímur Jónsson Thorkelin is not a name readily associated with Kerry history, yet in the last decades of the 18th century he travelled on a royal warrant from the King of Denmark to Ireland and Britain to consult the Annals of Inisfallen, among other documents, in order to recover Viking history for the Scandinavian nations. Now internationally famous as the scholar whose labours on that trip discovered and provided the definitive edition of Boewulf, his work on the Irish annals is all but forgotten.

Thorkelin was an Icelander, a country which was then part of the Kingdom of Denmark. He was a scholar of Nordic languages and history and held the posts of Professor of Antiquity in the University of Copenhagen and Keeper of His Majesty’s Privy Archives. In 1785 Christian VII, King of Denmark, tasked him with travelling to ‘Storbritanien, Irland og Øerne i 2de Aar’ (Great Britain, Ireland and the Isles for two years) in order to gather all materials relating to Danish and Norwegian (i.e. Viking) history. A copy of the king’s letter is among Thorkelin’s private papers curated in the Danish Rigsarkivet (Royal Archive). The Archive also contains drafts of Thorkelin’s research proposal, in which he stresses the large amount of documents available in those countries which could throw light on ancient Danish history. The commission given by the king was officially from July 1786 to June 1788, but was extended no less than three times due to the volume of materials found, so that Thorkelin’s trip extended to 1791. Along with this reason for seeking extensions, Thorkelin also pleaded that he found the libraries in Dublin closed for the summer as the Irish Parliament in College Green was in recess and he was informed they would not re-open until January when Parliament re-convened.

Thorkelin’s notebooks describe visits to Ireland in 1789 and again in 1790 where, among other things, he saw continuities between Gaelic and Viking funeral customs. While the Boewulf manuscript is what is most famous now, he collected a vast amount of material and even published three books during the period, including Fragments of English and Irish History in the Ninth and Tenth Century in 1788. He also brought back a large amount of material culled from various Irish manuscripts, including especially the Annals of Inisfallen.

In fact he had two separate interactions with two different sets of annals named after the island monastery. The manuscript of the Annals of Inisfallen was held then, as now, in the Bodleian Library, Oxford. As Seán Mac Airt, who edited and translated the Annals for Trinity College has a large collection of Icelandic works dealing with the historical interactions between Scandinavia and Ireland and Britain. This collection was assembled in the 18th century by Rev. James Johnstone, who was a friend of Thorkelin. Three letters from Thorkelin to Johnstone are also preserved in Trinity [TCD Ms. 1016]. These letters are in Latin, then the international language of scholarship. Thorkelin was made a member of the Royal Irish Academy in 1786.

It is not surprising that Thorkelin should have looked to Irish sources for explication of Danish history. From at least the middle of the 17th century there had been a growing interest among scholars in Scandinavia and Germany in the common ancient history of all northern European countries whose cultures developed outside the Classical Graeco-Roman milieu. The scholarship of the time thought that Celts, Vikings, Goths and Germans shared a common non-Classical cultural origin. Such ideas greatly influenced writers like Herder and Goethe. The Swiss scholar Paul Henri Mallet, who was a professor of French in Copenhagen, was asked by the Danish government to write a history of the country. He published two hugely influential books in 1755 and 1756 which proposed that Scandinavians were of Celtic descent. Oliver Goldsmith introduced Mallet’s theories into the anglophone world.

Indeed, this looking to Irish sources by Danish scholars continued on to the cusp of the 20th century. In the United States in 1898, Conor Murphy was researching the history of his native parish of Cill na Martra in County Cork. He wished to consult a copy of the Cogadh Gaedheal re Gallaibh:

…after a fruitless inquiry among the members of the Gaelic Literary Society of San Francisco, I at last found a copy of it in the public library of that city. It is, perhaps, the only copy of the work in California, and is, I am informed, often consulted by the Danish literary people of the Pacific coast, who seem to be deeply interested in its contents. The Irish-speaking community had also reached Scandinavia by Thorkelin’s time. In a work he published in 1808 O’Flanagan wrote:

I was acquainted some years ago with Mr. Thorkelin, an Icelandic gentleman, professor of history and Icelandic antiquities to his Danish Majesty…He sojourned in Dublin for some time on literary research. I translated, for his use, some abstracts from our annals relative to the transactions of the Danes in Ireland. He confidently assured me, that he knew several families in his native country, who were in possession of old books of history and genealogy in Irish, and old Irish poems, over which they frequently spent their hours of amusement, and made Irish the language of their domestic conversation.

As Diarmaid Ó Catháin writes, “Is léir ó chintas Uí Flannagáin go raibh aithne ag Thorkelin ar Éireannigh i rocht na Dannaigh agus go raibh cúrsaí mar seo pléite aige leo sarar chuairg sé go hEirinn…” (It is clear from O’Flanagan’s account that Thorkelin was acquainted with Irish people in the kingdom of Denmark and that he had discussed such issues with them before going to Ireland).
The Irish colony in Copenhagen at the time Thorkelin came to Ireland, consisted of wealthy traders. One such was John Dungan from Granard in Longford who made a large fortune from the sugar trade with the West Indies. He funded the first harp festivals held to revive ancient Irish music. These were held in Granard in 1784, 1785 and 1786. Dungan was a forerunner and inspiration of Edward Bunting and the Belfast harp festival.

This international transference of Irish manuscripts, no doubt going back to Viking raids originally, is attested as far as the 16th century when the then king of Denmark asked Elizabeth I to send over an Irish scholar who could translate the Gaelic manuscripts held there. At that time a member of the bardic O’Daly family was being held prisoner in London and the English court considered sending him. Eventually they decided not to as he was deemed too dangerous to release.

Thorkelin’s visits to Ireland, then, were part of a long tradition of Danish scholars using Irish manuscripts as primary sources for their own country’s history. Celebrated internationally by English language and Anglo-Saxon scholars for his discovery of Boewulf, it is unfortunate that his work on Irish manuscripts is forgotten.

Endnotes
Killarney, at the time of Queen Victoria’s visit in 1861, was enjoying a kind of new prosperity (in contrast with the days of the Famine). Whilst, the two most prominent families in the town, the Herberts’ of Muckross and the Brownes’ of the Kenmare Estate, were hugely influential, the social and economic fabric was changing. The railway had arrived in 1853 and “a building boom” brought new opportunities and prosperity for many.

Killarney town with a population of 5,187\(^1\) was governed by a board of Town Commissioners, which was set up by the Kenmare’s in 1859, following the 1854 Town Improvement Act. The members were drawn mostly from local business-men. This was an early break from the old administrative system, where the Kenmare’s had direct responsibility for the management of the town. With the announcement of the Queen’s visit, the Commissioners quickly formed a committee to organise the event. A report in The Kerry Evening News, lists those who attended a meeting in the Kenmare Arms Hotel: Maurice James O’Connell J.P., D.L., Right Hon. Colonel H.A. Herbert M.P., Henry Leahy, Thomas Galway, Daniel J. Moynihan, J.P., Francis H. Downing, Solicitor; James Coffee, Lake Hotel, John O’Leary Victoria Hotel, Daniel O’Shea, David O’Sullivan, O.C. McDermott.

As the Queen was being entertained by the Herbert and the Kenmare families, during her four day visit, it is instructive to imagine how “regular folk” may have lived. We will look therefore, at the social, economic, educational and religious fabric of Killarney together with evidence of a burgeoning tourist industry in the early 1860s.

**EMIGRATION**

Emigration was as much a feature of life in 1861, as unfortunately it is today. Mr. Daniel O’Shea, Main Street was the local Emigration Agent. Here is an excerpt from a notice placed by him in The Tralee Chronicle and Killarney Echo.

**Important to emigrants**

We the undersigned feel no hesitation in certifying that we consider Mr. Daniel O’Shea, Main Street, a very fit and proper person to continue to act as Emigration Agent: that persons about to emigrate may place the fullest confidence in him and that he will strictly and honourably perform whatever engagements he may enter into with them.\(^2\)

Of the 57 signatories, the most notable were The Bishop of Kerry, David Moriarty, Richard Herbert, Cahernane House, Patrick O’Connor PP. Furies and Francis H. Downing (Solicitor).

It is interesting to note that during a period of time when London, must have appeared incredibly remote, that a passenger service operated between Tralee and London. This was run by The London and Limerick Steamship Company, it called periodically at Portsmouth and Plymouth. The passenger fare for a state cabin was 21 shillings. Weekly sailings were also available to and from Liverpool. The fee for a state cabin was 15 shillings, whilst to travel steerage one paid 7 shillings and sixpence (it must be borne in mind that these sums of money would have been beyond the means of the majority of the population at the time).

**ECONOMY**

Killarney and the surrounding area were well supplied by a variety of craftsmen, trades and services in the town. The following is a list of the range and variety of these trades and services. They were bakers (13), booksellers and stationers (two), boot and shoemakers (14), butchers (26), carpenters (five), cart makers and wheelwrights...
(eight), china, glass and earthenware dealers (three), clothes dealers (two), coal merchants (one), coopers (five), drapers and haberdashers (three), dyers (two), flour factors and dealers (four), grocers (12), ironmongers and hardware-men (four). There were also leather sellers (two), milliners and dressmakers (five), nail makers (five), painters and glaziers (five), pawnbrokers (two), public houses (28), saddlers and harness makers (three), shopkeepers and dealers in sundries (11), smiths and farriers (12), spirit dealers (six), tailors (two), tallow chandlers (four), tanners and furriers (three), tobacconists (two) and weavers (six). These traders had their premises in High Street, Main Street, New Street, Henn Street, Fair Hill, College Street, Market Lane, Doyle’s Lane, Hogan’s Lane, Fish Lane, Barry’s Lane and Church Lane.

Some of the foregoing, which were essential to the needs of the people of the 19th century have long since vanished. One of these, the Killarney furniture industry, which was well established and prosperous by the 1860s. Arbutus and other tree species were used to make elaborately decorated furniture for sale to the tourists. This is a quote from a contemporary guidebook of the mid-19th century:

…of the Arbutus wood a variety of toys are made at Killarney, for which there is a considerable sale to visitors anxious to retain some palpable reminiscence of the beautiful lake.

The earliest manufacturer of decorated furniture was Jeremiah O’Connor of Main Street. He established his Arbutus and Irish Bog Oak Factory in 1825. Local views of Muckross Abbey, Glena Cottage, and Ross Castle etc. provided inspiration for the designers. James Egan of New Street displayed a ladies work-table at the 1853 Dublin Exhibition. This table was inlaid with 157,000 pieces, indicating the craftsmanship of the period. He was subsequently commissioned by Lord Castlerosse to make an inlaid Arbutus cabinet and desk, which was presented to Her Majesty.

Interestingly enough, then as now there were numerous public houses in the town, 28 in total being listed. The next most frequently occurring trade were butchers of which 26 are recorded. One of these a Mr. Michael Coffey was certainly well prepared for Her Majesty’s visit as the following demonstrates:

Mr. Michael Coffey, Victualler, Killarney, being desirous that her Majesty’s Kerry host, Lord Castlerosse and Col. Herbert, should be in a position to entertain their Royal guests so far as regards as a “Royal Baron”, not yet inferior to the “roast beef of Old England” as supplied by the more wealthy providers of Windsor Castle and Buckingham Palace has purchased from the magnificent and extensive herds of Lord Clarina and Mr. Gubbins of Killrush in the county of Limerick half a score of splendid heifers to be slaughtered in the course of the ensuing week and during her Majesty’s stay at Killarney. Those really beautiful animals have already arrived in Killarney, where their quality, condition and symmetry are so much admired that it is considered a pity they should be slain, even for supply of the Royal table.

FAIR

The traditional fair now long gone was a major feature of the economic life of most towns and many villages in the 19th century. It was an event where livestock were the main trade. The Fair encouraged a great social gathering, where town met country. A fair was held in Killarney each month. Cattle were driven into town and pigs were brought by horse and cart. They were sold in the Fair-field or on the open street. Some fringe events often attracted the attention of the local police. This report in The Tralee Chronicle and Killarney Echo records one such incident which occurred at the July 4 fair:

Three pickpockets of well-known personality who applied for admission to the workhouse the previous evening and were prepared for their professional feats were sent to prison pro-tem.

Prices were reported to be good with “milch cows” making £8 to £9; “springers” £8 to £9 per head and “heifers” changed hands for £6 to £7, with two year olds going for £4-10 to £5-10. It is estimated that £1 would be equivalent to approximately €90.

PUBLIC WORKS

In the post-famine period the concept of “Public Works”, continued as a means of providing employment. As is the practice today all Public Works had to be tendered for and were advertised in the newspapers. This example is taken from The Tralee Chronicle and Killarney Echo 1861:
referred to the fact that by the early 1860s there were seven hotels in the town. Two of these were in the town centre, The Innishfallen (Main Street) and the Kenmare Arms.10 It is generally agreed that Queen Victoria’s Visit, was majorly instrumental in promoting Killarney as a tourism destination. The opening of Killarney Railway Station on July 15, 1853, played no small part in making Killarney accessible to tourists. This is reflected in the fact that by the early 1860s there were seven hotels in the town. Two of these were in the town centre, The Innishfallen (Main Street) and the Kenmare Arms.10 The other five were outside the then town center. These were The Killarney Railway Hotel (The Malton) opposite the railway station (built in 1854), The Royal Victoria (Castlerosse Hotel) The Lake Hotel at Castelough, the Muckross Hotel and adjacent to it, O’Sullivan’s Hotel.11

**TOURISM**

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By the 1860s, the foundation of the Education system that exists in the town today was well established. At the request of Bishop Moriarty, the Loreto Sisters arrived in 1860 when they set up a boarding school for girls, having purchased the Torc View Hotel (the school’s location until 1866) from Jeremiah Hurley. St. Brendan’s College was opened on the May 16 (feast day of St. Brendan) 1860.15 It was established chiefly as a Diocesan Seminary however it also took in “Catholic boys who aspired to secular pursuits. Non-Catholics were also admitted for secular instruction”.16

A Notice in The Tralee Chronicle and Killarney Echo July 25, 1861 states:

...from the commencement of the next academic year...
De réir leabhar scoile deirtear gur file anaitheadh a chin, Sa leabhar Poets and Poetry of Munster scríofa ag Nóra Ó Céirín. 2

An Cailín d'fhág mé 'Go deó deó rís' a scríofa ag Liam Mac Paircín: Uimhir 238 Go deó deó réis ní réidh go Caíostol. 7 v (uimhirhte). “An Spailpín Fánach” Fonn: An Cailín d’fhág mé d’fhág mé an’ dhheigse. Nóra (le238i-239i). This song was composed in the beginning of the present century and is the composition of an itinerant potato digger from Kerry3, sa leabhar Spailpín as Chiarrai. 4

THE KERRY ARCHAEOLOGICAL & HISTORICAL SOCIETY

AN SPAILPIN FÁNACH – AMHRÁN NA NDAOINE

1860 agus tagairt á dhéanamh don “Spailpin Fánach”, nós stáir ná seanachas atá ann ach tradaidisiúin dícheallach agus cur síos ar chrutha an shaoil agus fós dícheall aige i dtodhchaí na tíre. “File anaithnd” a chum, dar leis na leabhair scoile ach tá tuairim le fáithí ag an-dhubh aonraigh sin i dtograíocht na tíre. Bhíodh aighneas eatarthu agus is minic a dhéantaí ionsaí orthu go Chiarrai agus bhídís sásta obair ar son pá níos ísle ná na daoine áitiúla. Tháinig an t-áthas “Fosters Corn Law” i bhfeidhm sa bhliain 1784 agus mar seo:

The poet best known to the inhabitants of Keel was Maurice Kerin (Muiris Ó Céirín who was a native of Castlemaine and a weaver by trade). Muiris Ó Céirín was held in high esteem among the old inhabitants of Keel and even to a very late period. He composed the “Spailpín Fánach” in memory of his brother Donchadha who went to France as a soldier about 1798. The Irish version is well known and there was also an English version also composed by Kerins:

This song is the production of an itinerant potato digger from Kerry who suffered some hardship among the farmers of Tipperary and Kilkenny, a class of men who though willing to pay the highest amount of wages to their men, yet require adequate labour in return. However the Kerry spalpeens, as they are called, are an object of hatred to their fellows of Tipperary, where shows of them muster from the Kerry mountains to earn a few shillings during the potato-digging season and hire themselves far below the natives for which they are severely punished. In the beginning of the present century many of the Kerry men had their ears, or one of them at least, cut off as a punishment for lowering the market wages. The mode of detecting a Kerry man from other Munster men was as follows. All the spalpeens, who slept huddled together in a barn or outhouse, were called up at night and each man in his turn was obliged to pronounce the word ‘gabhar’, a goat in Irish; when the long, sharp tone of the Kerry man betrayed him, and immediately his ear was cut off. ’

bhliain 1860 agus tagairt á dhéanamh don “Spailpin Fánach”

De réir leabhar scoile deirtear gur file anaithndh a chum, Sa leabhar Poets and Poetry of Munster scríofa ag “Erionnach”, J.C. Mangan, in 1860, deir sé “This song is not much older than the beginning of the present century, and is the production of an itinerant potato digger from Kerry”3; sa leabhar

The mode of detecting a Kerry man from other Munster men was as follows. All the spalpeens, who slept huddled together in a barn or outhouse, were called up at night and each man in his turn was obliged to pronounce the word ‘gabhar’, a goat in Irish; when the long, sharp tone of the Kerry man betrayed him, and immediately his ear was cut off. ’

Spailpin as Chiarrai.
Duine a thug a chlacht "an Spailpín Fánach", is líom go raibh sé i mbéal tábhairne agus cibeal, rírá, ceol agus amhránaíocht ar siúl eatarthu agus Is éasca samhlú lá aonaígh in Oileán Chiarraí timpeall 1800 i dtaobh bheidh go deó.10

D'fhreagair Uileog: "Ní raibh nead luiche i gcluais an chait riamh is ní iar-thar Chiarraí an cheist: "Cad ná raibh riamh is ní bheidh go deó" agus in diaidh na peice riamh, is beidh go deo" agus ansin chuir an file ó bhain Uileog amach an teach tábhairne is mó sa bhaile agus é lán de go háirithe sna tithe tábhairne. Fuair an file áitiúil Uileog Ó Céirín scéala Tá scéal i mBailiúchan na Sgol a thaispeánann an saghas cuideachta sa pháipéar ceithre véarsa ann gan aon tagairt ar Challainn ann. Tá leagan difriúil bainteach leis! An leagan a bhreacadh Reámonn Breathnach síos níl ach eadrainn, chuirfidh ceist air "Cé a chum an Spailpín Fánach", d'fhreagair fuair bás le déanaí, beannacht Dé lena anam uasal, le linn comhrá a bhí Tuairim difriúil ar fad a bhí ag an iriseoir cailiúil Con Houlihan, a An Cnuicín atá luaite anseo an í áit ducháis Uí Bhrosnacháin?

An Cnuicín atá luaite anseo an fáit duíchais Úi Bhrosnacháin?

Tuaraim difríúil ar fad a bhí ag an iriseoir cailltíú Con Houlihan, a fuair bás le déanaí, beanannach Dé lénana anam usáil, le linn comhrá a bhí eadrainn, chuireas ceist air "Cé a chum an Spailpín Fánach", d’fhreagair fhadadh é i Sráid na Beairice in Oileán Chiarraí.

Bhí leagan eile den amhrán ag Reámann Breathnach ó Chúl Ó Socht i an t-aonadh ar an seo de ghnó a cheist. Tá "An Spailpín Fánach" ar an gcúrsa le haghaidh na hardteistiméireachta "Dowling" sa Bhéarla atá i gceist.

Bhíodh ann do dhá bharr, William Harold, Michael Boyle agus Richard Boyle, is lá leobailt bhí "Captain William Merediths Mount Eagle Loyal Cavalry".

Gabhadh daoine aithtíulaách ach d’éilledh Boc Ó Gráda a bhí mar cheannaire ar na hÉireannaigh Aontaigh agus Thadgh Ó Dálaigh. Bhí an bhfeidhm ar a gcoiméad ar feadh bliain in ait fós fad éigean i gCúl agus bhfuair na daoine a bhí i gceist ann go háirithe.

Tá an Spailpín Fánach agus saol a linne.

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Tá an Spailpín Fánach agus saol a linne.
There isn’t a Listowel man that couldn’t talk the hind leg off a pot, sober or in his cups. If it’s a writer you want to be yourself someday, this is the place to visit. If the spark is in you at all, the flames will grow here. What was latent must leap forth to flower; it’s in the air around us, the magic that calls forth the urge to write, to create.

These are the words of the late John B. Keane in the opening programme of Listowel Writers’ Week (WW), 1971. For the next 30 years (John B. died as WW opened on May 30, 2002) he became an institution within Writers Week, making himself available to as many writers as possible (usually in his own pub) to clear a way through the thickets of complication that hampered their paths. Even those who did not have the spark in them, still experienced the magic in his presence. I doubt if anyone can remember being in the raconteur’s company for more than five minutes without an eruption of laughter. It is this natural and native wit, which had another local joker nickname Fossett’s Circus tent, “The Albert Hall” during the 2011 festival.

The late Dr. Brian MacMahon, a widely recognized master of the short story (though still not fully appreciated) attracted many in those early days, who felt that their creative talents lay in that area. He introduced the workshop idea, where writers would bring their work-in-progress into a group session. Ideally the work would have been sent in advance so that the facilitator could become familiar with the style, strengths and weaknesses of each writer as manifest in each piece of work. This format has since spread and flourished throughout the creative world.

Originally these workshops were held in various pubs around the town. The feasibility of this idea came into question, when some who were short of better things to do, working usually in pairs, decided to drift from pub to pub, pull up a stool and off-load a chip or two from their shoulders. These “chips” might range from their views on the participants, the subject matter, to the fact that the writers were “no craic at all, so quiet down there in the corner”. They might be a little more messy, questioning the facilitator as to who her/his favourite poet, novelist, etc. might be and why/what, she/he thought of a certain local writer and so on. The usual parting words would be that they themselves were in no need of a workshop at all; they could make up a story on the hoof, after ten pints, as good as any after hours and days labour in the huddle of a workshop.

Nowadays the Writers’ Week workshops run parallel to many other aspects of WW. Running from Thursday morning to Saturday, the format however has changed very little. What began as short story, poetry and drama away back when “the dream peeped over the quilt” has now grown to include all aspects of the creative word. Any writer who comes to a workshop just for “the craic”, soon discovers that this is a business session. Whether it is the novel, short story, drama, humour, writing for children, poetry, song-writing, all are structured to facilitate beginners through to advanced writers. Only those who are serious about their work are at home here. After all, if you are not serious about your own work how can you expect your potential readers to take you seriously?

The wider world of WW murmurs and sings along all over the town. Many who cannot afford workshops come along for the inspiration, confident that by rubbing their ideas off those of others they will “freshen” them up, perhaps even cross-fertilize. They also know that for less than the cost of a workshop they can get a season ticket to admit them to most of those events which are not already free, such as drama, film, readings, lectures, exhibitions and so on. Workshop participants miss some of these events, but you cannot have everything. Friends will fill them in on the essentials later.

Snippets of conversation overhead at any WW typically include:-

“It’s my fifth … “ “It’s only my first …” “Ah sure you’re only in nappies, it’s my fifteenth …”

“Fifteenth how are you; it’s my twenty fifth …”

This is usually trumped by someone who is well into the 30s in WW’s attended. The one who will be centre of attention in this situation is
always the first-timer. The others will feel it is their responsibility to introduce the newcomer to all aspects of what goes on, the venues, the characters, the activities and the possibilities in the most ordinary of places and things. After all, the grammar of WW is best understood when a knowing nod or eye signal across the street or square is interpreted in ways the outsider could not possibly comprehend.

There must be no such person as a stranger in WW, just a friend whom you have yet to meet. This philosophy engendered by the first president Seamus Wilmot and his committee has been maintained through to current President Colm Toibin, Chairman Sean Lyons and their hive of workers. While it would be impossible to list the names of all writers who attribute their success to participation in WW, I must mention one who has been the author of success for so many, including this one, the late David Marcus who was president immediately prior to Colm.

It is apt that David should have been honoured by the endowment of that role. He in the one who founded New Irish Writing away back then in The Irish Press and later sustained it as back-up to Ciarán Carty in The Sunday Tribune. All of us are in awe at how many scripts David must have read not only for the above but also as principal judge for the Francis MacManus Awards over many years for RTE Radio 1.

As I write, the 42nd WW is about to be opened by President Michael D. Higgins. The many in attendance will find that the core concept now has that assuring feeling of a well-worn pathway. Listowel is once again in season, ready to be entered by all lovers, or would-be lovers, of the word. As always there will be newcomers who will query why an event running from Wednesday night to Monday morning should be called a week. By the end of their first WW no explanation will be necessary; the wonder will be that they have fitted so much into those days and nights, that they have been drawn into so many new friendships.

Here days, nights, mornings strain to contain the criss-cross of happenings, scheduled and spontaneous, that sometimes seem to simultaneously ebb and flow. Late at night they may not notice that characters and events of former festivals seem to have merged in memory with those of the current one. Ghosts holiday from their heaven around the tables in John B’s, the hotel, the many favourite venues that merge in mere time.

Nobody can get to all the events on a WW programme. Here is where the extended family comes in; comparing notes as simultaneous becomes consecutive in the murmurs and laughter. Anyway, with a bit of luck, you will find yourself side-by-side over a bowl of soup and a sandwich and sharing notes with the performer or lecturer whose session you have missed. Meanwhile Dr. Brian in the castle yard or John B. in the small square smile on the small wonders of the creative spirit that continue to bud well beyond their own initial imaginings.

A key social event of WW is “The Cure”. It is never listed in the programme of events, yet people can be seen tiptoeing their way to John B’s on the Sunday morning as if on some compelling pilgrimage. Morning here on WW Sunday is relative, ungoverned by am or pm, determined by the tender moments of emergence to consciousness of the congregation. This is where they bring their collective head, their common affliction, assured that a cure will indeed be wrought at this sacred shrine. Billy, George or whoever happens to be master of ceremonies will dispense measures of flattery and insult so that the balm of laughter and their soothing liquid of choice will have them enjoying or participating in the music, verse and song that seep out to the street.

All is well. Further events await, including poets corner. Those who have difficulty weaning themselves off the feeling on Monday can visit poets corner in Tralee on their way to catching a train back to the world.
THE USURPERS OF WEST MUNSTER

THE O’DONOGHUES - LEGEND AND LEGACY

Elizabeth O’Donoghue/Ross

The O’Donoghues Mór of Ross Castle are best known for the legendary Wizard Prince who lives beneath Loch Lein and rides with his white steed across the lake at dawn on the 1st of May, helping anyone in need who calls for his assistance. The boatmen point out rock formations jutting from the waters called O’Donoghue’s Library and O’Donoghue’s Prison, and there is a steady stream of visitors to Ross Castle, one of the most popular tourist sites in Killarney.

Ironically, though they are irrevocably intertwined with the history and myth of Killarney, the original territory of this Ui Eachach Mumhan dynasty was not in Kerry at all but in West Cork. Their earliest known stronghold was at Garranes near Bandon, a massive ring fort where finds of fine bronze and enamel items and exquisite millefiori glass testify to an intense manufacturing centre having trading connections with Byzantium. There are remains of over a dozen other ring forts within a mile radius, indicating a complex community existed there. Dating pottery fragments there suggest the settlement may have been as early as the 2nd century AD, which is around the time some scholars suggest the Gaels arrived in Ireland.

According to the old legends and origin myths, however, the Milesian Gaels arrived in Kenmare Bay much earlier led by Donn, the eldest son of Mil Espana (Spanish soldier). When he met with Erin, Queen of the Tuatha de Danaan, she offered the island to Donn, provided he named it after her. He haughtily refused, claiming he would conquer the island and name it what he wished. For that, she cursed him and said that his seed would never prosper in this country. The Tuatha de Danann then asked if the fleet would sail out past the ninth wave in order for them to prepare for battle. The Gaels gallantly acquiesced and sailed out again into the sea. Having done so, the Tuatha de Danann magicians conjured up a fierce storm, with waves preventing the fleet from reaching shore. Donn, in a rage at their duplicity, sailed recklessly onward towards the shore and was drowned in the effort. The curse had begun, and some might say it haunts his descendants still.

Donn’s brother, Amergin, himself a druid, finally calmed the storm, the fleet arrived, the warriors subdued the Tuatha de Danann, and the new rulers crossed over to the island. Donn’s monument is the sea mount on which his craft was shattered now called Donn’s House. The progenitors of the Ross Castle O’Donoghues apparently claimed Donn as their ancestor. While this cannot be taken literally, of course, the gist of it may have its own significance.

It is said the descendants of these Gaels were the Eoghanachta, named after another mythological hero of the South, Eoghan Mór. They first settled around Killarney and then expanded east, conquering Cork and the rest of Munster, separating into various branches, most notably the Eoghanacht Loch Lein (O’Moriarty and O’Cahill) the rulers of that area, Eoghanacht Raithlind (O’Donoghue and O’Mahony) who moved into West Cork and Eoghanacht Cashel (McCarthy, O’Sullivan and another O’Donoghue lineage) whose territory was in Tipperary. The kingship of Munster usually alternated between the various Eoghanachta tribes. The O’Donoghue Mór ancestor King Dubhdadoireann II of the Kinel Laegarie Ui Eachach had been King of Munster until 959; but by the time of Brian Boru, the kingship was monopolized by the Eoghanacht Cashel. However, they were weakened by then, and Brian’s grandfather, Lorcan, made the first attempt to usurp control of Munster. The Eoghanacht killed him, and his son Cennétig and grandson Mathgamain; but Mathgamain’s brother Brian succeeded him and was eventually able to gain control of all of Munster and demand hostages from the Eoghanachta tribes.

For 500 years the Kings’ of Munster had validated their right of position as a royal lineage. The progenitors of the O’Donoghue Mór were outraged over Brian Boru’s usurpation of power from the immemorial Eoghanacht dynasty and led the fight against this Dalcassian crime against tradition. The irony is that the dynasty of the Ui Donnchadha Eoghanachta was to become usurpers themselves and seize the kingship of West Munster from the traditional Eoghanachta rulers of Loch Lein.

Though it is said that Brian was High King of all Ireland, it must be remembered that at the Battle of Clontarf, not all of the tribes in the north joined Brian and the Leinstermen fought on the side of the Vikings. After the battle and Brian’s death, Donal, son of King Dubhdadoireann, tried to persuade Cian, ancestor of the O’Mahony’s (both having supported Brian in the battle) to join him against the O’Briens and regain their hostages. Cian, married to Brian’s daughter, refused to participate. Donal fought him and his cousin clan and killed Cian. He then waged war against the O’Briens in early 1015, outnumbered as he was, and he was badly defeated and killed (Erin’s curse?). Both Cian’s tribe and the Eoghanacht of Loch Lein had fought with Brian; and in retaliation, Donal’s son, Donnchad, invaded Kerry shortly after in reprisal. It was from thence that efforts to wrest the coveted lands around the Lakes of Killarney from the Loch Lein Eoghanachts began.

By the early 12th century the King of Desmond, Cormac MacCarthaigh was supportive of the O’Donoghues’ efforts to take over Loch Lein and banished O’Moriarty several times from Kerry. Contrary to an often repeated suggestion that the O’Donoghues had been driven out of West Cork by the McCarrthys, the McCarrthys were in alliance with the O’Donoghues at that time, and this on-and-off partnership continued throughout the centuries until the fall of the Gaelic Order, until the mid-12th century. Awly Mór was described as “high king of Eoghanacht Loch Lein, usurper of West Munster” – which indeed he was. He had displaced the O’Moriairtys and O’Cahills who, as a result of the ambitions of the O’Donoghues, lost their title and lands – a fate that the O’Donoghue himself would suffer four centuries later.

Awly Mór was unswerving in his opposition to the O’Briens of Thomond, who were trying their utmost to oust the Eoghanachts of Desmond and re-gain the kingship of all Munster. He lived three centuries before Ross Castle or Muckross Abbey were built. All
indications are that his stronghold was at Aghadoe, where a stone church had been situated the previous century. He undertook to rebuild the church, and though it was never the seat of a bishopric, it was always called the Great Church or Cathedral.

It is the opinion of Raghnall Ó Floinn, Head of Collections at the National Museum, that it was likely that the execution of the ivory Aghadoe Crosier was undertaken around the same time as the cathedral. The decoration of the crest of the Crosier echoes that of the Romanesque doorway to the new cathedral, so it is reasonable to conclude that it was Awly Mór who commissioned both the rebuilding of the cathedral and the crosier.

It is worthy to comment that while the Aghadoe Crosier has been discussed previously in The Kerry Magazine, in the essays of Raghnall Ó Floinn and in a lecture given by Griffin Murray for the Society in April 2011, the truly exceptional nature of the Crosier has not been adequately emphasised. It is to date the only known volute crosier of the Romanesque period and the only known object of Irish manufacture made in ivory during that period. It is unique and exclusive to Kerry; and though small in size, it is of tremendous importance to Irish culture and Kerry history.

The Killarney 250 Committee had made efforts to obtain the Crosier on loan from the Kestner Museum in Germany for the celebrations in 2005 but lack of necessary funding prevented that from happening. The author approached the then Director of the National Museum Dr. Patrick Wallace and discussed the possibility of obtaining the crosier for the country. While an attempt to repatriate the crosier had been made by the Museum in the 1960s, those efforts failed; and there were no further endeavours to regain it. As a result of our discussion, Dr. Wallace gave Raghnall Ó Floinn, Head of Collections, the task to effect recovery of the Crosier for the Irish nation. This he succeeded in doing and the Crosier is now on display in Dublin.

Working in walrus (called morse) ivory is a Viking tradition. Irish craftsmen would have been unfamiliar with this material, and Ó Floinn posits that the object was carved in a workshop in a Hiberno-Norse town. There is a local tradition that the O’Donoghue had Viking connections through marriage, which would explain the choice of ivory and possibly even the presence of a Viking craftsman that could have executed the object.

The irony (the third example thus far) is that O’Moriarty has usurped the Ó Donoghue connection to the Crosier, in-so-far as the accompanying audio narrative at the Museum attributes the Crosier to O’Moriarty based on Griffin Murray’s differing attribution to Ó Floinn’s. He believes the animal design on the stem of the crosier matches so closely a similar design on the Cross of Cong that it necessarily was made by the same craftsman who worked at the Roscommon workshop patronized by Turloch O’Connor, who commissioned the cross. Murray postulates it was commissioned either by O’Moriarty himself before he lost his position in Kerry or by O’Connor for him, in order to place the crosier at Aghadoe.

However, Françoise Henry, a respected scholar of early Irish art discussing the Crosier opined that such animal ornament “was not confined to the workshops supplying objects in Connacht for Turlough O’Connor. It may have been in fairly common use throughout Ireland.” She mentions an equivalent design in stone on the sarcophagus in Cormac’s Chapel at Cashel, and the Doorty Cross at Killenora also has similar decoration on its west face.

Murray suggests the crosier was crafted around 1126 just before O’Moriarty was ousted from his position for the last time, but that is the same time-frame as the execution of the Cross of Cong, and it would seem a stretch to believe that a single craftsman would be working on two such important pieces simultaneously. Murray also proposes that the design of the crosier was the inspiration for the design of the doorway of the cathedral constructed 30 years later. That would imply that Awly Mór commissioned the decoration of his cathedral to match the crosier of his erstwhile adversary.

Aghadoe Cathedral was completed in 1158 and in that same year, Awly Mór was killed along with Mathgamhain Mac Cartaigh in battle on the bank of the River Suir defending Desmond against the O’Brien forces. He was buried in his cathedral, perhaps with his crosier. The family maintained hegemony over the wider Killarney area for over 400 years, which was described as Onaght O'Donoghue, with signs around Killarney naming it thus until the 1950s. Ross Castle was built in the late 14th century and became the stronghold of the clan until the fall of Rory Mór Ó Donoghue during the Desmond Rebellion.

Rory Mór had rebelled against the English crown earlier but had been pardoned in 1576. He was present with the English at Dun an Oir. Due to the debacle there and the chance to break free of his overlord MacCarthy Mór who remained loyal to the English Crown, he decided to support the ill-fated Earl of Desmond and in so doing lost his life in a skirmish at Inniskean in 1583. His family was attainted in 1586 and fell into destitution. There are a few references to these O'Donoghues of Ross in the Kenmare papers, and they resurfaced as rapparees during the Títhe Wars in the late 1700s. The main family was deported to the Burren in 1786 (the year before the English started transporting such rebels to Australia).

The O'Donoghues have been described locally as the “Hungry Donoghues”. Not a pleasant agnomen, but perhaps not completely undeserved. Donn’s arrogance may have fated the usurpers to a chequered history, but the final irony are that contrary to the oft repeated remark, they have not become extinct. Modern Y-DNA evidence is showing that a significant number of the Mór lineage still remain, even some in the territory of their ancient ancestors.

Endnotes:
5 Ibid.
8 “His own family and his people took the body of Amhlaobh to Aochadh Dá Éid, and he was honourably buried by them with hymns and psalms and Masses on the right side of the church which he himself built in honour of the Trinity and Mary”. Ó hInnse, S. (ed.), (1947): Miscellaneous Irish Annals (A.D. 1114-1437) Mac Cartaigh’s Book, The Dublin Institute for Advance Studies.
9 “...the other side may have seemed like the natural side to be on...” Dánta Shéafraidh Uí Dhonnchadha an Gleann, /The Poetry of Geoffrey O’Donoghue, Aubane Historical Society.
FATHER TOM JONES – HANDBALL PLAYER AND HERO
Jude O’ Gorman

Kerry County Museum houses a number of items in its collection, which illustrate aspects of the life of Father Tom Jones. He is probably best known as a leading handball player and two of the items in the collection reflect this aspect of his life, however, another item in the collection reflects a very different incident in a long and eventful life.

In 1888 Tom Jones of Tralee was declared Handball Champion of Ireland and his name, along with that of James Fitzgerald, has become synonymous with handball in Kerry. According to his obituary in The Kerryman “his feats in the handball alley have become legendary and the men of his generation in Tralee delighted in telling of the games in which he played and invariably won against all comers”.

One of those men writing in later years described watching Tom play. “His impetuous speed and superb skill with left and right hands, his agility and judgment, his bubbling vivacity took my breath away. He stood in a niche apart!”

Tom Jones was born in Rock Street, Tralee in December 1868 and was educated at the Christian Brothers School in the town. His father, Michael, is listed in an 1886 trade directory as a grocer and vintner. Michael was a handball player so it may have been his father’s influence that led to Tom first taking up the sport. At this time handball was extremely popular throughout the country and Tom very soon excelled at the game. By the time he was 16 his time handball was extremely popular throughout the country and Tom was declared Handball Champion of Ireland and his name, along with that of James Fitzgerald, has become synonymous with handball in Kerry. According to his obituary in The Kerryman “his feats in the handball alley have become legendary and the men of his generation in Tralee delighted in telling of the games in which he played and invariably won against all comers”.

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Tom’s reputation must have been wide-ranging as there were no challengers. Tom’s obituary in The Kerryman describes him as “head and shoulders above all contemporaries. There were few men who could make even a reasonably good showing against him in a ball court”.

By 1888, at the age of 19, he issued a challenge to any handball player in Ireland for the championship of the country; potential challengers included the self-declared Handball Champion of the World, John Lawlor of Dublin. Lawlor and Jones never met but John Delaney of Athy did accept the challenge and the two players met to decide the championship of Ireland. Jones won the championship and a side bet of £20. In 1889 he retained the title and also, with James Fitzgerald, won the double-handed championship of Munster.

Three weeks after these triumphs Tom Jones entered St. Brendan’s Seminary in Killarney to train for the priesthood.

Father Jones was ordained in 1896 after training at St. Patrick’s College, Maynooth. Whilst, at Maynooth he continued to play handball and one of the six courts at the college became known as the Jones Court. He also played cricket excelling as a batsman and fielder. For the first ten years after his ordination he ministered in the Diocese of Down and Connor, then in England and latterly in Australia.

This Australian posting was to the remote parish of Winton in Northern Queensland. The Winton area was first settled by Europeans in 1866, not long before Father Tom’s arrival. His parish was a huge area of sheep and cattle ranches covering around 900 miles with a very small and scattered population. Ministering to his parishioners involved many hours of horse-back riding through a landscape of rolling grassland. He would set out on his horse with his vestments, an altar stone and some basic necessities including water, tea and sugar. Apparently amongst those basic necessities there was usually a violin, which may perhaps have helped to while away some solitary moments. This vast and empty area would have been a potentially dangerous one for a single traveller. Father Tom would have needed to be aware of the location of water dams and to carry a rifle as protection against dingos, crocodiles and other threats.

By 1905 he was in America, returning to Ireland after his sojourn in Australia. He arrived in San Francisco and journeyed to New York via Chicago. In all these places he was welcomed by the local congregations who were eager to see his handball prowess.

After his return to Ireland Father Tom was appointed as curate to a number of Kerry parishes, initially Ballyferriter and later Killorglin, Dingle and Caherciveen. In 1931 he was appointed Parish Priest in Glenbeigh and he remained there for the next 20 years.

In 1946 Father Jones founded the Glenbeigh Handball Club and a large handball court was constructed in the village next to the church. The opening ceremony in June involved representatives from the Church and the Handball Association of Ireland. The village Sports Committee had elected to name the facility the Father Jones Memorial Court. The opening ceremony was concluded by a procession through the village headed by two bands. In 1979 this court was demolished to make way for the Community Centre. A smaller court was incorporated into the new Centre.

A small wooden plaque in the collection at Kerry Museum reflects the esteem in which Father Jones was regarded by the national handball community in Ireland. In September 1945 at a dinner in the Central Hotel in Dublin, he was presented with the shield by the Handball Association of Ireland. Included amongst the 50 guests,
were the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress, GAA representatives and well-know figures in handball and athletics. They heard Jones described “as the most brilliant exponent of handball the world has ever known”. Father Tom replied to this by saying that he regarded handball to be one of the very best games in the world, adding that he had played a couple of games that very day (at the age of 77!) In 1949 the founding of the Fitzgerald/Jones Handball Club in Tralee ensured that the role of Father Jones at the forefront of Kerry handball would always be remembered.

Another item in the Museum’s collection, a silver goblet, throws light onto a very different role for Father Tom; a role involving a heroic rescue.

Tom Jones was working as a curate in Ballyferriter during World War I, a period when naval and merchant shipping was under attack off the coast of Ireland from German U-boats. On April 25, 1916, Father Jones was involved in the rescue of a number of the crew of the Carmanian, a ship sunk off the coast of Kerry. The Carmanian was a large, three-masted Norwegian sailing ship en-route from Buenos Aires to Cobh with a cargo of wheat. She had been launched in 1897 in Workington in England and was operated by English owners until 1910. In that year she was sold to a Norwegian firm and registered at Stavanger.

On the morning of April 25, 1916, the Carmanian was intercepted by German submarine U-19. The submarine fired a shot and came alongside the vessel. The ship’s crew were instructed by the submarine commander, Raimund Weisbach, to leave as quickly as possible. Some provisions were hastily found and two life boats were lowered for the crew of 20. The captain of the Carmanian, Captain Dykesteen, took charge of one boat containing 11 crewmen and took the second boat, containing the remaining crew, in-tow. The U-boat then fired 26 shells on the ship, which sank very quickly.

The lifeboats were then adrift in rough seas for nearly 24 hours. As they approached the coast a squall hit the leading boat, which overturned throwing the occupants into the sea. The crew clung to the upturned keel until the second boat came alongside. During this episode two of the crew died of exposure. The second boat was eventually righted and the surviving crew members clambered aboard.

As they approached the shore one lifeboat was assisted by the coastguards and the crew were rescued. However, the second boat drifted along the coast towards the cliffs at Brandon Creek. It was at this point that Father Jones became involved in the rescue of the remaining crew-men. A group of four men, including Father Jones, lowered ropes from the cliffs. The subsequent dramatic rescue was described by an observer in a letter to The Kerryman about two weeks after the event.

One of the shipwrecked men had lost all power of movement and was so exhausted that he had to be dragged up the almost perpendicular cliff. While Father Jones and P. Lynch were doing this the two other rescuers had to hold their feet… Had any hitch occurred the whole party would have been launched into eternity.  

The rescued crew were treated in local farmhouses and eventually made their way home to Norway. In recognition of his part in the rescue the King of Norway, Haakon VII, awarded Father Jones a commemorative goblet inscribed with the thanks of a grateful Norwegian nation.

Father Tom Jones died on September 19, 1950 in the Bon Secours Hospital in Tralee. He was buried in Glenbeigh. In his later years, in addition to ministering to his parishioners, he had turned to less energetic pursuits than those of his previous years. His obituary mentions his talents as a linguist, a Shakespearean scholar and a musician (he played at least half a dozen instruments). Although his name will always be synonymous with Kerry handball it would seem that after a full and eventful life Father Tom also left his mark in many other arenas.

Endnotes
1 The Kerryman, September 23, 1950.
2 The Kerryman, June 1, 1946.
4 The Kerryman, September 23, 1950.
5 The Kerryman, September 15, 1945.
6 The Kerryman, May 6, 1916.
FENIANS, PUPPETS AND MAGIC LANTERN SHOWS! A VICTORIAN RE-ENACTMENT AT MUCKROSS

Patricia O’Hare

Last year, 2011, marked the 150th anniversary of Queen Victoria’s visit to Killarney and to Muckross House in August 1861. The anniversary was marked by the hosting of a number of events at Muckross. These included a seminar, which examined various aspects of Victorian life, and the mounting of a small exhibition. In addition, a series of re-enactments, which dramatized scenes from the royal visit, took place within the public rooms of the House. These were performed by Dóchas Drama Group, Killarney (during some of the guided tours) over a two-week period, at the end of August 2011. The re-enactments were so well received by the public that the decision was taken to close the year with a colourful Victorian Christmas drama.

Aside from its purely entertainment value, the aim of this Victorian drama was to explore the social and political life of the people of Killarney, during the 1860s. What was life like in Killarney during that decade, the earlier part of which was marked by the visit of Queen Victoria? Trawling through local newspapers, a picture gradually emerged of some of the people who lived, worked and played, in and about Killarney, at that time. These newspaper accounts were supplemented by other published material and by some private diaries of the period. The author selected three accounts of Christmas celebrations from the 1860s. Around these three lynchpins additional source material was woven to portray a general “pen picture” of the town and its inhabitants. Obviously it was necessary to employ a little poetic license here and there. Sometimes material relating to two or three different years was rolled into one. This was not a major concern as, for instance, the economic circumstances of the people were unlikely to have altered much from one year to the next.

Once the “pen pictures” of the town were finalised, they were handed over to three scriptwriters from Dóchas Drama Group: Liz Ryan, Mabel Counihan and Patricia McSherry. They then set to work to devise the storylines and the dialogue. The actors were chosen and the rehearsals began. The cast were supplied with some basic biographical information and photographs, where possible, of the characters they were portraying. The younger participants of our cast were members of Killarney Youth Theatre. The drama scenes were interspersed with Victorian Christmas Carols sung by the Tralee-based Opus 96 Chamber Choir. For many years, the members of Opus 96 have provided an annual concert of Christmas Carols at Muckross House. This year the choir was an enthusiastic participant in our Victorian drama.

The first two scenes of our Christmas drama were set in the drawing-room of Killarney House, home of Viscount and Viscountess Castlerosse.

THE CHRISTMAS TREE AT KILLARNEY HOUSE

On the feast of the Holy Innocents, Mr Valentine Browne and his sister entertained the children of the gentry and respectable families, about here, at tea. We seldom witnessed a merrier party and all the little ones were made to feel quite happy. Mr Columb dressed as old 1865, entered the banqueting hall.

All then followed the old gentleman to the drawing-room, where the Christmas tree was lighted up with coloured tapers and lamps and laden with all sorts of bonbons and presents; but besides those on the tree, other valuable ones were also given to all the children. After the distribution several amusing games and dances were gone through. And when the time for departure came the little ones separated delighted with the evening, but regretting the pleasure ended. Lord and Lady Castlerosse, with their usual amiability did all in their power to make the evening a merry one and I have no doubt their little guests will remember the feast of the Holy Innocents for a long time to come.

Based on the above newspaper account from January 1866, we used a little poetic license to move the action forward to the winter of 1866-1867. This allowed us to refer to the very severe weather conditions of that year. Viscount Castlerosse and his agent, Thomas Gallway, discussed the Fenian activity in the town, against the backdrop of dressing the Christmas tree and other party preparations. Gallway expressed the hope that the cold snap would help detain the Fenians in their beds. They discussed the fuel funds established to assist the poor and Major Herbert’s attempts to supply his Muckross workmen with wood cut from Tomies. Other topics to receive a passing mention included: The successful town gas lighting project, which Castlerosse had supported in 1860, his assistance in establishing a butter market in 1865, and the removal of marrane from the town lanes. Gertrude Viscountess Castlerosse also “voiced” her concern for the young women of the town and their need for “proper domestic training”. Gertrude’s aspirations to establish an industrial school and a laundry in Killarney were also highlighted.
Scene three was set in Killarney Workhouse.

**DISTRIBUTION OF TOYS AT WORKHOUSE**

The usual distribution of toys to the children in the Killarney poorhouse took place on Christmas Day, at two o’clock. The kindness of the many willing subscribers sufficed to furnish three tables of pretty and useful toys, suited to all ages, among the boys and girls and also to procure an ample supply of cakes and sweetmeats, the partaking of which was deferred till Sunday evening, in order that the children might have a pleasant tea party, and thus have two days enjoyment. The little treat is anticipated by them long before and talked of long after the event. The officers of the house seem to rejoice at it almost as much as the children and by their taste and skill they had decorated the room in which the meeting was held. Among those present were Mr and Mrs Cronin Coltsmann and their children . . . The Right Reverend Dr Moriarty after officiating according to his custom in the poorhouse chapel in the morning, visited the little exhibition of toys, in which he takes a great interest.15

The introduction of the workhouse scene, based on the above, allowed us to explore the economic circumstances of the ordinary townspeople during the 1860s. The scene depicted the Christmas party preparations in Killarney workhouse and allowed us to introduce Bishop David Moriarty.16 Always a champion of the poor, Bishop Moriarty is probably best remembered today for his utterances against at least some members of the Fenians.17 The scene also featured a Victorian puppet show, operated by Mr. and Mrs. Cronin Coltsmann, as entertainment for the children in the workhouse. The dialogue between the characters in this scene referred to the distressed condition of the poor of Killarney. It was based on a number of newspaper accounts, including those briefly outlined below.

In September 1862, a year following the Queen’s visit to Killarney, the Reverend Dr. O’Connor spoke, before one Sunday mass, of the condition of Killarney’s poor. He described the misery, suffering, starvation and crowded conditions, of those inhabiting the laneways of the town. Killarney’s population was largely dependant on tourism and, as Dr. O’Connor stated, the people were mainly employed as boatmen, car-drivers and guides. In a bad tourist season they suffered enormously. With compassion, Dr. O’Connor remarked:

> God help them – their clothes are in pawn – their children are hungry – their wives are heartbroken and many of them, as has been told to me by a respectable hotel proprietor, go on the Lakes, to the best of his belief, without their breakfasts, and to the strangers they appear to be happy. My God! How it humiliates me when I see their misery and cannot relieve it, for we have not the means. How it crushes within me all hope for our unhappy country when I see young men wasting their manhood without any incentive to industry within their reach and hundreds of fine young women standing about their doors in listless idleness, because for them there is no work – no sort whatever of employment.18

A second newspaper account, from October 1863, described the state of the Killarney district following a month of “continuous downpours” and poor harvests. This referred to “the large groups of tradesmen and labourers that are found daily, standing idle, at the different corners of the streets”. It also alluded to “the occupants of hovels in the lanes whose condition consequent in the dearth of employment is that of pinching want”.19 Both of these newspaper accounts remarked upon the reluctance of the people to enter the workhouse. Dr O’Connor observed: “They will not break up their wretched homes and separate their little families as long as the remotest hope remains”.20

The final scene was staged in Muckross House, home of Major Henry Arthur Herbert and his young wife, Emily. It was based on a number of diary entries written by the Major’s father-in-law, Sir Edward Keane, while he was a guest at Muckross House. The aim of this scene was to introduce some of the pursuits and amusements experienced by those living on the estate at that time. In particular, the hunting and shooting activities, enjoyed by the gentlemen, were emphasised.

**MUCKROSS HOUSE**

Wednesday 6 January 1869: “A servants’ Ball came off which was kept up till 6.30 the next morning”.21

Thursday 7 January 1869: “Everybody very late, from the Ball last night – sat down to breakfast at 11.30”.22

Friday 8 January 1869: “A Xmas tree was made in the Drawing Room and covered with toys for the children of the labourers and neighbours – 103 children after a good tea at 4pm, had them distributed and then an exhibition of a magic lantern by the Reverend C.E. Wright”.23


Unfortunately we have no further information relating to the servants’ ball, which was held in Muckross House, at Little Christmas 1869. However, it appears to have been attended by those from both “above and below stairs”. The subject matter of the magic lantern show is also unknown to us. However, as the Reverend C.E. Wright, of Muckross Church, operated the apparatus, it may have had a religious, or at least a Christmas, flavour. Magic Lanterns played an important part in Victorian society. They were used to relay the latest news about world events and for educational purposes. Religious and Temperance societies also employed them in their work.25 It is interesting that the inmates of Listowel Workhouse were also entertained by a magic lantern show in January 1869.26 Sourcing a magic lantern for our Christmas Victorian drama at Muckross was a major cause of anxiety. Fortunately a chance remark revealed the existence of a working example in a colleague’s attic, complete with colourful Victorian lantern slides.27

Our Victorian drama took place in the Main Hall of Muckross House.
on December 13, 14 and 15, 2011. A cast of almost 50 people took part, in full Victorian dress. They performed to a packed audience, of almost 100 people, on each of the three nights. It would be wonderful to think that our Victorian drama made people aware of individuals and events that shaped our town so long ago. However, even if we were unsuccessful, we certainly had great fun trying!

Acknowledgements: We would like to thank the members of Killarney Youth Theatre, Dóchas Drama Group, Killarney and Opus 96 Chamber Choir, Tralee, for their enthusiastic participation in this Victorian Christmas re-enactment.

Endnotes
1 The Queen arrived in Killarney, by train from Dublin, on the evening of Monday August 26, 1861. She was accompanied by her husband Prince Albert, the Prince of Wales (later Edward VII), Prince Alfred and Princesses Alice and Helena. The royal party spent that night as guests of Viscount and Viscountess Castlerosse, at Killarney House. They spent the following two nights (August 27 & 28) at Muckross House as guests of the Herbert family. (Tralee Chronicle and Killarney Echo, August 30, 1861).
2 The topics discussed included: Victorian Lady Amateur Painters by Carla Briggs of UCD; Photography in the Victorian Era, by David Davison, Davison & Associates, Dublin; Killarney as a Victorian Tourist Resort by Donal Horgan, author; Queen Victoria’s Visit to Killarney by Patricia O’Hare, Trustees of Muckross House; and Victorian Country House Food by Regina Sexton of UCC. Apart from the last, a summary of the talks was published in the Muckross Newsletter, Issue 21, Autumn/Winter 2011, available from Muckross Research Library.
4 28 December.
6 Kerry Evening Post, January 3, 1866.
7 Kerry Evening Post, January 19, 1867.
8 This republican secret society was active in and around Killarney during the mid-1860s. A small scale rising took place in February 1867, which inspired panic among the gentry. (Ó Lúing, S. (1970): “Aspects of the Fenian Rising in Kerry, 1867 : 1. The Rising and its Background”, Journal of the Kerry Archaeological and Historical Society, No. 3, pp. 131-153).
9 Kerry Evening Post, January 23, 1867.
10 Ibid.
11 Tralee Chronicle and Killarney Echo, May 15, 1860.
12 Kerry Evening Post, April 19, 1865.
13 Kerry Evening Post, September 11, 1867.
14 Daniel Cronin Coltsmans of The Park, Killarney, married Helena Lyons in 1854. (King, J., op. cit., p. 74).
15 Kerry Evening Post, December 30, 1868.
19 Tralee Chronicle and Killarney Echo, September 9, 1862.
20 Tralee Chronicle and Killarney Echo, October 23, 1863.
21 Tralee Chronicle and Killarney Echo, September 9, 1862.
22 Diary of Sir Edward Keane, Wednesday January 6, 1869, Muckross Research Library.
23 Diary of Sir Edward Keane, Thursday January 7, 1869, Muckross Research Library.
24 Diary of Sir Edward Keane, Friday January 8, 1869, Muckross Research Library.
25 Diary of Sir Edward Keane, Friday January 18, 1869, Muckross Research Library.
27 Mr G.R. Browne JP provided a supper of currant loaf and tea for the inmates in Listowel Workhouse. He then amused them for several hours with a magic lantern show. (Kerry Evening Post, January 13, 1869).
28 We are very grateful to Mr Paul Curtis, of Mucros Bookbindery and Paper Conservation Workshop, Muckross House, Killarney, for supplying the magic lantern and slides.
James Franklin Fuller.

The Kerryman James Franklin Fuller is acknowledged as one of the great architects of the late 19th century. Despite the fact that he left a legacy of beautiful buildings as testimony to the quality of his architecture, he does not appear to have got the recognition or credit, which he deserves for his work.

James Franklin Fuller was born in 1835 at Nedanone near Sneem, County Kerry. He was the son of Thomas Harnett Fuller, (eldest son of Captain Edward Fuller of Beechmount, Kenmare) and Frances County Kerry. He was the third daughter of Francis Christopher Bland, of Derryquin of Captain Edward Fuller of Beechmount, Kenmare) and Frances.

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James then moved to Dublin, where he opened his own architectural practice at No. 179 Great Brunswick Street. In 1871 he became assistant to the Representative Church Body for the dioceses of Dublin, Glendalough, Kildare, Meath, Ossory, Ferns and Leighlin. This position he held for 42 years until his resignation in 1913 “on account of advancing years and failing health”.

In 1850 he was taken by a cousin of his father’s to a college in England with the ultimate intention of entering a profession. On leaving home he claimed that apart from his father and mother, he missed the local Parish Priest Fr. Walsh most of all. He often went coursing with the priest and described him as a “grand old man”. James spoke Irish with Fr. Walsh.

After spending some time in college in England, his uncle (Mr. Arthur Helps, K.C.B. who was also a popular author) arranged for him to enter into an apprenticeship with the well-known mechanical engineers, Summers, Day and Baldock at Southampton. James found the work hard, after about a year, he moved to London, where he joined the firm of Frederick William Porter a much respected architect. His first job with the firm was to assist in designing a new gaol for Bodmin in Cornwall. After serving his Articles, he worked briefly for a number of other London architects. The salary at the time ranged from 20-30 shillings per week. When not working he spent much of his free time visiting theatres and cathedrals.

On moving from London, he gained employment with Alfred Waterhouse a prominent architect in Manchester. His first assignment there was to design a new Courthouse for Manchester City. He was recommended for Fellowship of the Architects Institute by Alfred Waterhouse. Whilst working, in Manchester he joined the local Citizen Army. Here he organised a full Irish Regiment. When he later moved to Sheffield and subsequently to London, he continued with his membership of the Citizen Army. He joined the regular British Army at Chatham and hoped for an appointment to the Ordnance Corps. This did not materialise, the only position he was awarded was one of a “sapper” in the force. James was very unhappy about this and wrote a very derogatory feature in a magazine about the experience. In Sheffield he worked for the firm of Matthew Ellison. Whilst in London he worked for the firm of Henry Dawson.

He wrote regular features for magazines including Building News for which he received one guinea for each feature. He then turned to writing novels, these included John Orlebar, The Chronicles of Westerly, Cumbshire Folk and Billy. All of his novels sold quite well but there was little monetary reward for him.

He had married Helen, daughter of John Prospere Gouvion in 1860 (by whom he had two sons and two daughters). Having spent some time in London and the provinces (and now having a wife and children to support), he decided to return to Ireland. A vacancy was advertised for a District Architect under the Irish Ecclesiastical Commissioners in 1862. Despite there being 97 applicants for the position, he was successful in his application. He took up residence at Killeshandra. His duties related to the supervision of Church works in nine counties - stretching from Carlingford, County Louth to Belmullet, County Mayo. He held the post for eight years until the Dis-establishment of the Church. He received a lump sum payment on the termination of his employment.

James then moved to Dublin, where he opened his own architectural practice at No. 179 Great Brunswick Street. In 1871 he became architect to the Representative Church Body for the dioceses of Dublin, Glendalough, Kildare, Meath, Ossory, Ferns and Leighlin. This position he held for 42 years until his resignation in 1913 “on account of advancing years and failing health”. He was granted a retirement allowance of £200 per annum. In 1873 he was appointed architect to St. Patrick’s Cathedral, Dublin. In addition to his work with the Church, he was architect to the Bencher’s of Kings Inns and to The National Board of Education. In 1912 he was appointed assessor to the Ballsbridge Carnegie Library competition.

His reputation as an architect spread very quickly. James’ first major contract was to design Annamoe House in County Sligo for Mr. Charles O’Hara. His next assignment was the construction of Mount Falcon for Mr. Ultred Knox. He designed Churches at the following locations: Artharstown, County Wexford, Rattoo, County Kerry, Killadrone, County Fermanagh, Durrow, Donaghpatrick and...
his designs include a mansion for Judge Wakely, Coolavin House for The McDermott and a residence for “Boss” Croker at Stillsorgan. Farmleigh House (for the Guinness family) in the Phoenix Park is also credited to him. The infamous Lord Leitrim was also a client of his, after a fairly strained relationship he designed his residence at Lough Ryne. James was also responsible for the restoration work for Barronstown House in Mullingar and Harristown House in County Kildare (for Mr. La Touche). He was awarded the commission to design Tinnakilly, County Wicklow by Captain Robert Halpin. Captain Halpin had been the skipper of the Great Eastern, when it successfully laid the trans-Atlantic cable from Valentia to Newfoundland and later laid shorter cables at different locations in the world. In recognition of his work, Captain Halpin had received a very generous sum from the British Government, which he used to construct Tinnakilly House.

Several large residences in County Kerry were designed by James Franklin Fuller, Cahirmene House, Killarney, (for Mr. Henry Herbert), Derryquin Castle near Sneem for the Blennerhassett, Burnham House in Dingle (for Sir John Columb), Garnish Lodge (for the 3rd Earl of Dunraven), Great Southern Hotel, Kenmare and Parknasilla Hotel (for Great Southern Railway) and Glebe House, Valentia Island. Public buildings in Kerry included New Church at Rattoo, a new Cable Station at Waterville (for the Commercial Cable Company), a Memorial Fountain at Waterville - in memory of James Butler, the Kerry Protestant Hall, Ashe Street, Tralee and a Gate Lodge and two wings for St Finian’s Hospital, Killarney.

Furthermore he designed additions and alterations to the following: Ballyseedy Castle (for Mr. Blennerhassett), Burnham House in Dingle (for the 4th Baron Ventry), Callinacery House, Milltown, (for Mr. M.R. Leeson Marshall, DL), Derreen House (for the 5th Marquess of Lansdowne, Glenbeigh Towers (also known as Winn’s Folly for Mr. Rowland Winn), The Church of Ireland, Killarney and three sets of additions to St Finian’s Hospital, Killarney.

While engaged in the latter assignment he was also busy designing and supervising the construction of the present Kilem ore Abbey for Mr. Henry. The stone for this building was quarried at Dalkey Hill, County Dublin and brought by sea from there to Letterfrack, County Galway. His next major commission was to design Ashford Castle at Cong for Lord Ardilaun. Following this he designed a mansion for the same client at St Anne’s, Clontarf, Dublin. Ashford Castle stands out as an excellent example of Fuller’s architectural genius.

Apart from architecture, he was very interested in genealogy, heraldry and antiquarian subjects. He was a member of the Kerry Archaeological Association from 1908 to 1912.

In 1916 he published his reminiscences entitled Omniana - the autobiography of an Irish octogenarian. Much of this publication recounts his early days in England, it does not do justice to his Irish works and achievements.

During the course of his career in Ireland, he carried on his business from No. 179 Great Brunswick Street, Dublin. Here, he ran his office in the most simplistic business lines imaginable. He held the view that “the parting goodwill of a client is an asset of much value”. He had several pupils and assistants in his practice, amongst these were George F. Beckett, Laurence A. McDonnell and Richard G. Thompson. In Dublin he resided (with his family) at No. 5 Sydenham Road, Dundrum from 1872-1898 and at No. 51 Eglington Road, Donnybrook from 1898 until his death in 1924. After inheriting the estate at Glashnacree upon his father’s death in 1886, he maintained a keen interest in his Kerry home. In 1913 he sold the two estates which he had in Kerry, totaling 1,400 acres to the Congested District Board.

James Franklin Fuller lived into his 89th year, retaining all of his faculties and mental vigor to the end. His longevity he ascribed to a sound constitution, which had not been undermined by excess and to keeping his bedroom window open at night throughout the year. He ate only two meals a day, drank mostly water and confined his pipe smoking to the period after dinner. James died at his home on Eglington Road after a few hours illness on December 8, 1924. He was survived by a son and a daughter and left an estate of £32,216.

He was truly a remarkable genius and left a legacy, which continues to stand the test of time. Many of his architectural works are adorned with small towers and castellated features. He is acknowledged as Ireland’s foremost Victorian architect of the Gothic style of architecture. He once described himself as a “Conservative Nationalist Protestant”.

**Endnotes**


Many thanks to Mr. Michael Lynch, Archivist, Kerry County Library, Tralee for all his help and assistance.
MÁIRÍN CREGAN
James G. Ryan

Máirín Cregan was a Killorglin woman whose interesting life included republican activism, and a successful career as a writer of children’s books who “was a writer of exceptional talent who enjoyed success in her lifetime but has been all but forgotten”.1 She was born Mary Cregan in Killorglin on March 27, 1891, the second of four daughters of Morgan Cregan (a stone-mason originally from Newcastle West, County Limerick) and Ellen O’Shea. She was a child of the Gaelic Revival: An interest in the Irish language and heritage was encouraged by her mother, Ellen who “talked a good deal about Douglas Hyde and the language movement”.2 It was also encouraged by her teacher “Una Nic Coluim, a sister of Fionam Mac Coluim, a mauinteo taisteal for Connradh na Gaeilge” (who) “definitely influenced my young mind towards the language and Irish history”.3 Local support in learning to speak Irish (with the encouragement of her mother) included an un-named shopkeeper in Killorglin, and Fr. Paddy Browne (later President of National University of Ireland, Galway). Through her associations with these individuals, she was “requisitioned for singing at Volunteer Concerts”, which she notes as her first active association with the republican movement. These concerts were “one of the chief ways of raising money for arms”. Her last appearance was at a “Grand Concert” for the 1st Battalion, Dublin Regiment of the Irish Volunteers on April 9, 1916, just two weeks before the Rising.

At this stage she was very actively involved in the republican movement and in the days before Easter week she was sent by Séan McDermott to Tralee with “automatics and ammunition” for delivery to the local volunteers. Her local contact was Fr. Joe Breen, then CC in Tralee. She put her in contact with Austin Stack and Paddy Cahill at the Skating Rink, where they were preparing munitions. There she handed over “a violin case full of automatics and ammunition” together with some letters from Séan McDermott. Although she was not aware of the contents, these letters were instructions for the erection of a wireless apparatus to get in contact with the Aud, the arms-ship carrying Roger Casement. She spent that night in the house of Pearle Veale. This account is validated by Paddy Cahill in a letter attached to her submission to the Bureau of Military History in 1950.

The next day, while home in Killorglin, she heard about an incident in which a car carrying four Irish Volunteers, on their way to meet the Aud, had lost its way and gone over the quay in Ballykissane. Three of the occupants were drowned. Máirín was involved in helping the sole survivor Tommy McInerney. She later published an account of this incident.4

Returning to Dublin proved difficult as trains were not running due to the Rising. When she eventually did get back, it was to find that most of her group of friends had been imprisoned. These included Jim Ryan (who was later to become her husband) and two of his sisters. One of the results of her activities was that she was dismissed from her post in St. Louis Rathmines because some of the parents protested “against their children being taught by a friend of these rebels and herself strongly suspected of having been mixed up in it”5. She found a new teaching position in Ballyshannon and later (Sept 1917) in the Dominican High School in Portstewart, where she remained until she was married in July 1919.

During the 1916 Rising her husband, Dr. Jim Ryan had been the medical officer in the General Post Office and attended Pearse, Connolly and others. His account of the Rising has been published.6 He was imprisoned on several occasions for his republican activities but had remained an active volunteer. In 1918 he was elected as Sinn Fein MP for South Wexford. The family home was in Tomcoole, near Taghmon. Several members of the family (as noted above) were actively involved in republican activities. He graduated in Medicine; by 1919 he was a General Practitioner in Wexford town, where Máirín went to live following their marriage. Their house was regularly raided by the British Army in pursuit of her husband. Her first son Eoin Ryan (later Senator and prominent Fianna Fail politician) was born in June 1920. While living in Wexford she joined Cumann na mBan and was again involved in local republican activities. In February 1921, following an ambush of a British Army convoy outside Wexford, six prominent Republicans were ordered to display copies of a proclamation of Martial Law in the windows of their houses. Máirín refused to comply and as a result she was imprisoned, brought before a court-martial and fined £50 for “refusal to exhibit a Martial Law Proclamation”. When released with seven days to pay the fine, she decided (in consultation with her husband who was imprisoned in Kilworth at the time) to sell their...
which was performed as an interlude play between
and the Tinker
was broadcast on Radio Eireann in September 1943, and
Her other children’s plays included
were
success as an author was in stories for children. Her major works
Mairin Cregan’s writing career began during the 1930s. Her main
retirement in 1965.

After the establishment of the Free State, Jim and Máirín bought
Kindlestown House in Delgany, County Wicklow which was to be
her home for the rest of her life. There she had a daughter Nuala
(now Colgan) and another son Seamus O’Riain, who became a
surgeon. Her husband Jim was a founder member of Fianna Fáil
and held a range of ministerial roles in several governments until his
retirement in 1965.

Mairin Cregan’s writing career began during the 1930s. Her main
success as an author was in stories for children. Her major works
were *Old John* and *Rathina*. *Old John* was published in the USA
by MacMillan in 1936 and in the United Kingdom by Allen and
Unwin in 1937. It is a fairy story based around the adventures of
the animal companions of the titular Old John. It borrows heavily
on the folklore and traditions of her native Kerry and is based in
the county. The book was very successful and was republished
in many languages. An edition of the book was also published in
Ireland by Browne and Nolan in Dublin in 1938. Also in 1938 an
Irish language version of the book, entitled *Sean Eoin* was published
by the Government Stationery Office, with translation by Tomás
O’Faoláin and illustrations by Jack B. Yeats. The book continued to
enjoy success up to around 1960.

*Rathina* was published by George, Allen and Unwin in London in
1942. This book was based on the fortunes of a rural Irish family,
the Donovans, and was loosely based on her own family life. It was
also published in the USA by McMillan and also translated into
several languages. In 1943 it won the Downey Award in the USA
as “the finest children’s book in the Catholic tradition”. The prize
was accepted on her behalf by her old colleague Robert Brennan,
who was then the Ambassador to the United States. He formally
presented the prize to her in 1945 on his return to Ireland after the
war. It was also serialised by the BBC (Belfast) over seven weeks in
1946, using a cast of 25 actors. 6

Her other children’s plays included *Seamus and the Robber* which
was broadcast on Radio Eireann in September 1943, and *Seamus
and the Tinker* which was performed as an interlude play between
performances of two ballets in the Father Mathew Hall in Dublin in
June 1938. 7 She also published many other short stories in different
periodicals.

Her writing for adult audiences included many articles on history
and current affairs for periodicals. She wrote two plays including
*Hunger Strike* which highlighted the perspective of the women
behind the men on hunger strikes. It was based on her experience
of her husband’s involvement in such a strike in 1923. This play was
published by M. H. Gill in 1933 and also broadcast on Radio Eireann
on May 5, 1936. Another play was *Curlew’s Call* (1940). She also
wrote articles based on her own and her husband’s experiences in
1916, including *Carrying the Message in Easter Week: a courier’s
thrilling story*. 8

All of Mairin Cregan’s letters, draft writings and other associated
materials have been donated by the family to the National Library of
Ireland and a full catalogue is available on their website. She is one
of several Irish writers included in a project “Irish Women Writers
of Children’s Literature 1870-1940” conducted by Dr. Gerardine
Meaney and Susan Cahill in University College Dublin. 9 Mairin
Cregan died in Dublin in November 1975.

Endnotes
1 National library of Ireland News No. 18 (2004).
2 Submission to Bureau of Military History (ref. WS416 – Military
Archives, Dublin).
3 Listed on the 1911 Census (April 1911) as Teacher, aged 20-Mary
Ellen Cregan (sic).
4 Cregan, M., “The Rush to meet the Arms Ship”, in the *Irish
Press*, April 24, 1933.
& Nolan, Dublin.
6 Irish Press, November 5, 1946, (article relates Jim Ryan’s
experiences as courier to Cork, although he is never identified as
the courier).
7 Irish Press, June 20, 1938.
9 http://ivrla.ucd.ie/ivrla/research
ANNUAL HERITAGE AWARD 2011

The Kerry Archaeological and Historical Society’s “Kerry Heritage Award” for 2011 was presented to Valerie Bary in recognition of her professional studies of the county’s heritage. Born in New Zealand, she enjoyed listening to her Kerry Granny’s stories of her forefathers in Ireland, which included McCarthy More, the last Earl of Clancarre, and the Cromwellian Col. John Godfrey. She married Brian Bary, a marine scientist, and they resided at various times in England, Scotland and Canada.

In 1970 they moved to Kerry, where she joined the Kerry Archaeological and Historical Society and was until recently a very active member of its council. She contributed articles to its Journal and almost all editions of its Magazine as well as presenting two very well attended public lectures. Valerie inherited the Godfrey papers and willingly made them available to students and researchers.

She is also a member of the Irish Georgian Society and An Taisce. Valerie carried out a detailed survey of de-consecrated Church of Ireland Churches in Kerry at the request of An Taisce. Her book, Houses of Kerry is a must for anyone interested in the history of the older dwellings in the county.

SIR ROGER CASEMENT’S HAT AND SWORD ON DISPLAY IN KERRY FOR THE FIRST TIME

Helen O’Carroll

A display of Sir Roger Casement’s hat and sword in Kerry County Museum was launched by Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Mr Jimmy Deenihan, TD on Monday June 18, 2012. In 1912, Casement’s report on the brutal treatment of the Amazonian Indian labourers working in the rubber plantations in Peru was published. The previous year, his work was recognised with a knighthood and on that occasion he wore this hat and sword.

Now on loan to the National Museum of Ireland, the sword and hat have been in the possession of the London Metropolitan Police since Casement was captured in 1916 on Banna Strand, County Kerry, bringing weapons for the Easter Rising. With the support and cooperation of the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and the National Museum of Ireland, they went on display in Kerry County Museum for six months.

OBITUARY

Pádraig Murphy (1931-2012)

Muinteer, Gaeilgoirt dílis a bea Pádraig.

Pádraig was born in Camp into a family with a strong tradition in Education and a lifelong interest and outstanding achievement in Gaelic Football. His interest in the Gaelic Athletic Association (G.A.A.) started in his native Camp and continued at all levels, winning many honours with Kerry throughout his life. Pádraig’s lifelong friend Micheál Ó Muircheartaigh in his autobiography recalls great memories with Pádraig in Scoil Isagain, Ballyvourney.

His teaching career led him to Listellick National School where he was principal for many years. Pádraig instilled in his pupils a great love for the Irish language and for all things Gaelic, history and especially sport. He was a true exponent of the well known Sean Fhocail “Mol an Oige agus tocafaidh si”. 

Pádraig was respected and much loved by teachers, pupils and the local community in Listellick. He was president of Na Gaeil G.A.A. Club where he enjoyed the games, meeting with friends and the many activities. A great supporter of Góir na nGaeil, he became involved with “Probus” on his retirement. His love of history led him to enjoy the lectures of the Kerry Archaeological and Historical Society.

Pádraig will be greatly missed by all who knew him in a long and fruitful life.

Ni bheidh a leithéid ann arís.

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam dilís.

Kathleen Browne
CONTRIBUTOR’S LIST

Isabel Bennett is an archaeologist and curator of Musaeum Chorca Dhuibhne, Béal an Phéaraigh. She edits both the Journal of the Kerry Archaeological and Historical Society and the annual Excavations bulletin.

Tracy Collins is from Limerick City and a graduate of the Department of Archaeology University College Cork. She is an archaeologist and company director of Aegis Archaeology Limited. She is currently a board member of the Institute of Archaeologists of Ireland and is its representative on the archaeology committee of the Royal Irish Academy. She lives in Kenmare with her archaeologist-husband Frank Coyne.

Dr. Helena Daly is a medical doctor who practices and lives in Dublin. Marie O’Sullivan is an archaeologist and editor of this magazine. Both Helena and Marie are grand-nieces of the late Michael Collins.

Con dennehy is a native of Currow and has contributed to a number of national and international publications. He is the Editor of Outlook Publications (Tralee Outlook, Killarney Outlook, Sliaabh Luachra Outlook). A former journalist with Kerry’s Eye, he is also an accomplished photographer. As a journalist he has won a number of awards and for more than a decade produced the Currow/Currans Anois is Artis magazine.

Dan Graham was born in Dingle. He attended Dingle Christian Brothers School, St. Patrick’s Teacher Training College, Dublin, University College Dublin and Trinity College Dublin. Dan has now retired from his position as Principal of Meelick National School, County Clare. He has published articles on Dingle’s Maritime History in various journals and periodicals both in Ireland and the Isle of Man. Dan contributed an essay on Dingle’s maritime history for publication in Traditional Boats of Ireland, which was published in 2008 by Collins Press, Cork. He has also lectured on Dingle’s maritime history at various conferences in Ireland and the Isle of Man.

Dr. Arnold Horner was a Geography lecturer at UCD until his recent retirement. Mapping Sligo in the early nineteenth century was published by Wordwell in November 2011.

Dr. John Knightly has been involved in local history projects in the mid-Kerry region and is a member of the Kerry Archaeological and Historical Society and the Irish Georgian Society. He is particularly interested in the history of the landed gentry of Kerry, who were the subject of his doctorate and in the history and evolution of historic designed landscapes

Claudia König is a historian and the Education, Community & Outreach Officer of Kerry County Museum. She has studied at University Leipzig, Germany and at University College Dublin. Claudia is a member of the Friends of Medieval Dublin and has a special interest in Vikings, medieval towns and archaeology.

Robert McGuire. BA, MA Archaeology, University College Cork, PGCE, University of East London. His MA thesis in Buildings Archaeology is entitled “A study of the tower houses within the later medieval lordships of Co Kerry”. He is a member of the Castlesland and District Culture and Heritage Society.

Bryan MacMahon is a regular contributor to The Kerry Magazine and other historical journals. His most recent publications are Ascend or Die: Richard Crosbie, Pioneer of Balloon Flight (The History Press Ireland, 2010) and Ballyheigue: Our Christian Heritage, which was launched in September 2012.

Seáin Moraghan is a Dublinler living near Killorglin. He has lived and worked in Kerry for 20 years. He recently annotated and published a new edition of Charles Smith’s 18th century study, The Ancient and Present State of the Kingdom of Kerry (Bona Books, 2010).

Donal Murphy holds a Masters Degree from UCC and an Advanced Diploma in Local History from Oxford University. He has published articles on historical themes in both Irish and English.

Michael C. O’Connor is a retired college lecturer, who holds a Diploma in Local History from University College Cork. He is a Failte Ireland approved tour guide. Daniel McCarthy is Michael’s nephew. He is currently studying for a B.A. Degree in History with the Open University.

Éamonn Ó Braonín, teagascóir i gColáiste Mhuire gan Smáil, MA sa Ghualieghe. Rugadh agus togadh in Oiléin Ciaraí &. An-suim aige sa bhéaloidheas agus sa stáir aitíuí, baint aige chomh maith le Féile Drámaíochta an Oiléin, taispeáint drámaíochta le haghaidh bunsoileanna. Chabhragh na foinisi i gcàirtlann na leabharlainne i d’Tí Li go móir leis.

Tommy Frank O’Connor lives in Tralee, County Kerry. A novelist, story writer, dramatist, essayist and poet, inspired by his Sliaabh Luachra background, six of his books are published. His stories and poems appear in literary presses and anthologies worldwide. His work is also performed on RTE Radio and on BBC Radio 4. He conducts Creative Writing Residencies in Schools, Libraries, Prisons and Colleges, and has served as Writer in Residence for Kerry for periods during 2007-2008 and 2010-2011. He completes short-term residencies such as Bealtaine, Creativity in Older Age, and mentors authors in the development of their work. He is Clan File of the O’Connor Kerry Clan.

Elizabeth O’Donoghue/Ross is a Director on the Executive Board of Clans of Ireland and a member of the International Society of Genetic Genealogists. She is a regular contributor to The O’Donoghue Society Journal and administrator of their yDNA Project as well as the Munster Irish DNA Project. She holds a BA degree in Philosophy from Marian College, USA. Elizabeth, her husband Tighe and family have lived in Kerry for over 25 years overlooking Lough Guittane, with the Lakes of Killarney and the battlements of Ross Castle visible in the distance.

Jude O’Gorman is a qualified librarian with an MA in Social History. She is currently employed as a seasonal guide for the Office of Public Works. In the off-season she works as a volunteer at Kerry County Museum.

Patricia O’Hare has been employed by the Trustees of Muckross House as Research and Education Officer since 1995. Her qualifications are as follows: MA - Archaeology (UCD), Higher Diploma in Irish Folklore (UCD), MA Museum Studies (Leicester University). She is currently in the final stages of completing a PhD in the Department of Irish Folklore, University College Dublin.


Dr. Jim Ryan is son of Eoin Ryan, and grandson of Mairin Cregan. He is a consultant biologist living in Dublin. Jim is also a keen family historian and founder of Flyleaf Press which publishes genealogy guides and references including a Guide to Tracing Kerry Ancestors.
KERRY PUBLICATIONS OCTOBER 2011–SEPTEMBER 2012

This list includes publications about Kerry, relating to Kerry and by Kerry Authors received by Kerry Library during the period October 2011-September 2012


Ardfert Central National School (2012): Ardfert through the centuries [DVD], Ardfert N.S., County Kerry.


Fitzgibbon, P. (2012): The Road to Gortaírisliog, Original Writing, Dublin.

Foley, C. Dr. (2012): Irish traditional step dancing in North Kerry: a contextual and structural analysis, The North Kerry Literary Trust, Listowel, County Kerry.


The Irish Film Institute and BIFF Productions, (2011): The O’Kalem Collection 1910-1915, Irish Film Institute, Dublin.


Kerry Folklore / Béaloideas Chiarraí (2012): Memories: Céiliúradh- Beatha Chiarraí Theas / Celebrating South Kerry Life, Béaloideas Chiarraí, Caherciveen, County Kerry.


MacMahon, B. (2012): *Ballyheigue - our christian heritage*, Ballyheigue Parish History and Heritage Group, County Kerry.


St Clare’s National School (2012): *St Clare’s Girls National School*, St Clare’s N.S., Kenmare.

Staff of Bon Secours Hospital, Tralee and Volunteers of the Recovery Haven (2012): *Caringly cooked: recipes to cherish*, Bon Secours Hospital, Tralee, County Kerry.


Ashford Castle, Cong, County Mayo.

Glenbeigh Towers - Wynne’s Folly.

St. Patrick’s Cathedral, Dublin.

Burnham House Dingle now known as Colaiste Ide.

Cable Station Waterville.