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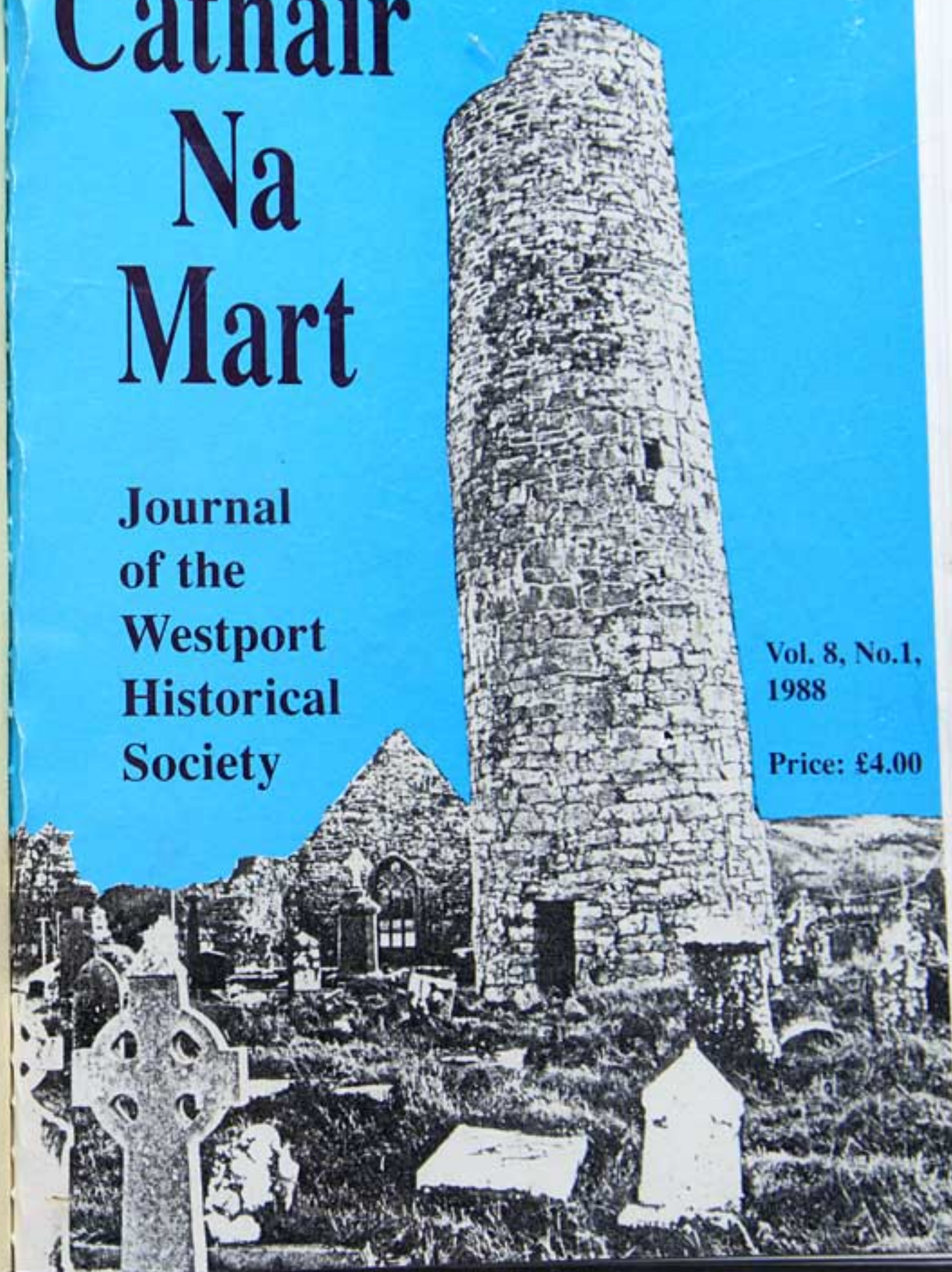
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# Cathair Na Mart

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of the  
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Historical  
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### **Please Help Westport Heritage Centre**

Support is urgently needed for Westport Heritage Centre. Premises at Westport Quay have been donated to Westport Historical Society by the Harbour Board, but funds are required for their restoration. These premises will house a museum and exhibition area, together with an area for research into family history. Fund-raising has begun with a successful Church Gate Collection in September, and application has been made to national and international agencies. It is certain that this centre will be of considerable benefit to the Westport area, so please show your appreciation of the project by handing a subscription to any committee member of Westport Historical Society.

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## AUGHAGOWER AND ITS PATRICIAN SITES AND CONNECTIONS

by Brian Mannion

Aughagower today, even though it is a small parish, can lay claim to being one of the few parishes, or the only parish, that has been the site of a parish church ever since St. Patrick's time. It was a place of importance for over a thousand years and it is mentioned eight times in Knox's *History of the County of Mayo*.

Aughagower has always been associated with St. Patrick and it is believed that St. Patrick spent the winter of 440 and 442 there, ending his stay by spending forty days in prayer on Croagh Patrick and spending the Easter of 441 with Bishop Sinach in Aghagower. Many people today will ask, why Aghagower?

There are two very good reasons, firstly Aughagower was a place of importance with a chieftain's residence. The town of Westport did not exist for another thousand years. Secondly, the chieftain not alone became a Christian, but was made a bishop and his two children were also converted. (See Dr. d'Alton's account below) This I think was unique. It would follow that the chieftain's household and subjects would follow their leader's example. This would be a very happy situation for St. Patrick and his missionary work. In such a situation, St. Patrick could visit various places to preach and baptize, and return to Aughagower to travel to a different area. It would also leave St. Patrick in a position to send out some of his priests or bishops while he himself supervised other important work at Aughagower.

From the *Tripartite Life of Saint Patrick*<sup>1</sup> we learn that as St. Patrick moved about on his missionary work, he had with him a similar household to that of a provincial king. This is very important information, for somehow the impression is given that St. Patrick working alone, converted people, built churches, blessed wells and baptized. This, one man could never have done. He certainly supervised the work of Christianizing and church building, but delegated work to his staff who travelled with him, each with his or her own job to do and skilled in that job.

The following is the catalogue of his household as given in the *Tripartite*:-

Sechnall, his bishop (episcop).  
Mochta, his priest (saccart).  
Bishop Erc, his judge (breithem).  
Bishop Mac Cairthinn, his champion (trenfer).  
Benen, his psalmist (salmchetlaig).  
Coeman of Cell Riada, his chamberlain (maccoem).  
Sinell of Cell Dareis, his bell-ringer (astire).  
Atheen of Both Domnaig, his cook (coice).  
Presbyter Mescan of Domnach Mescaín at Fochain, his brewer (scaoire).  
Presbyter Bescna of Domnach Dala, his chaplain, or rather his sacristan (sacart meisi).  
Presbyter Catan and Presbyter Acan, his two attendants at table (da foss).  
Odran of Disert Odraín in Hui Failgi, his charioteer (ara). [Totmeal would be dead at this time.]  
Presbyter Manach, his fire-woodman (fer connadaig).  
Rottan, his cowherd (buachaill).



denied her rights because she was a "mere Irishwoman", and as such not entitled to the protection of English law. What the decision was we do not know; but this lawsuit shows that the Archbishop let his see lands to middlemen who were Erenachs or stewards of church property.

The income from these see lands went to the Archbishop, and no doubt there were other lands assigned for the maintenance of the P.P., or the Perpetual Vicar as he was then called. His income was probably not large and required to be supplemented, for there is a Papal Letter dated 1440 in which the Pope gives two years' indulgence to pilgrims visiting Croaghpatrick and giving alms for the repair of the chapel on the summit. There it is also stated that the offerings given by pilgrims to Croaghpatrick also kept up the parish church at Aughagower. When the suppression of monasteries came, neither parish nor episcopal property was spared, and it was at Aughagower in 1595 that Sir Richard Bingham dictated terms of peace to the local chiefs.

So for over one thousand years after St Patrick's time Aughagower was the capital of Umhall. This territory corresponds to the baronies of Burrishoole and Murrisk and includes the islands of Clew bay. Westport town did not exist during that period; where it stands today was then an open field. The old village or small town of Aughagower was not situated where it is today. Local legend gives its site as west of the present village. This can be accepted as a fact, as chieftains always had their forts on high ground. A small fort on Michael Basquil's land is, in my opinion, a surviving part of the old fortifications.

However, the site of the Patrician settlement has always been where it is today. This is evident from the wells which had always fairy and pagan cults associated with them and were later Christianised. That Aughagower was situated west of the present village is further proved by the name of a small townland on which the late John Duffy lived, which is now owned by Tommie Derrig. The name of this townland is Creggannaseer – the Hillock of the Craftsmen. This most certainly refers to the tradesmen who erected the abbey and round tower. These men would have been journeymen and would have set up huts or some kind of living quarters while the abbey and round tower were being constructed.

A question was asked recently as to why there is not more information on Aughagower for that period from St Patrick's time to the coming of the Normans. It is possible that the records were destroyed. I would also think that Aughagower took a very independent line and was almost a law unto itself. This was to be expected as the chieftain's authority would be maintained when he became a bishop and would be inherited by his successors. Also its very close connections with St Patrick, would I feel, give that community an air of importance. That they did not accept being included in the diocese of Tuam and wished to be linked with Armagh bears this out. That this dispute had to be settled by Rome gives some idea of Aughagower's independence. That the de Burgos had two castles so close to Aughagower shows again its importance. The abbey and round tower proclaim the same.

This concludes the general history of Aughagower which I felt was necessary for the readers in order that they might have an understanding and appreciation of its Patrician sites and connections which are the subject of this article.

## PATRICIAN MONUMENTS

In my 25" Drawing No. 1, I show the position of the various monuments and sites around or adjacent to the Church:-

A *Labba Patrick* (Patrick's Bed). It is supposed to be a place where St Patrick rested. My own opinion is that it was a hut or tent erected for shelter and privacy, and used only during the day as a working place. There must have been several such shelters to house the whole entourage. St Patrick would spend his nights in Sinach's Residence.

B *Tobernandechoaun* (The Well of the Deacons). Perhaps it dates to St Patrick's time, perhaps it is much later when there was an abbey and bishop in Aughagower. In the *Book of Armagh*<sup>2</sup> we find a reference to 'Aughagower where bishops dwell.'

C *Dawach Patrick* (Patrick's Vat or Tub). We can take it that this well was used by St Patrick as a washing place.

These three monuments were places of pilgrimage up till recent times. They have recently been most tastefully restored.

D *Templenafiacal* (The Temple of the Teeth). This is the remains of a small house. No factual history is available as to what its function was or how it came by its name. There are legends but none of them seem credible so I won't give them here. For one thing, it does not date from St Patrick's time, though it could easily be a replacement for an earlier building. That it has a name and is shown on OS maps means it was important. Old maps show Togher Patrick running 20 yards from its eastern gable.

I have refrained from giving detailed descriptions of these monuments. I consider they are worth a visit by anyone interested. The round tower and ruined abbey are also of interest.

E *Leacht Tomaltaigh*

This ancient monument is on the south edge of Togher Patrick, in John Foy's land in the townland of Gorteen along the Gorteen Aughagower townland boundary.



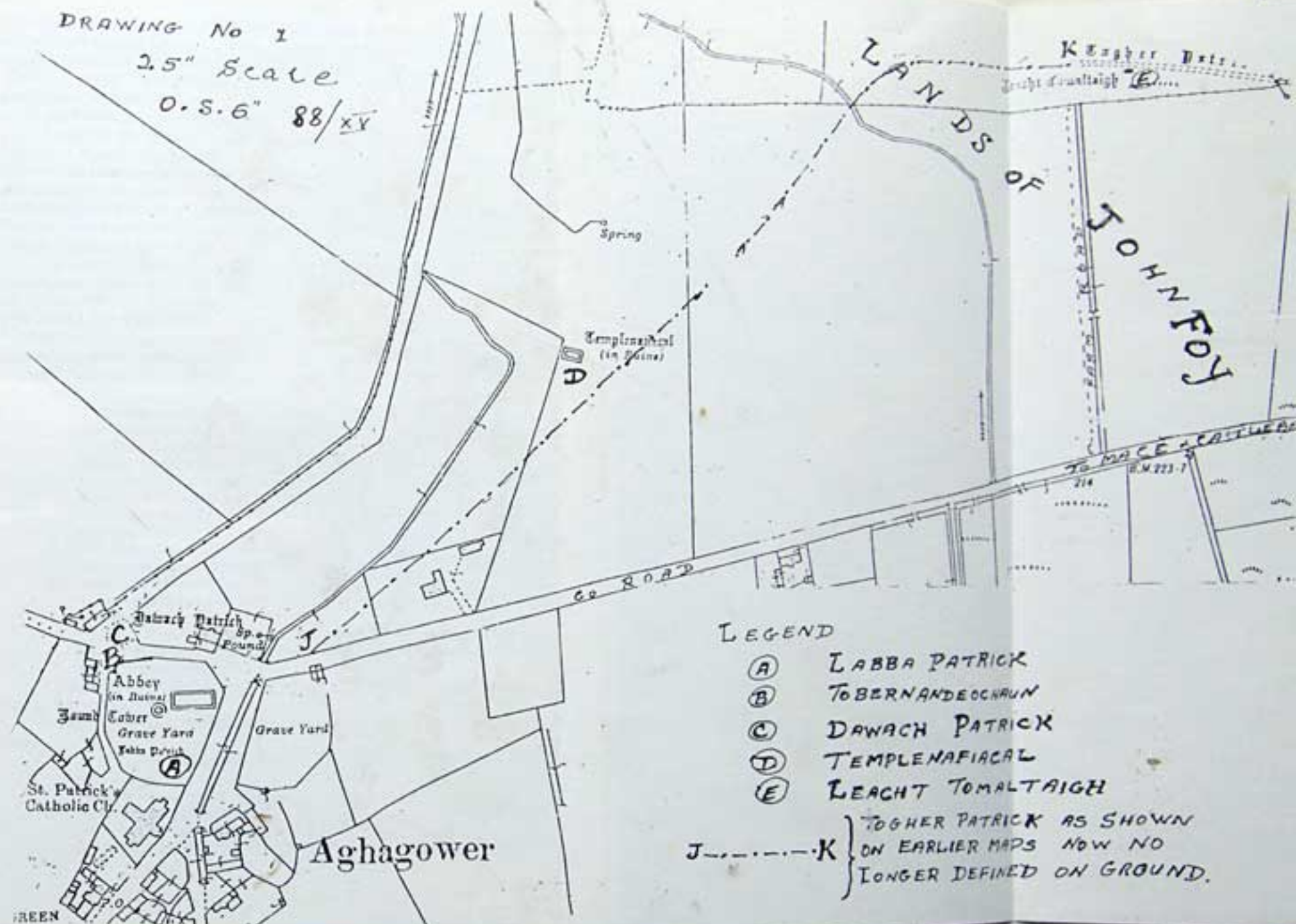
*Leacht Tomaltaigh. Site of Togher Patrick shown between white marking rods.*



I fault it under two headings – in both I apply common sense. First, in all legends where St Patrick punished offenders, he always gave them a chance to repent, and in any case the punishment was too great for the offence. Secondly, if one was to accept that the man met his end as a result of trying to belittle St Patrick, I don't think the local people would erect a monument to his memory, nor would it remain for over 1500 years. In O'Donovan's letters, we find a different explanation. He says Leacht Tomaltaigh was erected to commemorate a great man who came to laugh and scoff at the folly of the pilgrims, and was struck down by God.

The small difference between the charioteer's name and that of the leacht is easily explained by poor pronunciation over the years. The first map record would be in the 1820s. So for almost 1400 years the name was passed on from generation to generation. But the story of what it commemorated was lost, to be later superseded by a story thought up, perhaps, by someone to entertain some group on some jolly occasion, maybe after a visit to the nearest poteen still.

10





in ancient times and even down to my own day. Indeed in ancient times the person may not have had any other name. Many of these names formed the basis of many of today's surnames. A man who was bald could in those days be called, as is the case today, 'baldy'. This translated to gaelic would be Totmaeltech. This word said quickly or in poor diction would result in the t sound being lost. Not a great error in word of mouth history over a period of over 1300 years.

As regards the claim of Totmael's grave being in Murrisk, there is no local tradition or legend. I checked this out with the two best local historians in the area. Glospatrick graveyard and townland get their names from the stream 'Glas' that runs through the townland. To further strengthen my argument against the Murrisk claim, the old graveyard of Glospatrick is three-quarters of a mile beyond the Croagh Patrick ascent point. In other words Saint Patrick and his retinue had passed Croagh Patrick and were on their way to Louisburgh.

The Leacht Tomaltaigh monument today is in a collapsed condition as my picture shows. I hope that as a result of this article, restoration work will be carried out without delay on this unique and, what should be, a most treasured site.

### THE WELL OF STRINGLE

Of all Patrician sites in the Aughagower area, none has been as disputed as this famous well. No two writers agree as to its location. John Keville who was Principal in Lankill National School and who wrote on the history of Aughagower states the following:-

The famous well of Stringle is in the townland of Triangle off the main road from Westport to Ballinrobe and near the mearing of the two parishes Killawalla and Aughagower. It is about 300 yards on the Westport side of Mrs. Gibbons' house, and about 100 yards from the road on the same side as Dr Healy's Well. It is at the foot of a wide hill. Dr Healy's Well is at the foot of the same hill on the farther side, less than a quarter of a mile away. The site of the traditional Well of Stringle is now partly covered by a 5 ft. wall, separating Mrs. Gibbons' land on the Ballinrobe side from Frank Knight's land on the Westport side. Embedded in the ground on Mrs. Gibbons' side of the wall are a few large stones or flags, such as one may find at any well. Standing up against the wall, again on Mrs. Gibbons' side of it, and immediately beside the dried-up well, is a large irregular flag. It is 5 ft. in length, 3 1/2 ft. high, and varies from 8" to 11" in thickness. It is a reddish sort of stone.

About 20 yards on the Westport side of the traditional well is a circular pond about 11 yards in diameter. It has nothing to do with the well, and receives its water from a different hill.<sup>3</sup>

H T Knox in his *History of the County of Mayo* gives the location of Stringle Well as Bellaburke.

Dr Healy in his book *The Life and Writings of St Patrick* gives his account as follows:-

Northwards still went Patrick, between the lakes to Tobur Stringle, 'in the wilderness.' This is the place now called Triangle, a corruption of the ancient name. It seems Patrick encamped there over two Sundays, baptising and instructing the people. But it is not stated that he erected a church at Tobur Stringle, either because it was a wilderness, or he could not procure a suitable site. From Tobur Stringle he went to visit a place further north called Raithin.



Returning from Raithin to Stringle Well, Patrick left Magh Carra, and went further westward to the boundary of Uall, at Achad Fobair (Aghagower). In a footnote Dr Healy gives the following account:-

We have, after some searching, found out the well of Stringle 'in the desert.' There is one of the touches that show the wonderful accuracy of the Tripartite. The coarse 'desert land' is there still, reclaimed on one side of the well, but still covered with the wild heather on the other side. It is a beautiful spring well issuing from the rocks beneath an ancient whitethorn. The people around have a vivid tradition of Patrick's visit to the place, of his blessing the well and baptising the people in it. The modern Triangle is at some distance, where three roads meet, but the old road, of which traces still remain, passed close to Patrick's 'Tobur Stringle in the desert.'

It is possible that the confusion as regards the well's location stems from the fact that it is not shown on the ordnance maps of the area. This is an omission, as all wells are shown and if they have a name it is also shown. Mistakes and omissions occur on all maps. I found three in the area I worked during my departmental service. They are usually in out of the way places, otherwise they might be found on area check-ups.

Before dealing in detail with the Well of Stringle, I will first comment on erroneous locations.

As regards John Keville's account, I examined the location. There never was a well there as it would be geologically impossible. The land is very free draining and gently sloping glacial drift over boulder limestone. The flags he wrote about could be found at many points along the wall. This is an area of underground streams which include the Aille River. The circular pond he referred to was caused by a collapse of topsoil and gravel into some underground cavern or stream. As regards his comment on Dr Healy's well, I will deal with it when I come to Dr Healy's account.

As regards Knox's location of the well, Bellaburke, I can understand his decision. Mr Knox always checked out the location or site against what records were available to him. In the case of Stringle Well, he was adhering to the description given in the *Tripartite*. He would, as an officer in the army, depend on maps of the area. Had he seen the well omitted by the ordnance survey, he would immediately have known it to be the well in question. What he was looking for was a location to answer the description in the *Tripartite*. That would explain why he did not consider the well in Triangle to be the well he was seeking, as it was in a flat area and did not answer the description.

#### DR HEALY'S WELL

This is the Well of Stringle. It answers the description in every way. I cannot understand how John Keville having seen it, could think otherwise. However, I am at a loss to know why Dr Healy did not contact some of the local people who then drew their domestic water from it. If he did, he would have found out that for generations back it was known as Cranereen Well. The adjacent seven acres of land owned by the Mannions is known as Cranereen. There is a further omission by Dr Healy when he stated that the well was near Togher Patrick – he did not give distance or direction. When the name changed, and why, nobody seems to know. It is

possible that the area got depopulated, and that newcomers found the well and re-named it Cranereen from an adjacent grove of birch which now grows there and is self-generating. I don't intend to belabour the reader with a description of the well today. Dr Healy's footnote cannot be improved. The well is still in use. The water level is six feet below land level, the old whitethorns are still there and seem to be self-generating. The approach is by a gently sloping path terminating in three stone steps at the water's edge.

Most wells before St Patrick's time would have had pagan significance. What makes this well unusual is that it issues from under rocks, flows for approximately forty metres and disappears again under rocks. That this place was associated with fairylore there is no doubt. A small hillock of ground within the Cranereen field is known locally as Creggaun 'a Damhsa – the Hillock of the Dancing. I once asked the late Owen Hughes, who took a great interest in local history and Irish place names, 'Who was dancing?' His answer was 'The fairies of course!'

In Drawing No. 2, showing some sites of the area, a small lake is shown to the south. Inspection of land adjacent to the lake indicates that it was at one time much larger. It was lowered by a cutting that runs a few yards from the well. Before the lake was lowered, the flow from the well would in my opinion be much greater, as I believe that the well is water that filters through the rocks from the lake and would, when the lake was higher, have had a greater head. Dr Healy states in his footnote that he was of the opinion that St Patrick did not erect a church at Triangle. He then takes on himself to explain the reason, saying it was because it was a wilderness or he could not get a suitable site. There is no proof that a church was erected there, but St Patrick is recorded as having spent two Sundays there and always seemed to include Triangle in his itinerary to Aghagower. The only writer who states that St Patrick erected a church at Triangle is Dr. d'Alton. In his *History of the Archdiocese of Tuam*, he writes as follows:-

He (St Patrick) laboured till a church was founded near Triangle and the well of Stringle was sanctified by Christians.

As regards the name Triangle I agree with Dr Healy that Triangle is a corruption of Stringle. There would be no such word as Triangle in those days. It is my opinion that a church or monastery did exist in the area. John Keville refers to the townland of Triangle. There is no such townland. The townland is Mahanagh, which means the Place of the Monks.

Of interest here is another local name – Aillebhanish – the rock face that water from the well flows into. No local information is available as to why it got its name. I wonder are we again faced with a corruption of the original? I believe it was Aillmanister (Cliff of the Monastery) to distinguish it from Aillemore the cliff in the same townland where the Aille river disappears.

I will conclude with a story which concerns the well. The late Josie Burke who died in August 1969 would have been the nearest user of the well during the last 100 years. On my final visit to him in Castlebar Hospital, when I asked him how he was, his reply was 'I feel I would get better if I could get a drink from the Cranereen Well.' I was not aware it was the Well of Stringle as I had not begun my researches at that time. Perhaps I missed a lot of history. For perhaps that reason I had a water sample



taken and tested. It is just normal good drinking water. If it has any miraculous properties they would not show in the test.

My drawing shows the various sites referred to and which I have done my best to explain. The name of the little lake is shown on ordnance maps as Curraghveetheogue even though nobody locally ever heard it had a name. Perhaps it is Currach Bhuí na Síóige - 'The Yellow Currach of the Fairy.'

### CROAGH PATRICK - Drawing No. 3

That Croagh Patrick should be included in this article, may come as a surprise to many people and indeed to many of the pilgrims that climb the Holy Mountain each year. Not many will be aware that for hundreds of years the pilgrimage began at Aughagower. This was so because Aughagower was the starting point when St Patrick made his pilgrimage and returned there to celebrate the feast of Easter in 441.

That Aughagower was the starting point is well recorded. You have already read of the sharing of alms by pilgrims to help in the upkeep of Aughagower Church and the Oratory on Croagh Patrick. This was of such importance as to be directed by the then Pope in 1440. Details of this you have already read. This to me has great significance, for it is evidence that a church did exist on the summit at that date and that it was considered of such importance by the then Pope, but Aughagower was given equal importance. There are many other recorded accounts which show that Aughagower was the starting point of the Croagh Patrick pilgrimage. One such is that in 1351 Hugh O'Rourke was taken prisoner by the McPhilbin in the vicinity of Dooncastle when returning from a pilgrimage to Croagh Patrick. This led to McGuire taking up arms and it is recorded that this resulted in great slaughter.

The question will be asked when and why was it changed to Murrisk? The chief reason was the establishment of the Augustinian Abbey at Murrisk by the O'Malleys in 1457. By this time a new road system would have been established and the Murrisk approach was easier. Westport area was by now being developed and as a seaport, had advantages geographically and commercially. However pilgrims from the locality continued to use the old pathway even down to the present day. It is easy to understand that the Augustinians would wish their abbey to be associated with such an important Christian shrine. There would of course be many pilgrims who would be generous to their abbey. In Drawing No. 3, I show where the path from Murrisk joins Togher Patrick. It is shown BM. 1471.8. Further in this article I will go into more detail as regards Healy's account of St Patrick leaving Aughagower to ascend Croagh Patrick.

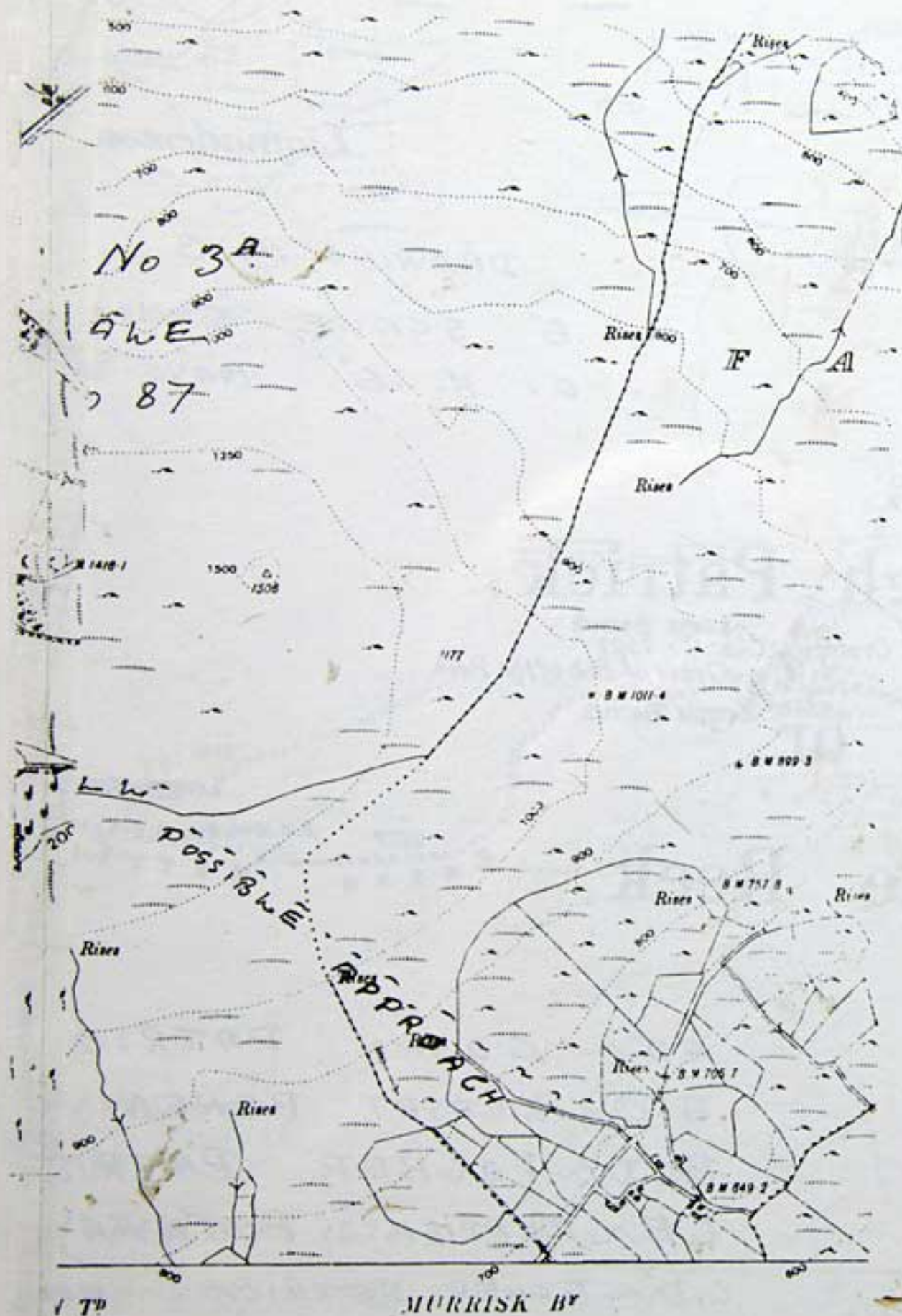
In his book *The Life and Writings of St. Patrick* he states, 'From Aughagower Patrick went to Cruachan Aigle since called Croagh Patrick.' The earliest written account of Patrick's ascent and his forty days of prayer on the summit is by Bishop Tirechan. This account is believed to be taken from earlier notes and records. They are known to be written before 656. They were copied into *The Book of Armagh* in the early ninth century. Tirechan's account is brief and simple:-

The apostle went there on Shrove Saturday, that is the Saturday before Ash Wednesday and his purpose was to fast for the 40 days of lent, thus following the example of Moses and Elias and Christ himself.

His great purpose in doing penance was for the success of his mission in Ireland.







When reading of St. Patrick's forty days of prayer on Croagh Patrick, the impression is given that he was there alone. This was not and could not be so. He was only human and would require food and shelter. He was then at a fairly advanced age. Even if he had wished to be alone, I'm sure his household would never have agreed.

We have recorded proof that St Patrick was not alone on Croagh Patrick. The *Tripartite* tells us so when it states:- 'When St Patrick was on Cruachan Aigle he sent Munis to Rome with counsel unto the Abbot of Rome, that is the Pope, and relics were given to him.' The full significance of this statement can be gleamed from another independent statement. The *Annals of Ulster* state under the date 441 A.D. 'Leo ordained 42nd Bishop of Rome.' Rome records show Pope Leo the Great consecrated on 29 September 440 A.D. Such news would be slow to reach Ireland and slower to reach St Patrick on his travels. That it would be during Lent of the following year before Patrick knew of it would under the circumstances not be unusual. It would be normal for St Patrick to send the pledge of his loyalty and submission and the assurance of his prayers to the new Pope.

These two separate entries in different records are of great importance, as taken together they give the Lent of the year 441 as the exact time that St Patrick was on Croagh Patrick, and that St Patrick spent the Easter of that year with Bishop Sinach at Aughagower. The record of St Patrick sending Munis to Rome shows that while on Croagh Patrick, St Patrick was kept informed of events concerning the Church. This Munis was a nephew of St Patrick and came to Ireland with him, and was a bishop when St Patrick sent him to Rome to pay homage to the new Pope and to get relics for future churches.

If we are to accept that St Patrick spent the winter 440-441 in Aughagower, we may take it that he had planned this vigil well in advance, I mean that he was within a day's journey of the mountain. This would be a big advantage in doubtful spring weather. It would appear that the journey time or any penance associated therewith did not form part of the exercise. The forty days of prayer seemed to be the actual penitential exercise.

Tirechan tells us that St Patrick went to Croagh Patrick on Shrove Saturday, that is the Saturday before Ash Wednesday. This would give him three full days to reach the summit. I feel it is reasonable to think the three days were required to take in certain places in the itinerary. It is believed that he visited the monastery in Lankill and its pagan standing stone in the field still known as Gort na Managh. The general belief is that this monastery was in existence before St Patrick's arrival in Ireland. There is no proof of this but we do know that there were Christians in Ireland before St Patrick's time. The Togher shows he visited the pagan Rock at Boheh now known as St Patrick's Chair. Why his chair? I believe that St Patrick had a number of his household with him when he went to Croagh Patrick. It is a quite possible that Mass was celebrated and St Patrick could have presided from the rock seat. There is very little known about this monument which I think is a pity. I believe it was a Christian site for some time after St Patrick's visit. The name Boheh means The Place of the Huts. There is a cillín close by and it is the burial place of two priests. There is no further history about this site or the names of the priests and why they were buried there. It must be regarded as consecrated ground. A large standing stone in the



townland of Lanmore situated between the Lankill site and St Patrick's Chair is shown on the Ordnance Map as Cloch Patrick. This pagan stone must also have been visited and blessed by the Saint.

From St Patrick's Chair the Togher is clearly shown until it reaches the Boheh Owenwee townland boundary. From this point to point D on Drawing No. 3 there is no trace of the Togher and there is really no legend. The only information is that St Patrick went through Owenwee. I have examined the land between Owenwee and Point D. From one point to the other is a gradual climb angling across a steep hill. The ground is dry and solid, growing heather with good green patches and some spear thistles. I show a stone wall which was constructed to enclose deer many years after the Augustinian monastery was erected at Murrisk. The wall is at places eight feet high. The movement of stones for its construction would be impossible except at right angles to its steep slope. There is a very level area each side of the wall. It is possible that this new wall for the deerpark was constructed along the Togher which was by that time disused in favour of Murrisk. If this is so it would have been possible to bring ponies with panniers as far as Leacht Benen, also important pilgrims or messengers could come that far on horseback.

Leacht Benen is the point where the climb gets steep. Here I find Ordnance Maps very interesting. The Togher that has been traced from Balla to Croagh Patrick is recorded on Ordnance maps as ending at Leacht Benen. The rest of the path to the summit is shown as Cosan Patrick.

Why the distinction? I would venture to say that Togher Patrick got its name because it was (if it existed before that) improved to permit St Patrick travel in reasonable comfort to Croagh Patrick. Its very name, causeway, suggests manual work. If St Patrick moved from place to place with a wheeled chariot and a household that, as you have read, included twelve able-bodied men, it would be only reasonable to expect that these men would inspect the terrain over which St Patrick intended to travel and clear away any obstructions. This would include the provision of timber bridges or footbridges over streams and rivers. It is also possible that if some previous path or road existed it would not be suitable for a chariot. Indeed there would be no such vehicle in the area. Travel would be on foot or by pony or horse.

I am also convinced by the OS map recording a Cosan (Path) from Leacht Benen to the summit, that Leacht Benen was a supply station that could possibly be reached by horse and panniers. It is a flat piece of ground with an approximate area of 440 sq yds. It is the last flat area before one reaches the summit. While certain doubts may exist as regards it being reached by ponies or horses, it is almost certain that it was St Patrick's and Benen's headquarters during the Lent of 441. St Patrick either returned there each night and went up again early next morning, or else he had a temporary shelter on the Summit, and was visited regularly and brought the necessities of life and any news of importance that would have arrived. This is borne out by the sending of his submission to the new Pope. It was business as usual even from the Reek top.

Dr Healy in his book *The Life and Writings of St Patrick*, says he could not say that this Benen (Benignus) was the same Benen as the Benen who gave his name to Kilbannon. I feel in writing history we cannot assume, but I am of the opinion that

this is the same man. He is listed in St Patrick's household. My reason is based on the tradition in Kilbannon that St Patrick called at Kilbannon on his way to Croagh Patrick. It goes as follows: St Patrick on his journey from Armagh visited Benen in Kilbannon. On reaching Benen's territory he knelt and gave thanks that he had made a safe journey. A monument marks the place today. It is known as St Patrick's Knees. I saw the knee tracks bare of grass approximately forty years ago. It is unfortunately overgrown with scrub at present. I have however been informed that moves are afoot to have it cleaned up.

It is almost certain that Benen travelled with St Patrick to Aughagower and then to Croagh Patrick. It would have suited Benen to have time on his hands, for apart from being a psalmsinger, it is also recorded that it was his duty to reconcile the Brehon Laws with the new Christian religion. The original composition of the *Book of Rights* (Leabhar na gCeart) is attributed to Benen. There was more than one Benen and their offices as recorded can easily be mixed up. However, I am of the opinion that Benen of Kilbannon is one and the same as Benen of Leacht Benen.

Some of the information given here does not really concern Aughagower or Croagh Patrick, but I give it so that there would be a better understanding of St Patrick and his forty days on Croagh Patrick. Many of the legends are more like fairy tales. This is so because no story ever lost anything in the telling. The basic facts are that St Patrick spent forty days in prayer on the summit of Croagh Patrick, possibly alone for most of that time. As a bishop he would celebrate Mass each morning, almost certainly at the headquarters at Leacht Benen. That the high bishop of all



Leacht Benen (Mhionain). See Drawing No. 3.



Ireland should spend forty days alone and that his household would not know just how he was faring, is beyond belief.

St Patrick in his *Confessions* says 'At the time I was barely sixteen I knew not the true God and I was led to Ireland in captivity with many others.' Again he writes 'for we had turned away from God and had not kept his commandments.' He goes on to say that as a punishment he was made see 'his littleness among strangers.' Later he relates how he prayed a hundred times a day and night as he herded his flock, 'Before dawn I used to be aroused to prayer in snow and frost and in rain.' I include this because it shows that it was when alone on the mountain that St Patrick found the spirit for his mission. It was therefore fitting in his old age that he would select a mountain on which he could once again come as close to God as he was during his slave days. He gives details of being called to pray and of being told in a dream that a ship was waiting to take him to his fatherland. Perhaps the story of the angel being in conversation with him on Croagh Patrick is not that unbelievable. However, I refrain from going into the details of his fighting with the demons, flocks of birds, reptiles, etc. and of his telling the angel he would not leave the Reek until all his requests were granted, and the legends record that they were granted.

This was never intended to be a history of St Patrick or of Aughagower. I am writing that it be made known what a great Patrician site Aughagower is, and that people would understand that the work of restoration and cleaning up which is now almost completed, should not be regarded as the restoration of an old village, but rather an effort to honour a great Patrician shrine and its Patron Saint.

#### NOTES

1. The *Tripartite* is the seventh life of St Patrick and is by far the most valuable and complete of all accounts of St Patrick and his missionary work. The author according to Colgan must have been a master of the Gaelic tongue and acquainted with Latin. It would, of course, have been copied faithfully from earlier notes and records. Colgan attributes its writing to St Evin of Monasterevan who flourished in the seventh century.
2. The *Book of Armagh* was copied from earlier documents in 808. It also included extracts from books which were written approximately 200 years previously. The latter would have been taken from earlier notes.
3. *Cathair na Mart*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (1982), p. 8.
4. Bishop Tireachan who lived before 656 recorded events in St Patrick's life. These were taken from earlier notes and were later included in the *Book of Armagh*. The book also included notes dictated by bishop Ultan of Ardbracean who died 656 AD.

Brian Mannion, a native of Kilbannon, Tuam, Co. Galway, worked for 35 years in the Westport area as Field Officer in the Farm Development Service under the Department of Agriculture. He has been closely involved with the Westport Historical Society for many years.

#### SAINT PATRICK'S POEM TO HIS TOOTH<sup>1</sup>

by J. Vendryes

This short poem addressed by Saint Patrick to a tooth which has fallen out has been known for a long time. It has been published by Whitley Stokes in the *Tripartite Life*,<sup>2</sup> and since then by K. Meyer in the *Zeitschrift für Celtische Philologie*.<sup>3</sup> Four manuscripts contain the poem: the Book of Leinster,<sup>4</sup> Rawlinson B 512<sup>5</sup>, Laud 616<sup>6</sup> and Egerton 93.<sup>7</sup> But the five quatrain version is to be found only in the Laud manuscript. There are four quatrains in the Rawlinson and Egerton manuscripts, and only three in the Book of Leinster. In addition, the text of the latter would indicate that there was originally only one quatrain, and that additions were made to it over the years.<sup>8</sup> In certain respects, the poem as it stands appears to be a collection of quatrains from various sources. They must at any rate have been well known to the public; the variants are sufficient proof of their popularity. The fourth quatrain is to be found, in a scarcely modified form, at the end of a short poem in a religious text recently published by P. Grosjean.<sup>9</sup>

Teeth can in a general way be considered as relics of no great value. The loss of a tooth is too common an accident to deserve attention and subsequent veneration. The Latin poet Martial made it the subject of a rather caustic epigram.<sup>10</sup> However, Saint Patrick is not the only Celtic saint to have lost a tooth and have the incident commemorated. A tooth of Saint Brendan enclosed in a silver reliquary is recorded at the same time as a tooth of Saint Martin, according to the inventory of the parish church of Saint Perran Zabulo in Cornwall.<sup>11</sup> In Ireland itself, Saints Mochta and Finnian have had memorable teeth.

Following Saint Patrick's example, Saint Mochta composed a short poem on a fallen tooth of which two quatrains have been preserved in the Annals of Tigernach;<sup>12</sup> cf. the *Féire Oenguso* edited by Whitley Stokes,<sup>13</sup> where a quatrain has been reproduced from the Book of Leinster.<sup>14</sup> According to the Annals of Tigernach, Saint Mochta died in 534 (*dormitatio sancti Mochtai discipuli sancti Patricii*), having lived for 300 years.<sup>15</sup> But in the Latin life of this saint, as well as in the *Acta Sanctorum* of the Bollandists,<sup>16</sup> and in the collection of Fathers de Smedt and de Backer,<sup>17</sup> there is no mention of the fallen tooth.

As for Saint Finnian, who died in 549,<sup>18</sup> the comparison with Saint Patrick is drawn from another detail. One reads in the *Lismore Lives*,<sup>19</sup> that the saint, having lost a tooth, hid it in a bramble thicket; but the tooth shone so brightly that it attracted attention and was found. The same account is given in Latin in a slightly enlarged version in the Codex Salmanticensis:<sup>20</sup>

Postquam uir Dei vij. annos compleuit apud Mugny, uolens cultum Dei amplificare, profectus est ad locum qui Collis Dentis dicitur; qui ideo dicitur Collis Dentis quia ibi cecidit dens sancti Finniani, quem ibi medio campi abscondidit sub rubo. Venerunt autem quidam uiri ad eum, uolentes habere de reliquis eius secum, ut sic tuti possent inter hostes manere. Quibus uir Dei respondit: Ite ad rubum in medio campi, et querite diligenter et inuenietis dentem de dentibus meis ibi. Euntes autem apparuit radius igneus de rubo ubi erat dens, et inuenerunt sicut sanctus dixerat eis; et ideo uocatur locus ille Achad Fiacla, hoc est Collis dentis.



In the life of Saint Patrick,<sup>21</sup> we are told that as Saint Patrick was washing his hand one day at a ford, one of his teeth fell from his mouth into the ford. Patrick returned to the hill bordering the ford, whence he sent someone to look for the tooth. The tooth appeared immediately in the ford as brilliant as the sun. The same account is in the *Lismore Lives*<sup>22</sup> and in the Paris manuscript.<sup>23</sup> This luminous tooth brings to mind the luminous fingers of Saint Patrick<sup>24</sup> and of other saints; for other instances of luminosity in hagiography, see *Lismore Lives*, *Adamnani Vita Columbae* and Plummer, *V.S.H.*<sup>25</sup> Ever since that time the ford was known as Ath Fiacla 'the ford of the tooth'; and thus it can be said that the story had its origin in a placename. It was in order to explain Achad Fiacla 'hill of the tooth' (or rather 'field of the tooth') that the anecdote concerning Saint Finnian of Clonard is recounted, as we have seen, in his *Vita*.

As regards Saint Patrick, many places can claim to have sheltered the fallen tooth; unless perhaps he lost many of them in different places. A repetition of the accident could have been invented in order to explain various place-names containing the word 'Fiacal' or perhaps, once the legend had been created, in order to connect it to different stages of the saint's apostolate.<sup>26</sup> According to the *Tripartite Life*<sup>27</sup> and the *Lismore Lives*<sup>28</sup> the loss happened in the territory of Muscraige Briogain, that is, the south-east of Munster, in the county of Cork. There we find Toothford and Cell Fiacla ('The chapel of the Tooth'); cf. the *Onomasticon* of Edmund Hogan.<sup>29</sup>

But according to another passage in the *Tripartite Life*,<sup>30</sup> Patrick lost his tooth at Caisel Irre, in the county of Sligo; it fell on a flat stone in the yard of a house which he was visiting. The editor of the *Life* connected the little poem which follows with that incident.

Finally, according to the account published in *Anecdota Bollandiana*,<sup>31</sup> Patrick lost his tooth at Cruachan Aigle (Croagh Patrick), to the south-west of Westport in County Mayo. It was his last tooth according to the Book of Leinster:<sup>32</sup> *oenfiacail immoro la Patric intan luid a Cruachan, ocus la epscop oc Achud fobair rofachad ind fiacail sin*. 'Patrick had only one tooth when he left Cruachan; and this tooth was left with a bishop at Achad Fobair'. The place was called Achedover, modern Aughagower, in the barony of Burrishoole; it had a certain ecclesiastical importance.<sup>33</sup> According to the Book of Leinster, this is the tooth about which Patrick composed the little poem that follows here.

Of the four manuscripts which preserve the poem, Rawlinson and Egerton have nearly identical versions. The text of Laud, however, resembles that of the Book of Leinster, but it has two extra quatrains. The variants are indicated in the notes.<sup>34</sup> There can be no question of assigning a date to the little poem, so evidently put together from separate fragments, nor, consequently can the original text be restored. The essential is to interpret the manuscript tradition and to choose, where possible, from among the variants.

#### Irish Text

A fir há!  
ocus mennatán i mbá  
ó atá am i n-ar m-bíu  
nochot acca cossindiu.

Cein robámar immalle,  
ní rodámar huar na té,  
bendacht for rí na n-uile,  
ronscar, a chnáim senbuidé.

Cip é gellas dít nach than  
imm anmaim icom adrad,  
gellfatsa de fiad ile  
do deoin fiadat findnime.

Ónd aidchi co ránac rim,  
atherim fiad rí na rend,  
ní dechoid feoil torut síis,  
ní tanic góu anís dart chend.

In fiada find fil for nim  
co n-ecnu, co n-airmitin  
domrosat fo baithis gil,  
nimreilce i n-athis n-óenfir.

#### Translation

O tooth!  
near is the place where you were;  
since we have been alive,  
I have never seen you until today.

As long as we have been together,  
you have suffered neither cold nor heat,  
may the Almighty King be blessed!  
he has parted us, old yellow bone.

He who shall respect you,  
in my name, in order to honour me,  
I will favour him before multitudes  
as it shall please the Lord of Paradise.

Since the night you came to me,  
I declare before the King of Stars,  
no morsel of meat passed you from above,  
no untruth passed you from below.

The good Lord who is in Heaven,  
with wisdom, with love,  
perfected me with holy baptism,  
do not leave me in disfavour with any man.



# NOTES

1. This article from *Études Celtiques*, III (1932), pp 95-104, has been translated by Sheila Mulloy. It was felt that this world-renowned Celtic scholar had made an important contribution to the story of Aughagower. Joseph Vendryes (1875-1960), was professor in the University of Paris and in the École Pratique des Hautes-Études, and a member of the Institut de France.
2. Rolls Series, 1987, v. I, p. 140.
3. V. X, p. 41.
4. Middle of the twelfth century, p. 353 d.
5. Fourteenth – fifteenth century, 16 b 2.
6. Fifteenth century, 74 a 1.
7. Second half of the fifteenth century; cf. *Br. Mus. MSS Cat.*, II, 434.
8. There is a reference here to the commentary which appears at the end of the article. This commentary has been omitted here, as it was felt that it was of interest only to the student of linguistics.
9. *Anal. Boll.*, L, 351.
10. VIII, 57.
11. cf. Doble, *St. Perran, St. Keverne and St. Kerrian*, Cornish Saints Series, n° 29, 1931; cf. *Anal. Boll.*, L, 197.
12. *Rev. Celtique*, XVII, 134.
13. 1905, p. 188.
14. 357, upper margin.
15. cf. Keating, *Forus Feasa*, (ed.) Dinneen, III, 52.
16. Aug. III, 1737, col. 736-747.
17. *Acta sanctorum Hiberniae ex codice Salmanticensi*, 1888, col. 903-914.
18. Plummer, *V.S.H.*, I, p. lviii.
19. II, 2607 ff.
20. ed. de Smedt-de Backer, col. 197, §14.
21. *Trip. Life*, I, 196, from Rawl. B 512, f° 23 a-b.
22. (ed.) Stokes, II, 472 ff.
23. f° 75 v° 2, l. 20 ff.
24. *Trip Life*, I, p. 126 and *Arch. für celt. Lexic.*, III, 22, §56.
25. Whitley Stokes, p. 343; Reeves, p. 226, c.n.; I, cxxxviii, c. n. 7.
26. cf. Bury, *Life of St. Patrick*, p. 130.
27. p. 196.
28. I, 472.
29. pp 60 and 192.
30. p. 140.
31. L. p. 349.
32. p. 353.
33. Bury, op. cit. p. 130.
34. There is a reference here to the Critical Notes which follow the Irish text of the poem. These have been omitted for the same reason which has already been given in Note 8 for omitting the Commentary.

## TWO C<sup>14</sup> DATES FOR FULACHTA FIADH AT TURLOUGH, NEAR CASTLEBAR — EVIDENCE FOR THE PREHISTORIC 'MINI NUCLEAR WINTER' IN CO. MAYO.

by Victor M. Buckley and Christy Lawless

In the last issue of *Cathair na Mart*<sup>1</sup> the writers recorded the discovery of over 120 fulachta fiadh, otherwise known as Ancient Irish cooking sites, in the parish of Turlough, near Castlebar. These sites consist of troughs or pits dug into boggy ground or beside small streams and filled with water. Nearby, stones were heated on a hearth until red-hot from whence they were plunged into the trough thus bringing the water to the boil.

Two of the fulachta at Cashel Upper (pl. 1) and Lack West (pl. 2) which were revealed by the cutting of a new drain at Turlough, proved to be of prime importance because they provided material for C<sup>14</sup> dating.

Samples of one of the nine exposed beams from Cashel Upper and an axe-sharpened stake from the core of the pit at Lack West, were sent to the Biologisch-Archaeologisch Institut of Groningen, Holland, where, through the good offices of Dr. Jan Lanting, we were able to get C<sup>14</sup> dates for the two samples.

The dates (uncalibrated) received were:-

CASHEL UPPER	Gr N 15494	3310 ± 40 b.p.
LACK WEST	Gr N 15495	2780 ± 50 b.p. <sup>2</sup>

The term b.p. means 'before present' which is taken to be 1950 AD, therefore the 'real' dates are Cashel Upper, 1360 ± 40 B.C. and Lack West, 830 ± 50 B.C.

As suggested by the writers in the last issue,<sup>3</sup> the bulk of fulachta fiadh appear to be Bronze Age in date, but new evidence is emerging at this time of an important natural disaster which had dire effects on the climatic conditions, population and basic life of the population in the Middle Bronze Age – a natural disaster which is mirrored in the dates from the Turlough fulachta fiadh.

Recently published results<sup>4</sup> from tree-ring studies carried out on a 7,272 oak tree-ring chronology in Belfast, have shown that major dust veils caused by eruptions of volcanoes at Santorini in the Mediterranean in 1628 B.C. and at Mt. Hekla in Iceland in 1150 B.C. caused narrow growth-rings in the trees. This evidence has been consolidated by findings from archaeological survey and excavation in the northern uplands of Britain,<sup>5</sup> which show that the creation by the dust veil of an area of low pressure over Britain and Ireland c. 1150 B.C., combined with low temperatures led to a rapidly increasing rainfall, rendering upland areas uninhabitable and flooding valleys. The effects would lead to a 'domino effect' – failure of crops, large numbers of displaced refugees and widespread warfare and disease. The event has been referred to as the 'twelfth century BC nuclear winter'.<sup>6</sup> In Ireland, thin layers of volcanic dust found in peat bogs attest to the Hekla 'fallout'. The widespread disruption caused in Irish society would have taken a couple of hundred years to have settled and normalized, and it is interesting to note that these two C<sup>14</sup> dates for Fulachta fiadh in Co. Mayo appear to fall on either side of the gap, suggesting that the destabilizing effect was also felt as far afield as the West of Ireland.



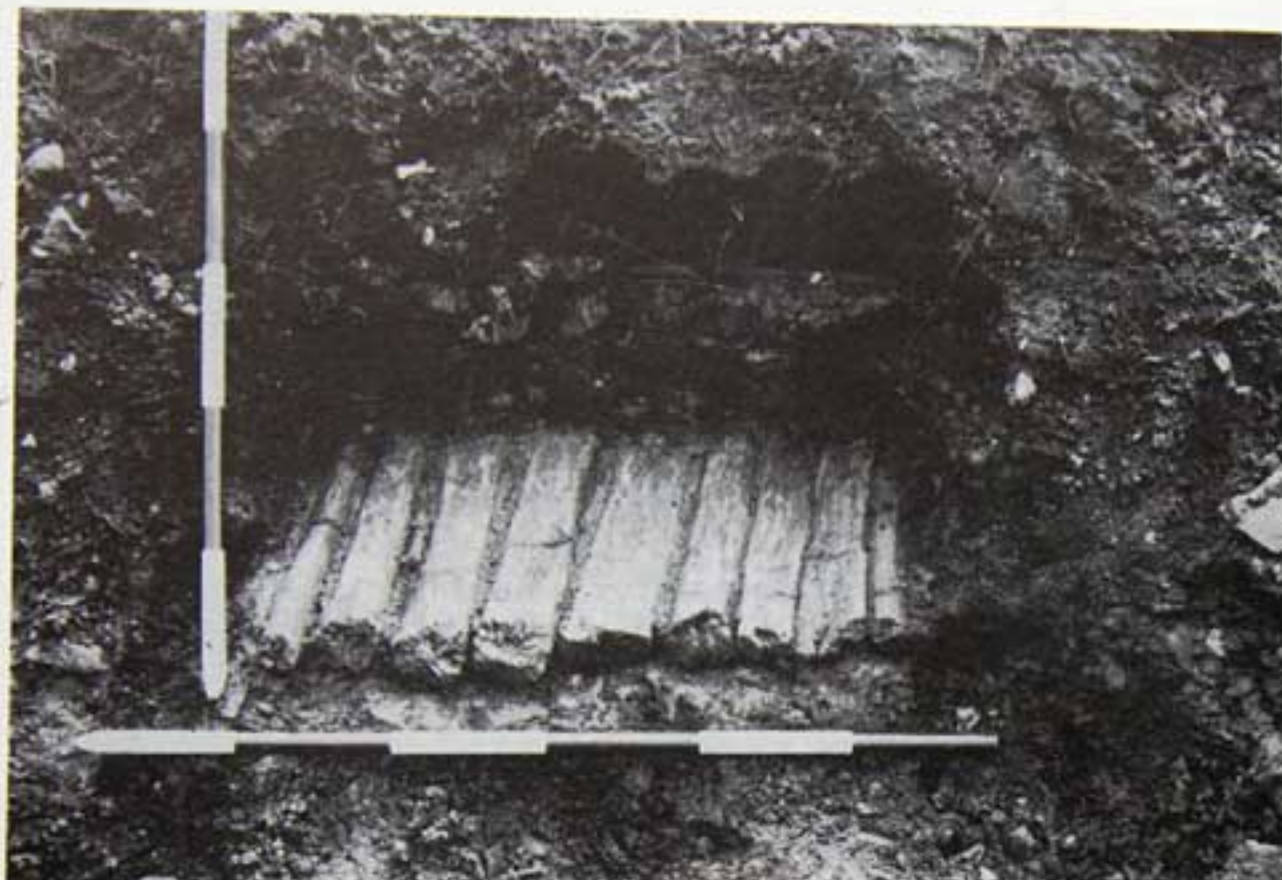


Plate 1: Base of trough at Cashel Upper exposed in drain.



Plate 2: Pit at Lack West exposed in drain.

## NOTES

1. V. M. Buckley and C. Lawless, *Cathair na Mart* Vol. 7, No. 1 (1987), pp 32-36.
2. The writers are indebted to Anna Brindley (O.P.W.) and Jan Lanting (BAI, Groningen) for these results.
3. V. M. Buckley and C. Lawless, *Cathair na Mart* Vol. 7, No. 1 (1987), p. 35.
4. M. G. L. Baillie and M. A. R. Munro 'Irish tree rings, Santorini and volcanic dust veils', *Nature* Vol. 332, No. 6162, pp 344-346, 24 March 1988.
5. P. Keys, 'Cloud of volcanic dust blighted Britain 3,000 years ago', *The Independent*, 15 August 1988.
6. P. Keys, *ibid.*

Victor M. Buckley, B.A. (Archaeology), Queen's University of Belfast, is an archaeologist for the Office of Public Works. Author of the *Archaeological Inventory of Co. Louth*, he has excavated, surveyed and published widely in Ireland and Britain on wetland archaeological sites.

Christy Lawless, a native of Turlough, Castlebar, works with Mayo Co. Library Service, and has contributed greatly to the locating and recording of hundreds of previously unknown archaeological sites in Co. Mayo.



# A PRELIMINARY ACCOUNT OF A LATER BRONZE AGE HOARD FROM KILBRIDE, CO. MAYO

by Mary Cahill

## Introduction

Early in 1987 a hoard of the Later Bronze Age period containing two gold ornaments and two bronze axeheads was found at Kilbride, Co Mayo.<sup>1</sup> The hoard was discovered by Mr. John Dyra of Mullaun, Newport, in the course of removing a large stone which over the years had proved a hindrance to agricultural machinery.

The intention was to push the stone further down the slope and bury it. The hoard came to light in a shovelful of clay which John Dyra noted was darker than the surrounding soil. An excavation and survey of the findplace was conducted by Ms. Nessa O'Connor, N.M.I. and the writer.

The hoard seems to have been buried under a corner of a large stone. The stone is a glacial erratic of dark green foliated gneiss which probably originated in the Ox Mountains.<sup>2</sup> It came to rest on the eastern margin of an isolated drumlin west of Newport Bay. The stone measured approximately 1.20m x 1.15m x .72m (maximum dimensions).

The hoard contained two bronze socketed axes, a gold bracelet and a gold dress-fastener (Plate 1). One terminal of the dress-fastener was missing but an extensive search of the spoil and further excavation of the find did not result in its recovery. There was no evidence to suggest that the objects had been concealed in a container or wrapped in a cloth. However the possibility remains that a container or wrapper may have existed.

The axes were in very poor condition when discovered but conservation treatment in the National Museum of Ireland has successfully stabilised their condition.

## Description of the Hoard

The objects have been registered as 1987: 104-107.

**1987: 104 Gold Bracelet** made from a solid bar of approximately circular section with expanded, slightly hollowed terminals. The bar was formed by hammering an ingot and then polishing it smooth. Some of the original rough surface of the metal can still be seen on the inner curve. Hammer marks are also visible. Each terminal has a slightly strengthened rim formed by hammering up the edges. The bracelet is undecorated.

Maximum width of ring: 6.96cm

Diameter of terminals: 1.26cm

Maximum diameter of bar: 4.77mm x 4.3mm

Weight: 38.5 grammes

**1987: 105 Gold dress fastener** now lacking one terminal. The bow is hollow and broadly u-shaped. Traces of the joining seam survive on the inner curve. The surface has been well polished. The surviving terminal is conical in form and the rim is slightly thickened. The external surface of the terminal is decorated in two bands each consisting of two rows of opposed, hatched triangles (Plate 2). The area

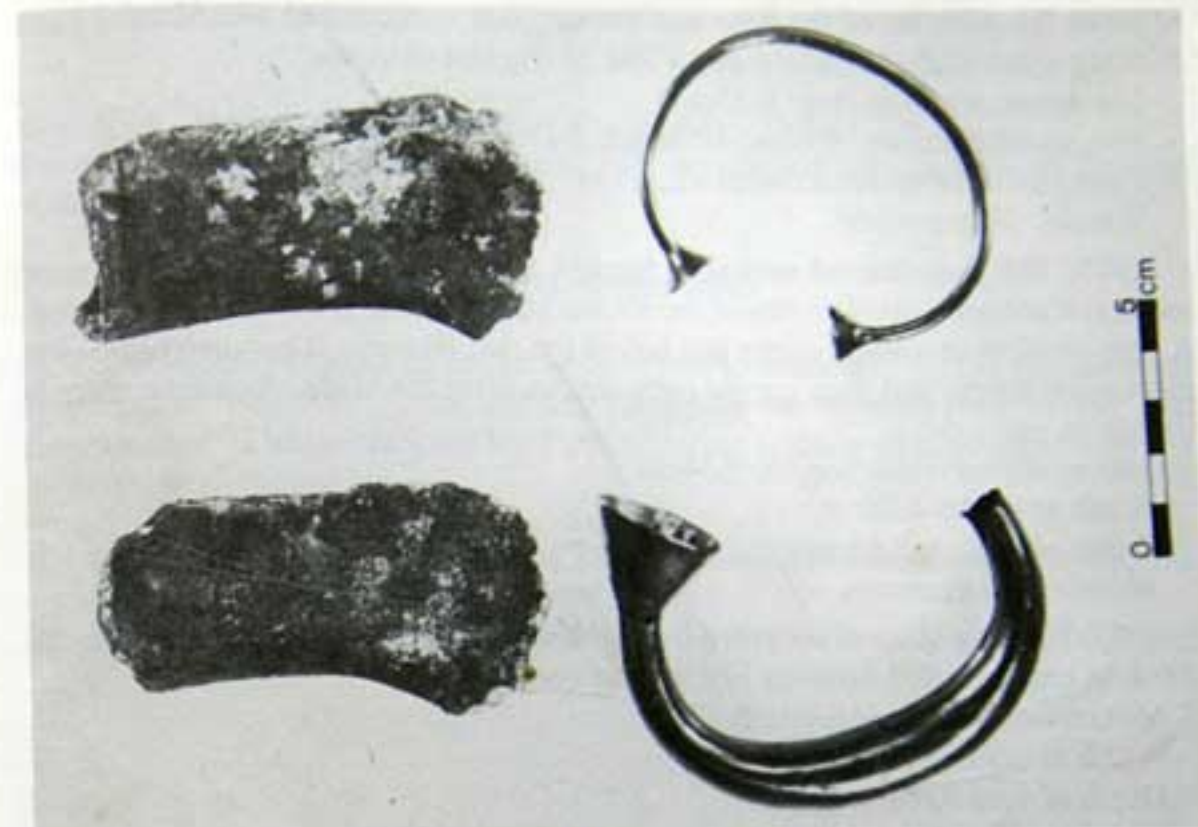


Plate 1: *The Kilbride Hoard (before conservation).*

(National Museum of Ireland)

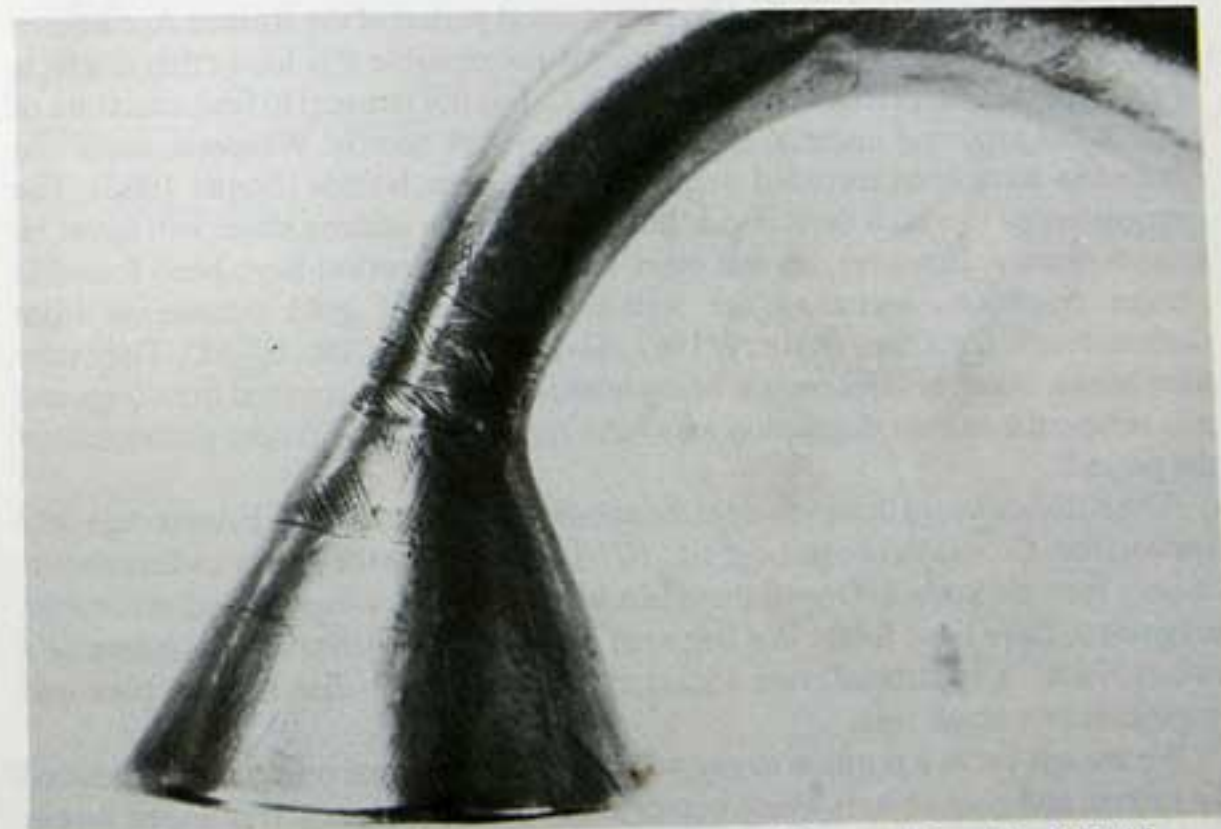


Plate 2: *Detail of decoration on terminal of dress-fastener from the Kilbride Hoard.*

(National Museum Of Ireland)



between the junction of the bow and the terminal is decorated with slanted lines forming a herringbone pattern and a row of hatched triangles.

Maximum width of ring: 8.35cm

Maximum diameter of bow: 1.53cm x 1.47cm

Diameter of terminal: 2.56cm x 2.83cm

Weight: 49 grammes

**1987: 106 Bag-shaped socketed bronze axehead.** Very little of the original metal surface remains. The rim of the socket and the blade are completely eroded. A very shallow moulding exists just below the rim. The axe is parallel-sided over most of its length and then curves outwards to form the blade. A casting seam is visible on one side.

Maximum surviving length: 9.34cm

Width at blade: 4.78cm

Depth of socket: 5.63cm

Weight: 200 grammes

**1987: 107 Bag-shaped socketed bronze axehead.** This axe is very similar to the previous example and survives in a similar condition.

Maximum surviving length: 8.58cm

Width at blade: 4.45cm

Depth of socket: 6.27cm

Weight: 195 grammes

### Discussion

This important hoard can be dated to the latest period of the Bronze Age known as the Dowris Phase. While precise dating is not possible it is likely that artefacts of this type were in production c.700-800 B.C. It is not unusual to find a mixture of both object type and material in Later Bronze Age hoards. Weapons, tools and ornaments have been recorded frequently together in hoards (Eogan 1983). The circumstances in which the Kilbride hoard was hidden under a stone will never be known exactly. However, several other hoards of the period have been found in similar conditions including the well-known find of gold ornaments from Gorteenreagh, Co. Clare (Raftery, 1967, 61-71; Eogan op. cit., 67-68). They may have been hidden for safekeeping. Many hoards have been recovered from bogs and it is believed that their deposition may have related to a religious or votive cult of the period.

The Kilbride hoard brings to eight the number of hoards of Later Bronze Age date known from Co. Mayo (Eogan, op. cit., 107-112). Of these the present whereabouts of only four are known. One of these is a hoard of tools, weapons and ornaments believed to have been found in a bog near Newport. It consists of a fragment of a sword blade, a spearhead, two socketed axeheads, four disc-headed pins and fragments of a small ring.

We are not yet in a position to say whence came the metal ores which produced the bronze and gold objects which comprise the Kilbride Hoard. It is hoped that as part of a larger programme of analysis, a source for the gold may be identified in the future.

### References

- Eogan, G., *Hoard of the Irish Later Bronze Age*, (Dublin 1983).  
Raftery, G., 'The Gorteenreagh Hoard' in E. Rynne (ed.) *North Munster Studies*, (Limerick 1967).

### Acknowledgements

The National Museum of Ireland would like to acknowledge the generous co-operation of Mr. John Dyra and his family in the investigation of the find circumstances. The assistance of Mr. Patrick Durcan is also gratefully acknowledged.

### NOTES

1. O.S. sheet Co. Mayo No. 68 townland, Kilbride; parish, Burrishoole; barony, Burrishoole. 7.1cm from West; 8.65cm from South.
2. Identification courtesy of Dr. John Jackson.

Mary Cahill, M.A., is an Assistant Keeper in the Irish Antiquities Division of the National Museum of Ireland.



## MAYO AND THE JACOBITE WAR OF 1689-91

by Sheila Mulloy

Why was the Jacobite War fought and what was the reason for the French intervention in Ireland at that time? Louis XIV of France, the strongest, most-admired and most-imitated ruler in Europe, became in time the most feared and most hated. To consolidate the supremacy of France, he pursued a policy of aggression towards his neighbours, taking bits of their territory under one pretext or another, rounding off the French frontiers at their expense, and declaring loftily the while that peace was his premier aim. (We all know this type of despot.) Opposition built up gradually and took the form of the League of Augsburg. The leader of the opposition was William of Orange of the Dutch Republic, who was son-in-law and nephew of James II of England.

James II came to the English throne in 1685. An unhappy man, who was always torn between conflicting loyalties, he soon found himself on a collision course with his English subjects. A declared Catholic and admirer of his first cousin Louis XIV, he wished to restore the Catholics of England to some of their former power and prestige, and this of course did not please the Protestant majority. Louis, being an astute politician, wanted to maintain his friendship with the Stuart monarchs, and through his subsidies kept them financially independent of rebellious parliaments. However, there was no way to stem the tide of opposition in England to James's Catholic and French policy, and in 1688 she welcomed to her shores William of Orange and his wife Mary, who was a Protestant and James's daughter by his first marriage.

James, his wife and son went to France, and were received graciously and generously by the French king. Ireland meanwhile had remained loyal to James, and under the leadership of the Lord Lieutenant Tyrconnell, a large army had been raised, with commissions being granted to Catholic officers, and Catholics were once more admitted to positions of authority in church and state. Here indeed was an opportunity not to be missed. James would go to Ireland, and with French help, would secure that part of his realm against the new rulers of England. Louis would be helping his kinsman, the Catholic religion, an unfortunate fellow-monarch, and at the same time he would strike a blow against the hated William and the power of the League of Augsburg. And so the struggle in Ireland became an extension of the War of the League of Augsburg, and William was to be prevented for three years from throwing England's weight into that struggle on the Continent of Europe.

For during those three years 1689-91, Louis continued to send men, arms, war material and provisions to the Irish Jacobites, and by any standards this was an enormous undertaking, and not to be even remotely compared with any previous or succeeding expeditions to our shores by foreign allies anxious to help us in the struggle against the ancient enemy. We must remember that this was the seventeenth century and soldiers had to go on foot. Transport of supplies was by horse power or sail power. An unfavourable wind could keep vessels powerless for weeks at a time, and in general it was not practical to keep the heavy cumbersome vessels at sea during the winter. In the same way armies went into winter quarters, and could not

get moving again until the grass began to grow for the horses. So the campaign months in a general way were reduced to the months from May to October.

With all these difficulties the wonder is that the Jacobite army achieved so much. The terrible winter of 1690-1, when the people starved, and the soldiers lacked the strength to work on the fortifications, was succeeded by further supplies from France in the spring and the last courageous battle of Aughrim. From then to the Treaty of Limerick in October, it was evident that the will to fight was no longer there, and it was a question of getting the best possible terms. The treaty was a satisfactory one when signed, but like many a treaty before and since, was broken before the ink was dry. France profited by the 16,000 or so Irish troops who came to swell her armies, some of whose descendants won fame and fortune for themselves, but the vast majority were to sink without trace.

The county of Mayo did not play a very significant part in the struggle, but neither could it escape. There were no fortified posts or large towns in Mayo, with the exception of Inishbofin, which then belonged to the county, but the inhabitants were divided into the same groups as existed in the rest of the country. There were fewer Protestants, and more of the original old Irish natives were still in possession of property than was the case in the neighbouring county of Galway. There the enterprising tribal families had intermarried with the surrounding families, lent them money when they were in financial difficulties, and so gradually came into possession of land all over Galway and Mayo. Lynches, Blakes, Brownes, spread to Mayo in the seventeenth century, with some of the other tribal families - Darcys, Frenches, Joyces, Kirwans and Martins doing so to a lesser extent. These astute merchants also bought the land of transplanted who had forfeited their property after the 1641 rebellion. They were confirmed in their purchases by the Acts of Settlement and Explanation, and so found themselves in opposition to the dispossessed who attempted to overthrow these acts in the Patriot Parliament of 1689. They were Catholics, but their property was in danger as much from the former proprietors as from the Williamites. They threw themselves into the Jacobite camp out of self-interest and in self-defence, but lacked the total commitment of their old Irish neighbours and those of the old Norman families who had become more Irish than the Irish themselves. These New Interest men, as they were called, never lost sight of their property, and thought only of getting the best possible terms before that property would vanish forever.

The Old Irish on the other hand, and this term included the old Norman families, looked on this war as a last chance to regain their ancient territories. They were still regarded as the real leaders by the local people; their dispossession was too recent to be forgotten. The coming of James II to the throne of England, and the formation of a native army in Ireland, seemed like the dawn of a new era. They had nothing to lose, and everything to gain, by throwing themselves into the conflict and this they did without the reservations of the later arrivals.

It is estimated that the Catholic ownership of land in Mayo at this period was about 43%, having fallen from a figure of about 88% in 1635. The most important Protestant landowners were Ormonde and Bingham, and these together with some less important Protestant transplanted and settlers of various kinds were firmly on



the Williamite side in the war. Large Catholic landowners were the Brownes of the Neale and Westport, the Moores of Brees, and the Dillons. John Browne and John Moore had arrived in Mayo late in the previous century, while the Dillons had first come to Mayo at the beginning of the seventeenth century. Later arrivals were the FitzGerald and Berminghams. Of the older families the Bourkes in the person of Lord Mayo, were also in possession of large tracts of land, at least on paper, but Theobald, the sixth Viscount, was only eight years old in 1689, so naturally his name does not figure in the war. He was besides the heir to a greatly indebted estate, a large part of which had been sold off in an effort to stave off bankruptcy. Colonel John Browne of Kinturk and Westport, his uncle by marriage, was the principal purchaser, and in 1702 John Browne's daughter Mary was to marry her first cousin Theobald, an alliance which was designed to strengthen further the position of the two families.

These Catholic families had weathered the storms of the Cromwellian period, and through one act of parliament or another had managed to hold on to some property. In many cases this wealth was to survive the Jacobite War, and was eventually to be made secure in the hands of its owners through conforming to the Established Church.

The majority of the Old Irish families meanwhile had lost their property to the new owners and joined the ranks of smallholders. The O'Malleys of Murrisk and Burrishoole, however, clung tenaciously to their ancestral territory, and many of these were to thrive through judicious matrimonial alliances and the adoption of the Protestant faith in the following century. It is noticeable, however, that during the period under discussion, the older inhabitants played a very minor role.

The representatives for Co. Mayo in the Patriot Parliament of 1689 were Garrett Moore and Walter Bourke, and for the Borough of Castlebar John Bermingham and Thomas Bourke. These names are to appear again in another connection, for a commission was issued on 20 April 1690 by King James to raise £20,000 per month, and persons of local influence were appointed in each county in connection with the tax. Those appointed in Mayo were Colonel Garrett Moore, Colonel John Browne, Lieutenant Colonel Walter Bourke, George Browne, Esq., Captain Thomas Bourke, Captain John Bermingham and John Fitzgerald Esq. At a later stage orders regulating winter quarters were given to Lord Athenry, Col. Garrett Moore, Col. John Browne, Capt. Terence MacDonough, Capt. Gregory Nolan and Capt. Geoffrey French, all Commissioners for the peace in Co. Mayo.

To begin with those of lesser military rank, Lord Athenry was Francis Bermingham and sat as a peer in the Parliament of 1689. John Bermingham, described as Portrieve of Castlebar, i.e. chief officer of the town or borough, was a captain in the Earl of Clanricarde's infantry regiment. John Fitzgerald was of Turlough, and does not appear to have taken an active part in the war. George Browne was of the Neale family and not personally involved in the fighting, although his brother, John Browne of Westport, was a colonel, and a son John was a captain and taken prisoner at the siege of Derry. Captain Terence MacDonough was in Col. Henry Dillon's infantry regiment. He represented Sligo in the 1689 Parliament. He was a Counsellor and commonly known by the name of 'blind Mac

Donough'. Captain Gregory Nolan belonged to a family that had lost their land in the Barony of Carra after the 1641 Rebellion. Captain Jeffrey French had been granted land under the Act of Settlement in various parts of Mayo. Thomas Bourke of Turlough was to become a colonel in Baldearg O'Donnell's Brigade. Patrick Bourke also had an independent company of 100 men in that Brigade. (We will deal with this brigade at a later stage.) Lieutenant Colonel Walter Bourke had lost half his Turlough estate to John Fitzgerald in the Cromwellian settlement. He fought as a colonel at the battle of Aughrim, and interestingly enough, a Robert Fitzgerald was one of his captains. At that battle he was in command of the old castle of Aughrim with 200 men. This was considered an impregnable position because the causeway leading to it was extremely narrow, but Bourke found himself with the wrong ammunition for his men, and was forced to surrender in the evening, by which time his force was reduced to 12 officers and 40 soldiers. This was one of the events which led to the loss of that battle. He afterwards became colonel of an infantry regiment in France and died a major-general in 1715.

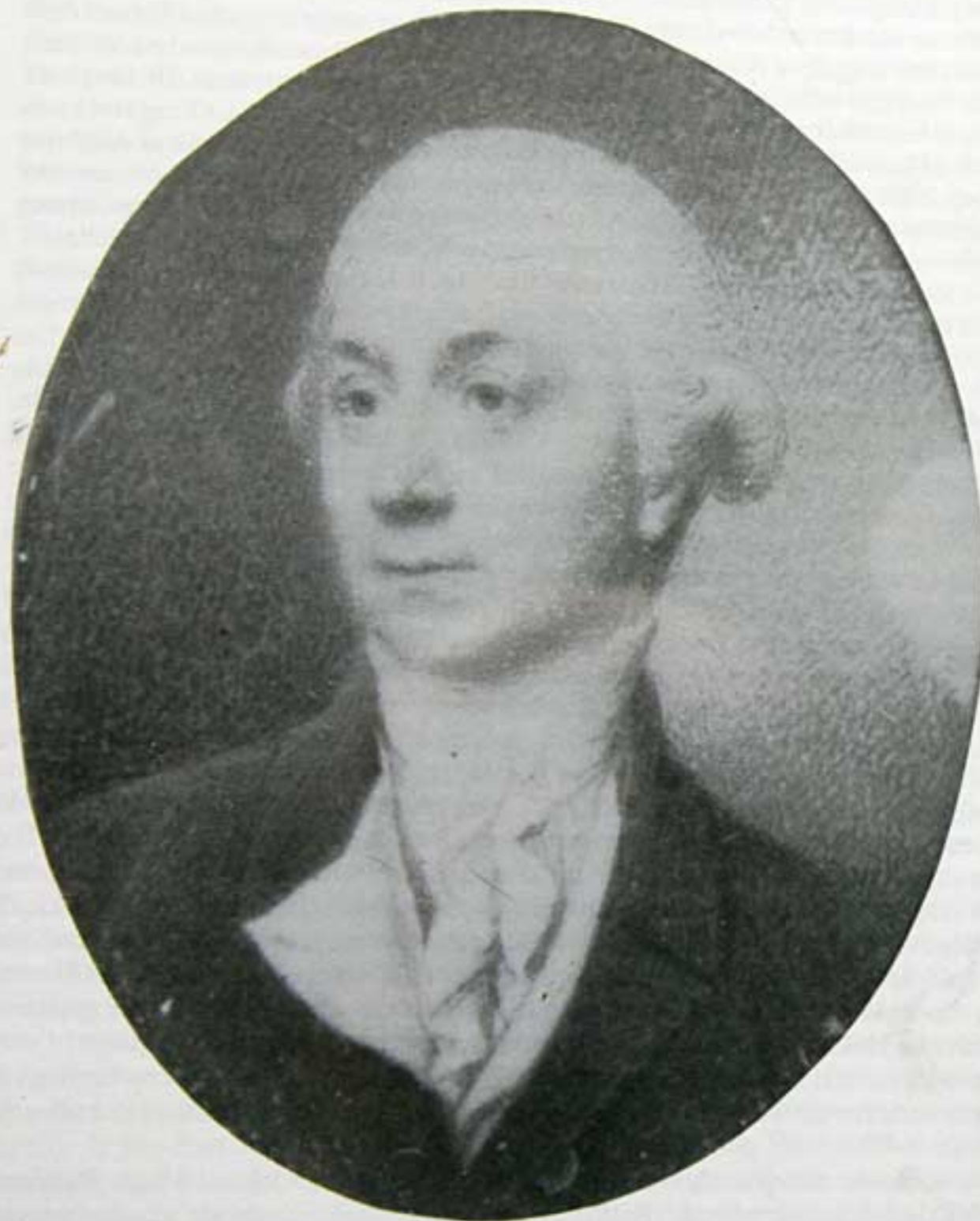
Other Bourkes who became Colonels in the Jacobite army were Patrick, Michael, Toby, Ulick, David and William, as well as Richard, Earl of Clanricarde, John Bourke, Lord Bophin and Ulick Bourke, Lord Galway. Lord Galway and David Bourke were killed at Aughrim, while Lord Bophin and Walter Bourke were taken prisoner at the same battle.

Colonel Garrett Moore of Brees, was a privy councillor while James was in Dublin Castle, and his signature appears on a document of 12 September 1691 drawn up in Limerick by the Lords Justices and Council during the second siege of that city. No regiment under his name appears on the army lists, but he was one of those who were in command of independent companies of men. His company of 68 men was in Baldearg O'Donnell's brigade, and afterwards formed part of the Limerick garrison.

Colonel Henry Dillon, eldest son of the seventh Viscount, commanded a regiment of infantry in the war. His father had been restored to extensive estates in Mayo, Roscommon and Westmeath, and raised two regiments for James. The regiment of Arthur, the second son, formed part of the Mountcashel Brigade, and was to serve with distinction in the French service. Arthur himself was to die a Field-Marshal in 1733. Henry Dillon represented Westmeath in the 1689 Parliament, and replaced Alexander MacDonnell as governor of Galway in December 1690. He was a son-in-law of the Lord Lieutenant, the Earl of Tyrconnell, but does not appear to have had his brother's military ability. He surrendered Galway after a siege of only two days, and arrived in Limerick with 3,381 men of the garrison. Perhaps in gratitude for the weakness of this resistance, he was restored to his estates after the war.

Some mention should be made at this stage of Colonel Hugh Baldearg O'Donnell and his brigade. Baldearg was a picturesque character who had gone to Spain in his youth in order to partake of his inheritance as successor to the Earls of Tyrconnell. He arrived in Ireland after James's departure from the scene, and became immensely popular with the people of Ulster, so that in a short time he had 8,000 men in his brigade. There was a prophecy at the time that an O'Donnell with





*Tadhg O'Malley 1675-1751 (Courtesy Miss Jane O'Malley, Kiltarnaght, Newport).*

a red mark would free Ireland from English rule, and this prophecy was applied to Baldearg. These troops were not incorporated into the Jacobite army, but were supplied with bread, and used whenever the occasion might require. He himself made terms with the Williamites in August 1691, and helped to capture Sligo. His troops operated mainly in Connacht and representatives of many Connacht families joined their ranks. Colonels Manus and Daniel O'Donnell, who will be mentioned later in connection with the seizing of a Danish ship, commanded battalions in this brigade. Daniel was a kinsman and died a brigadier in the French service, while Manus was grandfather of Sir Neal O'Donnell of Newport.

I have mentioned Thomas Bourke who was also a colonel in O'Donnell's brigade. Captain Owen O'Malley, who was associated with Colonels Manus and Daniel O'Donnell in the affair of the Danish ship, belonged to the Cahernamart O'Malleys and was aide-de-camp to Baldearg O'Donnell. His great-grandson was Sir Samuel O'Malley of Kilboyne and Rosmindle. He afterwards entered the service of William and commanded the Horse Militia in Mayo. Representing the Belclare O'Malleys was Tadhg O'Malley, who had been a captain in John Browne's regiment, but is described elsewhere as having been a captain of dragoons. His mother was a daughter of Sir Christopher Garvey of Lehinch, and he himself was the ancestor of Sir Owen O'Malley of the British diplomatic service, who lived for a time at Rosyvera and was one of those responsible for the restoration of Carrigahowley Castle.

Our last notable is Colonel John Browne of Kinturk and Westport, who had married Maude Bourke daughter of the third Viscount Mayo in 1669. A barrister by profession, and considered by Lord Clarendon in 1686 to be capable of filling a vacancy on the Irish Bench, he acquired vast estates in Mayo and Galway, including most of the property of his brother-in-law. It is said that he raised two regiments of foot, but no regiments under his name appear on the army lists. His own regiment was discontinued at an early stage, probably when he was appointed a deputy lieutenant of the County of Mayo in October 1689, under Lord Athenry the High Sheriff. Other Deputy Lieutenants were Col. Thomas Bourke, George Browne, and Captain Peter Moore. (Peter Moore may have been a member of the Brees family.) The regiment then appears to have been drafted into Robert Fielding's regiment and sent to France with the Mountcashel Brigade in May 1690. Colonel Robert Fielding, an Englishman, had great difficulty in raising a regiment and had given 3,000 pieces to an Irishman who would raise soldiers for him. This may be the explanation of the letter written by Robert Fielding to John Browne in September 1689 which would imply some sort of arrangement between himself and Browne. We also know that Browne was extremely active in raising recruits. He fell under the displeasure of the French Ambassador M. d'Avaux in February 1690, for his treatment of the captain of a French merchant ship which had run aground near Galway. The captain had been persuaded to sign a paper in English, which language he did not understand, by which he promised one third the value of the vessel and its contents to Browne in exchange for some assistance which he had given him. (This was the amount of the usual salvage reward.) In addition Browne had taken from him 11 hundredweight of powder, 400 cannon balls, and two barrels of musket balls, in the name of the king.





*Colonel John Browne (1638-1711). From portrait in Westport House.*

The colonel was a personal friend of Patrick Sarsfield, but gives the impression of busy, bustling pragmatism rather than blind patriotism. He maintained ironworks at Knappagh, Foxford and Westport, and there made arms, ammunition and tools for the Jacobite army.

We have an account published in Lord Sligo's book of tools, arms and ammunition sent to Sligo. At a later date in July 1690, he was ordered to send the 'gunsmiths and bladmakers at Westporte well guarded, and with all their tools and utensils to ye town of Galway, where the governor is heirby requierd to make all provisions and necessarys fit for them', so that presumably the manufacture of guns and swords ceased about this time. That the ironworks continued in production practically to the end of the war is proved by a letter written from Belle-Île to Versailles on 30 August 1691, where the arrival is reported of a ketch from Westport, laden with iron bars, horse shoes, horse shoe nails, and earth-moving tools. This vessel had been on its way to Limerick, but hearing that enemy vessels were at Galway and Limerick, decided to make for Nantes.<sup>2</sup>

In August 1690, Lord Athenry and the Deputy Lieutenant were to levy a certain quantity of hay, oats, butter, wheat and malt, on every acre of profitable land in Mayo and deliver this to the King's stores. This was followed by an order to raise 800 beaves and 1,500 wethers for the town of Galway in case of a siege, and these were 'to be ready to be sent on a day's warning to the saide towne of Gallway'. In September Col. Browne was 'to Seize or cause to be Seiz'd all the salt-pannes in the county of Mayo – for his Mats. [Majesty's] use'. On 15 September orders were issued to seize twenty out of every 100 head of black cattle in possession of the Creaghts to provide stores of salt beef for the winter. These Creaghts were refugees from other parts of Ireland who had crowded into the Jacobite section with their families, goods and possessions, mainly in the form of cattle. In the same month also orders were received to send three hundred men with their provisions to Galway every fortnight, to work on the fortifications, each group to work for a week. Inishbofin being then part of the Barony of Murrisk, had also to be provided for. The garrison there was to receive 70 barrels of oatmeal and 60 barrels of malt or meal, 100 beeves and 300 wethers. In December all the makers of clothe and weavers of Mayo were to be sent to Galway to make clothes there for the army. Provisions were to be sent to Sligo the same month, and steel and tools were required at Sligo, Galway and Limerick for the work on the fortifications. Colonel Browne's ironworks were still in production in June, when 1,200 horse shoes and their nails were delivered to Patrick Sarsfield's regiment.

John Browne was involved in another affair with a ship in June 1691. This time he was authorized to pay £150 to Col. Manus O'Donnell, Colonel Daniel O'Donnell and Captain Owen O'Malley for their part in seizing a Danish ship off Achill. This ship was brought into Westport, and was licensed to become a privateer.

Colonel Browne appears next in Inishbofin, which was then, as stated above, part of Mayo. Colonel Tadhg O'Riordan was the governor, while Lord Athenry and Lieutenant Colonel John O'Kelly, a former sheriff of Co. Galway, were among others who had taken refuge there. Captain Michael Cormack and Captain Dominic Browne were in the garrison. Captain Cormack had been in command of an



independent company of sixty men. He had extensive estates in Erris and other areas. Captain Dominic Browne is difficult to identify, but may have been connected with the Breaffy family. Sir Henry Bellasyse, later governor of Galway, attempted to mount an invasion of the island, but was defeated by adverse winds and a shortage of supplies. Colonel Alexander Mac Donnell, former Jacobite governor of Galway, was then used as an intermediary, and the island surrendered on 27 August to Captain Dunbar on the same terms as those accorded to Galway a month earlier. Colonel Browne proceeded to Limerick with his horse, servants and arms, and there with his fellow lawyers Sir Garrett Dillon and Sir Theobald Butler, helped to draft the Civil Articles of the Treaty of Limerick. He enjoys the distinction of having a special article of the treaty devoted to his personal affairs. This article instigated the Protestant historian Story to wonder 'whether it be conform to the Laws of War, that one and the same Person should be included in Articles of Surrender of three distinct places, as was Col. J. Browne.' The French generals were also stung to remark that the Irish negotiators of the Treaty were more interested in obtaining the best terms for themselves rather than negotiating the best terms for the Jacobite Army as a whole.

Article Number 13 of the Treaty stated that Col. John Browne's products, commandeered by Tyrconnell and Sarsfield, had been pledged as security for loans he had taken from Protestants. There was, therefore, to be a charge levied on every estate restored to a Catholic under the Treaty to the amount of the debts. The implications are that Col. Browne was a person of importance or had important friends, perhaps both, because he also features in the articles for the surrender of Galway and Inishbofin. At the very least his debts must have been impressive, for this Treaty clause involved several acts of Parliament. The first act legalized his Protestant creditors, but because of his desperate financial circumstances, a second act became necessary, which involved the sale of his estates and the distribution of his assets. Imprisoned for debt, he disappeared during a temporary period of freedom when he had permission to go to Dublin to assist in winding up his affairs. Another act of Parliament was passed in 1705 which declared him dead. In fact he lived until 1711 or 1712, and managed to salvage a small part of his estate, including Westport House.

How then can we sum up what was happening in Mayo during the Jacobite War? The seventeenth century had seen an enormous upheaval in the ownership of land. Successive confiscations and parliamentary measures had led to the original Irish and Old Norman proprietors being replaced by transplanted and new settlers. To the Irish Jacobite the struggle was not primarily concerned with supporting James against William, nor was the League of Augsburg of the slightest interest to him. He was making a final desperate bid to overthrow the status quo and repossess the land which he regarded as his rightful inheritance. The Old English party, sometimes called the New Interest men, that is, those Catholic families who had more recently arrived on the scene, were equally desperately trying to maintain the status quo, against both the New English or Protestant party and the Old Irish party. They were Jacobites because they were Catholic and also because they felt threatened by the Protestant Williamites. The vast majority of the Jacobite army

went to France after the war, but a powerful minority managed to survive the ravages of the war with some part of their possessions intact, and they made these doubly secure by conforming to the Established Church early in the eighteenth century. The dispossessed remained in their native territories as tenants at will under their new masters, but were ultimately to triumph when penal laws and landlordism were finally to vanish from the Irish scene during the following centuries.

#### NOTES

1. Much of the information in this article is based on S. Mulloy (ed.), *Franco-Irish Correspondence, Dec. 1688-Feb. 1692* (Dublin, 1983-4).
2. See S. Mulloy, 'Some Seventeenth Century links with Brittany', *Cathair na Mart*, Vol. I, No. 1 (1981), pp 33-6.

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## WESTPORT — AN EARLY IRISH EXAMPLE OF TOWN PLANNING

by Brendan Jeffers

Much has been written on the origin of modern town planning and on the 'Garden City Movement'. Great research has been carried out, from time to time, on these subjects and much valuable information has been brought to light. With the knowledge obtained, the modern architect has changed the formation of our town and cities from what was a chaotic jumbling of streets, lanes and by-ways into an organized and well planned layout.

Westport, a small town on the very edge of our western seaboard, is perhaps, one of the earliest attempts in the British Isles at what we now know to be Town Planning. The year 1680 saw the beginning of what is now the prosperous, provincial town of Westport in County Mayo, Ireland, known in those far off days as 'Cathair na Mart' literally translated from Gaelic as the 'City of the Beef'.

A very prosperous family, the Brownes, lived in the area and were owners of most of the western portion of the county. As an Irish Catholic family (one of them, a Col. Browne fought with Patrick Sarsfield at the siege of Limerick), they were in grave danger of losing their lands and possessions to the English Planters. Overcoming this by the simple measure of renouncing their religion in favour of Protestantism, they were duly rewarded by the powers then reigning in England and so retained full possession of their lands, a great area of which still remains as an entailed estate of the family.

In 1680 the town was built to the east of Col. John Browne's mansion and for nearly a century the hovels and cottages of the peasants continued to grow in number. Unfortunately, we have little or no knowledge of what took place around Cathair na Mart (the name of the mansion) between the years 1680 and 1730. This latter date is of great importance to the town, for in that year, Westport witnessed the first steps in organized and carefully planned building, as laid out by one of the famous architects of the time — Richard Cassels. Cassels was employed by John Browne, later to be Baron Lord Mount Eagle, Viscount Westport and First Earl of Altamont, and was responsible afterwards for the designing of many famous Irish buildings, among which were:

Centre portion of the Old Parliament Buildings, Dublin.

Nos. 9 and 10, Henrietta Street, Dublin, 1731.

Printing House in Trinity College, Dublin, 1734.

Carton House, Maynooth (seat of the Earl of Kildare, Duke of Leinster), 1738.

Tyrone House, Marlboro' Street, Dublin, 1740.

Leinster House (now Dáil Éireann), 1745 — 1748.

Cassels began his work in Westport by removing the hovels and cottages from in front of the house, giving the occupants the choice of moving to the West Shore, Westport Quay, or to the east, where the town proper lies in the valley of the Carrowbeg river. The debris having been removed from around the mansion, the architect laid out a large landscape park, much of which can still be seen today if a visit is made to the Demesne, the property of the present Marquess of Sligo, Denis Browne. The park is symmetrically laid out close to the house, but further afield, it



*Aerial view of Westport 1950.*



*The Old Rectory.*



is delightful in its meandering paths, broad lawns, bordered by a variety of trees; small, but well placed waterfalls are climaxed by an artificial lake to the west of the house.

The East front as it now stands, is the particular work of Cassels and is dated 1730 – 34. At the same time, he designed the House Bridge, stables and layout of the Farm House. In 1778 the south wing was added to the house probably to the design of Thomas Ivory.

In 1781, the third Earl of Altamont, later the first Marquess of Sligo, employed another architect, named James Wyatt, to design the dining room, the roof of the front hall, some ceilings and cornices in the mansion, but more to the point, he also employed Wyatt to design the town of Westport. This architect designed the town as it now stands, part on both sides of the Carrowbeg river and part mounting the hills on both sides, and so we see that this town must be one of the earliest examples of town planning as it is employed today.<sup>1</sup>

The streets are wide and long and run north east and south west. The most beautiful part of the town is perhaps, the Mall, which is not unlike a French boulevard. The river flowing through it has fine wide roads on either side, the footpaths are wide and have large trees with wide branches overhanging the cut stone walls which line both sides of the river.

A local and generally-held theory is that Westport was planned by French engineers, captured after the defeat of Humbert, a French general who had landed in the north west of the county in support of the rising of 1798, but documents and books show that this story is a myth, having gained credence down through the years from the fact that there is a striking similarity between Westport, Bruges and St. Lô.

The houses included as the focal points of the town plan are: The Theatre (Market House) – now a bakery, situated on the Octagon, itself an unusual feature of the town and attributed to Cassels. The Inn, now the Railway Hotel, situated on the Mall. The Rectory, situated on a hill, some hundred yards outside the town, but quite near the present Protestant church. This church was the last building erected by the Ecclesiastical Commission before its disestablishment.

All the above-mentioned buildings are each for different purposes, but all are symmetrically planned and each one has the mark of good Georgian proportions, even to the cornices, fan-lights and windows of the different buildings.

In 1785, the third Earl, who was later to be the First Marquess of Sligo, built the west and north wings of Westport House. James Wyatt an English architect and a rival of Adam himself, famous in England and Ireland for his low relief decorative work in plaster, was responsible for the decoration of the gallery and dining room. Whether he came to town or not is not known for certain. The ceilings in the Theatre bear his mark, as also do the fireplace in the Dower House and the ceilings and fireplaces in the mansion. It is quite probable that he came to supervise the work.

Another building of interest in the town is the Old Catholic Church, which indeed is not very beautiful (a good portion still remains). The lease for this church was taken out by a gentleman named Lynagh in 1787. A plaque on the front archway bears the date 1813 and would appear to be the date of its Consecration. It is situated on the other bank of the river opposite the Inn.



*Bank of Ireland, formerly the Dower House.*



*Post Office.*



The three bridges crossing the river are erected in beautifully cut black limestone.

The lease for the Theatre dates back to 1775. This building later became the Town Hall, later still the Market House and finally a bakery. The exterior elevation is almost as it was first designed except for the addition of an office to the front, an addition which became necessary when it became the Market House. However, only on close inspection can one imagine the fine decorative work which once graced its interior.

Little is known about the Dower House, which overlooks the river. It is built in dignified Georgian fashion, with fine spacious rooms, decorative ceilings in low relief and the main stairs being a feature of the inner hall. At the back of the stairs, a large Georgian window looks out on a well laid-out garden at the rear of the house.

The Rectory has suffered from many additions by builders who had little feeling for, or knowledge of aesthetics, nevertheless, from the main elevation one can still conceive the beauty of the early architects, who were so meticulous in their work. Situated on a hill, facing south west, the Rectory has a broad lawn and a winding drive leading up to the hall-door, and is well shaded on both sides by well-placed trees. The lawn and gardens surrounding the house, like those of the Dower House, lend themselves well to landscape architecture.

It is also worth noting that in the planning of Westport, the Carrowbeg river was diverted from its natural bed to form the tree lined Mall, as it now stands.

The Inn, built in or about 1780, is a very simple, yet dignified building, overlooking the river, but instead of broad lawns and gardens, stables for horses etc. are situated at the back. On either side of the main building are two wings of bedrooms, with open arcades of square limestone columns underneath, while all along its entire length, on the extremity of its stone slab pavement, hitching posts, limestone and cylindrical, occur every five feet. Another feature of the Inn is the dressing room to the back of each bedroom, a feature customary in those days of this type of building and gracious living.

Like the other houses, the Inn has large spacious rooms, high ceilings, which in this case, are plain, except in the old dining room and entrance hall, both of which have a little decoration in low relief. Yet another feature of this building is the fine cut limestone work in the form of an arcade on either side of the central block, and the dark limestone quoins and limestone columns supporting the entrance porch. The exactness of these early builders can be seen from the fact that this building is almost 300 feet long, yet the left and right wings vary from one another by only one inch.

Robert and James Adam designed the Adelphi on the Thames, but they were better known for their delicate decorative work in low relief plaster and their beautiful fireplaces. James Wyatt was the favourite student of the Adam brothers and possibly, he supervised the work carried out on the mansion. Benjamin Wyatt, who also worked in Westport House, was known as 'The Destroyer', for he undid much of the decorative work done or carried out by his father and substituted for it his own, which was inferior. Castlecoole in County Fermanagh and Horace Walpole's house on Strawberry Hill are also the work of Benjamin Wyatt.



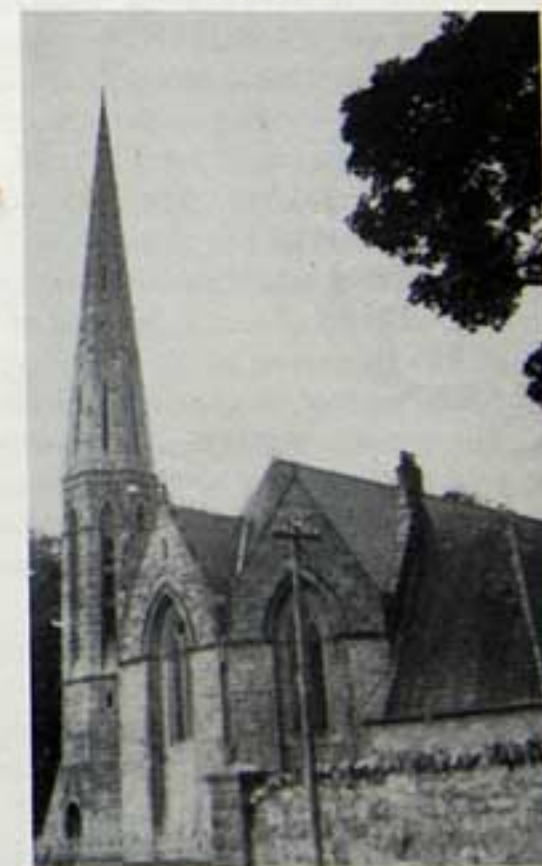
*The Octagon.*



*The Railway Hotel.*



*St. Mary's Church.*



*Church of Ireland.*



Westport House itself, though dating only from 1734, stands on the site of Col. John Browne's castle and records in this building go back as far as the eleventh century, but they are more of historical than architectural value.

From the information which the reader has now at his disposal, it can be readily seen that Westport is indeed an early example of town planning as it is employed nowadays.

#### NOTE

1. The 'Wyatt Theory' is not accepted by modern authorities. See Marquess of Sligo, *Westport House and The Brownes* (1981), p. 31; Peadar Ó Flanagan, 'An Outline History of the town of Westport', *Cathair na Mart*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1981), p. 6 – Editor.

Brendan Jeffers, architect, is a member of the well-known Westport family who were proprietors of the Railway Hotel for many years. This article is part of the thesis he presented for the Royal Institute of British Architects final examination in 1955.

## MANNERS AND CUSTOMS OF THE GENTRY IN PRE-FAMINE MAYO

by Marie Kelly

In any examination of landed society, the question of wealth is relevant, as it was the vital element separating the upper classes from the lower. Central to the popular image of Irish landlords has been their visible wealth and their seemingly insatiable desire to accumulate and spend. To judge from nineteenth century Irish novels, the country was filled with 'reckless or impecunious members of the gentry who spent money as fast as they could beg, borrow or marry it'.<sup>1</sup> Wealth was the prerequisite for what the newspapers termed the 'high life'. Gross rent from agricultural land was undoubtedly the main source of wealth for the great majority of landlords, although a few possessed other sources of substantial income. Some landowners, of whom the Marquess of Sligo was the most conspicuous, owned plantations in the West Indies, from which they drew additional revenue to supplement their Irish estate rentals.<sup>2</sup>

Although Dublin was the main social focal point in the country in the nineteenth century, rural gentry had by this time established a lively social circuit, within the constraints of isolated locations, poor communications, and a limited social circle. Some historians, writing on gentry lifestyle in this period, assert that essentials such as the works of Voltaire and Rousseau, the clarets of Bordeaux and the souvenirs of the traditional Grand Tour of Europe, were the trappings of the landed gentry in early nineteenth century Ireland, in addition to the stable of horses and pack of hounds which adorned the country estate.<sup>3</sup> However, the number of gentry who possessed the means to maintain such a lavish lifestyle were, possibly very few. In Mayo, certainly, only a small percentage of the gentry were in a position to aspire to the ranks of the very wealthy. In 1812 Lord Sligo's estate produced £20,000 annually; Lord Dillon's £18,000; Denis Browne's £15,000; Lords Lucan, Clanmorris and Tyrrawley and Mr. Palmer £10,000 each, and Sir Neal O'Donnell, Colonel Jackson and Mr. Rutledge £7,000 each.<sup>4</sup> In comparison with other Irish landowners, these incomes appear to be in keeping. Curtis quotes the Earl of Longford as drawing a 'substantial' income in the 1870s, averaging £21,262.8 during 1870–74, but he does admit to the difficulty in finding the 'typical' estate for any particular region, time and cohort.<sup>5</sup> Lesser landlords and land agents could not hope to attain the same levels of extravagance as the above group, but did succeed in establishing an exclusive social circuit in Mayo. This circuit centred around the main towns, especially where there was a resident military presence, as in Ballinrobe early on in the century:

'A great number of the military are generally stationed here, who circulate a good deal of money.'<sup>6</sup>

Land agents, although unable to aspire to the high social standing of their employers, were an important factor in estate management, and therefore commanded a degree of prestige in the local community. Such a man might be a respectable local solicitor, qualified by his profession to deal with leases and the legal problems of rent enforcement. In addition, he might be useful if the landlord who employed him



was cultivating political interests.<sup>7</sup> Blacker in 1834 outlined the important position they held, when he stated:

The embarrassment under which gentlemen of landed property in Ireland too generally labour may, in most cases, be traced to the improper selection of their agents. Upon holders of this important office most commonly devolves not merely the management of the estates but also of the private concerns of the owners . . . until the late years, the importance of the appointment . . . seems to have been almost universally overlooked.<sup>8</sup>

However, the importance attached to their positions was often forgotten in the wake of the tenantry's hatred and enlightened observers' disapproval of the agent as the heartless oppressor of the tenantry.<sup>9</sup> A report in the *Connaught Ranger* in 1836 accused one agent of trying to emulate his employer's lifestyle, by means of stealing from him. This occurred on the estate of the Marquess of Sligo, to whom a letter was addressed:

My Lord, I do not know whether you are aware of the plans that are carrying on in Mr. Clendinings office in the town. But my Lord, I do believe that these are not solitary instances, to the shame of the Irish landlords . . . I have seen it stated in newspapers that this gent pockets yearly the sum of £15,000 clear profit out of the tithes of the Union of Westport, and which it is stated he has contrived to manage through an over-valuation or otherwise. My Lord, it can be proved that many acts of great hardship, if not cruelty, are committed by your people on your estate.<sup>10</sup>

There is no evidence to support this accusation, but it serves to illustrate the various attitudes adopted towards the land agents by people not included in the gentry class.

Mayo's social circuit had many facets, incorporating select social events, sporting activities, club membership and informal practices such as visits between occupants of the various estate houses. Early tourists such as Young, Trotter, Wakefield, Fraser and others, visited the larger estate houses of Mayo, enjoyed the hospitality of their hosts, and with rare exception, wrote in praise of the latter in the books which resulted from their tour experiences. As early as the mid eighteenth century, this pattern of visiting with the gentry in order to experience county life had been established, as Pococke described from his 1752 tour in the West Mayo area:

I arrived at Newport where my friends of Newport spent the evening with me. On the 9th, Mr. Herne the Minister came up to see me, and I preached at his Church. He, Mr. O'Donnel and Mr. Moore, the Collector, invited me to dine with them; the last very politely by a card the night before, being a little indisposed with the Gout, the other that even; but I was first engaged to Captain Cantillon, the commanding officer of the foot here. I drank tea with the Collector, rid with Mr. Herne to see the Monastery of Burrisool and spent the evening with the Collector, and lodged at Mr. Hernes . . . On the 11th I set out to the south and all the officers went with me, and dined with Mr. Brown of Westport, who had sent compliments to me that he should be glad to see me.<sup>11</sup>

Trotter also experienced the hospitality of the gentry on his tour in 1817. He wrote:

As we have had several days repose at Newport and the hospitality of Sir Neal and Lady Catherine O'Donnel has made us enjoy ourselves very much, we shall commence our final excursion to Erris with fresh vigour . . . Newport has

been unexpectedly enlivened by the arrival of a number of American ladies and gentlemen, who were very nearly lost on their way to Liverpool from the United States, on the dangerous coasts of Mayo; and the society of our Newport friends increased, by the addition of some well-educated and pleasing people, when the Captain of the American vessel was good enough to take us, in a boat he employed, to his vessel, which exactly lay in our way to Erris.<sup>12</sup>

It appears from these tour books and guides that the inclusion of a favourable report on a gentleman's family and estate was a mark of social distinction. Mayo gentry were possibly aware that these narratives enjoyed a wide readership among the educated elements in Britain and Ireland, and capitalized on their popularity as a means of establishing themselves as prominent members of the social elite. Volumes such as these were advertised widely, in an effort to promote not merely the author, but also the county, among the Irish and English gentry. One somewhat amusing example of such a promotion effort centred on Knight's *Erris*, which was published in 1836. The *Telegraph*, or *Connaught Ranger* declared:

To such as are desirous to become acquainted with the romantic and beautiful, though secluded, district of Erris, we would earnestly recommend the perusal of a publication which has just appeared, describing its localities, soil, culture and capabilities. This is a very interesting work, and from the quantity of information which it conveys, should, we think, be in the hands of every gentleman in Erris and its neighbourhood, and even our whole County . . .<sup>13</sup>

Knight portrayed a wild, impoverished fastness, deprived of progressive influences due to its remoteness and inhospitable terrain, and he did not employ adjectives such as 'romantic' 'beautiful' or 'secluded', in his descriptions. The book cost 5 shillings,<sup>14</sup> which amounted to a week's wages for the average labourer in the 1830s. It appears, therefore, that ownership of such books was confined mainly to the upper levels of society, who possessed the means with which to purchase them.

These favourable reports proved popular with Mayo gentry for a further reason. While the majority of the Mayo gentry class was descended from Anglo-Irish ascendancy stock, this same Anglo-Irish proprietary class had long been the object of verbal and printed abuse in England. Contemporary economists almost unanimously condemned the subdivision and rack-renting as practised by many Irish landlords. This condemnation was echoed in the press and in Parliament, and if the British public learned to view the Irish peasant as shiftless and lazy, they came to see Irish landlords as callous, greedy and often undeniably cruel, during the late eighteenth century and the pre-Famine period.<sup>15</sup>

It would be reasonable to assume that as a counteraction to this prevailing adverse publicity, such reports citing hospitable, benevolent landlord hosts, would be welcomed by the gentry in Mayo, and indeed in every other county in Ireland. The Mayo gentry had, after all, prominent political, social and cultural ties with England; the county forwarded members to Parliament there, and London and Cheltenham were fashionable social centres in the nineteenth century, frequented by the social elite of Mayo. For these reasons, publications lauding the efforts of Irish landlords would have provided a welcome change from the barrage of criticism levelled against them by such as the *Times*, *Fraser's Magazine* and *Blackwoods Magazine*, in addition to increasing attacks from Parliament from both conservative



gentry and radical free traders, during the 1830s and 1840s.<sup>16</sup>

In addition to books, local newspapers provided an important social service, documenting events such as society occasions, sporting events, news from Dublin, London and Paris, and general notices of interest to the gentry. Advertisements were directed solely towards the upper classes, in the hope that they might patronize the establishment or service advertised. The following notice was typical of the format used:

A. Finlay, Apothecary and Chemist, begs leave to acquaint the Nobility and Gentry of the County of Mayo that he has opened an Establishment in Hollymount, for the sale of simple and compound medicines of the very first quality. He hopes therefore, by an unwearied attention to his business, to give every satisfaction to those who may favour him with their commands. He is also provided with every description of medicines used in the Farriery and Farming line. – Bloomfield, May 20th 1828.<sup>17</sup>

Lower elements of the gentry class utilised a different means of selecting and purchasing their requirements, as Otway described:

About the commencement of the present century [nineteenth], the Connaught secondary gentry, who seldom thought of going to Dublin, used, besides rigging themselves out at Ballinasloe fair, to have their common and occasional wants in the way of raiment, jewellery and spicery supplied by pedlars who went about the country with large and strong chests stowed on carts, and which contained often valuable assortments of goods of all kinds. These persons were of such respectability that some of them dined at the tables of the gentry . . . and were treated with all possible consideration.<sup>18</sup>

Social events involving music, theatre, or the arts in general were important to the gentry classes. The formal arts in the early nineteenth century were the prerogative of the upper classes, and by all appearances were far removed from the traditional folk culture of the peasantry. The gentry patronised the opera, the ballet or the recital, and Mayo gentry were no exception, whenever the opportunity presented itself. Touring artistes and instructors in the various accomplishments travelled throughout the country, and were popular among the upper classes. The people of Castlebar were well versed in the art of Terpsichore, according to the *Telegraph* in 1836:

We have much pleasure in announcing to the lovers of Terpsichore that Mr. Kyle, the distinguished professor of that enlivening art has arrived among us, and that he proposes giving lessons as usual. We have no doubt that the fair part of the creation in Castlebar and its neighbourhood will hasten to avail themselves of the opportunity thus afforded them of attaining a proficiency in this elegant and indispensable accomplishment.<sup>19</sup>

Castlebar appeared to have been the cultural centre of Mayo, in so far as it attracted various theatrical and operatic companies, in addition to travelling artistes, to perform there. One exuberant notice in the local newspaper drew attention to the approach of an important social event, the staging of the Petit Opera House at Sheridans Great Rooms, Castlebar. In this notice, the 'nobility, gentry and the public in general' were invited to a Grand Concert by various artistes, including 'Mr. and the Misses Dulang, and Signors Valentini'. All the songs and performers were listed, and patrons were informed that front seats cost 2 shillings, with children and

servants half price. This was the sixth visit to Castlebar for these particular performers, which is indicative of the popularity they enjoyed.<sup>20</sup>

Dublin society in the eighteenth century, inspired by the 'fashionable sophistication of a colonial governing class', according to Brian Boydell, had encouraged and patronized the arts, which were regarded as an essential decoration of elegant living. Music and the theatre, among other cultural pursuits, had flourished in this society, which soon spread its influence to the larger provincial cities.<sup>21</sup> The advent of improved communications in the early nineteenth century served to facilitate the spread of cultural pursuits to the smaller country towns, such as Westport and Castlebar.

Castlebar was also the main centre for horse racing in Mayo, which was a highly popular social event among the landed element. Held at Breaffy, outside the town, these Castlebar Races were second in Connaught only to the Galway races. Castlebar races were held in August, and, according to the newspaper reports, were frequented not only by Mayo gentry, but by distinguished landed families from all over Connaught. The report stated:

At Castlebar races . . . several equipages adorned the course, and were graced by numbers of the ladies of the distinguished families of this and some of the neighbouring counties . . . the number of sporting characters and men of celebrity on the turf who are in attendance on our races is gratifying . . . and the number of horses from different parts of Ireland which have been brought here have made our sports of a high and interesting character indeed, and promises to place those of Mayo amongst the first of the Races of Ireland.<sup>22</sup>



*Coranna (Chester Cup, 1846; Cesarewitch, 1843).*

From M. G. Moore, *An Irish Gentleman*, George Henry Moore.  
[See p. 66 – Editor]



Horse racing was an important feature of the social life of Mayo in the pre-Famine period, with various meetings held during the summer months. Races were held at Ballina annually, but this meeting does not appear to have enjoyed the same level of prestige as did the Castlebar meeting.<sup>23</sup> It is likely that this meeting at Ballina was held at the race course of Mount Falcon, the seat of J. F. Knox, which was situated two and a half miles from Ballina town.<sup>24</sup>

Various families such as the Knoxes and Gores were active in racing circles in Mayo, but during the 1830s the Moores of Moorehall were possibly the most prominent family, known especially for the training of racehorses and hunters. George Moore's biographer noted that:

In 1841 George Moore and his brother, Augustus, had given up all else and devoted themselves heart and soul to racing and riding.<sup>25</sup>

One social custom connected with horses and practised by the gentry of Mayo was that of 'pounding matches', described by Col. Moore:

Sixty years ago "pounding matches" were favourite amusements in the west of Ireland. It might be at some dinner before races or a fair, when the punch was smoking, spirits waxing high, and the merits of horses were being discussed, some fortunate owner of a great jumper would challenge a rival sportsman to this test. On the appointed day, accompanied by their friends, their grooms, and by half the countryside, they would ride to some very difficult piece of country, and then each in turn had the choice of fence, over which the other must follow or admit defeat. Large sums were often ventured on these ordeals, and in the effort to "pound" an opponent the most dreadful obstacles were attempted.<sup>26</sup>

These race meetings and hunts constituted more than mere horse races. They were, through the suppers, balls and 'ordinaries' which accompanied them, an integral part of the social life of Mayo's gentry. The 1820s appear to have witnessed a decline in the number of dinners and balls held in the county. Mr. R. P. Mc Donnell testified accordingly, in a reply to a question from a Select Committee on the state of Ireland, regarding this subject in 1825:

We are become a very sober and sedate kind of people there; balls and assemblies are nearly laid aside altogether, and public dinners occur there but very seldom indeed.<sup>27</sup>

Race dinners also, which were usually held in the local Linen Hall, had not been held there 'for some years past', according to Mr. McDonnell. The situation improved in the 1830s, as illustrated by the profusion of social events, centred around the Castlebar races in particular. Balls were held annually at Sheridans Great Rooms, at Mr. Martin Sheridan's private residence in Castlebar, and at the residence of Captain Ireland, Spencer Park, Castlebar.<sup>28</sup>

The local newspapers carried extensive reports on these social occasions, such as the following, in 1836:

No sooner had the race sports commenced than Castlebar was all life and spirit... The announcement of a fete at Dr. Dillon's on Friday night last kept the fashionables of Mayo on the 'qui vive' for several days previous, and nothing was talked of but the newest fashions and the progress of liaisons... the 500 friends of the host and hostess poured thick and fast into the suite of apartments at the Infirmary, which for that night at least was a scene for mirth and jollity, not a mansion of woe... Westport Quadrille band was in the Rooms,

supper and refreshments were... of a quality and rare excellence that would have propitiated the favour of the most warm disciple of Apicius.<sup>29</sup>

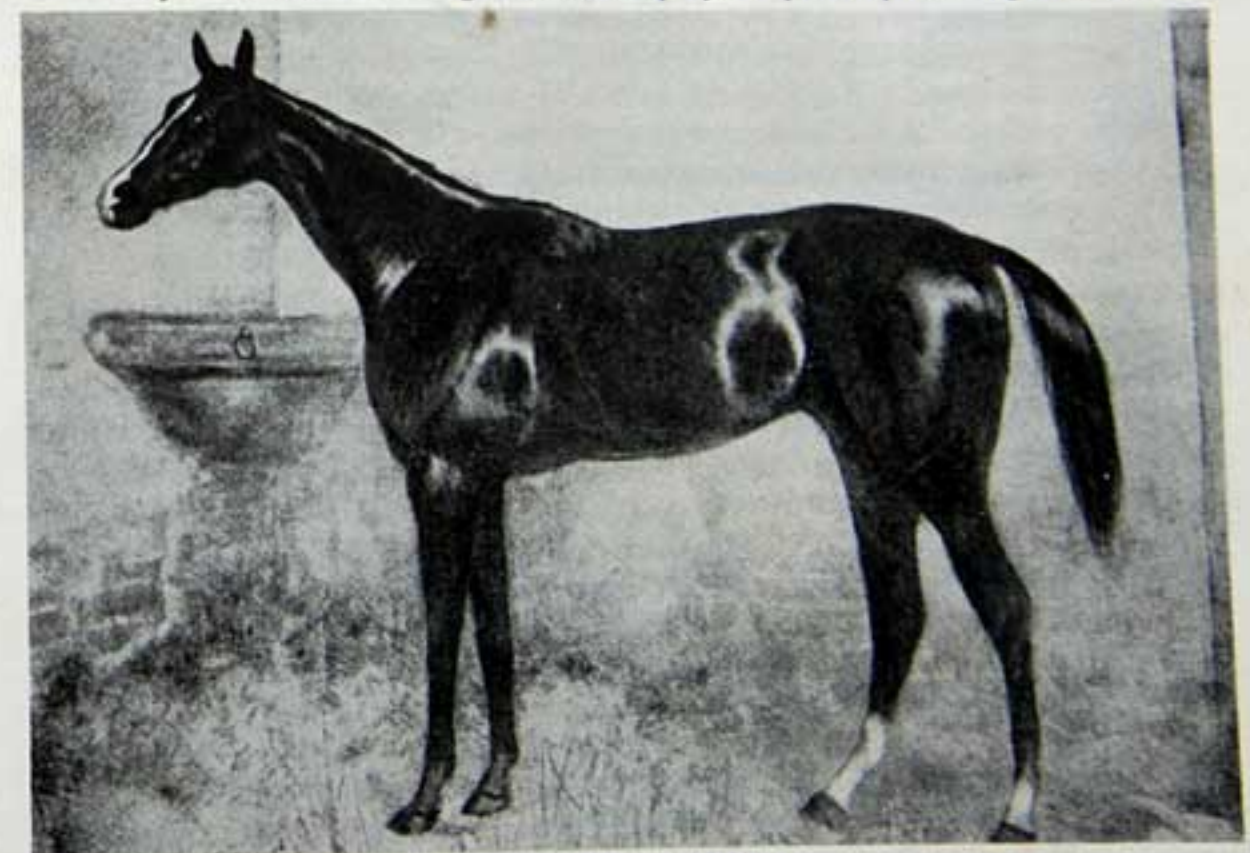
In pre-Famine Mayo, balls and social gatherings were also synonymous with the hunt. Most of the landed gentry, but in particular the Moores, Dillons and Knoxes, kept hunters, especially since it was generally agreed that:

If ever a district were designed by Nature for field sport, a person, from even a cursory glance upon the map, would point to Mayo.<sup>30</sup>

George Henry Moore, M.P., commonly called 'Dog Moore' during the 1840s after his celebrated race horse 'Wolfdog', was noted throughout the country for his hunting bloodstock, and the reckless courage with which he rode in the hunt.<sup>31</sup> It would appear that hunting was popular with the gentry in Mayo generally, especially in Tyrawley, as illustrated by a notice from the *Tyrawley Herald* newspaper which stated 'The Tyrawley Hunt will meet 9 times in March'.<sup>32</sup>

The hardy Irish hunter, whose breed had originated in the eighteenth century, was replaced gradually in the nineteenth century by a new class of racing hunter. The increased popularity and faster pace of the sport had occasioned the change, possibly encouraged by the inclusion of new social groups within the gentry class, such as the lesser gentleman farmer, land agents, and the wealthier elements of the newly-emerging middle classes. This new popularity regarding hunting had diminished the supply of game in the county, where by the 1840s red deer, pheasant and partridge had become scarce, but there remained an abundant supply of fallow deer, grouse, hares and foxes to maintain the various hunts comfortably.<sup>33</sup>

Mayo's seacoast and larger lakes also played a part in providing facilities for



*Croaghpatrick* (Stewards Cup, Goodwood, 1861).

From M. G. Moore, *An Irish Gentleman*, George Henry Moore.



sporting and social occasions. Regattas were popular with the gentry throughout the 1830s and 1840s. The *Mayo Mercury* of 27 June 1840 reported that the Lough Carra Regatta was held on 25 June, and that the attendance was numerous and fashionable, as was the attendance at the larger Clew Bay Regatta held annually in August. The paper stated that:

We know of no amusement that does more good than this . . . the greater part of the prizes are distributable amongst the hardy fishermen on the coast, for it acts as a stimulus to their exertions in repairing their boats.<sup>34</sup>

The same paper advertised the Lough Lannagh Regatta held in September, near Castlebar. It reported that 'A handsome snuff box, value £5, will be given to the winner, among 4 oared boats, steered and rowed by gentlemen.'<sup>35</sup>

These regattas were followed by 'ordinaries', such as that held in Robinsons Hotel, Westport, after the Clew Bay event.<sup>36</sup> The Royal Western Yacht Club, the Irish division of which had its rendezvous at Limerick, commanded considerable prestige, so much so that when Robert Dillon Browne, M.P., of Glencorrib, Mayo, was enrolled as a member, the appointment merited special notice in the local newspapers.<sup>37</sup> Other prestigious gentlemen's clubs of the time included the Turf Club, Hibernian United Services Club, Brunswick Club, Royal Irish Yacht Club, and the Connaught Club. This latter was formed in 1825:

The members of the club dine together at Gill's Hotel, Ballinasloe, each day during the October Fair. The president for the year is Chairman of the first day's dinner, the Vice President, Croupier, and on each succeeding day a different Chairman is appointed. The members originally were of the Province of Connaught exclusively, but for some years past, the society has been open to gentlemen from all parts of Ireland, and is composed principally of persons connected with agricultural pursuits, the breeding and feeding of stock &c. The objects of this Society are - 'social intercourse, universal benevolence, and local improvement.' General and local politics or other such subjects likely to create disunion are strictly prohibited. Subscription £1 per annum.<sup>38</sup>

Hunts, shoots, balls and associated parties served a number of functions of a more serious nature than sport, conviviality or carousing. These occasions provided opportunities for social integration, political interaction and the selection of marriage partners by members of the younger generations of the gentry class. Hoppen, in a discussion of landlords and electoral politics, remarked that it was considered essential that any candidate should be 'connected' with the county he sought to represent, with regard to campaigns for public office or for county politics:

So strong was this conviction that it can be regarded as the first law of proprietorial politics . . . So powerful a propellant was this sense of proprieties that it could drive even the sober third Marquis of Downshire to involve himself in horse racing - that universal solvent of 19th century rural life - it being, as he fastidiously remarked, 'only on public electioneering grounds that I meddle in it'.<sup>39</sup>

In the pre-Famine era, society marriages were major social occasions among the landed class, and elicited long and detailed reports in the local press, such as that concerning Valentine O'Connor Blake of Towerhill, Mayo to the Hon. Margaret, daughter of Lord Ffrench, held at Castle Ffrench in Co. Galway in 1836.<sup>40</sup>

Gentry marriages were often decided as a result of much hard bargaining between families, and the final terms reflected the precise rung on what David Large terms 'the slippery ladder of rank and fortune to which both parties aspired'.<sup>41</sup> He raises the point that it would be useful if it could be established whether, on balance, portions of wealth coming into families tended to grow larger more rapidly, than the losses that had to be incurred in jointuring and raising portions for future daughters and providing for younger sons. He noted:

. . . In England the terms of trade in this matter in the eighteenth century favoured those families of high social rank, but if, as is possible, this was the case among Irish landowners, there is one consideration which suggests that they were not likely to be as well placed in the marriage market as their English counterparts. Common estimation . . . set Irish peers on a lower rung of the social ladder than English peers, and in so far as Irish peers sought alliances with the daughters of English peers the likelihood is that the terms of trade would not favour them . . . On the other hand, a sample indicates that only about one in ten Irish peers married into English families, so that this could not have been a very serious factor in burdening Irish rentals.<sup>42</sup>

However, one Mayo 'gentleman' succeeded in manipulating matters to his advantage, in the marriage stakes, as Thackeray discovered during his sojourn in Mayo:

One of the villas the guide pointed out with peculiar exultation, it is called by a grand name - Waterloo Park, and has a lodge and a gate, and a field of a couple of acres, and belongs to a young gentleman, who being able to write 'Waterloo Park' on his card, succeeded in carrying off a young London heiress with a hundred thousand pounds. The young people had just arrived, and one of them must have been rather astonished, no doubt, at the 'Park'.<sup>43</sup>

Gentry in Mayo were well-informed about social affairs in England, by means of personal travel and local newspaper reports. In addition to London, Bath and Cheltenham were favourite attractions, and many of the landed elite would undertake the journey annually. The *Telegraph* reported in 1836:

Mattias Mc Donnell esq. J. P., accompanied by his eldest and second eldest daughters, passed through Castlebar yesterday, on their way to Cheltenham, to participate in the gaieties of that fashionable watering spot.<sup>44</sup>

Another activity which was the prerogative of the upper class element in Mayo was that of holding celebrations coinciding with Royal occasions in England, such as those of Royal births or weddings. One such event occurred on the occasion of Queen Victoria's marriage in 1840:

The festival of the Queen's marriage was observed with great joy and harmony by the inhabitants of Claremorris. In the evening the town was most tastefully and brilliantly illuminated . . . the town of Castlebar presented one stream of joyous illumination.<sup>45</sup>

Celebratory dinners marking local occasions of note were also a feature of the social calendar. 'Public dinners' as they were termed, were held to mark specific occasions, or honour a select member of the gentry. One such dinner was reported in January 1836:

On Monday evening last, the independant freeholders of the Barony of Gallen entertained their neighbour and popular and excellent representative Sir



William Brabazon, at a public dinner in the town of Swinford. The entertainment was served up in the large Sessions Room of the town, which was tastefully decorated with festoons of evergreens for the occasion. At about 7 o'clock, Thomas Philips esq. J. P., Clonmore House, was called upon to preside, and about 70 gentlemen sat down to dinner. To the right of the Chairman sat the Honourable Baronet, in whose honour the banquet was given, and on his left sat the Hon. and very Rev. Dean Gore.

This report contained no mention of wives or ladies present, but does report a toast – 'To the ladies of Swinford whose presence this evening has cheered and charmed us'.<sup>46</sup>

Lord Altamont, on his return to Westport following a two year period of residence in Jamaica where his father was governor, was another recipient of a public dinner in 1836. This was held in the Court House, Westport, and was presided over by the magistrate Charles Higgins. Lord Viscount Dillon in the same year, was the honoured guest at a dinner in Ballaghaderreen on 26 September 1836, 'for his kindness to his numerous tenantry in the barony of Costello, and the humane and benevolent consideration he has always expressed for their welfare'.<sup>47</sup>

In conclusion, it appeared that the preservation of an acquired status and influence relied heavily on the preservation of the gentry family's identity, and the wealth that maintained it. Hence the constant concern for the continuity of the family and the preservation of its wealth. Long residence in a particular locality enhanced a family's standing. Landed gentry derived their income mainly from the land; therefore the estate had to be safeguarded from excessive burdens of debt; and moreover, if financial pressures demanded sales of land, then it was the detached or outlying portions of the estate that went, not the main core around the estate residence.<sup>48</sup> The maintenance of customary standards of living, the making of socially acceptable marriage contracts, and the protection of the interests of the family, all hinged on the continuity of the estate and its revenues, and this was as important to the titled elements in Mayo landed society as it was to the aspiring gentleman farmer, for the overall retention of the gentry position in that society.

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  18. Otway, *Tour of Connaught*, (1839), pp 255-56.
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- Marie Kelly, M.A., a native of Westport, graduated in English and History in University College Galway. Her M.A. thesis (1988) had as its subject 'Aspects of Economy and Society in Pre-Famine Mayo'.



**DINNER TO MR. JOHN BROWNE**  
(MAYO CONSTITUTION, THURSDAY, 12 MAY 1831)

On Monday a most numerous party of the freeholders of the Barony of Murrisk, entertained the new Candidate, Mr. John Browne, at Robinson's Hotel. The covers were laid for upwards of one hundred. At seven o'clock, 89 persons sat down to one of the most splendid entertainments ever given in this part of the country. The Chair was filled by Charles Higgins, Esq., whose venerable appearance seemed to fill everyone present with sentiments of affectionate and respectful attention, particularly as that much esteemed gentleman was just recovered from a protracted fit of illness. On the cloth being removed Mr. Fitzgerald Higgins relieved his father, and with the hearty concurrence of the assembly, took the Chair, and in a most becoming manner, proposed the following toasts:-

"The King, may he ever regard the affections of his people as the best security of his throne," (Nine times nine.) - Air - God save the King.

The Queen, the amiable consort of our popular and beloved King, and the other branches of the Royal Family.

Our gallant and benevolent Viceroy. (Three times three.)

His Majesty's Ministry, who are nobly and successfully advocating the cause of Reform.

The British Army.

The Navy: after the cheers which followed this announcement, Mr. Irwin was universally called on: who briefly and energetically returned thanks.

The land we live in, May civil or religious discord never divide her generous and most gallant sons.

Mr. John Browne, The Chairman in proposing this toast, expressed the pleasure he felt, at seeing his friend in the proud situation of Candidate for this County, the third in Ireland. Of his success he entertained not the least doubt, when he considered the unprecedented and unqualified pledges made to him on his canvass, and he hesitated not to assert, that he would faithfully and honestly discharge the trust reposed in him.

This toast was received with the most deafening shouts of applause. After the applause had ceased, Mr. Browne stood up to return thanks. He made the unequivocal declaration of his political sentiments, highly creditable to his head and heart. He spoke at considerable length, and fully developed his views, should he be called to the high honour of representing his native county. In the most unmeasured terms, he professed himself the friend of Parliamentary and domestic Reform, and only solicited the patronage of the electors as long as he merited their approbation, by a strict and honest attention to their wants and wishes. He requested "a free stage and no favour," but to give him a trial, and if he did not redeem his pledges, to discard him as unworthy of the trust. He spoke at great length, and with much warmth, and was received with marked enthusiasm, particularly when he emphatically declared, that the moment he departed from the wishes of his constituents, that instead he would return to them, the trust he reposed in them.

The Marquess of Sligo. (Nine times nine). Mr. Peter Browne returned thanks in a speech replete with expression, the most grateful, for the kind manner in which the health of his Noble relative was drunk.

The Marchioness of Sligo. Mr. Browne returned thanks.

Prosperity to the town and trade of Westport. Mr. Patten returned thanks.

In his usual eloquent and energetic style, Mr. Clendining begged to propose the health of their venerable Chairman, which was received with the most enthusiastic applause.

Our late Member, Mr. James Browne. Mr. John Browne returned thanks.

Mr. Clendining, who returned thanks in a speech much replete with good sense and kind feeling, and was much cheered throughout.

Mr. John Browne proposed the health of the Rev. Bernard Bourke and the Catholic Clergy. After a well merited eulogism on the victory of this respectable body, the toast, we need not add, was received with the loudest acclamation. The Rev. Mr. Bourke returned thanks at a considerable length, and was cheered repeatedly throughout.

Mr. Peter Browne. This Gentleman returned thanks in very appropriate terms, for the kind reception he received, on his return to the country.

Mr. Richard Levingston and sons. The Vice President, Mr. Levingston, returned thanks.

Several other toasts were drunk in the course of the evening, and appropriate airs played by the band of the South Mayo Militia, and this numerous party separated, highly gratified with the festivities of the evening.

And so ended a convivial evening in the famous Robinson's Hotel, Westport (now the Olde Railway Hotel), for the local gentry and their supporters, as reported by their organ the *Mayo Constitution*. The toasts and speeches - seventeen of each with 'several' others during the course of the entertainment - led to a highly satisfactory outcome a week later when their candidates John Browne, Mountbrowne, and Dominick Browne, Castlemacgarret, were declared elected, defeating the 'clerical candidate' Joseph MacDonnell, Doocastle. The *Constitution* editorial of 19 May proclaimed that

In Mayo, the Election has proved, that clerical influence is unequal to cope with the power of the aristocracy - the trial was unwise and unnecessary - and the result has proved what was hitherto doubtful - the political weakness of the Roman Catholic Clergy.

(Contributed by Sheila Mulloy)

**WESTPORT TRADE**

(BALLINA IMPARTIAL, 11 FEBRUARY 1833).

Last night, by moonlight, eight sail of merchant men sailed from this Port laden with grain of various kinds, and carrying burdens varying from ninety to two hundred tons. It was most pleasing to hear the mariners cheering each other and thereby lightening their labour in the management of their vessels - the night was delightful and the moon shone beautifully, reflecting in the glass-like surface of the ocean, the very picturesque and magnificent scenery around. A short time since the fleet of merchant men here was (for such times as the present) quite respectable, it consisted of nearly twenty sail, principally large vessels - the value of the vessels in themselves could not be much short of fifty thousand pounds, some in ballast and many having assorted cargoes of merchandise for the supply of various towns in the country. You would be surprised to know the number of hands engaged in the preparation of the grain shipped from here - hundreds are always sure of employment. What a pity there is not better ground for speculation, that men of capital have not more encouragement... one of the vessels which sailed last night, the *Elizabeth* of St. John, N.B., with 180 tons oats, for the Clyde, struck on a part of the new quay near Roman Island, and remains fast. She does not appear to have received any damage, and it is hoped she will float the coming tide.

(Contributed by Desmond McCabe)



## THE BOOTH SCHOOL AND OTHER MATTERS AT AYLE

by Jarlath Duffy

The road from Mace to Killawalla, forming part of the Westport to Ballinrobe road, has many interesting landmarks, all to be found on the right-hand side as one drives from Westport – MacPhilbin's Castle at Castlepark, the ruins of the church and school in Ayle, the site of the R.I.C. barracks, the Ayle caves, the place of Lord Haw-Haw's early formative years, St. Patrick's Well at Stringle and the hunting lodge of the Avonmores of Tipperary at Hazelrock. This article will concern itself mainly with the school and church in Ayle, which flourished in the middle of the last century and which played a significant part in the history of the locality.

Late eighteenth century references to the schools in Mayo seem to be rare and the recording of hedge-schools seems to have been left to the oral tradition.<sup>1</sup> However, in 1826 Mayo had 341 schools serving 16,185 scholars, some of the schools being endowed by Erasmus Smith, the Kildare Place Society, the London Hibernian Society or the Baptists. Two-thirds of the total would seem to be of the hedge-school type.

In the list of schools operated by the Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in Ireland, the following appear – Westport, Knappagh, Slingan, Ardygommon, Ayle, Drummin and Mina. Ardygommon and Ayle are supported by the London Hibernian Society and the Methodist Missionary Society, and have average attendances of 23 boys and 12 girls, and 38 boys and 39 girls respectively, but both schools are violently opposed locally and in August 1824 Ayle is closed because of the opposition. The Ayle school is listed as being in the townland of Tubbermane.<sup>2</sup>

The parochial returns supply the following information. Schools listed include Tubbermane (village of Ayle), Aylemore, Mause, Aughagower, Ramore (Aughagower), Cushen, Mace, Knappagh (2 schools) and Lanmore. The schools listed for the Ayle area have the following teachers:

Michael Naughten, R.C. (Tubbermane), yearly income £23

Rebecca Kyle, Protestant (Aylemore), yearly income £6

Patrick Tuohy, R.C. (Mause) and Patrick McDonnell, R.C. (Mace)

The condition of the school houses varies greatly from Tubbermane, which is built in the best manner with stone and lime and cost £118, to Aylemore which is a miserable cabin awaiting the school's transfer to a new house in Ayle. Naughten teaches 11 Protestants and 11 Roman Catholics, Kyle has 75 of the former and 5 of the latter. Figures for Tuohy's school are not given and McDonnell presides over 56 Roman Catholics.

Patrick Gibbons, succeeded by James Causland, both Roman Catholics, are the teachers in Ardygommon at this time. The school is supported by the Kildare Place Society and has 7 Protestants and 5 Catholics attending. Causland is also listed as teaching in Tonnranny in a miserable cabin under the London Hibernian Society and has 22 Protestants and 18 Catholics in the school. George Booth, Parish Clerk, and his wife Jane (nee Dane), married in 1814, are listed as the teachers in one of the eleven Westport schools.<sup>3</sup>

In 1837 the population of the parish of Aughagower is given as 12,045, with schools at Ayle, Ardygommon, Cushinkeel, Aughagower, Triangle and Lanmore.<sup>4</sup> Opposition to the new educational system from the archbishop of Tuam resulted in these schools remaining outside the system and very poor. In the late forties the attitude of the Lion of Tuam mellowed and there was a rash of applications to Dublin from parish clergy for approval of the schools in their area, for building grants and for teachers' salaries. Only one school now remained in Ayle although its exact location at any particular year is difficult to ascertain. Changes occur with the school in Cushin 'moving' to Knockrooskey (1853),<sup>5</sup> Triangle to Ballyburke (Gortbawn 1849)<sup>6</sup> and a new school opened in Killawalla (1852).<sup>7</sup> Ardygommon is still open in the 1850s.

George and Jane Booth, school teachers in Westport had seven children – Elizabeth (born 1818), Esther (1824), William (1826), Joseph (1828), Jane and James (1831), and Robert (1835).<sup>8</sup> Application was made by the Rev. William Leahy, Vicar of the Union of Westport in 1848, seeking approval for teachers' salaries for Esther and Joseph Booth teaching in the townland of Tubbermane. The school was 4 miles south of Westport with Lankill, Aughagower hedge school and Ballyburke (not yet built) as the other schools in the area. The school adjoined the Ayle Church but was separated from it by a wall and enclosed garden. The school was not connected with any religious establishment claimed the Rev. Leahy, but the succeeding years would prove otherwise. The school was built of stone and lime and was thatched, measuring 68' x 22' x 10' internally, with 2 rooms, one for males, one



*Ayle Church and Booth School.*



for females. Ventilation was poor as the windows were fastened and could not be opened. Inspector Hamill complained of one classroom cluttered with the teacher's furniture!

Esther was pretty good as a teacher, her brother was tolerable. Some students, out of a total of 53 males and 59 females on the day of inspection in May 1848, brought 1 penny per week to pay the teachers. The school operated a five-day week from 11 to 3 in the summer and from 11 to 4 in the winter. Religious education was given in the hour from 10 to 11 before the proper opening time. Mr. Hamill was reluctant to seek the views of the R.C. clergyman 'in consequence of Dr. McHales's directions'. As the school was always well attended under the Poor Law system, and there were no complaints of partiality, Mr. Hamill recommended that approval be given for the teachers' salaries so that 'the school, which was 20 years in existence, would not be rendered inoperable by the withdrawal of rations or the hostility of the R.C. clergymen.'<sup>9</sup>

Joseph Booth was granted £10, his sister £3 per annum. Two years later Esther resigned and was replaced by Bridget Daly who was described as incompetent. Threats to withdraw her salary were shelved in the hope that the average attendance would increase if the building was repaired. A new site was under consideration in 1850 in the townland of Mass. A lease of three lives was granted, approval passed for building and privies, with grant to furnish, when the Commissioners were informed that the site had been changed to the townland of South Mause. In July 1851 permission was given for the new site. Mr. Leahy was replaced by the Rev. John Cather who now took up the correspondence with Dublin. But not all the school problems were of a building nature. Charges were levelled at Joseph Booth that he acted discourteously towards the Rev. Geoffrey Bourke and that he used language calculated to excite religious controversy. The charges were fully established. The average attendance had fallen to 19. The Commissioners ordered that Ayle school be struck off and fined Mr. Booth £1 out of his salary. A few years later application was made for salary for Francis Kirkpatrick, twenty years of age, to teach 7 males and 5 females in a stone and mortar thatched schoolhouse 11½' x 11½' x 10' situated in Church grounds in Tubberavane. There on the clay floor were two desks and some forms. The competing schools were St. Joseph's N.S., Knockrooskey and Aughagower. The Parish Priest of Aughagower objected to approval for the school on the grounds that there were not enough Protestants to warrant a school. Robert Kirkpatrick was teaching in Killawalla, Pat Lyons in Ballyburke.<sup>10</sup>

St. Joseph's N.S., Knockrooskey was opened in 1853 with a young teacher Joseph Langan aged nineteen years. Attending the school which measured 30' x 18' x 10' were 25 males and 15 females. There was much local opposition from those who supported the Ayle school to the name St. Joseph's. Despite instructions from Dublin to remove the name from the building which were ignored locally, the school name remained and the Commissioners yielded. Joseph Langan almost lost his position for being discourteous to a Protestant gentleman from the locality who wished to enter the school. The teacher's defence that he thought the gentleman in question was a commercial traveller for he carried a bag, was accepted reluctantly on that occasion by the authorities who severely warned the teacher about his

conduct. As St. Joseph's thrived, the Booth School in Ayle declined.

The church in Ayle dates from 1825, when the decision was made to change the site from Aughagower, and it must have been built in conjunction with the first school there.<sup>12</sup> In 1827 the archbishop of Tuam, Le Poer Trench, consecrated the church, St. Patrick's, on the first of July.<sup>13</sup> Rev. Jones served as curate from Westport at that time and one must wonder where the influx of people came from and why they settled in Ayle. The surnames of those born around 1825 tell their own story – Curley, Walsh, Kimlin, Wilson, McNally, Couch, Timmons, St. George, Kyle, Smyth, Lapworth, Burren, Parkham, Frazier, Johnson, Poudy. Some of the occupations listed include farmer, shoemaking, tailoring, weaving, policeman, and there is also evidence of a connection with the Coastguard station at Rosmoney. The road into the Church was built in 1828.

The church served Aughagower parish in general, and in particular Ayle, Coachgap and Ardygommon. The last son of George and Jane Booth was baptised in Ayle Church in December 1835. The Rev. Ring served as curate for a short while, as he died aged about thirty in the year 1840. The Rev. Giles Eyre officiated at his funeral. The Rev. Pouden's death in 1847 at the age of fifty-two is recorded in Ayle, which must have assumed a most important place in the life of the parish of Westport. One wonders what the state of the church in the Demesne was at this time. Records show the use of the schoolhouse on the Newport Road as a church. George Booth described as Parish Clerk, Ayle, died in 1847 aged sixty-five years. It is in the Ayle Register that John C. Garvey's (of Murrisk Abbey) wedding to Jane Leahy, who was daughter of Wm. Leahy, Vicar of Westport, is recorded in 1847. A year later, Edward Dalton married Joanne Williams in Ayle Church, both of whom are residing at Pigeon Point, Carrowholly and are members of Coastguard station families. Esther Booth married William Stewart in 1851. One of the latest marriages recorded in Ayle was of Peter Conroy from Newport and Elizabeth Smith of Ayle in 1900. Canon J.A. Hannay, the well-known author, who wrote under the pseudonym of George A. Birmingham, first preached in Ayle Church in 1892 and recorded the last marriage there in 1904.<sup>14</sup>

Towards the end of the nineteenth century the church declined and became a burden on the parish of Westport. In 1881 an appeal for more financial support was refused, and the people were advised to bring their own fuel to heat the church or sit in a cold one; a proposal to close the church in 1883 received consideration by the Select Vestry, but got submerged in the general discussion about Kilmeena being amalgamated with Westport. Mr. Laing was appointed sexton in 1890. The colourful James Hannay arrived and the discussions went on. Oughaval and Kilmeena were amalgamated in 1913. The church at Carrowholly was sold. Many a time nature in the form of terrible storms and great snows or the smoke from the wet turf put paid to the church services. Two entries in the Church records for the year 1922 belong to another story –

July 9 – no service in Ayle owing to disturbed state of locality

October 8, 11.30 a.m. – heavy firing in progress . . .

In 1928 the Select Vestry noted the poor condition of Ayle Church with over £89 needed for repairs. The final decision was not made until 1962 when the roof



was removed. The building was also secured against damage and remains to this day a testimony of times long past.<sup>15</sup> Holy Trinity Church now served the needs of Westport and the surrounding area.

The Ayle river enters a cave-like entrance not far from the Booth School and Ayle Church. It rises again three miles later in the townland of Ballyburke and flows a normal surface course into Lough Mask. The cave where the river goes underground is noted as the only one in Mayo,<sup>16</sup> and has in recent times assumed national and international importance with potholers from near and far. The Yelvertons and Avonmores are long, long forgotten and a new school has opened recently on a site that would have seen the gentry of old commence their hunts for the deer which once abounded in the woods . . . On his capture after the Second World War, the British gave William Joyce a trial, a guilty verdict of treason and execution, all on the one day. No more would 'Germany calling' be heard . . . St. Patrick on his way from Stringle to Aughagower passed through Tubberruane and crossed the Bog Road . . . The Four Masters record that over 80 people seeking shelter in the Caves of Ayle from their enemies were suffocated by them in 1063 . . .

There would have been no church to block the view of the MacPhilbins as they looked south from their castle at Castlepark in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries . . . The local IRA burned the Barracks in 1920 . . .

The church and school now stand as reminders of the past. The journey from King's Crossroads to Killawalla Church should be rewarding for those who can reflect.

#### NOTES

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3. Ibid., Part II, pp 1254, 1272.
4. Samuel Lewis, *Topographical Dictionary of Ireland*, Vol. I, p. 92.
5. National School Records, P.R.O., ED1/62, No. 83, No. 104; ED1/64 No. 166; ED1/65, No. 26; Reg. ED2/33, Folio 251; ED2/109, Folio 165, 166, 167; File ED9/457.
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8. Church of Ireland Records, Dublin, Birth Registers for Westport and Ayle Churches.
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10. Ibid., Reg. ED2/33, Folio 125, 124, 166, 186; ED2/109; ED1/62; ED2/102.
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12. Vestry Minutes Union of Westport, Parish of Aughavale, Representative Church Body Library, p. 158.
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## GEORGE HENRY MOORE AND HIS TENANTS, 1840-1870

by David Barr

The Moores of Moore Hall, the famous Mayo family, were prominent members of the county's landed gentry until the fall of landlordism. Particularly noteworthy amongst them were John Moore, who was proclaimed the first President of Connacht during the rising of 1798, George A. Moore, the well-known writer living at the turn of the last century and Colonel Maurice Moore, the soldier, patriot and member of the first Irish Senate. In 1795 the family seat was established at Muckloon Hill, overlooking Lough Carra<sup>1</sup> and a few miles to the east of the main Ballinrobe - Castlebar road. Once an impressive Georgian mansion, Moore Hall is today a forlorn ruin, having been burned down in January 1923 during the Civil War.

In the nineteenth century, the Moores owned well over 12,000 acres of land, putting them amongst the top 300 landowners in Ireland.<sup>2</sup> In addition to the demesne at Muckloon, they owned lands in nearby Ballintubber and Partry and had estates near Ashbrook further north in Mayo. Outside the county, they owned land in Galway and Roscommon. George Henry Moore (1810-1870) was landlord of these estates between 1840 and 1870, years which saw the Great Famine and the formation of the Tenant League. This study sets out to investigate the relations between George Henry Moore and his tenants, with particular reference to the Ballintubber, Partry and Ballycally parts of the estate.

George Henry's father, following the common practice of the Irish gentry, sent his son to be educated in England. At Oscott School near Birmingham, he showed considerable ability, but became the despair of his mother during his undergraduate days at Cambridge, where he learned little, 'except skill at billiards', according to his son Maurice.<sup>3</sup> George Henry appears to have emerged from his adolescence as an affable young extrovert who preferred hunting, horse racing and gambling to more scholarly pursuits. Both he and his brother Augustus were riders of no mean ability and Moore Hall quickly became a centre of equine activity. In the racing world the Moores enjoyed considerable success. A favourite horse, *Anonymous*, won at steeple chasing and George Henry himself had a string of successes on the flat at the Curragh. A tragic setback was the death of Augustus following injuries received whilst riding *Mickey Free* at Liverpool in 1845. George Henry's passion for horses continued unabated and indeed, a big win on *Coranna* during the Famine helped finance much needed relief for his distressed tenants and contributed towards establishing his reputation as a caring landlord. Before his death, George Henry's father had expressed the wish that his son become a resident and caring landlord,<sup>4</sup> but in the years immediately prior to the Famine, it seems that Moore continued to live the life of a leisured member of the ascendancy class, with his estates providing the funds necessary for the maintenance of his chosen lifestyle.

From documentary sources in the Valuations Office, the Land Commission and the National Archives in Dublin, a reasonably clear picture can be gained of the structure and management of a major part of the Moore estates when George Henry was landlord. The 6,443 acre Ballintubber lands and the 785 acre Ballycally townland<sup>5</sup> were close to the Hall and are historically the most significant in tracing



Moore Hall.



the relationship between Moore and his tenants. Agricultural land use on these two estates fell into the categories of arable, pasture and mountain-commonage. The quality of the land varied and the Field Valuations for 1843<sup>6</sup> show a diversity ranging from 'mica-slate soil, extremely poor' (Derrindaffderg Common) to a 'rather good arable' (Ballintubber townland). In 1840 the land had not yet been enclosed to any extent and there is frequent reference to the continuing use of the runridge system of farming.

Land on the estates was let by Moore either directly to a tenant, or to a sub-tenant via a middleman. An agent was usually employed to oversee the running of the estates, his most important function being to collect the rents. In 1840 we find that William Mullowney combined this duty with those of butler and steward to the Moores. Tenants included cottiers who paid their rents with their labour, tenant farmers who paid a rent either in cash or in kind and graziers who rented pasture for their cattle. In addition a staff was, of course, employed at the Hall.

The functions of the middleman on Irish estates in the nineteenth century were of considerable importance to the landlord and, not infrequently, disadvantageous to the sub-tenant. By using a middleman, the landlord (particularly an absentee one) facilitated his rent collecting and ensured his cash-flow, but by letting land on long leases to middlemen on advantageous terms, the landlord received much less in rent than he otherwise would have done. Also, the temptation for middlemen to rackrent their sub-tenants was high. On the Ballintubber estate, land was extensively let to middlemen who are recorded as controlling 9 out of the 16 townlands which comprised the estate. The 9 sub-lettings accounted for 75% of the total area of Moore's Ballintubber estate.<sup>7</sup> The townlands rented by middlemen were: 1. Kiltarsaghaun, Derreennascooba, Derrindaffderg (including Dereindaffderg Common). 2. Drumminroe East and Drumminroe West. 3. Skehanagh Lower, Cartonbower, Cranmore. Middlemen also rented parts of two of the remaining townlands.<sup>8</sup> The Field Valuation book of 1843 gives us a clear idea of the size and importance of three individual middleman holdings:

Name	Area of townlands rented (to nearest acre)
Malachy Tuohy	2990
Peter Tuohy	1251
Mr Cheevers	581

Acreage of this size must have led to a considerable income for the middlemen. That they did exploit them for a substantial profit is revealed in contemporary documents. The Valuation book of 1843 records that Mr Cheevers in Skehanagh, 'pays about 13/0 to 14/0 p. plan. acre for it and has reset it at a rent varying from 25/0 to 31/6 p. acre'. Malachy Tuohy in Kiltarsaghaun occupied 3-4 acres himself. He paid an estimated £40 in rent for the townland, which he sub-let to about forty tenants who paid him about £130 a year in rent.<sup>9</sup> Thus, Cheevers and Malachy Tuohy were sub-letting their holdings at between two and three times the rent paid to George Henry Moore. A consideration of rateable values of property on the Moore estate confirms the financial standing of the middlemen Peter and Malachy Tuohy. In the 1843 Field Survey (where only buildings with a valuation over £5 are listed), Peter's house and offices have a rateable value of £15.6s, which is roughly one third

of the value of Moore Hall and its out-buildings. The 1858 Valuation lists<sup>10</sup> allow an interesting comparison with the dwellings of ordinary tenants. On the townland of Kiltarsaghaun, a house of Malachy Tuohy's is valued at £1.10s, those of his sub-tenants at between 2s and 5s each. The relative power of middlemen like the Tuohys stemmed in part from the long leases they had been given. In 1793 the Tuohys had secured a lease for the lands of Kiltarsaghaun, Derreennascooba and Derrindaffderg (plus commons) for a period of 'four lives'.<sup>11</sup> As these long leases ran out, so the middlemen began to disappear. In the case of the Tuohys, they had ceased their activities as middlemen after 1865,<sup>12</sup> but retained their dwelling. They also appear to have retained their social standing and continued to play a prominent role in the local community.

Rents on the Moore estates were collected twice a year on 'Gale Days'. Rent levels differed greatly because of the variety in type and quality of the holdings. Land let by George Henry Moore in Ballycally, for example, ranged from 20s to 42s per plan. acre.<sup>13</sup> There is evidence to suggest that rent levels on the Ballintubber estate and in Ballycally were excessive, given the quality of the land. Henry Duffy, the Valuations officer, judged a rent of 20s per acre for portions of Ballintubber townland 'greatly too high' and the £140 charged for 147 acres of townland in Balloor East prompted him to conclude: 'Mr. Moore is a rackrent landlord'. No less a person than Maria Edgeworth, the celebrated Irish novelist, endorsed the official opinion.<sup>14</sup> She was a friend of Louisa, George Henry's mother and, in a letter to her complained: '... 40gns taken from these wretched tenants it is beyond anything my wickedest imagination could have conceived for a bad Irish agent (vide Jane Quirke in my *Castle Rackrent*)'. Hone, who quotes this letter, believes that the agent referred to was Mullowney. Yet, despite the high rent levels in the early 1840s, there is no evidence that George Henry evicted any tenants for non-payment. This could be more an indication of his lenient attitudes towards his tenants rather than evidence that the rents were actually affordable. As we shall see later, there was distress amongst some tenants at this time, but this distress was evidently not shared by middleman Peter Tuohy. He offered £200 to rent pasture in Carn townland in order to usurp a grazier who was paying £180 in 1843.<sup>15</sup> During the later life of George Henry and particularly during that of his sons, rent levels on the estate fell generally to well below the 1843 levels, very largely as a result of the Land War and the 1881 Land Act. The same land for which Peter Tuohy had offered a rent of £200 was being let for £120 in 1895.<sup>16</sup>

The issue of grazing was a national and highly emotive one in Ireland throughout the nineteenth century. After the ending of the Napoleonic Wars, corn prices fell and grazing became an increasingly attractive financial proposition for the larger farmer. Being less labour intensive than tillage, livestock farming brought economies to the larger farmer, but hardship to Ireland's lower classes. Extensive grazing reduced employment opportunities for rural labourers and often utilized the best lands, forcing small holders who were evicted to make way for the cattle on to marginal land, which they then had to reclaim personally (often without remuneration). Before the Famine, consolidation of holdings and large scale clearances to make way for cattle were more common in the east of Ireland than in





George Henry Moore.  
(From M. G. Moore, *An Irish Gentleman, George Henry Moore*).

the west. Usually, a country house would have a livestock farm attached to it which was managed by the landowner. The Moore Hall property included a livestock farm and at the time George Henry's father died, cattle and sheep produced an expected turnover of £1,500 per annum. It was also estimated at that time, that if the Ballintubber estate had been let out as grassland, the rent yield could have been increased by over 50%.<sup>17</sup> However, in Ballintubber, only about 500 acres in the townland of Carn were specifically let to a grazier, although other tenants kept some livestock. The grazier had rented half of the land in 1840 and the remainder in 1842, sub-letting a small portion – Church Island. The land was best suited to pasture and its use is recorded in the Field Valuation book of 1843:

He (*the grazier*) preserves the grass of this townland during the summer and grazes it from November till May – generally puts on strong heifers but also some cows + 1 year old cattle – has common only. Some horses on it along with the cattle.

Records of the Congested Districts Board show that Carn continued to be used for grazing into the twentieth century and that this caused discontent amongst neighbouring tenants. Mr. P. V. Joyce was renting land between 1907 and 1911 and an indication of the land hunger at the time was that his cattle were twice driven from his farm. Joyce tried to come to some agreement with his neighbours but was forced to quit the lands in May, 1911.<sup>18</sup> But although livestock were kept on the Moore Hall property and there was long term grazing at Carn, the Ballintubber estate saw no mass clearance of the tenantry for cattle, despite the financial benefits such an action would have brought for George Henry Moore.

For the running of the demesne at Moore Hall, George Henry drew on local labour from Ballycally. These labourers paid their rent through their work at a rate of 10d per day in summer and 8d in winter. When the rent has been covered, the rates of pay were reduced by 2d and were roughly average for the period.<sup>19</sup> Before the building of Moore Hall in the early 1790s, the population of Ballycally was sparse. Manuscript notes of 1912 recording the memoirs of Alec McDonnell, a senior member of the demesne community soon after its establishment, name three families who pre-dated the arrival of the Moores – the McDonnells, the Howleys and the Carabines.<sup>20</sup> In additional notes to the memoirs, 16 tenants with 13 different surnames are recorded as living in Ballycally in 1850. The establishment of the Moore demesne, with its provision of a local focus and employment opportunities, had clearly had an impact on local settlement patterns.

In his first few years as landlord, 1840-1845, George Henry does not appear to have taken any forceful measures to improve the condition of his estates, although he did reveal that he was conscious of, and responded to, instances of distress among amongst his tenants. Poverty was widespread in Ireland long before the Famine and the Moore estates were no exception. In July 1842, Moore was informed of suffering amongst his tenants at Ballybanaun on the Partry estate and sent a donation to help alleviate it. An acknowledgement by the parish priest of Partry gives us an idea of tenant distress there even before the potato blight struck:

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your cheque for five pounds for the poorest tenants of Ballybonane and shall with the greatest pleasure



comply with your good intentions. Alas! it is at last proved that they are in distress. They are unable to work. They are weak and panting at my door and their pale and emaciated countenances would terrify you. Their little gardens are almost dug up. I will endeavour to do my duty. You and your kind and charitable mother have done yours; may Almighty God in his mercy pour his choicest blessings on you. You have saved from starvation and untimely death many in the neighbourhood.<sup>21</sup>

When the Famine did come to the lands around Moore Hall, it hit hard. Appealing for relief in June 1849, Father Browne of Ballintubber wrote of the horrors in Ballintubber and Burriscarra. Of 1600 houses standing in 1844 at least 800 had been levelled. 3,000 lives had been lost and 500 persons had fled to either America or England. 4,000 souls remained and some families had been forced to pawn their clothes in order to buy seed in a desperate bid to plant the land and feed themselves.<sup>22</sup> The areas referred to included parts of many estates including much land that belonged to George Henry Moore. Local landlords received strong criticism from Father Browne and local priests, but Moore was an exception. He did a great deal to help not only those on his own lands but also the destitute on others. Early in the Famine he was in London indulging his passion for horse racing. News of the deteriorating situation of his tenants coincided with a huge win of £10,000 on his horse *Coranna*, which he had entered in association with Lord Waterford in the Chester Cup. Much of the money was required to settle his debts, but he immediately sent £1,000 to his mother at Moore Hall with instructions for its distribution. £500 was to be used to finance relief works, the balance was to be distributed in charity to the very poorest. Immediate relief was to go to all on his lands whether tenants or squatters, since, as he believed: 'the horses would gallop all the faster with the blessings of the poor'.<sup>23</sup> Back in Mayo, the money was used to good effect. Every widow on George Henry's property received a milch cow,<sup>24</sup> land was free to tenants under £5 in rent and relief was given to others paying up to £20 in rent.<sup>25</sup>

As the Famine became more acute and the distribution of charity proved more difficult than expected, George Henry Moore returned home to see what could be done personally. He served as Chairman on relief committees in Partry and Ballintubber<sup>26</sup> and helped finance the voyage of the *Martha Washington*. This vessel shipped a large cargo of foodstuffs from New Orleans to Westport Quay in June 1847 and was financed by a trio of Mayo landlords, Lord Sligo, Sir R. Blosse and George Henry Moore.<sup>27</sup> Flour and meal imported were sold to the famine stricken at highly subsidised rates, the deficit being met by the three landlords. The venture required £10,000 in capital and incurred an overall loss of £4,800, George Henry's share in the deficit being some £900.<sup>28</sup> Moore and Lord Sligo toured the country, consulting with leading figures to see what could be done for the destitute. They both attended a large Dublin meeting in January 1847 at which Daniel O'Connell, Peers and M.P.s were present and there was a call for the repeal of the Union.

Despite Moore's best intentions, the distribution of relief was not trouble-free. Before his return to Ireland, his mother, who was in charge of the £1,000 relief fund won by *Coranna*, found herself in dispute with some of the local priests. They

prompted tenants to refuse to work except for double wages. As a result of the dispute, relief to Ballybanaun was suspended until George Henry's arrival. In this instance, both parties were only doing what they thought best for the tenants. Others, less scrupulous, were prepared to profit from the crisis. A local man, Tom Lawless, was convicted of using false weights when selling flour and meal intended for relief during the tragedy.<sup>29</sup>

As the famine years receded, their consequences in terms of human suffering became clearer, and so did the impact of George Henry's efforts. By means of an analysis of census figures quoted in a manuscript history of Ballintubber Parish by the priest, Father Heaney, we can gain an idea of the general consequences of the Famine and the effectiveness of Moore's relief work.

#### Ballintubber Parish, Population Figures.

	1841	1851	Change	% Remaining	% Disappearing
Whole Parish	6753	3141	- 3612	46.5	53.5
Lands owned by G.H. Moore	1708	1066	- 642	62.4	37.6
Lands not owned by G.H. Moore	5045	2075	- 2970	41.1	58.9

Ballintubber Parish was clearly hit particularly hard by the Famine. Its population declined by 53.5% when Mayo as a whole showed a decline of 29.41%.<sup>30</sup> The figures in the Table indicate that the impact of the Famine, severe though it was, was not so great on lands held by George Henry Moore at Ballintubber as on estates owned by other landlords in the parish. In human terms, had the decline on the Moore lands been as great as that on his neighbours' properties, 364 more people would have disappeared.

Moore's efforts to alleviate distress during the Famine were greatly appreciated locally both then and now. The parish Priest of Ballintubber and Burriscarra, Father James Browne, who had been particularly critical of landlords who had failed their tenants, declared in the *Freeman's Journal*, 28 June, 1849:

I neglected (...) to do an act of justice to the humanity, benevolence, and feeling of one excellent landlord, Mr. Moore of Moore Hall, who owns a very large portion of Ballintubber. I now hasten to supply that omission; and in doing so it affords me no little gratification to have this opportunity of expressing my own admiration of Mr Moore's generosity and paternal kindness to his numerous tenantry, not only in these two parishes, but to the people on the other estates through this county. I have lived for many years in the midst of Mr Moore's tenantry and I never heard of a single tenant having been evicted by himself or his agent. Of all his fine qualities there is none in which he so pre-eminently excels, nor for which he is so much admired, as his great tenderness for the poor.

More than a century later, a monument was erected near the family burial ground at Kiltoom to record the continuing appreciation of the endeavours of the Moore family during the Famine. The plaque reads: 'Kiltoom/Burial place of the/Moores of Moore Hall/this Catholic patriot/family is honoured for/their famine relief/and their refusal to/barter principles for/English gold. Erected by Ballyglass



Coy/Old I.R.A. 1964'.

Years of famine relief, low or often non-existent rents, high Poor Law Union rates and a lack of rigour in his financial management, left George Henry in a state of acute difficulty. His Ballintubber and Ballybanaun estates were put in chancery and a bailiff and receiver were appointed. In 1854 the properties were re-sold in the Landed Estates Court, having been advertised as follows: Ballintober, 6442 acres, 2 roods, 3 perches, producing a nett rental of £894.9s. 11<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>d annually. Ballybanaun, 2440 acres, 1 rood, 18 perches, producing a nett rental of £254.6s. 3d. George Henry procured a massive loan of £20,300<sup>31</sup> from the Scottish Amicable Life Assurance Society<sup>32</sup> with which he bought back the Ballintubber estate. He was unable to repurchase the Ballybanaun estate and this was acquired by a man who was known and feared throughout Mayo, the proselytizing Bishop Plunket, much to the chagrin of Moore, the tenants and the Catholic clergy. A further financial burden was a debt to his friend and neighbour, Lord Sligo, an obligation of which Sligo reminded him in a letter of 1854. Including interest, the debt totalled £1,326.<sup>33</sup> All George Henry's financial problems did not arise simply from the running of the estate. Gambling on horses meant periods of indebtedness punctuated by dramatic financial recovery when his horses won, and although Maurice Moore believed that his father emerged in profit from his speculations on the race course,<sup>34</sup> there is little doubt that, at the very least, heavy gambling caused cash-flow problems and destabilized his financial arrangements. Considerable expense was also necessitated by his political activities after 1846. In the six month period between November 1852 and April 1853 for



*Kiltoon monument near Moore Hall.*

example, George Henry's political expenses came to £300.<sup>35</sup> When he died in 1870, he left the family finances in a far from healthy state. His son George Augustus found himself saddled with the large Scottish Amicable debt which remained a burden during the rest of the life of the estate. The debt still stood at £8,700 in 1925 when the purchase money for the estate was allocated by the Courts of the Irish Land Commission.<sup>36</sup>

In the 1840s Moore embarked on a political career and first contested a seat in 1846 following the resignation of Mark Blake. He lost to the repeal candidate, Joe MacDonnell [See p. 59 – Editor]. He stood again in 1847, this time strongly criticizing government famine policy and emphasizing the need for the independence of Irish representatives in Parliament. He felt that the repeal of the Union was not appropriate at that time, but that it would come eventually. He won the seat and, once in Parliament, revealed nationalist sympathies. He became a supporter of the Tenant Right Movement whose main aim in those years was to achieve greater security of tenure for tenant farmers. In so doing, he alienated the support of his landlord neighbours. His unrestrained public utterances caused the gentry to transfer their support to the Tory candidate in the next election in 1852. Despite this, Moore was returned to Parliament where he continued to champion the idea of independent Irish M.P.s and turned down the offer of the post of Chief Secretary during the Liberal administration. Moore's first period in Parliament came to an end in 1857 when he was unseated due to allegations of 'spiritual influence'. It was alleged that local clergymen had spoken out in his favour.<sup>37</sup>

George Henry's display of patriotism and his support for tenant rights in Parliament were more than political expedients. He was linked with the Irish Republican Brotherhood and O'Donovan Rossa visited Moore Hall during the 1860s. It is not known if Moore took the Fenian oath. Links with the I.R.B. were maintained and it is said that some of its members once visited Moore Hall disguised as nuns.<sup>38</sup> Nor did he forget his tenants, nor even his ex-tenants. Trouble on his former Ballybanaun estate led him to assist some of his old smallholders there. Bishop Plunket, the new owner of the Ballybanaun lands ejected tenants for religious reasons rather than for non-payment of rent. Of those who fled or who were forced to flee from Partry, four very poor families, the Quins, Boyles, Higgins and Walshes were given shelter by George Henry.<sup>39</sup> He moved one tenant, his butler and jockey Appley, to a field known as Lagnavaddogue, leaving space near Moore Hall for four small holdings. Years later this re-arrangement was a source of trouble for Moore's children when dealing with the Congested Districts Board since the subdivision overcrowded the land.

George Henry's willingness to sub-divide for the fleeing Partry tenants was an indication of his benevolence and also of his position on the vexed national question of holding size and division. It was felt that uneconomic smallholdings were an evil which needed to be remedied. It has been estimated that nationally, 74% of farmers and smallholders in 1854 eeked out a living on less than 30 acres.<sup>40</sup> Amalgamation and consolidation of holdings had started before the Famine, especially where farms were cleared for grazing. Because it hit the smallest farmers and cottiers in particular, the Famine accelerated the process directly. Indirectly, it



encouraged some landlords to rationalize holdings in a bid to avert further similar disasters after the end of the Great Hunger. George Henry's neighbour, Lord Sligo, was one landlord who did clear land; Moore himself did not. The pair argued and Lord Sligo wrote saying that although a quarter of his tenants, 'the really idle and dishonest', might be evicted, the rest would prosper with new fair rents. He warned George Henry of the similarities between the Moore estates and those of Sir Samuel O'Malley in Kilmeena. O'Malley's was a crowded estate and when in chancery, there were mass evictions in a bid to resolve the estate's finances; up to three-quarters of the tenants were at risk of eviction. Lord Sligo feared that Moore's reluctance to evict would result in overcrowding and then mass evictions at the hands of a receiver. 'Time will show', he warned, 'who saves most of his tenants and most of his rents'.<sup>41</sup> Lord Sligo's clearances were detested, but his warnings to Moore had some foundation. Holdings on the Moore estates were often small and the 1858 Valuation lists for the townland of Kiltarsaghaun show that plots averaged ten acres.<sup>42</sup> The holdings of the four Partry families who had fled from Bishop Plunket reveal a similar average since they shared just over 43 acres. George Henry's policy did indeed create the problems mentioned by Lord Sligo and evictions were made by the receiver on the Ballintubber and Ballybanaun estates when these were in chancery.

George Henry had further problems with his estates which were in chancery. The receiver held that tenants owed the landlord 4 years' rent in arrears. Moore maintained that he had given instructions for 6 months' rent to be collected and the rest written off, and that he had heard nothing in reply until called to court in Ballinrobe where he first learnt that his tenants were up in arms. George Henry wrote the debts off immediately, but the whole affair made the press and was reported in a manner which deeply offended him. In a letter of complaint dated 27 June 1855 to the Editor of *The Telegraph*, Moore accused him of being a knave, and one of his reporters as lying.<sup>43</sup> This *contretemps* with his tenants does not appear to have tempered his benevolence towards them. A few years later we find George Henry providing substantial funds for the re-building of Carnacon village church (always referred to as a chapel by the locals).<sup>44</sup> The money for this project came from a big win on *Croagh Patrick* at Goodwood in 1861 [See p. 53 – Editor].

In 1868 George Henry was elected to Parliament again and thereafter spent much time in London, throwing himself whole-heartedly into his politics. He pleaded for Fenian prisoners, whose treatment appalled him, and campaigned for tenant rights, in particular for security of tenure and the right to vote as one chose. Tenants' rights were advanced by Gladstone's Land Act of 1870 which Moore supported. The Secret Ballot was introduced in 1872, but he did not live to see this.

The last few months of George Henry's life were clouded by a bitter rent dispute with some of his tenants. In 1868, those on the Ballintubber estate demanded a considerable reduction in rents. Moore referred the matter to the arbitration of Father Tom O'Shea, Father Patrick Lavelle, P.M. O'Sullivan and John Martin who knew the tenants well.<sup>45</sup>

Father Lavelle was the well known Mayo man and nationalist priest who had fiercely opposed the proselytizing of Bishop Plunket. What was considered a fair

rent was fixed and paid until George Henry received the following threatening letter in January, 1870:

Important – Caution. Notice is hereby given that any person who pays rent to landlords, agents or bailiffs above the ordnance valuation will at his peril, mark the consequences. By order – Signed Rory.<sup>46</sup>

Moore was indignant and wrote to Father Lavelle asking him to intervene, making it quite clear that he would not succumb to blackmail but would rather evict all those refusing to pay the rent:

If it is supposed that because I advocate the rights of the tenants, I am to surrender my own rights as a landlord; if it is suspected that I am so enamoured of a seat in Parliament that I am ready to abandon my own self-respect rather than imperil its possession; if it is hoped that because I alone of all the landlords in the parish of Ballintubber have not cleared my estate of the people, the people are to send me to jail – those who count upon taking this base advantage of my political position will find that they have mistaken their man. I did not seek a seat in Parliament for my own personal advantage, and I do not wish to retain it a day longer than I can do so with advantage to the people and honour to myself. I am determined to vindicate my own rights, without fear or flinching, and if it be necessary to evict every tenant who refuses to pay his rent in full – whatever be the consequences – I will take that course.<sup>47</sup>

Father Lavelle did intervene but to no avail and George Henry felt it necessary to return to Ireland in order to take charge of the situation personally. He arrived on Good Friday 1870 in an exhausted condition, deciding to consult with his agent, Sebastian Nolan and Father Lavelle before taking further action. Over Easter, Moore's fatigue and evident distress continued, but it was a shock to all at the Hall when he was found dead in bed on the Tuesday. The doctor diagnosed cerus apoplexy; Father Lavelle wrote: 'heart break, I call it'. Colonel Maurice Moore in his father's biography, agreed with Father Lavelle and, in fact, went further, pointing to what he believed was an orchestrated campaign on the rent issue led by a former bailiff:

Soon however personal greed and dishonestly began to spread, propagated by the very man who was bailiff when the estate was in the hands of a receiver, who had fed his cattle on the landlord's farms and sold government meal during the famine, with false weights to a starving people whom Moore was endeavouring to support.<sup>48</sup>

A different interpretation of George Henry's death was proposed by the writer George Moore in the preface to his brother's biography of their father. George expressed the belief that his father had committed suicide and died like an old Roman.

Moore's friends and colleagues in Dublin wished to bury him as a nationalist hero in Glasnevin. Numerous bands were invited and the interment would have been, in fact, a sizable patriotic demonstration. When it became known that the family wished to bury him more quietly at Moore Hall, the proposed Dublin demonstration took the more muted form of a meeting at Harold's Cross addressed by P.J. O'Byrne, the old '48 campaigner, and Isaac Butt. There was a large crowd of mourners at the funeral in Kiltoom. Some members of the gentry, alienated by George Henry's nationalist politics, did not attend, but there was a good representation



from that class. Predominant were the tenants, over 400 in number, and those who supported and spoke for them, the clergy, some 25 of whom were present. Father Lavelle, who had been so condemnatory of harsh landlords, undoubtedly spoke for very many tenants on the estate when, in his funeral sermon on George Henry Moore, he affirmed: 'the poor deplored him as a lost friend, (...) one who was heart and soul in their interests, and the stern and uncompromising foe to their enemies and oppressors'.<sup>49</sup>

## NOTES

I wish to thank Mr. Michael O'Riordan of The Land Commission, Dublin, for the benevolent assistance he gave me in seeking out documents; Mr Art Ó Súilleabháin of Carnacon for showing me round the Moore demesne and for making available manuscript materials, and Mrs Ó Súilleabháin for her kind hospitality.

1. 324 hectares of land at Muckloon were bought by George Moore (1729-1799) on his return from Spain in 1792. See: *Mayo*, ed. B. O'Hara, R.T.C. (Galway, 1982), p. 240.
2. Finlay Dunn, *Landlords and Tenants in Ireland, an inquiry for The Times*, (London, 1881), p. 2.
3. Maurice George Moore: *An Irish Gentleman, George Henry Moore; his travels, his racing, his politics*. With a preface by George Moore. Wiedenfeld & Nicholson (1913), p. 7.
4. Joseph Hone: *The Moores of Moore Hall*, (London, 1939), p. 57.
5. The Area of Ballintober in Landed Estates Courts Rentals, June 1854, vol. 29. National Archives. For Ballycally, Valuation Lists, no. 4, Co. Mayo, Co. Health District, Mayo E.D. Burriscarra, Ballinrobe District, vol. 1. Valuations Office.
6. Field Note Book, Co. Mayo, Barony of Carra, Parish of Ballintober. No. 9. V.O. (Ballintober was valued in 1843).
7. Compiled from Field Note Book, Co. Mayo, no. 9 and Irish Land Commission Estates, Commissioners, Schedule of Areas. E.C. 8854, 8839, Box 5107. I.L.C.
8. Field Note Book, no. 9. V.O.
9. Ibid.
10. Valuations Lists, no. 4, Co. Mayo. Vol 1, 1858-1883. V.O.
11. Landed Estates Court Rental, vol. 29, June 1854. National Archives.
12. Valuations Lists, no. 4 V.O.
13. Field Note Book, Co. Mayo, no. 9 V.O.
14. Hone, op. cit., p. 103.
15. Field Note Book, Co. Mayo, no. 9. V.O.
16. Congested Districts Board Records, Box 210.
17. Hone, op. cit., p. 102.
18. CBD Records, Box 210.
19. Field Note Book, Co. Mayo, no. 9. V.O.
20. MS. 10566. N.L.I.
21. Hone, op. cit., p. 126.
22. *Freeman's Journal*, 7/6/1849.
23. Hone, op. cit., p. 138.
24. *Freeman's Journal*, 28/6/1849.
25. Unpublished notes of the Reverend M.J. Heaney, P.P. Mayo Abbey, dated 25/7/1984. Kindly made available by Art Ó Súilleabháin, Carnacon.

26. Gerard P. Moran: *The Mayo Evictions of 1860* (FNT, 1986), p. 26. Another source, J.F. Quin in *The Moores of Moore Hall*, serialized in *The Western People* from 28/1/1933, claims that he served on relief committees as far off as Achill and Belmullet.
27. Notes. Very Rev. M.J. Heaney.
28. Maurice Moore, op. cit., p. 125.
29. Notes. Very Rev. M.J. Heaney.
30. Vaughan & Fitzpatrick, *Irish Historical Statistics, Population 1821-1871* (Dublin, 1978), p. 26.
31. Gerard P. Moran, op. cit., p. 26.
32. C.B.D. Records, Box 210.
33. Ms. 892 (449), a source to which my attention was drawn in Gerard Moran's excellent book: *The Mayo Evictions of 1860*.
34. Maurice Moore, op. cit., p. 135.
35. Ms. 892 (433).
36. Allocation Schedules, Court of The Irish Land Commission, CBD Record 8854, Box 5107, no. 7665, hearing dated 10/3/1925. The sum owed to the Scottish Amicable in Glasgow was £8570. With interest and costs, this rose to £8707.7s. which the Court ordered should be paid to the Scottish Amicable.
37. Hone, op. cit., p. 161.
38. Ibid., pp 169-171.
39. Ms. 10566, N.L.I.
40. M.J. Winstanley, *Ireland and the Land Question 1800-1922* (Methuen, 1984), p. 16.
41. Hone, op. cit., 158-160.
42. Valuation Lists, no. 4, Co. Mayo. Vol. 1, 1858-1883. V.O.
43. Ms. 892 (464). N.L.I.
44. Dr. John Langan, *Carnacon — The Most Important Place in The World*, Connaught Telegraph, 1982.
45. J.F. Quin, see note 26.
46. Ibid.
47. Ibid.
48. Maurice Moore, op. cit., p. 371.
49. *Freeman's Journal*, 25 April, 1870.

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## LIFE IN WESTPORT AND CASTLEBAR c. 1896

by John D. Clarke

David Clarke, my grandfather came to Westport, Co. Mayo in the West of Ireland. As you can see in Figure 1, a cutting from the *Mayo News* (a local newspaper published in Westport), of that time, my grandfather first set up in business in Westport, in February 1896. I perused old copies of the *Mayo News* newspaper which are readily available on microfilm at my local library in Castlebar, and the first instance I came across of my grandfather's advertisement appearing in the *Mayo News* was on Saturday, 22 February, 1896. My grandfather obviously believed in the power of advertising as his ad. appeared regularly throughout the year, mainly on Page 2 and once on Page 1 on 5 December, 1896.

I managed one day to get into this Shambles area to have a look around, but alas, nothing of relevance is to be found there today. I spoke to one very old resident of Westport, Mr. Dan McGing, Bridge Street, who was then aged 82, and he remembered playing in the Shambles area as a child. He told me that a lot of grain and corn from around the Westport area used to come to the Shambles and be weighed and re-distributed there. Unfortunately, he had no memory of my grandfather, but he told me that a lot of tradesmen always worked out of the Shambles and that there was always a smithy there.

My grandfather moved to Castlebar, where he met my grandmother, Catherine McGreal, who worked in the 'old' Infirmary, (a small hospital), now long demolished,

### DAVID CLARK, PLUMBER & BRASS FOUNDER. (Successor to Mr. Wm. Burns), WESTPORT.

I BEG to Announce that I have purchased from Mr. WILLIAM BURNS, Lower Bridge-street, Westport, his

#### Stock and Interest

In the Well-known Plumbing Establishment which he has conducted there so successfully during the past 20 years, I am now prepared to Receive Orders for Plumbing Work in every department which shall be executed with expedition and upon Lowest Remunerative Terms.

DAVID CLARK.

Westport, February 18th, 1896.

**Cornelius Patten,**  
Hardware, China, & Earthenware  
**FAMILY GROCER & PROVISION  
MERCHANT.**

Fig. 1: Extract from "Mayo News", Feb. 1896.



Fig. 2: Location of Plumbing Business in Westport, 1896.

located where the Mayo County Council Machinery Yard now is. They were married in Castlebar, and subsequently all of their fourteen sons and daughters were born in Castlebar. My grandfather carried on his business in Westport for some time before transferring it to Castlebar. He lived and worked in Castlebar and died there at the relatively young age of 60, on 7 June 1929. His wife Catherine lived for another 16 years after his death and died in Castlebar on 31 October 1945.

Here I would like to pause briefly to tell of my grandfather's arrival from the north east of Scotland to the little town of Westport in county Mayo, nestling at the mouth of the Carrowbeg River in a corner of Clew Bay. Westport, a relatively 'young' town (the 'new' town being mainly constructed around 1750) progressed well in the next century and became industrious, and with the benefits of its excellent port grew rapidly. At the time of my grandfather's arrival it had a regular steamship passage between Sligo, Belfast and Glasgow.

The year of his arrival in Westport was 1896. Queen Victoria was ruling the throne of England at that time for fifty nine years. Poor Dreyfus had just spent a very unhappy two years' exile on Devil's Island. We were seven years away from the Wright Brothers' first historic flight and twelve years away from the arrival of Henry Ford's first Model-T motor car. We were two years after the fateful Achill Disaster (June, 1894).

Achill Island, Ireland's largest island, off the West Coast of Ireland, traditionally supplied manpower for years for the harvest in Scotland. The unfortunate tragedy occurred when the hooker bringing 100 migrant workers from Achill to Westport



Fig. 3: Coffins on the quayside, Westport, after the Achill Disaster.  
Photo - Wynne Collection 1898.



capsized. Twenty three of the migrants died, when in their excitement at seeing the Glasgow Steamer in Westport Harbour, they stood up and caused the hooker to capsize.<sup>1</sup>

The third Earl of Lucan (an ancestor of the still 'missing' Lord Lucan) owned a large estate in Castlebar around this time. His estate around Castlebar consisted of some 5,000 acres and he owned a total of 60,000 acres in Co. Mayo. In his Castlebar estate, which contained a large dairy, farm yard, tweed and cheese factories, he employed men at a shilling a day and women and 'scarecrows' at sixpence. The 'scarecrows' were youths employed to keep the crows away from the crops.

In researching the year 1896, I was very fortunate to have microfilm copies of the *Mayo News* (Westport's local newspaper) readily available to me in Mayo County Library, Castlebar. For this I would like to thank sincerely the County Librarian Mr. Pat McMahon and also Mr. Richard Hickey and my fellow Castlebarite Mr. Ivor Hamrock, who were always available to assist and guide me in my research.

In Westport in 1896, in the clothing line 'Spearmans' best serge was available from Plymouth at 1/8 per yard. W.R. Hood of Bridge Street, was selling watches, silver at 30/-, Hunters at £2.10.0 (warranted and upheld for 10 years) . . . where would you get a guarantee like that today, and gold watches at £5.0.0. 'Black Mans Flour' was also on sale at that time which according to its manufacturer 'produces more bread than ordinary flour' and 'sweetens life and husband's temper'.

Still in Westport and in Bridge Street, James Ryan, had large stocks of Assam



Fig. 4: Third Earl of Lucan outside his Castlebar residence.  
(Wynne Collection).

and Indochina Teas at the following 'low' prices 1/4, 1/6, 1/8, 2/- per lb. The same James Ryan was also selling melodeons from 2/6 to 12/6 each. The Glasgow, Dublin and Londonderry Steam Packet Company Ltd. was operating a service from Westport to Glasgow, calling at Sligo en route. The fares from Westport - Glasgow were:

Cabin (Single 12/6)  
Cabin (Return 20/-)  
& Steerage (Single 5/-)

On the agricultural side guano was a very popular fertilizer. J.J. Hughes and Co. Westport were importing Ichaboe Guano into Westport. What you may ask is Ichaboe Guano? The guano is the fresh excreta of sea birds deposited on the Ichaboe group of islands and as a fertilizer was very popular around that time, being high in ammonia and phosphates.

The thoroughbred sire, *Abdullah*, was standing at his owner's (C.J. Cavanagh's) stables in Westport at the following terms:

Gentlemen's mares . . . . . £2.10.0  
Farmer's mares . . . . . £1.10.0

Still on the agricultural line, 'Beauty of Bute' seed potatoes were available at 3/- per cwt., and a pure bred Aberdeen Angus bull - Noyau - was standing for the season at Murrisk farmyard at 5/- fee for service.

Castlebar Lunatic Asylum was advertising for two female attendants: wages £12 a year with allowances of rations, clothing and residence valued at £22.10.0. On



Fig. 5: Castlebar Asylum Attendants, 1898.

(Wynne Collection).



the engineering front, and they as a profession were very scarce on the ground at that time, an Assistant Surveyor with Mayo County Council was on the princely salary of £80 per annum. On the refreshment side, Mary Horan, in Bridge Street, again in Westport, was selling Guinness XX porter at – wait for it – 2p per pint.

Getting back to a lighter note, one great malady seemed to be very prevalent at that time . . . CONSTIPATION. Judging by the number of ads. for constipation pills and remedies, constipation must have been one of the great social inconveniences at that time. Here I unashamedly reproduce one of the best of them, which is an ad. for 'Brandreth's Sugar Coated Pills' (see Fig. 6 below). I hope you find it as amusing as I have.

So all in all at the time of my grandfather's arrival in Westport in 1896, life was not all that bad. Prices were relatively low, as also were wages. The word inflation was another 60 to 70 years away. What were the prospects for a tradesman, like my grandfather as a plumber at this time? Why did he come to Westport? Had he much capital in order to set up in business?

Sanitary services, plumbing, and all they entailed, were only in their infancy in the west of Ireland. Plumbers were very scarce, large projects were only beginning to get started. To give you an idea of the scarcity of plumbers at that time, my father frequently related to me that my grandfather often had to travel up to Sligo and Donegal from Westport, to prepare lead caskets for the deceased remains of wealthy families, who were accustomed to bury their dead in vaults or crypts. It gives you some idea of the scarcity of plumbers at that time, when he had to undertake such a journey, a round trip of at least 200 miles !

**Constipation.**



**C**ONSTIPATION is one of those horrible troubles which attacks a strong and healthy man, who has perhaps never known a day's previous illness. It lays him low, and lets forth all its tortures; Headaches (splitting, never-ending Headaches), then pains all over the body, followed by Lassitude and General Debility, which finally leave the victim bad-tempered and enfeebled, thoroughly dissatisfied with life. And why? because the effete matters, instead of passing naturally away, are reabsorbed in the system—a horrible idea, but true.

**BRANDRETH'S**  
SUGAR-COATED  
**PILLS**

will undo this work in a few hours, undo it, however far it may have gone. These little pills are irresistible, and should find a place in every household. They cure Constipation, Indigestion, Liver and Kidney Troubles, Sick Headache, Biliousness, and Mental Depression.

Four Pills in a Box, 1/6 of all Chemists, or Direct from the Wholesale Agents, 25, HAMILTON STREET, BIRMINGHAM, ENGLAND.

Fig. 6

Extract from *Mayo News*, 3 July 1897. This is an interesting little piece I came across.

#### A CONTRACT

Tenders were considered for putting in a lead valley over the women's infirm ward. There were four tenders before the Board: P. Mulloy, £28.50; Michael Moore, £31.00; Richard O'Donnell, £32.0.0; and David Clarke, £35.0.0. Mr. Richardson said the best thing to do was, as he proposed, before the tenders were opened, to take the lowest tender. Whether the sum was high or low Mr. Dixon would see that the work was done. Mr. Richardson's suggestion was agreed to and Mr. Mulloy's tender was accepted.

Mr. J. O'Malley: Is Pat Mulloy a plumber?

Colonel Buchanan: He is a slater and slaters always put in valleys.

#### NOTES

1. The actual number drowned was thirty-two. See K. Clarke, 'Clew Bay Boating Disaster', *Cathair na Mart*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (1986), pp 5-23 – Editor.

John D. Clarke, a native of Castlebar, works as a draughtsman in the Road Design Section of Mayo County Council. Former Chairman of Mayo Historical Society.



# NOVELS, NUNS AND THE REVIVAL OF IRISH INDUSTRIES: THE RECTOR OF WESTPORT AND THE FOXFORD WOOLLEN MILL

1905-1907

by Peter Murray

## I

The publication at the beginning of 1906 of George A. Birmingham's second novel *Hyacinth* coincided with the revelation to the public of the author's true identity – The Reverend James Owen Hannay, Church of Ireland Rector of Westport. Almost immediately a storm of controversy burst around the clerical author's head. In May Westport's Board of Poor Law Guardians passed a resolution demanding that the Local Government Board dismiss Hannay from his post as Chaplain to the town's workhouse. Speakers in its favour advocated that, in addition, Hannay should be dragged through the streets and thrown in the river.

The Local Government Board declined to act on this resolution, but Hannay was to find himself in a less well-protected position when his detractors assailed him in another of the public roles he played, that of a leading advocate of the Irish language. In September he found himself excluded from a Gaelic League committee being formed to organize the Connacht Feis.

This action, initiated by a Catholic clergyman, Canon Macken, the parish priest of Tuam, was widely criticized within the Gaelic League as a breach of the organization's non-political and non-sectarian constitution. Influenced by his friendship with Douglas Hyde, who feared that a split severely damaging to the movement could result, Hannay did not press for a ruling by the League's Coisde Gnótha (Executive Committee) on the constitutionality of what Canon Macken and his supporters had done. This placed him in what his wife, Ada, described as 'the absurd position of being practically kicked out of the Gaelic League in Connaught while still a member of the Coisde Gnótha in Dublin'.<sup>1</sup> Hannay put an end to this absurdity and to his participation in Gaelic League activities (which were far from making him popular within his own Church) by declining to stand for re-election to the Coisde Gnótha in 1907.<sup>2</sup>

## II

Why should such a hostile reaction have been generated by the first two novels written under his George A. Birmingham pen-name by Hannay? The answer is that under a thin veneer of fictionalization both books indulged in strongly critical comment on the political and social situation in Ireland as Hannay saw it. The novelist's fictional creations, therefore, bore a strong resemblance to real people and institutions: some of these, or some of their friends and supporters, were incensed by the unflattering way in which they believed themselves, or those they admired, to have been depicted in the George A. Birmingham novels.

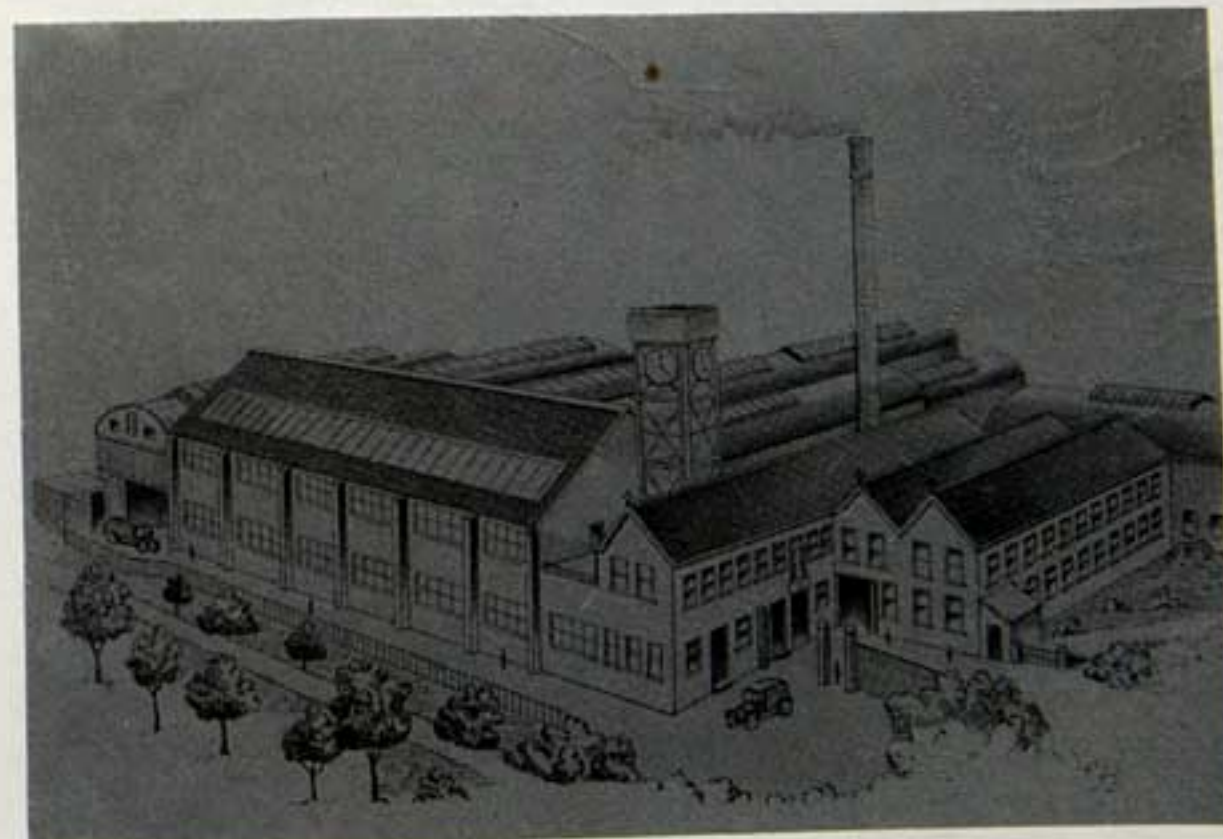
Two cases where resemblance was claimed but intention was denied were those of Fr. Michael McDonnell, Hannay's opposite number the Catholic parish priest of Westport, who believed he had been held up to ridicule in the first of the novels, *The Seething Pot*, and of the Sisters of Charity at Foxford whose Providence Woollen Mill was seen as the model of 'Robeen', a convent industry receiving

government subsidies and paying very low wages, advantages which enabled it to drive out of business an older Protestant-owned Irish factory which produced similar goods and employed the hero of *Hyacinth* as a commercial traveller. In his autobiography, *Pleasant Places*, published in 1934, Hannay refers to the reaction of Fr. Mac Donnell, 'with whom I had hitherto been on friendly terms', but denies that there was any foundation for the priest's belief that he had been caricatured in *The Seething Pot*:

'It was certainly not true I had that priest in mind when I wrote. The book was written, though not published, a year or more before he came to Westport, and therefore before I knew him'.<sup>3</sup>

Fr. Mac Donnell himself, it may be noted, was no stranger to controversy. In February 1905 he was summoned before Westport magistrates on a charge of assaulting an Irish-speaking pedlar of Protestant magazines and tracts, Alexander Mc Askill, in the town. By a majority decision the magistrates dismissed the charge, the Resident Magistrate dissenting.<sup>4</sup> The aggressive attitude adopted by Fr. Mac Donnell in this instance, in contrast to that habitually displayed by his fellow priests, who normally advised their flocks to ignore rather than to confront street preachers or tract sellers,<sup>5</sup> suggests that he might have been particularly quick to identify himself with a character in Hannay's novel and to give vent to the offence he felt at this supposed portrayal. In any event:

Fr. Mac Donnell in his fury stirred up the people of Westport against me. He used to write weekly articles in the local papers with such headings as 'The



A general view of Providence Woollen Mills, Foxford, 1932.  
(From Rev. Denis Gildea, *Mother Mary Arsenius of Foxford*)



Author of *The Seething Pot Unveiled*. The people, convinced that they ought to rise in defence of their faith, used to gather outside my house at night and boo at me. They burnt me in effigy in the streets. They made an attempt, only moderately successful, to boycott me . . .<sup>5</sup>

The upshot of this rift between the two Westport clergymen – each in his own way, perhaps, a ‘turbulent priest’ – was to leave Hannay in a very isolated position there:

The place, although I loved it very much, had become difficult for me to live in. Many of my parishioners felt very strongly about the views I held about Irish affairs. The Roman Catholics and Nationalist people did not like me any better. In spite of my real love for the place and the people the difficulties were too great.<sup>7</sup>

Twenty-one years after his arrival in Westport in 1892, Hannay resigned as Rector of the parish to go on a lecture tour of America where his play *General John Regan* was being produced in New York after a successful run in London. In February 1914 a touring company of actors brought Hannay’s acclaimed play to the town in which it had been written, provoking disturbances in Westport which put the more famous Irish theatrical riots surrounding the Abbey Theatre productions of Synge’s *The Playboy of the Western World* and O’Casey’s *The Plough and the Stars* in the shade.<sup>8</sup> Noting this, the George A. Birmingham entry in the Macmillan Dictionary of Irish Literature states that ‘as with *The Playboy*, the audience rioted over a presumed insult to Irish womanhood’.<sup>9</sup> In fact, as an R.I.C. report on the rioting makes clear, the new trouble in Westport surrounding Hannay’s literary output harked back to the old one:

‘The outrage was due to religious intolerance on the part of the Ancient Order of Hibernians because Canon Hannay had portrayed a Roman Catholic priest on the stage’.<sup>10</sup>

### III

The identification of the fictional Robeen convent industry with the actual Foxford one, is an aspect of the controversy surrounding his first two novels to which Hannay does not refer in his autobiography. He did, however, address at some length the criticism which had been levelled at him on this score in a Preface (‘To My Irish Readers’) to his third novel, *Benedict Kavanagh*, which was published in February 1907 – a year and a week after the appearance of *Hyacinth*:

My description of the convent factory of ‘Robeen’ has been applied by some of my critics to Providence Mills at Foxford. My ‘Robeen’ is not Foxford; nor, as these same critics somewhat illogically point out, is my convent the least like the Foxford convent. Still I now see that in certain particulars the circumstances of my ‘Robeen’ were too like those of the Foxford factory. I think it is right, therefore, to state now that I believe the Foxford factory to have been started from a philanthropic and not a commercial motive, and that the wages paid in this factory are probably not below the standard usual in Connaught. Whether, even under the peculiar circumstances of the place, it was right to spend large sums of public money in subsidizing a business which, if successful, must come into competition, and does as a matter of fact compete in the open market with other unsubsidized commercial undertakings, is a question which my critics, perhaps wisely, did not discuss, and which I therefore feel no need of touching

here.<sup>11</sup>

Reading this Preface it is clear that Hannay felt little enthusiasm for the factory, and did not regard its establishment as a proper object of the local pride for the county in which he lived. Why he should have felt this way is the subject of the remainder of this article. Firstly, correspondence found in Hannay’s personal papers and those of Francis Sheehy-Skeffington, is used to throw additional light on the attitude towards the Foxford Mill Hannay expresses in the Preface to *Benedict Kavanagh*. Then the wider issues which Hannay raised – of ecclesiastics taking on the role of industrialist; of the provision of state subsidies to new industrial enterprises in Ireland; and of the payment of low wage rates by these factories – are placed in the broader context of the experience of initiatives undertaken by the State or by popular national movements in the 1890s and 1900s to promote the revival of Irish industries.

### IV

In *Hyacinth* a former Robeen worker tells the novel’s hero:

I was the best worker they had. I worked for them for three years and all I was getting at the end of it was six shillings a week . . . There’s few that earned as much as I did. Many a girl works there and has no more than one and ninepence to take home at the end of the week.<sup>12</sup>

Quoting this passage in a scathing review of the novel, Fr. Thomas Finlay, a Jesuit and an economist, admitted that wages had been low while workers with no industrial experience were being trained in the necessary skills when the Foxford mill started. But, by 1906, he claimed:

A girl who had learned her business at the loom can now earn £1 a week or over. There are 120 hands employed in the factory. The wages bill for last year was £4,989, showing an average wage of over 15/- per week.<sup>13</sup>



Weaving Department, Foxford factory.

(From Rev. Denis Gildea, *Mother Mary Arsenius of Foxford*)



In this review Fr. Finlay also gave details of how the mill had been capitalized. On his figures the total capital amounted to almost £35,000. Of this 45% had been advanced in loans and grants by the Congested Districts Board, with outright, non-repayable, grants amounting to 25%.

Before responding to critics like Finlay in his Preface to *Benedict Kavanagh*, Hannay sought to satisfy himself as to the facts regarding subsidies paid to and wages paid by the Foxford mill. He contacted Sir Horace Plunkett, Vice President of the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction, a member of the Congested Districts Board and a close associate of Fr. Finlay's in the Agricultural cooperative movement, for information. Replying in a letter dated 14 June 1906 Plunkett, who 'had an inquiry made by people I can trust', gave almost identical information on the question of grants and loans but produced a different set of figures for the wages being paid: an average of 9s 6d with some higher paid workers earning between 10/- and £1 a week. He concluded:

'You can safely say they pay the wages usual in Connaught, subject only to the qualification that usually no wages are paid in Connaught'.<sup>14</sup>

Hannay subsequently contacted the Rector of Foxford to see if he could find out anything more about what workers in the mill earned, sending him Plunkett's letter. The Rector wrote back on 17 October 1906 saying he had found it impossible to get information that could be verified. He commented that: 'the word has evidently been passed to say nothing'.<sup>15</sup>

In composing his Preface Hannay, therefore, slightly adapted Plunkett's conclusion that the Foxford wage level was not usually low for Connaught, but he did not choose to endorse another judgement expressed by Plunkett who, having given Hannay details of the amounts paid in grants and loans to the Foxford factory by the Congested Districts Board, wrote in his letter of 14 July:

Assuming that the factory can now be carried on upon commercial lines without any further assistance, considering all the circumstances of the district; I am inclined to think that the action of the government in giving it support was justified.<sup>16</sup>

## V

Having replied in print to the criticism levelled at him for his depiction of Robeen, Hannay might have been expected to put the subject of the Foxford mill behind him. This was not, however, to be the case. Five months later, in a letter dated 20 July 1907, Hannay is to be found sounding out Francis Sheehy-Skeffington, joint editor of a radical Dublin-based monthly, the *National Democrat*, to see if he would be interested in a story about the Foxford workers' pay.<sup>17</sup> If he was interested, Hannay offered to put him in touch with an informant who was compiling for Hannay a comparison between conditions at the Foxford mill and those at an Athlone woollen factory, Smith's.<sup>18</sup>

Sheehy-Skeffington's reply is not among Hannay's preserved correspondence but he was evidently interested in the story and in a further letter, dated 23 July, Hannay, without saying how he had come into contact with him, describes his informant's background:

He was born and reared in Foxford before the days of the factory. He then

obtained a situation as commercial traveller for a Dublin firm and was absent for some years from Foxford. Then his brother, who as well as I can make out inherited a shop in Foxford from his father, died; and [Hannay's informant] took over the business. This has brought him into close touch with the Foxford people, many of whom he knew as children. He started with no prejudice against the nuns having, I think, a sister in the order.<sup>19</sup>

In a third letter, dated 29 July, Hannay told Sheehy-Skeffington that the informant would prefer to call on him in Dublin rather than to communicate by letter. Hannay went on to sketch what he thought the 'true lines of inquiry' along which a published investigation of Foxford working conditions should be constructed. It should begin by setting out in detail the extent to which the Foxford mill had been benefitted from state subsidies and charitable donations. Then it should move on to compare the wages paid in Foxford with those of Smith's in Athlone.

General labouring wages did not vary between the two districts so, Hannay reasoned, skilled or semi-skilled factory wage rates should not vary either. If they did differ, the difference should be in favour of workers in the subsidized enterprise whose 'free' capital gave it both a capacity and a moral obligation ('when it makes an appeal to the fashionable public as being a charity existing for the benefit of workers') to pay more.

Not yet having got detailed figures back from his informant, Hannay then made the assumption that at each of three distinct levels of skill and responsibility, Foxford wages would only turn out to be 50 to 60% of those paid by Smith's. He also estimated that employer's provision of housing for some of the workforce was administered on much less generous terms in Foxford than in Athlone. If his assumption and estimation were correct, and Smith's was still able to secure a profitable return on its capital, he concluded that:

'The Foxford factory must either be a small gold mine for the proprietors or be grossly mismanaged'.<sup>20</sup>

The projected investigation was to get no further than this. The *National Democrat* was in serious financial difficulty and the August 1907 issue turned out to be its last. Without an outlet for any material his informant might produce, Hannay appears to have finally let the subject of Foxford drop.

## VI

The paradox of Hannay's attitude towards Foxford can be stated as follows. The Rector of Westport was a strong supporter of the Gaelic League. In addition to its primary aim of reviving the Irish language, the Gaelic League sought to promote a revival of the Irish industries which declined throughout the nineteenth century under the Union. The establishment of a woollen mill at Foxford, was a practical realization of the widespread aspiration that industrial vitality should be restored in the south and west of Ireland. Yet Hannay, who might have been expected to welcome it, regarded the new enterprise without enthusiasm. Why?

According to his detractors the answer was that Hannay had been blinded by anti-Catholic bigotry. But a reading of his novels discloses that he was at least as critical of prevailing Protestant attitudes and institutions as he was of Catholic ones. Indeed it was his willingness to take an unflinching look at the shortcomings of all



sections of Irish society, that won his writing the admiration of nationalists as varied as John Dillon, Michael Davitt and Arthur Griffith – none of whom had an indulgent attitude towards religious bigotry.

In its broad thrust Hannay's writing was characterized by a hankering for the creation of a new, true national, Irish identity of the type evoked by Wolfe Tone when he spoke of uniting Catholic, Protestant and Dissenter under the common name of Irishman. To create such an identity, Protestants would have to embrace the concept of an Irish nation and give it, rather than the British state, their primary allegiance. At the same time the existing nationalist movement would have to change the sectional character an almost exclusively Catholic support base given it, in order to give representation to all the elements of Irish life. Writing to Lindsay Crawford, a radical dissident within the Orange movement, Hannay stated his views in the following way in May 1905:

I crave the union of the two [Catholic and Protestant] Irish democracies so deeply at heart that I want it made perfectly plain from the start, that while we are willing to trust our Roman Catholic fellow countrymen, we are not going to shut our eyes or allow them to shut theirs to a priestly tyranny.<sup>21</sup>

Debate about the power exercised by the Catholic clergy over Irish political and social life has a long – and ongoing – history. Around the turn of the century this power appeared to many to be on the increase to an alarming extent. The Parnell split of the 1890s had seriously undermined the authority of lay political leaders among nationalists. At the same time Unionist administrations were pursuing a strategy of 'Killing Home Rule by Kindness'.

This was based on the theory that the nationalist demand for Home Rule would decline if it were deprived of the support of the social and religious grievances felt by the Catholic population. Promotion of land purchase legislation to turn tenants into proprietors, was the main policy embodiment of this strategy. It also embraced the adoption of a more sympathetic stance towards the Catholic Church's unmet educational demands, and towards giving churchmen a prominent role on the advisory or executive boards of the new state bodies which were set up in the 1890s to promote Irish economic development – the Congested Districts Board (CDB) and the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction (DATI).

'Killing Home Rule by Kindness' aroused strong opposition among Irish Unionists. This was articulated by figures like Lindsay Crawford who argued that Protestants had opposed Home Rule because they believed it would mean 'Rome Rule': the threat of Home Rule had receded but Unionist governments had taken to administering Ireland in a manner which was bringing the obnoxious Rome Rule into existence anyway.<sup>22</sup>

On the nationalist side there were also fears that the Catholic hierarchy was losing interest in the movement for Irish self-government, and was putting the advancement of the Church's institutional interests above the cause of the nation. These were voiced by Michael Davitt when he wrote to Hannay after reading *Hyacinth*:

I expect great things from your hero in the next story, and hope to see him as a Constitutional Wolfe Tone leading the Protestant nationalists and

independent nationalist Catholics against the coming English garrison – the Roman hierarchy, Orangemen and pro-English loyalists.<sup>23</sup>

But, quite apart from the post-Parnell political situation, there was another factor tending to increase Catholic clerical influence over Irish life at this time. For more than fifty years the country's population had been falling, but its number of Catholic religious – brothers, monks, nuns and priests – and the range of functions they carried out in society, had been increasing. Over this period also, Ireland had been splitting into two distinct regional economies: a growing industrial one based on linen, engineering and shipbuilding in the north-east and, over the rest of the country, an almost entirely agricultural one which had lost its manufacturing activities and whose stagnation made continuous mass emigration a necessity.

Apart from their diverging economies the most obvious factor differentiating the Irish regions was their religious makeup: the north-east was predominantly Protestant, the south and west had an overwhelmingly Catholic population, within which the ratio of clergy to laity was moving in favour of the former. As the staple industries of the north-east have declined, while the south and west have – to a limited extent – succeeded in establishing an industrial base, the economic divergence had tended to disappear over the course of the twentieth century while the religious difference has remained. At the turn of the century, however, when this divergence assumed its greatest extent, the temptation to seek its cause in the difference between religious cultures was strong.

'Ecclesiasticism', or the tendency of Catholic monastic orders to increase in numbers, wealth and influence in the midst of a dwindling and economically inert laity, was a theme taken up by a variety of writers from a number of political and religious viewpoints.<sup>24</sup> Its themes were encapsulated by Sir Horace Plunkett in a book published two years before *Hyacinth* and at least as controversial as the novel, *Ireland in the New Century*.

But it is not alone extravagant church building which in a country so backward as Ireland shocks the economic sense. The multiplication – in reverse ratio to a declining population – of costly and elaborate monastic and conventual institutions, involving what in the aggregate must be an enormous expenditure for maintenance, is difficult to reconcile with the known conditions of the country. Most of these institutions, it is true, carry on educational work, often as in the case of the Christian Brothers and some colleges and convents, of an excellent kind. Many of them render excellent service to the poor, and especially to the sick poor. But, nonetheless, it seems to me their growth in numbers and size is anomalous. I cannot believe that so large an addition to the classes, technically called unproductive, is economically sound, and I have no doubt at all that the competition with lay teachers of celibates 'living in community' is excessively and educationally injurious. Fully admitting the importance of religion in education, I still hold that teachers who have renounced the world and withdrawn from contact with its stress and strain, are at a great disadvantage in moulding the character of youths who will have to take their part in the hard struggle of modern industrial life.<sup>25</sup>

Writing to Douglas Hyde in September 1906 Hannay stated that he felt he had made 'a literary mistake' in *Hyacinth* by allowing what he had intended as a



depiction of ecclesiasticism in general terms, to be mistaken for an attack on the Foxford nuns in particular.<sup>26</sup> As the correspondence quoted earlier shows, he certainly did develop a specific interest in the Foxford case, responding perhaps to the assertions with which his assumed attack was rebutted, and this seems to have been heightened by the difficulty he encountered in collecting information about employment conditions in the Providence Woollen Mill. But, whether the fictional convent industry led to the real one, or vice versa, it is clear that anyone who deplored ecclesiasticism would have difficulty in working up enthusiasm for the Foxford project.

For, if what was needed to regenerate Ireland economically, was a strengthening of the moral fibre of the Catholic laity by counteracting features of their social environment which militated against self-reliant entrepreneurial behaviour, then a factory directed by an order of nuns was part of the problem rather than part of its solution. Indeed it represented an exacerbation of the problem – one more area of properly secular activity coming under religious control.

Because it involved self-help channelled through the organization of language classes, summer schools and feiseanna, the Gaelic League's efforts to save Irish from extinction embodied for Hannay a spirit of democracy rather than a mentality of dependence. While sceptics suggested that directing popular energy towards the revival of an almost dead language would retard economic development in Ireland, he took up in his journalistic writings the argument that unless a people's intelligence was first developed through the imparting of its own national culture, commercial or technical education would have no solid foundation upon which to build. The model for such a happy marriage of national culture and growing industries was Denmark, and in support of the argument that the League was laying the groundwork for similar developments in Ireland, Hannay quoted the views of his friend Plunkett:

There is no wiser observer of Irish affairs, and no man in a better position to form an opinion, than Sir Horace Plunkett. He wants to introduce into Ireland a system of cooperation in agriculture analogous to that of Denmark; and he has repeatedly given it as his opinion that the educative work done by the Gaelic League has developed, in the people who come under it, a capacity for entering into and successfully seeking out his suggestions.<sup>27</sup>

Plunkett believed that the science of economics could be used to create a neutral arena within which the social antagonism between Ireland's major religious cultures could, through dispassionate analysis, be faced up to and even superseded. Sound business principles gingered up by moderate and wholesome sentiments of national pride, would then become the basis of a new consensus in politics. Hannay laid more stress on the cultural ingredient of the compound and less on the economic one. As a Sinn Féin supporter, he believed the restoration of the constitution under which 'Grattan's Parliament' had functioned prior to the Union should provide the institutional framework for the new consensus, while Plunkett favoured maintenance of the Westminster parliamentary status quo. But the broad thrust of the change in Irish social values the two men hoped to see take place was the same.

The hopes of both men were, however, to be dashed. Following the publication of *Ireland in the New Century*, Plunkett's removal from the Vice Presidency of the

DATI was pursued, and finally in April 1907 achieved, by the Nationalist Party in Parliament. In the same year Hannay, who had followed his friend into the minefield of religion's influence on economic achievement, found himself effectively excluded from playing an active role in the Gaelic League. Thereafter, he continued to believe that the language revival was a positive force for the regeneration of Irish society. But in private correspondence he also expressed bitterness at the 'cowardice' and 'funk' of the League's leaders who had, he felt, abandoned him to ostracization, and had in doing so betrayed the spirit of their organization's constitution.<sup>28</sup>

## VII

The belief displayed by Plunkett and Hannay that economics could unite where politics had divided, seems in retrospect a naive one. In economic affairs, as present day controversies over the validity of Monetarist theory and other policy issues remind us, one person's detached and neutral science can be another's blinkered and partisan ideology. To carry on such controversy, however, some basic agreement on rigorous forms of argument and methods of assessing evidence must exist. How then might Hannay's economic reasoning – as applied to the factual investigation of Foxford and to the fictional depiction of Robeen – be assessed from the vantage point of current social scientific canons?

The 'true lines of inquiry' into Foxford he suggested to Sheehy-Skeffington would certainly be open to a number of criticisms. In his outline of what these might be, Hannay failed for a start to assimilate the range of information on the financing of the enterprise, supplied to him by Sir Horace Plunkett or published by Fr. Finlay (a reprint of whose review of *Hyacinth* from an unnamed local newspaper is to be found in the press cutting books Hannay kept).<sup>29</sup>

Again, in sketching a comparison with an Athlone woollen factory, Hannay takes no account of locational advantages or handicaps in his evaluation. Athlone had good railway, canal and navigable river links: Foxford's more remote situation – further from raw materials, supplies and markets for its finished goods – must surely have meant that operating costs would have been higher there. For this reason it could conceivably have been neither 'a gold mine' nor a grossly mismanaged enterprise, even if Hannay's assumptions about its wage levels were correct.

Finally, his argument that a state-subsidized and charitably-supported factory could and should pay higher wages than an ordinary capitalist one, overlooks the point that a legitimate object of philanthropy (or government policy) might be to create as much employment as possible, and if this was the case, the factory owners might reasonably seek to offer more jobs at lower wage rates rather than fewer jobs with higher pay. Our current Programme for National Recovery has, after all, been criticized for opting for the latter rather than the former within the public sector.

Hannay's hostile comments on state subsidization of Foxford in the preface to *Benedict Kavanagh*, could be interpreted as marking him out as an economic reactionary at a time when laissez-faire prescriptions were beginning to be challenged. But state subsidy can either promote development where none might otherwise take place, or it can distort the rational allocation of economic resources. From the point of view of a subsidizing authority, subsidy is justified if, at a reasonable cost, it leads



to import substitution on the home market or fosters growing production for export. It is a source of distortion rather than a stimulus to development, when aid to a new indigenous enterprise is the cause of an existing indigenous enterprise shutting down. Beggaring our neighbours may, in other words, be rational: robbing Peter to pay Paul within our own boundaries is not. The scenario presented in *Hyacinth* is one of subsidy-induced distortion rather than development, Irish Paul's output and employment gains being cancelled out by Irish Peter's losses.

'Killing Home Rule by Kindness' saw the creation of two bodies empowered to subsidize Irish industries – the CDB and the DATI. The CDB could help any kind of industry within the designated Congested Districts; DATI support could only be given to a category of 'rural industries' defined by the act which set it up. But there was also the possibility that, if it was interpreted broadly enough, firms could be subsidized under the DATI's technical instruction remit.

In the depressed Congested Districts there were few candidates for government assistance to anything above the level of cottage industry, which could supplement family farming or fishery earnings. A Scottish carpet manufacturer received help to set up branch factories in Donegal, while, further south, Foxford, and a smaller mill attached to a Sisters of Charity convent in Ballaghaderreen, were the only CDB-backed factories.<sup>30</sup> Within its rural industries limitation the DATI helped start a fruit and vegetable processing industry at Portadown, but it pulled out when its involvement aroused the opposition of commercial interests in England. When approached by the promoters of a Kilkenny woollen mill, the Department turned down a proposal that it should provide the salaries of the mill's manager, foremen and skilled workers for an initial period of three to five years, as their function would be that of technical instructors, and that in addition it should pay allowances to the mill's inexperienced workers.<sup>31</sup>

Such a level of support – for a mill with a capital of £18,000 and a workforce of 58 – was essential, its Gaelic League-inspired promoters argued, if a newly-created Irish enterprise was to compete on equal terms with Yorkshire. Hannay's contention was that firms subsidized in this way would not only compete with Yorkshire, but would also jeopardize the position of those woollen mills that already existed in Ireland. As Foxford and Kilkenny were to join eighteen other firms in a woollen manufacturer's association which successfully lobbied the Irish Free State for a 25% protective tariff in the 1920s<sup>32</sup>, potential for distortion would certainly seem to have been present within the industry. At the same time I have been able to find no other Irish manufacturer of woollen goods actually complaining around the time of Foxford's establishment, of being threatened by such subsidized competition.

Where complaints of unfair, because state-subsidized, competition, can be documented in this period, is in the area of industries like butter and milk processing or bacon curing. Here cooperative societies were entering into competition with existing private firms – and being assisted and encouraged to do so by officers of the coordinating body of the cooperative movement, the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society, who were receiving payment for their organizing activities from the DATI.<sup>33</sup> This was Plunkett's doing and it ceased after his removal from the DATI Vice Presidency.<sup>34</sup> It appears ironic that Hannay, who pointed out the effects

that subsidized competition might have on other Irish woollen mills in the Foxford case, was later to emerge as a campaigner for the restoration of state funding to promote the spread of agricultural cooperatives, in spite of the threat these new enterprises could pose to existing businesses. But, like Plunkett, he believed that exploitation of monopoly power rather than efficient use of resources, characterized the relationship between farmers and commercial processing or trading interests<sup>35</sup>, and this perception led him to advocate a different approach within the agricultural sector. Whether such 'gombeen' exploitation actually existed – and whether it continues to exist today – remain hotly debated issues among Irish social scientists.<sup>36</sup>

Finally we turn to the question upon which Hannay focussed most closely: that of wages and working conditions. Here, as we saw, he experienced frustration in his efforts to establish how things stood at Foxford. But in his identification of the treatment of labour as an issue that would bedevil efforts to promote a widespread revival of Irish industries, he was certainly prescient.

When the Irish Industrial Development Association (IIDA) was founded in 1905, a common hostility towards foreign competition and imported goods brought businessmen and trade unionists together to support the 'buy Irish' appeal it addressed to consumers.<sup>37</sup> The trade union movement, however, was in flux as its old core of craftsmen was being joined by new groups of semi-skilled and unskilled workers. With this change a new breed of labour leader with more radical attitudes was coming to the fore. What this change meant for industrial revival propaganda was spelled out by James Larkin at the 1908 Irish Trade Union Congress (ITUC), when he declared that so long as the IIDA paid no attention to whether trade union conditions were observed or not, he would ignore its 'claptrap about Irish goods'.<sup>38</sup>

This attitude was to become increasingly prevalent in trade union circles, as Irish workers resisting the imposition of wage cuts or seeking to have their unions recognized, collided with Irish firms which were vigorously playing the consumer patriotism card to their own advantage. Bitter conflicts of these types took place at Varian's, the Dublin brushmakers, in 1909, at Pierce's, the Wexford manufacturer of agricultural machinery and bicycles, in 1911 and at Kilkenny Woodworkers in the same year. At the 1910 ITUC a United Brushmakers delegate reflected on the lessons of the continuing lockout at Varian's:

He had been, and was, an ardent advocate of Irish industries (hear, hear) but when he advocated the support of Irish industries he meant the support of the people in comfort and self-respect and, above all, the maintenance of a decent wage amongst the workers (cheers) and at any rate he did not believe it was ever intended as a movement to make rich the few on the labours of the many (hear, hear).<sup>39</sup>

As an isolated outpost of manufacturing industry with a mainly female workforce in an especially depressed part of the country, however, Foxford remained untouched by such shifts in attitude among organized workers. Trade unionism had yet to penetrate beyond the cities and large towns in the east or to recruit more than a few women workers. Under James Larkin's leadership, with the launching of the Irish Women Workers Union and the emergence of Sligo as an early centre of Irish Transport and General Workers Union activity, things were beginning



to change. But labour organization would continue to be held back by western employment prospects, which remained as Sir Horace Plunkett had described them in his reply to Hannay's inquiry about the situation in the Foxford mill:

You can safely say they pay the wages usual in Connaught, subject only to the qualification that usually no wages are paid in Connaught.<sup>40</sup>

#### NOTES

1. Ada Hannay to Douglas Hyde, 18 April 1907, National Library of Ireland, Douglas Hyde Papers, MS 21,099 (3).
2. For a fuller account of Hannay's advocacy of and activity within the Gaelic League, see R.B.D. French, 'J.O. Hannay and the Gaelic League', *Hermathena* 102 (1966), pp 26-52.
3. George A. Birmingham, *Pleasant Places* (London, Heinemann, 1934), p. 162.
4. *Daily Express* (Dublin), 8/2/1905 and 17/2/1905.
5. The Colonial Office papers in the London Public Record Office contain many reports on disturbances throughout Ireland connected with street preaching in the 1890s and 1900s.
6. *Pleasant Places*, p. 163.
7. *Pleasant Places*, p. 175.
8. On the rioting and its aftermath, see *Connacht Tribune* 7/2/1914, 14/2/1914 and 7/3/1914.
9. Robert Hogan (ed.), *The Macmillan Dictionary of Irish Literature* (London, Macmillan, 1980), p. 109.
10. *R.I.C. Inspector General's Monthly Reports*, London Public Record Office, Colonial Office 904 92 5198 S.
11. George A. Birmingham, *Benedict Kavanagh* (London, Edward Arnold, 1907), pp VI-VII.
12. George A. Birmingham, *Hyacinth* (London, Edward Arnold, 1906), pp 239-240.
13. T.A.F., 'The Blight of Criticism', *New Ireland Review* 25 (1906), pp 54-57.
14. Sir Horace Plunkett to Hannay, 14 July 1906, Trinity College Dublin, J.O. Hannay Papers.
15. The Rector of Foxford to Hannay, 17 October 1906, Trinity College Dublin, J.O. Hannay Papers.
16. Sir Horace Plunkett to Hannay, 14 July 1906, op. cit.
17. Hannay to F. Sheehy-Skeffington, 20 July 1907, National Library of Ireland, F. Sheehy-Skeffington Papers, MS 21,618 (iii).
18. Presumably the woollen factory of Messrs. Gleeson and Smith to which the entry on Athlone (p. 1295) in *Thoms Official Directory* for 1907 refers.
19. Hannay to F. Sheehy-Skeffington, 23 July 1907, National Library of Ireland, F. Sheehy-Skeffington Papers, MS 21,618 (iii).
20. Hannay to F. Sheehy-Skeffington, 29 July 1907, National Library of Ireland, F. Sheehy-Skeffington Papers, MS 21,618 (iii).
21. Hannay to Lindsay Crawford, 29 May 1905, Trinity College Dublin, J.O. Hannay Papers.
22. Lindsay Crawford was editor of the weekly *Irish Protestant* to which Hannay contributed a series of articles on the eighteenth century Volunteer movement in the Summer of 1905. He signed them 'Eoghan'.
23. Michael Davitt to Hannay, 9 February 1906, Trinity College Dublin, J.O. Hannay Papers.

24. These included Sir Horace Plunkett (Protestant and Unionist), M.J.F. McCarthy (Catholic and Unionist) and F.H. O'Donnell (Catholic and, for a time, a Nationalist MP) as well as the Sinn Féin-supporting Hannay.
25. Sir Horace Plunkett, *Ireland in the New Century* (Dublin, Irish Academic Press, 1982, Reprint of the Popular Edition first published in 1905), pp 108-109.
26. Hannay to Douglas Hyde, 4 September 1906, National Library of Ireland, Douglas Hyde Papers MS 18,252 (ii).
27. J.O. Hannay, 'The Gaelic League', *Independent Review* 7 (1906), p. 313.
28. Hannay to H. de Fellenberg Montgomery, 29/5/1907, Trinity College Dublin, J.O. Hannay Papers; Hannay to F. Sheehy-Skeffington, 14 July 1908, National Library of Ireland, F. Sheehy-Skeffington Papers, MS 21, 619 (i).
29. Trinity College Dublin, Hannay Papers MS 3432, contains press reviews of *Hyacinth*.
30. L. Micks, *History of the Congested Districts Board Dublin* (Eason and Son, 1925), pp 67-72.
31. See *Departmental Committee of Inquiry on the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction for Ireland Parliamentary Papers 1907*, Volumes XVII (Report and Minority Report) and XVIII (Minutes of Evidence).
32. *Saorstát Éireann Tariff Commission Report No. 4*, 'Report on Application for a Tariff on Woollens and Worsteds' (Dublin, Stationery Office, 1929).
33. See the evidence of William McDonnell and Sir Thomas Cleeve (dairying) or Alexander Shaw (bacon curing) to the Departmental Committee of Inquiry into the DATI, op. cit.
34. See Patrick Bolger, *The Irish Cooperative Movement* (Dublin, Institute of Public Administration, 1977), pp 90-103.
35. George A. Birmingham, 'Politics in the Nude', *Irish Review* 1 (1911/1912), pp 469-476.
36. See Peter Gibbon and Michael D. Higgins' exchange with Liam Kennedy, *Economic and Social Review* 6 (1974/75), pp 27-44 and 8 (1976/77), pp 213-222 and 313-320.
37. See Dermot Keogh, *The Rise of the Irish Working Class* (Belfast, Appletree Press, 1982), pp 38-42.
38. ITUC Annual Report, 1908, p. 39.
39. ITUC Annual Report, 1910, p. 32.
40. Sir Horace Plunkett to Hannay, 14 July 1906, op. cit. On recent changes see Lorelei Harris, 'Industrialisation, Women and Working Class Politics in the West of Ireland', *Capital and Class* 19 (Spring 1983), pp 100-117.

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# POLITICS OF REVOLUTION: LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN IRELAND DURING THE ANGLO-IRISH WAR

by Marie Boran

A general election was held in Ireland on 14 December 1918. The electorate returned 73 MPs who had fought the election on a Sinn Féin ticket and who subsequently formed their own Parliament in Dublin – Dáil Éireann. Among the departments created by the Dáil was that of Local Government, initially under the direction of W.T. Cosgrave. Following his arrest in 1920 it was taken over by Kevin O'Higgins. Following the local government elections in January and June of 1920, this department really began to assert itself. We shall examine, therefore, the results of these elections and the interaction between the local authorities they created and the Local Government Department of Dáil Éireann.

The Local Government (Ireland) Act 1898 had handed over county administration to democratically-elected county councils. Urban sanitary districts were now to be governed by urban district councils and rural sanitary districts by rural district councils. Administration of the district's share of roads and other public works was also assumed by these councils. The Boards of Guardians of Poor Law Unions which had been in existence since the 1830s, were now restricted in their activities to poor relief and dispensary district work only. Asylums were placed under the jurisdiction of the county councils.<sup>1</sup>

The elections in 1920 were conducted under the system of proportional representation. It was widely believed that this was a ploy on behalf of the British government to defeat Sinn Féin.<sup>2</sup> The municipal elections held in January 1920 produced the following over-all results:<sup>3</sup>

PROVINCE	Numbers of Councils	
	REPUBLICAN	UNIONIST
Leinster	36	2
Connacht	9	—
Ulster	21	23
Munster	32	—

The breakdown of figures for the province of Connacht was:

COUNTY	REPUBLICAN	REP. NATIONALIST	UNIONIST	UNKNOWN	TOTAL
Galway	3	1	—	—	4
Roscommon	1	1	—	—	2
Mayo	2	—	—	1	3
Sligo	1	—	—	—	1
					10

Some of the candidates elected did not, in fact, belong to the Sinn Féin party, but were, nonetheless, willing to throw in their lot on the Republican side. The case of Ballina urban district council is an interesting one. There were three wards there involving a poll of 1119. The candidates elected there illustrate the variety of interests represented. Ardnaree ward had four seats and those elected were:

Henry C. Bourke (Ratepayers' Association)

Daniel Kennedy (Ratepayers' Association)

Martin Duffy (Labour)

Patrick Nixon (Labour)

The South ward produced an even more diverse group:

J. Browne (Independent)

P.J. Rutledge (Labour)

L. Dodd (Ratepayers' Association)

J. Gaughan (Sinn Féin)

J. Garvey (Comrades of War)

The North ward had six seats and here also candidates were elected from all of these parties.

J. Flanagan (Ratepayers' Association)

P.J. Rutledge (Labour)

J. Ahern (Ratepayers' Association)

P. Connor (Sinn Féin)

T. Ruane (Sinn Féin)

M.J. Nealon (Comrades of War)<sup>4</sup>

This council, despite its diverse composition and the fact that the Ratepayers Association were the majority party, nevertheless followed the pattern of other councils and passed a resolution declaring its allegiance to Dáil Éireann. Similar action was taken by a majority of councils elected during the municipal elections, and later by rural district and county councils as well as Boards of Guardians.<sup>5</sup>

These local authorities, elected in June, were in the main Republican in character as can be seen from the results.<sup>6</sup>

## COUNTY COUNCILS

Republican	28
Republican/Nationalist	1
Unionist	4
	33

## RURAL DISTRICT COUNCILS

Republican	182
Unionist	19
Others	5
	206

## BOARDS OF GUARDIANS

Republican	138
Unionist	16
	154

Many of those elected to the new bodies were involved in other areas of the independence struggle. The chairman of the county council in Mayo was Conor Maguire, who was also involved in the Republican courts. A similar pattern occurred in the district authorities. In Tubbercurry, County Sligo, for example, the chairman of the district council was Frank Carty, commander of the local Battalion of the Irish Volunteers.<sup>7</sup>

One historian, writing about this period, has asserted that: 'With this incongruous mixture of canny old clerks and untried boy soldier administrators Irish local administration entered its most exotic period.'<sup>8</sup> An examination of some aspects of the local administrative bodies during this period, shows that the canny



old clerks and boy soldiers took their responsibilities seriously, but at times the going was very difficult.

The first session of the Dáil following the success of the Republican side in the local elections was held on 29 June 1920. Kevin O'Higgins, the substitute Minister for Local Government, stated that the matter of determining a policy for local bodies had been referred to the Dáil. It had become clear, even in that short time, that most of the local authorities were considering an immediate break with the English Local Government Board. O'Higgins maintained that many of the local boards were unprepared for such a step and should wait for a time. Both Michael Collins and Countess Markievicz observed that the continuation of contact with the English Local Government Board, including the sending of minutes and reports, would be tantamount to recognising its authority. A Commission was set up at this meeting to examine the area of local government generally, but with particular reference to finance. It was stipulated that until this Commission reported its findings, no action should be taken by the local authorities without the consent of Dáil Éireann.<sup>9</sup>

It is clear from the reports of their meetings, however, that the newly-elected councils would not be prepared to wait for the completion of the Commission's deliberations. The first meeting of the Republican county council in Mayo took place at the end of June. According to reports the proceedings were conducted almost entirely in Irish at the request of a majority of the councillors.<sup>10</sup> A large Sinn Féin flag was hoisted over the courthouse in Castlebar. (The proposals adopted by the council are given in Appendix I.) A declaration of allegiance to Dáil Éireann was then passed.<sup>11</sup> Copies of this resolution were sent to the Dáil department of Local Government. Copies of the resolution passed by at least thirty-seven local authorities are still extant. The first meeting of Mayo's Republican council continued to underline its allegiance by passing a resolution in support of the railwaymen. The munitions strike, during which railworkers refused to carry armed British personnel or military equipment, had begun in May 1920. Many local bodies organized fundraising committees in support of this action.<sup>12</sup>

The final decision made by Mayo County Council at this first meeting was that no further correspondence would be entered into with the English Local Government Board, since allegiance had now been pledged to Dáil Éireann. Several other bodies, including the county councils in Roscommon, Leitrim, Longford, Sligo, Galway and Clare, acknowledged no authority other than that of Dáil Éireann.<sup>13</sup>

A meeting of Belmullet Board of Guardians on 10 July 1920 discussed the question at length. It was agreed that no dealings should be entered into with the English Local Government Board. The point was made, however, that communications should not be completely broken off. Finance was certainly an important consideration of this particular authority, as one member questioned whether Dáil Éireann would be able to provide loans.<sup>14</sup>

Finance was certainly the key question in the minds of the administrators in those halcyon summer months of 1920. The terms of reference of the Commission set up by the Dáil, were almost exclusively concerned with means of economizing

in the councils and with methods by which finance could be raised to meet their expenses. The whole area of finance was one which was to occupy the councils and the Dáil Department of Local Government for many months to come. It is a question which is deserving of further research. For the remainder of this article, however, we will concentrate instead on the problems of organization and administration which arose in the transition to local government under the direction of Dáil Éireann. This was not without controversy, and several instances can be cited where decisions adopted by local councils were disputed and overruled by the Department. Leitrim County Council, for example, discussed a resolution calling on all young men between the ages of seventeen and forty to join the Volunteers. In addition, it was decided to strike a rate of 6d. in the pound in support of those engaged in the fight.<sup>15</sup> Several other authorities, including Boyle, Claremorris and Tubbercurry district councils debated this motion. However, following a discussion in the Dáil, it was decided to inform the local bodies that young men could be advised to join the Volunteers. A report in October indicates that Leitrim County Council had received an intimation that the proposed levy of 6d. was not in order. It is possible that the Dáil felt such a move would confer too much power on local authorities. Furthermore, it is likely that any levy on the ratepayers would provoke hostile reaction from those who were willing to submit passively to a *civil* authority which was not of their making, but would have no part in the upkeep of a *military*



*Republican Court sitting in Westport Town Hall in the summer of 1920. The author, Conor A. Maguire, Solicitor, Claremorris, presiding. On his left, Éamonn Moane; on his right, John O'Boyle. At the Solicitors' table: J. C. Garvey and John Gibbons. Two I.R.A. policemen stand at centre of picture, only one is identified, Seán Gibbons. Second policeman may be Martin Reilly.*

*(Courtesy Roderick Maguire).*



movement whose stated aim was the achievement of an Irish Republic. There is also the more material explanation that such a levy would attract undesirable elements into the Volunteers, whose priority would not be the establishment of an Irish republic but rather some personal gain.

There were other cases of dissent between the local authorities and the department; one notable and protracted dispute involved Ballina Board of Guardians.<sup>16</sup> Though memoranda were issued by the Dáil relating to specific actions, no detailed instructions were given to the councils on the general management of their administrations. The first intimation that such a document was under preparation is contained in the Minutes of a Cabinet meeting for 20 November, when a draft of such a circular was approved by the Ministry.<sup>17</sup> However, it has not been possible to obtain a copy of this document if indeed it ever went beyond the draft stage. It was, therefore, difficult to coordinate the actions of local bodies and consequently disputes inevitably arose.

As the problem of finance assumed paramount importance a scheme of reforms for the local authorities was drawn up, centred around the amalgamation of Poor Law Unions in order that the services they provided be administered in a more economical fashion. A general meeting was held in Mayo in November 1920 to discuss this question.<sup>18</sup> The figures in Appendix II indicate the inefficiency which existed in the system there. The system was clearly in need of reform. Large buildings were being maintained for – in some instances – less than 15% of the number for which they were originally intended. The council concluded that the system was outrageously extravagant. It was unanimously decided that workhouses as such should be abolished in Mayo. It was proposed at this meeting to have the aged and infirm of the county cared for in one large central building. After some discussion, it was recommended that the workhouses due to be closed should remain open as district hospitals.

A second area of considerable interaction between the local authorities and the department of Local Government involved the organization of the Belfast Boycott.<sup>19</sup> Serious outbreaks of sectarian violence and intimidation of Catholics occurred in Belfast in 1920. The Dáil agreed in principle with concerted action against these outbreaks but was slow to put anything into practice. The local authorities, therefore, went ahead on their own. Ballinrobe District Council, for instance, called on all traders in the town to take combined action: 'Withholding all trade from firms in the north-east until the latter fell in line with the nationalist aspirations of the country.'<sup>20</sup> Some other local bodies followed their example but an organised effort was slow to come about. In August, however, a change of attitude occurred in the Dáil and it was agreed at a meeting of the cabinet that a boycott should be launched against Belfast banks.<sup>21</sup> It was decided that this would be implemented with the cooperation of the councils so as to achieve maximum involvement at local level. The General Council of County Councils met on 12 August and agreed to this proposal. Between mid-August and mid-September many councils passed resolutions in support of the boycott. It proceeded in a somewhat haphazard fashion. The councils appear to have made their own decisions as to how it would be implemented. For instance, in Roscommon it was decided to exclude

# BELFAST TRADE BOYCOTT

## Warning to Irishmen

### and Irishwomen . . .

In view of the convening of the Partition "Parliament" at Belfast, it has been decreed that NO NOTES OR CHEQUES ON ANY OF THE FOLLOWING BANKS ARE TO BE ACCEPTED UNDER ANY CONDITIONS AFTER ~~Nov. 30th~~ 1921.

**THE ULSTER BANK**

**THE NORTHERN BANK**

**THE BELFAST BANK**

Any such Notes or Cheques seized on or after that date will be confiscated.

All persons in possession of such Notes or Cheques should immediately dispose of them.

By Order,

**Belfast Boycott Committee.**

*Belfast Trade Boycott.*

Courtesy Public Record Office, London.

6.9.21

Belfast Trade Boycott



6.9.21

Westport 12.11.21

Westport

Westport

I beg to submit annexed notice which I had down off Lambart at Westport on 11th 12th 1921

12.11.21

12.11.21

Submitted, Glasgow 12th 12.11.21  
the post was observed post at about 9 pm on the date and was down immediately afterwards along with the post to be taken to the post office

3.11



northern horse-dealers from the Athleague horsefair.<sup>22</sup> This was usually the source of lucrative profits for the dealers. Western dealers and buyers, with the assistance of the local unit of the Volunteers, managed to achieve the exclusion of the northern dealers. Local Sinn Féin members also assisted. The *Roscommon Herald*, however, complained in its editorial of the 'absence of any official boycott' and called for a greater degree of organization. Joseph McDonagh was appointed substitute Minister for Labour on the arrest of Countess Markievicz at the end of 1920.

He was asked to take charge of the organization of the boycott. In February 1921 all local authorities were issued with instructions to form committees to coordinate the boycott. The table in Appendix III shows the number of councils in some of the western counties who followed these instructions.<sup>23</sup> Though the conduct of the boycott improved under McDonagh's direction, problems were still being experienced in its administration at the time of the Truce. In a report to the Dáil in August 1921, McDonagh praised the efforts of many councils and stated that 400 local committees had been established. However, he maintained that loopholes still existed.

As 1921 progressed it became increasingly difficult to maintain normal structures in local government. Military duties, road blocks and raids by enemy forces all made attending council meetings hazardous. The frequency of meetings fluctuated. They frequently fell through for want of a quorum. Complaints were made about committees of Mayo county council which failed to meet during this period. In some instances this was due to the councillor's absence; they were 'on the run', in jail or else unwilling to expose themselves to the dangers which had already overtaken their colleagues. The Finance Committee of Clare County Council, for example, had to resort to clandestine meetings to transact its business. One of these meetings was held in a barn outside Ennis with boxes and bundles of hay as furniture.<sup>24</sup> Local bodies came under intense pressure from British forces. Records of finances, minutes of meetings were all seized. Meetings of county councils, including those in Mayo and Roscommon, were interrupted. Members of local authorities, including P.J. Rutledge, Chairman of Ballina District Council, were jailed. Several local representatives including Mícheál Breathnach, a member of Galway Corporation, were killed by Crown forces.

It was against this background of uncertainty that the Custom House, the symbol of English Local Government in Ireland, was burned on 25 May 1921. The act itself may not have been particularly sensible, given the number of active personnel exposed to danger. Its significance lies rather in the fact that it represented the decisive assault on the centre of British administration. The Republican government system which had been established was still insecure. Nevertheless, its actual establishment and the attempts to create a more viable economic local government system under an Irish authority, illustrate that the bid to construct a system divorced from British rule was not without support. Like the courts of justice and other administrative structures, the very existence of Republican councils indicated that the movement which was striving, by whatever means, to establish an Irish republic was, in some senses at least, a movement of the people.

## APPENDIX I

The following proposals were adopted by the council:

- (i) That Irish be the official language of the council.
- (ii) Chairman and Vice-Chairman to be Irish speakers.
- (iii) All members able to speak Irish should use that language only in discussions so that business could be transacted in Irish.
- (iv) All minutes of proceedings be reported in Irish.
- (v) Advertisements be issued in Irish.
- (vi) Cheques should be issued in Irish.
- (vii) No official position be given to a candidate who has not got a knowledge of the Irish language.
- (viii) No printing be given to a paper not having an account in Irish.

## APPENDIX II

WORKHOUSE	INTENDED NUMBER	NO. OF RESIDENTS 1920
Ballina	1078	95
Ballinrobe	500	54
Castlebar	1100	107 (of whom 48 belong to Claremorris)
Belmullet	150	21
Claremorris	654	Boarded out
Swinford	768	116
Westport	1100	74

## APPENDIX III

COUNTY	NO. OF COUNCILS	NO. OF COMMITTEES
Roscommon	3	3
Mayo	8	5
Sligo	3	1
Galway	10	6
Clare	11	11
Longford	2	1

## NOTES

1. Cf. J. Collins, *Local Government* (2nd Ed. Dublin, 1963), pp 1-15; S. Ó Cinnéide, 'The Development of the Home Assistance Service', *Administration XVII* (1969), pp 284-297.
2. Dáil Éireann Papers (hereinafter DÉ) 2/8 State Papers Office, Dublin Castle.
3. *Irish Councils for Irish Freedom*, p. 35, National Library of Ireland.
4. *Western People*, 24 January 1920.



5. The resolution read: *That this council of the elected representatives of at a duly convened meeting hereby acknowledge the authority of Dáil Éireann as the duly elected government of the Irish people and undertakes to give effect to all decrees duly promulgated by the said Dáil Éireann insofar as same affects this council.*
6. *Irish Councils for Irish Freedom.*
7. *Sligo Champion*, 17 June 1920.
8. David Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life* (Dublin 1977), p. 186.
9. *Proceedings of the First Dáil Éireann* 29 June 1920, p. 186.
10. *Western People*, 26 June 1920.
11. DÉ/2 State Papers Office.
12. Cf. M. Boran, *Manifestations of Nationalism: Identifying Support for the Irish Separatist Movement 1919-21* (Unpublished M.A. Thesis, UCG, 1987), pp 129-54.
13. Reports in *Connacht Tribune*, *Leitrim Observer*, *Roscommon Herald*, *Sligo Champion* and *Western People* for the period 26 June to 17 July 1920.
14. *Western People*, 10 July 1920.
15. *Roscommon Herald*, 28 August 1920.
16. Cf. 'Manifestations of Nationalism', pp 63-5.
17. DÉ 1/2 State Papers Office.
18. This account is taken from *Western People*, 20 November 1920 and 27 November 1920.
19. Cf. D.S. Johnson, 'The Belfast Boycott 1920-23', in Goldstrom and Clarkson (ed.), *Irish Population, Economy and Society* (Oxford, 1981).
20. *Western People*, 31 January 1920.
21. Dáil Cabinet Minutes, DÉ 1/2 State Papers Office.
22. *Roscommon Herald*, 18 September 1920.
23. DÉ 2/110 State Papers Office – Belfast Boycott File.
24. Fitzpatrick, op. cit., p. 91.

Marie Boran, grew up in Callow, midway between Swinford and Foxford, and was educated at St. Mary's Secondary School, Swinford. She graduated from University College Galway in 1985 with a B.A. Degree in History and Archaeology. She was conferred with an M.A. Degree in 1987 for a thesis on the subject of support for the War of Independence 1919-21.

## RICK JOYCE REMEMBERS

(as told to Jarlath Duffy)

Rick Joyce (now an octogenarian in Chicago) remembers being a member of Na Fianna Éireann by early 1916 and mobilising on 29 April with his unit at Farnaght for a period of four days. The nature of his military work was scouting exercises and dispatch work. Regular military drill classes were held and subscriptions for arms for the Irish Republican Army were collected.

Soon after 1917 Rick left Fianna Éireann and joined the Westport Company, Westport Battalion of the West Mayo Brigade of the army, later known as the IRA. Drills and parades took place frequently. Efforts in 1917 to impose conscription were opposed. The R.I.C. were attacked at the trial of members of the company at Westport Courthouse. Baton charges and counter-attacks became an almost nightly occurrence during 1919.

Soon dug-outs for the storing of arms and ammunition were prepared. Early in 1919 Rick became the Brigade Engineer and was in active service continuously afterwards. Brigade staff meetings were attended and important dispatches delivered. Rick's special responsibility was the care and storage of arms, ammunition and explosives. On one occasion while bringing guns from Leenaun, it was decided to dump the arms in Carrowkenedy as a precaution. Pat Tunney, Dan Gavin and Rick hid the arms and later brought them to a house near the Red Bridge owned by John Cunningham.

Out in Cloona Mills with his moulds, jars of sulphuric and nitric acid and cotton, Rick manufactured powerful high explosives. Hideouts had to be frequently changed. Known relatives and friends of the IRA became targets of the enemy who tried to terrorise them. The brigade men struck back in the hours of darkness when least expected. Many an ambush was planned, but had to be abandoned after long hours spent in vain awaiting the forces of the Crown.

Rick remembers taking part in the burning, with P. Heraty, Joe Baker, Dan Gavin, J. McDonagh and others, of the R.I.C. Barracks at Westport Quay where he had the arms and ammunition ready for the job at hand. P. Heraty had only three bullets in his revolver. Joe Baker was beside a small building not far from the barracks where he could see towards the Demesne gates. Dan Gavin and Jim McDonagh were with Broddie Malone who started the fire. McBride was outside hoping his house would not go on fire. On other occasions he lay in wait all day at Sheeaune, Murrisk, Erriff, Aille, Meneen and Brackloon for enemy forces which did not come. The abortive ambush at Islandeady stands out in his mind, where three lorries of Black and Tans were warned by a woman before they approached the positions held at the ballroom, returned to Castlebar for reinforcements and came upon some of the Column in the act of cutting the road to prevent reinforcements arriving.

Clogher Cross ambush was a hard fight where the men of the Flying Column were met by three lorries of Black and Tans when it was rather dark. Both sides used grenades and rifles for almost one hour before the enemy withdrew. Like his Westport comrades, Rick was not at the ill-fated ambush at Kilmeena, but took part



next morning in the holding up of the train at Meneen where they expected to find wounded R.I.C. and Tans with an escort, but had to content themselves with the carrying off of the mail which they censored later. Rick found £1,800 in a packet from a Westport Bank on its way to a Ballina Bank.

Enemy forces escaped the attention of the Column in Altamont Street when they received intelligence and escaped into nearby houses at the approach of the men of the Column. Around this time Tom Kittrick came from Dublin posing as a student doctor, and gave £600 from the White Cross to Joe Ring for the men of the Column who never had anything. Rick remembers receiving about 30 shillings (£1.50 in today's money but of course worth a lot more then than now).

The burning of Drummin barracks was another important event in Rick's service, but above all, the successful ambush at Carrowkenedy stands clear in his mind. The Column were billeted in Claddy – a compact village of six or seven houses. About 1.00 p.m. after an alert from the sentries, the men mobilised taking some bread in the haversacks. There was no excitement. Michael Kilroy O/C, Ned Moane V/C and J. Gibbons Adj., arrived and led the men to the Westport Leenaun Road. Three lorries of Tans and R.I.C. had passed out from Westport. Some trenches had been dug in the road further out and so the men of the Column expected their enemy to return sooner rather than later. Positions were scouted for at the ambush site. Before leaving the village of Claddy those with no arms were dismissed for the time being. John Kearns and Pat Joyce from the Owenwee Company came with two rifles and some ammunition. The four rifles in the possession of the men of the Column were of a junk nature and had been possibly worn out on some English rifle range. But they nevertheless served their purpose. It was thought that the Tans had used dum-dum ammunition on the men in Kilmeena, so a few rounds of 303 which were used for shooting seals were divided amongst the rifle bearers. John Duffy's section lost no time in getting ready and he was the first to fire on the first lorry. Dan Gavin and Rick near the road, got orders to take cover. Hearing English voices hollering the other side of the wall, they fired at the positions where they imagined the Tans to be and seemed to scare them from making any advance. However, they ran into the fire of Jim Moran and Joe Doherty who were lying in some rushes and they (the Tans) did not have a chance. J. Flaherty was out on a flanking position and Rick joined him, bullets cracking by him and missing narrowly. Ammunition was scarce and had to be spared. Joe Walsh stood up on some rocks looking around and despite the fire, located the position of the Tans under a little bridge. With Dan Gavin, who had grenades in his haversack, they approached the Tans' position. But the enemy all of a sudden decided to make for the McGreals' house which was about 100 yards away. Shots were fired at the retreating soldiers who reached the safety of the widow's house. There they drank the old woman's tea despite her protests and taking cover fired on their attackers. Meantime John Duffy had got out on the road to force a surrender of the first lorry which quickly happened after an explosion in it. A Tan with a broken leg was used as cover approaching the McGreal's house. Some Tans lying under cover had to be rounded up. The captured lorry was cleared and fired. Tom Kittrick gave the captured Lewis gun to J. Flaherty and Rick, and they set it up on higher ground. Soon the Tans in the widow's house surrendered.

They were sure they would be shot, but relaxed when Michael Kilroy warned Sergeant Hadnett not to be caught in the uniform again or he would be shot! It was now getting dark so the Column prepared to withdraw taking all captured arms with them. The wounds of the enemy were attended to, and help was sent for before the men of the Column made their way into the friendly mountains where food and rest awaited them. There was a hard core in the Column who were not found wanting on that day and they knew they could rely on each other. It is appropriate to thank all the fine people who stood by the men of the Flying Column. They will never be forgotten by those who took part.

The men went quickly via Derryherbert and into Durless. As daylight approached the sound of lorries or aeroplanes could be heard in the distance. The Column managed to outwit their pursuers. The Truce was announced and reorganisation took place. For health reasons Rick requested that some other person be appointed to his position. Michael Kilroy agreed and Rick turned over explosives, electric batteries and other materials to T. P. Flanagan in the new Town Hall.

The Civil War should not have happened. It is difficult to understand why Collins signed the articles of agreement. Liam Breen said the signatories should have been shot as they came off the boat at Dublin. After the Truce the IRA went into barracks and training camps. Military opponents were arrested. Rick, committed to Michael Kilroy, went to Limerick city with part of his unit for one week expecting



W. R. Joyce, 1927.



civil war to break out there. He was on active service in Renmore and Castlebar military barracks. He became Battalion Vice-Commandant and was second-in-charge of the Westport military post. He helped to blow up important bridges with Capt. J. Moran, Newport, and a man named Grey from Achill at Manulla, Ballyvary and Turlough. Michael Collins came to Castlebar and Michael Kilroy sought money from him. McCabe from Sligo drew a mauser pistol and some shots were fired before McCabe and pistol were seized.

On 22 April 1922 Rick was badly injured by a grenade during the trial of a fuse and he was rushed to St. Vincent's Hospital, Dublin, where he remained for two months. Rick returned and saw further action in the attack of an enemy boat at Newport which was bringing supplies to the garrison in the town. On other occasions he helped the defence of Newport when it was in the hands of the IRA and under attack from the Free State army. He fought at Castlebar, Derrypark, Dulough and Brocach Mountains. He fought his way out of many a round-up in Mountbrown, Durless, and Derrymore. Rick was active in the attack and capture of the barracks in Clifden where, after seven hours, the enemy positions were captured. He was among those guarding the unloading of a flour boat at Newport.

The unit was disbanded at Christmastime 1922, but Rick was captured later when he was re-joining the Column which was reformed. Next came internment in Galway Jail for six months where he was on the list for execution, then No. 3 camp Tintown, the Curragh, for another six months, and then to Harepark Camp, where Kilroy, H. Murphy (Kerry), Liam Deasy, and Joe Baker were also prisoners.<sup>2</sup> In the late summer of 1924 he was unconditionally released. In Tintown Rick endured hunger strike for over three weeks.

Rick returned to Westport in a poor state. Soon he found himself in Chicago having first worked in the coal mines in England where he was well received by the coalminers. Throughout the years he has kept in contact with relatives and friends in the home country, visiting on many occasions. Some of the accounts of the period from 1916 to 1924 appearing down through the years, have not told the truth and done justice to the brave men among whom Rick was numbered. Names like Jack McDonagh, Dan Gavin, Jack Keane, the Duffy brothers, Joe Baker, Jim Moran, Tommy Kittrick and of course, Michael Kilroy, spell bravery and courage to Rick. No problem going into an ambush with men of that calibre!

It is hoped that Rick will be among the survivors who, together with their fellow countrymen, will commemorate in 1991 the deeds of seventy years ago.

## NOTES

Sources for the above article are contained in the following written accounts by R. Joyce on his contribution to the Fight for Freedom 1917-1924.

1. Statement of R. Joyce, 12 May, 1936, to Pensions Board Dublin
2. Letter to John Duffy, Knockrooskey, 1964
3. Letters to Jarlath Duffy
  - 19 January 1985
  - 18 January 1988

23 March 1988  
 30 March 1988  
 14 April 1988  
 20 May 1988

Richard Joyce, third son of Thomas Joyce and Anastasia Morahan, Barley Hill, Carrowholly. After the War of Independence he settled in Chicago, married and reared his family there. Frequent visitor to his native soil. Brother of Mrs. Chris Deane, Carrowbeg Cottage, Castlebar Road, Westport.



## MY EXPERIENCES IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR

by George W. Duffy

In 1922 when I came into this world, my grandfather Michael Duffy was in his 65th year. Another 65 years (and a few months) later, on the 130th anniversary of his birth—September 22, 1987—I, Michael's second grandson, stood in Westport, County Mayo, where his life began. Of Michael Duffy's eight children, eight grandchildren, and numerous great-grandchildren, none other than I has made the pilgrimage home.

Michael's route to America was not direct. Records show that in 1882 at Hawick, Scotland, he married Mary Hanagen, and two children, Patrick and Catherine, were born there. In 1886 the small family emigrated to South Groveland, Massachusetts, United States of America.

My voyage to Westport in 1987 was in some respects the reverse of theirs, for I had been in Hawick two years earlier. Truth be known, I have made many voyages in my life. One in 1942 ended in a thunderclap of exploding shells and torpedoes—and nearly caused this article to have never been written. More later.

Back to Mary and Michael Duffy. In South Groveland in 1889 Mary Ellen was born, followed in 1892 by George, in 1894 by William, in 1896 by Charles, in 1899 by Madelyn, and 1904 by Dorothy who, in 1988, still resided barely 10 miles from her birthplace.

George was my father. He was given the name of George Washington because his birthdate of 22 February was then (and still is) celebrated as the birthday of George Washington, the nation's first president. In 1920, after serving in the United States Army in France during World War I, George married Alice Lanen, also of South Groveland. The Lanens trace their roots to Kilkenny where the original Gaelic spelling of the family name was Ó Leannáin.

As I stated at the beginning of this narrative, I came along in 1922, followed by a sister, two brothers, and a sister: Eleanor (1923), Robert (1924), Richard (1927), and Natalie (1929). From 1928 we lived in the small city of Newburyport, Massachusetts (population 15,000 more or less), located on the seacoast at the mouth of the Merrimack River about 35 miles north of Boston. The Great Depression had a severe impact on us.

By 1939 I had completed my twelve years of education: grades one to eight in the school of the Immaculate Conception parish, and grades nine to twelve in the City of Newburyport High School. Convinced that my future and my fortunes lay not in Newburyport, I made application to the Massachusetts Nautical School in Boston. There, young men were trained to become officers in the United States Merchant Marine. Following a competitive examination, I was accepted, and two years later graduated. The date was 23 September 1941; barely ten weeks later the Japanese would attack Pearl Harbour.

When hostilities commenced, I was serving as Fourth Officer in the brand new motor vessel *American Leader* laying alongside Pier 1 in the port of Manila in the Philippine Islands. I had not yet reached my 20th birthday. Ten months later, by then promoted to Third Officer, I was on the navigating bridge of the *American*

*Leader* as it departed Capetown, South Africa bound for New York.

From Manila we had traversed a large part of the world. Escaping from the Japanese, we went to Australia and New Caledonia where we loaded wool and chromium ore consigned to the U.S. east coast. At the end of April 1942, having successfully delivered that cargo and with our holds full of trucks, barbed wire, steel, combat boots and sundry other military supplies, plus nine twin-engined bombers lashed to the deck, we put to sea once more. This time our destination was the Persian Gulf which we reached 81 days later. In mid-August, the discharging/loading cycle again accomplished, we were homeward bound with 10,000 tons of sheet rubber, liquid latex, opium, rugs, and dozens of other products of the Middle East and India crammed under and on the decks of our 400 foot long freighter.

Our last port of call was Colombo, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka). It was there that I recall reading an item in the daily paper concerning the activities of the German Navy in the South Atlantic ocean. It appeared that the British and American Naval authorities feared that one or more German commerce raiders were loose. These heavily armed vessels were actually freighters or small passenger ships converted to military use. Their guns were carefully masked; equipment such as scouting aircraft and fast torpedo boats was out of sight in the spaces that once carried bananas or cocoa or coffee or timber or anything else that a normal peace time merchantman would carry. These raiders, thus, were something to be feared, not only because of their guns, but because they could be practically on top of their unsuspecting victims before the danger was realised.

So, on September 7, 1942 we left Capetown—alone. The days of the large, escorted convoys had not arrived. In fact, with the exception of a few hours in the Caribbean earlier in the year, we had traversed the oceans of the globe by ourselves without a vestige of any protection from the Allied naval forces. Now we were alone at sea again, bound for New York but via the Pacific Ocean! The Germans were creating so much havoc in the North and South Atlantic oceans, that our British Admiralty-dictated routeing sent us westwards and then southwest to the Straits of Magellan, then northwards along the west coast of South America to the Panama canal, where presumably we would then find ourselves under the wings of the United States Navy for the last leg of the voyage home.

We never saw the Straits of Magellan. For, on 10 September, in a position about 1,000 west of Capetown, at about 8 o'clock in the evening, the *American Leader* was attacked and sunk by the disguised German raider *Michel*. We had a crew of 49 merchant seamen plus 9 U.S. Navy personnel, who manned our meagre 4-inch cannon and 4 machine guns. Several hours after the *American Leader* sank, the *Michel* returned to the scene and picked up a total of 47 survivors who were floating on three rafts.

There were already three Americans aboard the German—wounded survivors off a tanker sunk seven weeks earlier. Two nights later, the British flag freighter *Empire Dawn* fell to the *Michel* and 22 of her crew of 44 were picked up. For about four weeks, the 72 of us were kept prisoner under strict surveillance. Essentially, our treatment was fair: we were given the same food as the German crew and in the same quantity: we joined the Germans for movies and listened to the same music and





Capt. George W. Duffy, Seabrook Beach, New Hampshire, U.S.A.

announcements spewed out by the ship's PA system.

During our time on board the raider, she met up with several other German vessels. Finally in early October we were transferred to the supply tanker *Uckermark*. There, things were both better and worse. The living accommodation for the officer/prisoners was above deck, up in the fo'c'sle (the forward portion of the ship); the crew member/prisoners were lodged below deck in a storage space that afforded no escape if the tanker ran into difficulty.

Her skipper had been a prisoner of the British on New Zealand in World War I, therefore he understood our plight and tended to be quite lenient with us. For example, we were free to come and go on deck from sunrise to sunset, and he made no objection to our attempts at determining his ship's position daily. My captain joined him every day for a drink and a copy of the day's news from Berlin.

But the really bad side of our predicament was that we were bound for the Far East, probably Japan. And so it was, that two days after our arrival in the roadstead of the harbour of Tandjong Priok, outside the great city of Batavia, Java, a group of Japanese officers came on board and we were unceremoniously handed over on 6 November 1942.

Suffice to say that I managed to eke out an existence over the following 34 months, but it was a most difficult time. For a while I remained on Java, living in three different camps and working at a variety of jobs – loading ships, building roads, growing vegetables, and so on. In June of 1944 I went by ship to Singapore and thence to Sumatra, where about 5,000 prisoners and untold numbers of native labourers constructed a railway through swamps, practically impenetrable jungle, and rolling, hilly countryside. Hundreds of Allied personnel succumbed to tropical illnesses, but we finished the job on the day that the Japanese surrendered!

It was mid-October, 1945 when I returned to Newburyport after an absence of three and a half years. My mother and father had received a few messages from me during all of that time, but not until after I had been declared missing in action, my life insurance paid off, and my estate finalized by the Probate Court. (It is interesting to note that the first word from the Japanese indicating that I was alive and a prisoner came on the morning of Easter Sunday, 1943 – Resurrection Day!).

Other families were not so fortunate. Of the 58 men on board the *American Leader* when she was attacked by the *Michel*, only 28 eventually were repatriated.

Following a few months at home, I went back to the ships and continued sailing until the early 50s. At that time I married Margaret Mary Doyle of Newburyport. We have two daughters, Maryellen and Geraldine, and four granddaughters, Caitlyn, Marilyn, Christine, and Andrea. I am still licensed by the United States Coast Guard as Master of Steam and Motor Vessels, Any Tonnage, Upon Oceans, and every morning after I rise I look out the windows of our home here at Seabrook Beach, New Hampshire, towards the eastern horizon where the Good Lord has given me another day.

George W. Duffy, whose ancestors may have originated from Aughagower, now lives in New Hampshire, U.S.A. His grandfather emigrated to the U.S. in 1886.



## A JOURNEY TO ACHILL

by Brendan Scally

Tourist information was given by word of mouth in the late 1940s. The chap in the office who had beaten a trail westwards from Dublin, came back with travellers tales of a land beyond the Shannon, of islands off the blue Atlantic coast. Accommodation was available in modest hotels, and B & Bs were few and far between. There was, our traveller said, great value, friendly people, no electricity, candles supplied to light the way to the bedrooms and mutton every day.

So I took the train from Kingsbridge station at 9 o'clock one Saturday in August 1947 and puffed westwards at a rate of knots, two tenders of turf to keep up the pace, and wondered what Achill Island would be like in far off Mayo. There was a stop at every station, and falling in with another traveller we had an occasional bottle of stout at the hiked-up CIE price of 10d. per bottle when it was 7½d. in any decent pub.

The train made heavy going and stopped several times at unscheduled places due to lack of steam pressure caused by soggy turf from the poor harvest of '46. Remember that wettest of summers when city people descended on the farms in crusading zeal to save the harvest? Howsomeandever, after many delays the train reached Westport at around 6 o'clock in the evening and rain was pouring down.  
**END OF THE TRACK**

The rail line to Achill Sound from Westport was closed some two years previously, and the CIE bus was the line of communication between the end of the track and the land beyond. Passengers boarded the Achill bus in some hurry, bikes and baggage and miscellaneous items aloft, and then a half hour delay for no apparent reason while the rain poured down in the wetting mist. The bus lurched off into the unknown about 6.30 p.m. crossing humped bridges and stopping often to pick up new passengers, and once a crate of live chicks was accepted for delivery along the road. There were as many standing as sitting, and at every 'comfort' stop the passengers milled about trying to drag arms and legs after them as they went to exercise their rights as genuine Bona Fide travellers.

The conductor, a man who couldn't say 'no' to man or beast, weaved through the groups of his passengers in the pub, cajoling, urging and wheedling them back into the bus like a sheep dog worrying a flock through a gap. The bus progressed through Newport and I saw the magnificent bridge of arches and the people sheltering against the wall, with their high brows, narrow faces and immobile expressions. They were different from the small lined faces of Dublin people I was used to.

### BRIDGE OF SIGHs

At Achill Sound it was all off the bus on account of the rickety bridge which then spanned the water and we trailed after it on foot to Sweeneys; we were off the mainland! In a nearby pub I heard Irish spoken by two locals who had it obviously from the cliabhán and was entranced by the flow of beautiful sound, and sad to relate I only understood three words which cropped up in their animated conversation now and again, 'Two whiskies, Paddy!'



Slieve Donard - Achill Island



CROAGHAUN MT., ACHILL



Well, the endless journey went on and the rain mist seeped down and we got as far as Bunnacurry by midnight. Here the buses parted company with each other, one to Dugort, and our bus lurched on through Keel and over the hill at Pollagh down into the valley of darkness and reached Dooagh, our destination at last, after 16 hours! We were met by girls with bicycle lamps who escorted us through the wet to our hotel. Dublin was far away and we were received with great warmth, a ball of malt and a hot meal at Clew Bay Guest House. Then candles to light us to our beds. We were not at all downhearted!

#### OUT OF THE MISTS

Next morning the mist lifted, and the white clouds which slide over the mountains of the island like enormous blankets disappeared to reveal the most glorious panorama I had ever seen till then. Slievemore came out of the mist, towering over the island, Croaghaun swept up to dramatic heights as the clouds receded, and what luck! the sun shone from a cloudless sky and bathed the sea, the Minaun Cliffs, Croagh Patrick, the faraway islands and distant coastline in many shades of blue. It was glorious and remained so for our fortnight. We made many friends, we were young and outgoing. Anthony Gielty played the fiddle non stop for half an hour after a half-hour of encouragement, Delia Gielty made the nicest seed cake and we had plenty of mutton but not every day.

Sonny O'Malley's was hectic at night, the locals looked for flat pints of stout without froth to get full value, and he gave visitors a dollop of froth out of a jug, with a spoon. His Da used to burst into the pub from the kitchen after closing time like



Looking towards the Minaun Cliffs, Achill Island

Brendan Scally  
1970



Achill, Slievemore

B. Scally 1972



Croaghán Mt., Achill Island, from the Mullet Peninsula

Brendan Scally  
1974



a flaming dragon, larruping everyone with his stick to clear the house. He laid it heavily on backs and shoulders but avoided giving the visitors the same treatment. We got the message and removed ourselves. Sonny's grandma was alive at that time but said little to anyone because, as the tide of the Irish language receded from the island, she was left in a lonely world. 'She had the poor English, the creatúr!'

#### THE DESERTED VILLAGE

Up at Corrymbre House, former residence of Captain Boycott, Major Freyer resided and was treated and referred to as a sort of Lord of the Manor. Slievemore village on the slopes of the mountainside, was abandoned with the exception of one family, the last of many who once lived and herded their flocks on the good grazing in the valley. In the evenings there was much singing and music making by locals and visitors. Painters and poets had discovered this magnificent island and made it their own, and they resented the incursion of holiday-makers from Dublin and other places to this sacred place. Well, for all the beauty of sea and land, the laughter and gaiety, we could not but be aware that many of our new found friends were preparing for leave-taking to Boston or New York, the midlands of England or Scotland. The old-timers had finished with tatie hooking, the young lads were off in their place now to the building sites to come home only at Christmas time to spend their earnings.

But for us the sun shone, we traipsed the hills over to Annagh, went along the rough track to Keem Bay, climbed Moyteoge Head, and night-time at Gielty's fireside heard many tales of poteen making – kegs of rum from the sea – of tragedies – and learned to pronounce the Irish place names of the fields, mountains and headlands and the stories that went with them. When the locals spoke these names they had the rich tones of their forefathers from the times when Gaelic was supreme as the language of the island.

Forty years on memories of Achill are still vivid pictures in the mind. What heartbreak for exiles to remember it as we saw it in the gathering dusk one evening on the road down to Dooagh, the scattered white houses in the valley against the deep purple of majestic Croaghnaun, a sea of bronze reflecting the after-light of the sun, then suddenly rising from each chimney, a white plume of smoke in slender columns, graceful, weaving a haze in the upper air as if each household decided by instinct that at that moment day was over and night time had come. It was entrancing, never to be forgotten.

Brendan Scally, local historian and artist, former Chief Draughtsman with An Bórd Telecom. Chairman of An Taisce, Fingal, the Ballymun Historical Society and the Old Fingal Society.

#### WESTPORT HISTORICAL SOCIETY Proceedings 1 December 1987 – 30 November 1988

Much of the time and energy of the Society during the year under review was devoted to the establishment of a Westport Heritage Centre. Our Chairperson Jarlath Duffy is pursuing this objective with his usual dynamism, and a start has been made with the computerization of material for the genealogical information which will be available at the centre. Temporary premises have been rented until such time as funds will permit us to renovate the premises at Westport Quay which have been made available to the Society through the generosity of the Harbour Board.

**Cathair na Mart**, Vol. 7, No. 1 (1987), was launched on Friday, 11 December 1987, at the Railway Tavern, Altamont Street, by An tAthair Mícheál Mac Gréil, C.I. Mr. and Mrs. Joe Ring were most hospitable hosts on that occasion. Mr. Ring is a nephew of the late Brigadier-General Joe Ring, the subject of the leading article in the journal, contributed by our Vice-Chairperson Peadar Ó Flanagan. There was a large attendance including Pádraig Flynn, Minister for the Environment; Denis Gallagher, Minister for the Gaeltacht; Séamus Hughes, Chairman, and members of Westport Urban District Council; members of the Hughes and Ring families. The journal was sponsored by Seán O'Connor's Superstore, represented by Noel Kavanaugh.

Our third **School of History** based on the theme **The Birth of the Nation 1918-1923**, was held in the Railway Hotel, Westport, on 11 and 12 March. This was well attended and proved to be most stimulating and informative. The programme was as follows:

Friday 11 March:	7.30 p.m.	'Military Struggle in Ireland 1918-1923 – an Overview', by Marie Boran.
	8.30 p.m.	'West Mayo Brigade I.R.A.', by Michael McEvilly.
Saturday 12 March:	11.00 a.m.	'The Connaught Rangers' Mutiny', by Stuart Barr.
	12 noon	'Manifestations of Nationalism (Identifying Support for the War of Independence)', by Marie Boran.
	2.30 p.m.	Tour to Ambush Site of Carrowkennedy.
	7.30 p.m.	'Meet the Survivors', with Willie Sammon.
	8.30 p.m.	Annual Dinner of Westport Historical Society.

**Mr. Hugh Weir** lectured to the Society on 28 March on the subject of 'the Irish House through the Ages'. The lecturer is a keen environmentalist and geologist, and has several publications to his credit including *The Houses of Clare*.

The Society was represented at many events throughout the year:-

<b>March</b>	Opening of Strokestown House Exhibition and French Park Heritage Centre.
<b>April</b>	Launch of Castlebar Community Development Association Heritage Centre.
	Tour of Killala area under the leadership of Monsignor MacHale



with the members of the North Mayo Archaeological and Historical Society.

Opening of Exhibition by the Crossmolina Archaeological and Historical Society.

**June**

Presentation of Awards in the *Irish Times* Young Historian Competition (Mayo area), in Geary's Hotel, Pontoon.

**July**

Opening of the Granuaile Interpretive Centre in Louisburgh. Fahy School Centenary Celebrations.

**October**

Annual General Meeting of the Federation of Local History Societies.

**November**

Armada Exhibition in Ulster Museum, Belfast.

