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IRIS BHÉALOIDEAS CHORCAÍ

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THE CORK FOLKLORE PROJECT

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Note from the Project Manager

Archive 21 sees a greater focus on material collected by the Cork Folklore Project over the last two decades. High quality pieces of research are reinforced by an increased presence of collected testimony and folklore, extracted from interviews skilfully recorded by researchers on the Project. This approach reflects a renewed emphasis on increasing output and engagement, with the almost 700 recordings in our collection, to date.

This determination to build on the outreach of previous years, has seen the Project open an Outreach Hub at the new North Cathedral Visitor Centre, where the public will be able to interact with out material, with greater ease. It is sincerely hoped that this positive move, will mark a new departure for our Project and lead to greater investment and support for our work in the future.

In *Archive 21*, regular and valued contributors Billy McCarthy and Geraldine Healy offer unique insights into Cork social and folk history, drawn from their own experience and inherited tradition. Mark Wilkins, once again contributes a powerful illumination of Cork's music scene, with his delicate and personalised treatment of music pioneer, Fergus O'Farrell. Based on over two years of focused interviews, Michael Moore deepens his exploration of stone masons and reveals multiple insights into a trade which has enveloped our surroundings. Project researchers, David McCarthy and Kieran Murphy produce two detailed works, which also draw on recordings undertaken by the project. McCarthy's work on 'The Loft' presents an exhaustive exposé of the Cork Shakespearean Company, while Murphy's attention to another Cork staple, 'Tripe', expertly assembles disparate sources from within our archive, to present a coherent account of Cork's sometimes inconsistent relationship with the food. The presence of the republican martyr Tomás Mac Curtain in Cork lore is treated by an examination of related material, in order to set in context his murder as a landmark in the historical conscious of the people of Cork. The presence of the Irish language continues as a central component of our annual journal, with a reflection on its presence within our collected material. Finally, the ongoing work on of the Ballyphehane Oral History Project is explored by Jamie Furey, who has led the project, and offers an authoritative communication of its intrinsic value. With *Archive 21*, the Cork Folklore Project, once again contributes to the broader cultural fabric of Cork City and County.

Tomás Mac Conmara

THE CORK FOLKLORE PROJECT NEWS

Newsletter of The Cork Folklore Project
Available at www.ucc.ie/en/cfp/news/

'The greatest gift that anyone has given me'

On 10 November 2016, Cork Folklore Project researcher Jamie Furey conducted an interview with John Chute, a well-known Piper Major from Cork, as part of the Ballyphehane Oral History Project. John passed away less than two months later. As part of our commitment to memory in Cork, we gift a copy of each recording to the family of every interviewee. In June 2017, the project received a wonderful correspondence from John's son Isaac, which powerfully underlines the profound value of our work:

"You can only imagine how happy I was to review your package last night here on the north shore of Boston. At first I burst into tears to hear my dad's sweet, lyrical tenor voice after all these months since he passed. But then those tears turned to laughter to hear the stories of old, not to mention some of which I was the protagonist … Having the a copy of the recording he made is the greatest gift that anyone has given me."

Isaac Chute

Crawford College of Art and Design

In May 2017, the project visited the Crawford College of Art and Design to deliver a presentation focused on the value of Cork Folklore to the arts. The presentation featured audio samples of our work as well as a detailed account of the project's development in community outreach, over the last twenty years, which receive a positive response from the college:

"Thank you so much for the presentation you delivered to the Year 1 Fine Art and Applied Art students here in the Crawford College of Art and Design last week. Staff and students alike were deeply impressed by the material that you introduced. For future artists, the educational value of contact with the kind of knowledge contained in these archives, and the research opportunities it offers cannot be overestimated."

Dr. Simon Knowles & Bill O'Flynn

'Fair play to the Cork Folklore Project'

The Project has been widely acknowledged for our work by a variety of public figures. Acclaimed Cork singer-songwriter John Spillane visited the office of the Cork Folklore Project, where he spent time speaking with our researchers and was struck by the depth of work involved in our day-to-day operations:

"On a recent visit to the Cork Folklore Project in Farranferris it was lovely to see the patience and respect that was shown to elderly Cork people who are the carriers of a wealth of stories, customs and folklore. I was struck by the warmth that was shown to the ordinary people of Cork. Fair play to the Cork Folklore Project!"

John Spillane

No crew cuts or new-fangled styles Mr. Lucas - The Barber

By Billy McCarthy

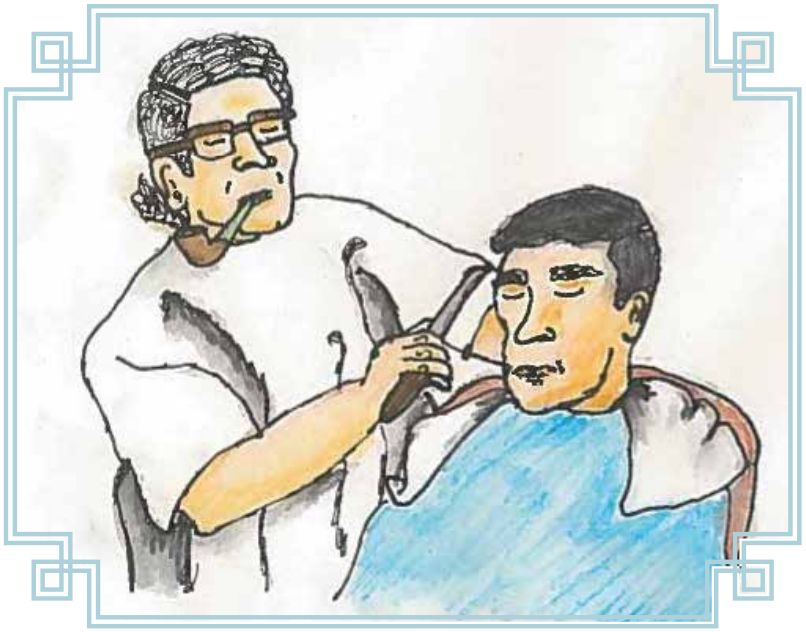


Illustration by Ciara Murphy, the granddaughter of the author, Billy McCarthy

In the early 1950s, Mr. George Lucas was our local barber. His shop was located on Douglas Street, adjacent to Capwell Post Office, and was the source of much of our early education, as we listened attentively to the stories told so graphically by the proprietor. He knew the names and histories of breeders, owners, trainers and jockeys of all the great racehorses of the day, and this great knowledge he shared with the men who called to his premises on Friday evenings as they made their way home from work at the Ford and Dunlop factories. On the walls of the shop were hung several notices outlining the rules of the house. One notice informed customers that religion and politics were forbidden subjects, not for discussion, but the sign that will remain forever in my memory is the one which declared "Please do not spit, it is both offensive and dangerous". As Mr. Lucas smoked a pipe, we juveniles were always on the lookout for opportunities to violate this "set in stone" rule.

On Friday afternoons, with our homework hastily completed, we would head for the Barber Shop at a time when we knew the workmen would be having their regular haircut. When our turn came to occupy the chair, Mr. Lucas would politely ask if we would allow "this gentleman to have his haircut first as he was in a hurry to get home". Of course we would readily forfeit our turn. This line would continue until all of the men, maybe five or six, had been shorn and shaved and the barber had collected about a shilling for the respectful lads who sat back patiently, surrendering their places for the benefit of their elders. At that time, (the early 1950s) the price of a haircut was three pence, so this meant that four of us could have our hair cut and use the haircut money which we had in our pockets on a trip to the Corporation Baths (swimming pool) on Eglington Street.

Before I ever heard the term Barbershop Choir, or the expression Barbershop Singing, I enjoyed many great singalong sessions with Mr. Lucas as we watched the bunches of hair of varying colours, from jet black to silver grey, tumble onto the sawdust-covered floor of this, our own beloved social club. In fact it was here that I first heard the song "Do you want your old lobby washed down", with Mr. Lucas adding the "Con Shine" tailpiece. Ever since then when I hear Brendan Shine belt out that song it brings back beautiful memories of lads, five or six years our senior, most of whom have now passed on to their eternal reward, who treated us to a feast of the popular songs of the day.

Mr. Lucas was a dyed - in - the - wool traditionalist, and his idea of a haircut was short back and sides with the hair combed from left to right. In the mid 1950's however, the crew cut was the popular style of the day. One day a boy shoved his head in the door and asked "do you do crew cuts, sir"? Mr. Lucas replied, "I do not do crew cuts or any of your new-fangled styles, now get out of here and back to wherever you came from".

I recall another humorous occasion when my father came home from a visit to the barber and asked what we thought of his haircut. When each of us had professed an opinion he informed us that it was a lady who had performed the task. Apparently the daughter of the proprietor had called into the shop, and seeing so many men awaiting their turn, put on one of her father's white coats, the hem of which was touching the floor, and called out "who's next?" After some head-turning and a lot of foot-shuffling my father, a deeply religious man, decided that since he didn't have a whole lot of hair to cut, he would put his trust in the Lord and set an example for others to follow. He thought the lady must have done a fair enough job, as when she called out "next", three men immediately stood up. I like to think it was then that the first female barber was introduced to a previously male dominated trade.

The last time I spoke with Mr. Lucas was in the mid-1950s; he informed me then that he had been working in this same shop for the past sixty years. Our barber and choir master passed away shortly after that. Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam uasal.

Billy McCarthy is a former researcher with the Cork Folklore Project.

‘He’s corresponded with me for thirty years in Irish, and you lost yours in Cork’

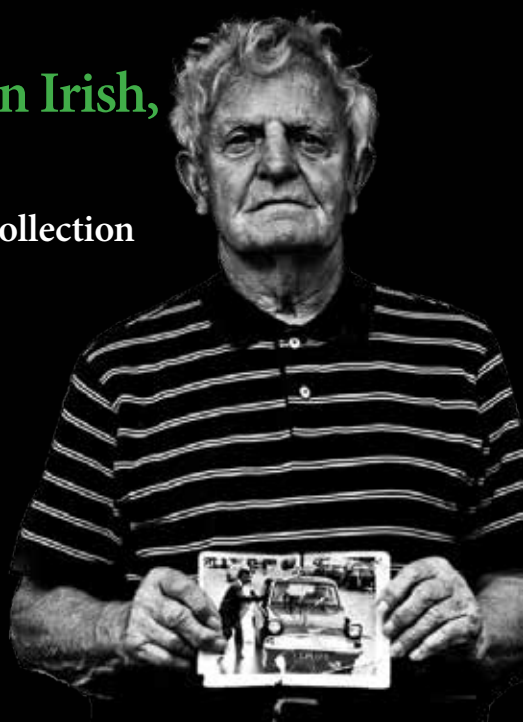
A reflection on the Irish language in the Cork Folklore Project Collection

By Dr. Tomás Mac Conmara

Tá mo chroí-se réabtha ina míle céad cuid
’s gan balsam féin ann a d’fhóirfeadh dom phian,
nuair a chluinim an Ghaeilge uilig á tréigbheáil,
is caismirt Bhéarla i mbeol gach aoin.

My heart is torn in a hundred thousand pieces,
And no remedy will soothe my pain,
When I hear Irish being abandoned
And the din of English in everyone’s mouth

Art Mac Cubhthaigh, Armagh, 1715-1773
(Trans: Tomás Ó Fiaich)



Johnny Chris Kelleher, Photo by Gráinne Mcgee for the CFP Archive

In Cork, outside of the Gaeltacht areas, the Irish language has in the main, responded to the national rhythms and patterns, as seen elsewhere across the country. Cork is one of only seven counties to have officially designated Gaeltacht regions. Located west of Cork City is the Gaeltacht area of Múscraí, which consists of the two principal settlements of Baile Bhuirne (Ballyvourney) and Béal Átha an Ghaorthaidh (Ballingeary). As an area with such a depth of tradition in language, literature and culture, it is not surprising that it has been home to some of the most creative and artistic Irish people over the last three centuries. Seán Ó Riada, Seán Ó Ríordain, Máire Bhuí Ní Laoghaire, Eibhlín Dubh Ní Chonaill, Séamus Ó Céilleachair, An tAthair Peadar Ó Laoghaire and Dónal Ó Mulláin are among those who have honed their artistic trade in the area. Acadamh Fódhla, a cultural organisation founded in Múscraí in 2001 to promote scholarship and engagement with the heritage of the area, has suggested that almost 2,000 poets are buried in Baile Bhuirne graveyard alone. Almost all the latter’s creative output was through the medium of the Irish language. In addition to Múscraí, located off the coast of West Cork, lies the Gaeltacht area of Oileán Chléire (Cape Clear Island). In 2017, Cork City has a vibrant Irish-language scene and, supported by the efforts of organisations like Gael Taca, an independent group founded in 1987, with its own dedicated language centre on Sullivan’s Quay. The role of schools like the North Monastery, Coláiste Daibhéid and Coláiste an Phiarsaigh should also be underlined, with regard to their committed role in nurturing the language.

In the broader collection of the Cork Folklore Project (CFP), only a small number of contributors’ drift into the Irish language as a form of communication. In July 1999, in one of the earliest recordings of the Project, Jack Ó Muircheartaigh was recorded in his native language, discussing the significance of Mount Brandon, a mountain on the Dingle Peninsula in County Kerry and its connections to Cork (CFP, Sound Recording (SR) 284, Jack Ó Muircheartaigh, 1999). A further interview with the singer and songwriter Seán Ó Sé (known as ‘The Pucker’) also reflected on the role the language played in his formation. Interspersed among broader recollections of youth and schooldays, the Irish language frequently emerges as a subject within the CFP collection, with reactions swaying from its utter rejection, to a firm embrace.

In an interview conducted on 21 July 2010, Johnny Chris Kelleher was recorded by Michael Daly on behalf of the Cork Folklore Project. Kelleher offers testimony on a range of subjects from butchers, cattle-droving and fairs, to hurling, bowling, football, tuberculosis and diphtheria. When discussing his schooldays, he reflected on the way in which Irish was taught and offers his own personal views on the subject. He also remembers the passion for the Irish language of his teacher Donnchadh Ó Céilleachair:

Oh, I had the same master from first, second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth. Donnchadh Ó Céilleachair. He was a very good [Gaeilgeoir], but at the time, the system of learning Irish, unfortunately, and with hindsight, was wrong. As far as the Irish people are concerned, you don’t beat anything into them. You might coax them, but you don’t beat them. And trying to learn us the Irish back in those days, they did try to beat it into us. As a matter of fact, I was left school for many years after and I was down by Bridge Street with the papers and Mr. Kelleher [Ó Céilleachair] came down, and he said “Conas atá tu?” and I said, “Tá mé go maith, buíochas le Dia” and he began to continue to talk in Irish to me, but unfortunately I had lost my Irish. So I said “Sorry, Mr. Kelleher” I said, “I’m afraid I lost it” and he got cross with me. I was about twenty-four or twenty-five at the time. He said “you should be ashamed of yourself!” He took a letter out of his pocket from Pádraig Ó hÓgáin. Now we’d know him as ‘Pa Hoc’, but [in] Irish was Pádraig Ó hÓgáin. He said “this is a letter from Pádraig Ó hÓgáin from Luton. He’s corresponded with me” he said “for thirty years in Irish, and you lost yours in Cork!” Well now, when it comes to brains, I’ll let other people judge that, but I am quick to think, so I said to him: “Well Mr. Kelleher” I said, “isn’t it only proof we’re better Irish people abroad than what we are at home!” [laughs] (CFP, SR 390, Johnny Chris Kelleher, 2010).

The short contribution of Johnny Chris Kelleher presents one man’s experience with the Irish language. Within that reflection the cohabitation of passion and indifference towards the language, is shown. For some, like the eighteenth century Ulster poet, Art Mac Cubhthaigh, as well as Donnchadh Ó Ceilleachair, the weakening of the language was a devastating and irreparable injury to the Irish people. For others, the language was peripheral to their lives. Within our existing collection, a range of views and feelings are found. As an organisation positively disposed to the language, it is the intention of the Cork Folklore Project to expand this understanding, through increased recordings that capture a sense of where the Irish language is situated for people in the contemporary world, as well as reflections on the language in the past.

The Loft - Cork Shakespearean Company

By David McCarthy

Pat Lehane as King Lear. Cork Opera House, 1973 (Courtesy of Cork City Libraries). Photographer Paul O' Flynn

2024 will see the 100th anniversary of the founding of an institution that has become an inseparable part of the cultural life of Cork and in particular to the historic inner-city Shandon area. In 1924, Fr. Christopher O'Flynn was running weekly classes in traditional Irish singing at the North Monastery. A combination of some of the boys from this class plus some girls who had performed in a Christmas play at St Vincent's Convent made up those whom he invited to attend acting classes. The first class met in the choir room of The North Cathedral and thus what would become known as The Cork Shakespearean Company was set in motion. A number of temporary premises including St Vincent's School would house the fledgling group before 1926 after which it settled in two upstairs rooms in number 37A John Redmond Street. The space known as 'The Loft' was housed over a former stable which in time would become home to Lenihan's sweet factory. The Loft became the group's home for the next seventy-three years and was bestowed with the name by which the Cork Shakespearean Company became best known.

The seeds of The Loft's development can be traced to the 12th of December 1881 when James Christopher O'Flynn was born at 12 Mallow Lane (now Shandon Street). His father Cornelius had steady employment in the nearby Butter Exchange. His mother Kate (nee Uppington) was the product of what was then termed a mixed marriage, that is between Catholic and Protestant. The earliest memory of young Jimmy, as he was known in the family circle, was of being held aloft on his father's shoulders to witness Parnell pass by when the M.P. visited Cork in January 1885 at the height of his campaign for Home Rule and land reform. Jimmy began attending the National School in Blackpool the following year but a parallel education was obtained from ob-

serving the stallholders, cattle dealers, beggars and street singers who would throng Mallow Lane on market days. He took note of the speech patterns and sing-song cries of the street traders, the mannerisms of the drunks, their facial expressions and body language. A lifelong love of Irish traditional song was sparked by an elderly street singer whom he heard singing an Irish song 'An Maidrín Rua' in the traditional style. He learnt to sing this song as he had heard it performed by the old man who most likely came from an Irish speaking region in West Cork.[1]

After leaving school Jimmy spent a brief time working as a clerk for Ogilvie & Moore, a noted Cork sweet manufacturing firm, and in due course expressed the desire to become a priest. In 1899 he entered the junior seminary in Farranferris. 1902 saw him dispatched to Maynooth and it was here that the next important step in the future development of The Loft was made. He joined the College Dramatic Society and received elocution lessons from Mr. Abraham McHardy-Flint who had worked with the celebrated English actor-manager Henry Irving. It was McHardy-Flint who fired the young seminarian's passion for Shakespeare. Taking over the role of Laertes in *Hamlet*, after the student who was due to play the part dropped out, Father O'Flynn stated in later years that 'Laertes was my first meeting with Shakespeare. I played the part as my heart dictated. They said I did a good job of it'. [2]

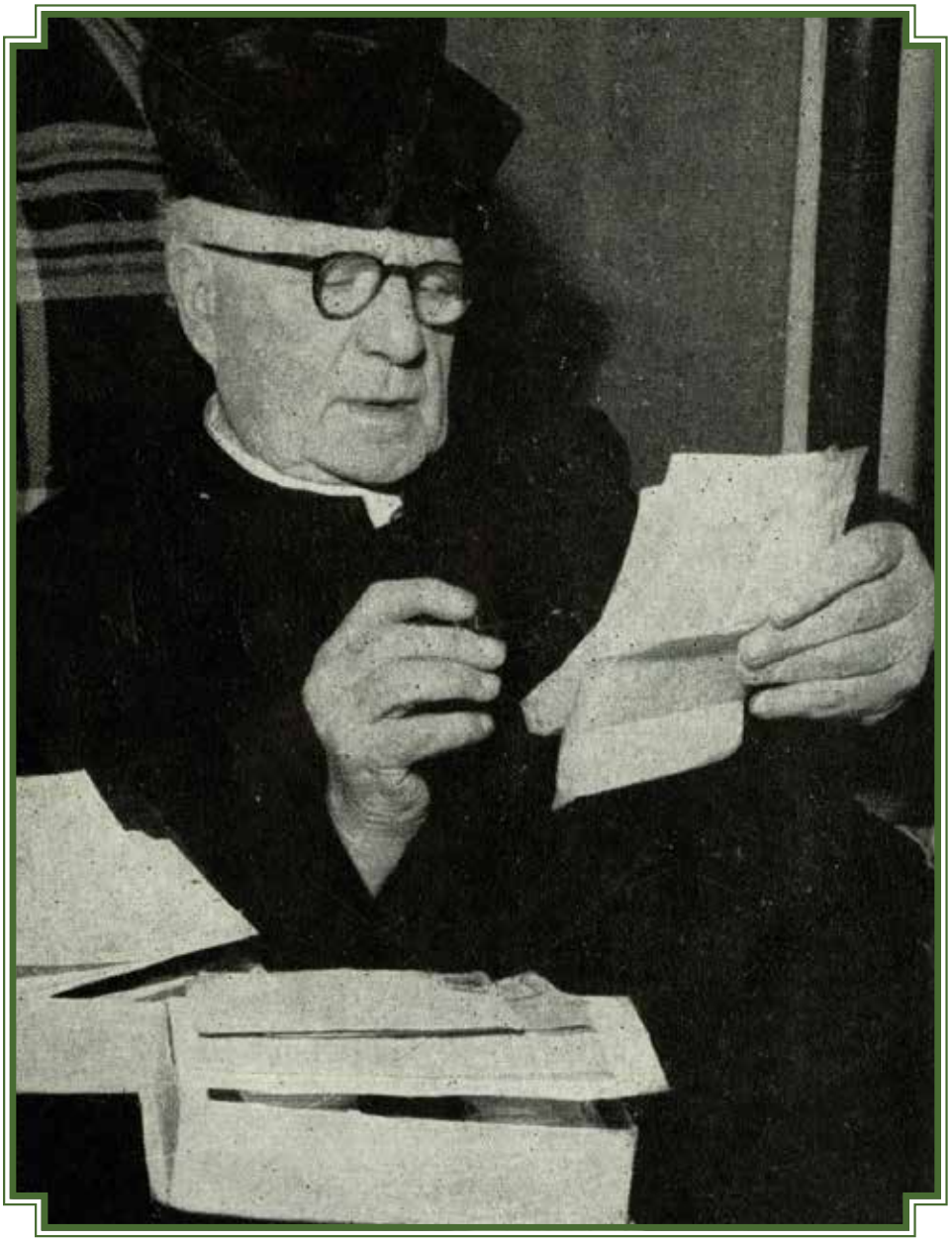
In June 1909 he was ordained and took the name of Fr. Christopher (Christy) O'Flynn. He took a variety of postings over the next number of years such as Chaplain of the Lunatic Asylum on Lee Road (Our Lady's Hospital) and of St Finbarr's Seminary. His theatrical side was allowed full expression when he organised the North Monastery Pageant of 1911, an epic undertaking that involved hundreds of Shandon's youth. His growing interest in the Irish language and culture would see him become increasingly involved with the Gaelic League. In 1916 he arrived in Dublin

Pearse Gunn and Pat Gunn, Cork Opera House, 1973 (Courtesy of Cork City Libraries). Photographer Paul O' Flynn

on his beloved Indian motor-cycle to give a lecture on Irish music to a group of Gaelic League members when he was halted by a British Army roadblock. Fr O'Flynn recalled the officer's curt reply to his explanation for travelling to the city. 'You can forget about your lecture on music tonight. There's a rebellion on since this morning.' [3]

The following tumultuous years would see Fr. O'Flynn sorely tested. His support for Carl Hardebeck in taking the role of Professor of Irish Music in the newly established Cork School of Music brought him into conflict with an organisation representing demobilised British military personnel. They objected to the position being given to Hardebeck on account of his German heritage. This culminated in Fr O Flynn receiving a warning letter signed 'Tubs O Blood' and in him being physically attacked by two men on the North Mall. The Irish War of Independence saw the violence that erupted in Cork visit Fr. O'Flynn personally on a number of occasions. In May 1921 a bomb was thrown at an RIC patrol in Blackpool fatally injuring four officers. Upon hearing the blast Fr. O'Flynn rushed to the scene and performed last rites on the dying men. It was on that same night his close friend, Fr. James O'Callaghan was gunned down in the Sunday's Well home of Sinn Féin Alderman, Liam De Roiste by masked plainclothes constables in a reprisal attack.[4] This period of turmoil was captured in an interview conducted by the Cork Folklore Project in 1998 with the then almost 100-year-old Mary O'Donovan who recalled her memories of The Black & Tans and her experience of working as a secretary for Lord Mayor Tomás McCurtain who would himself be assassinated in March 1920.[5]

The Loft emerged in 1924 into the newly established Irish Free State following the struggle for independence struggle and the Civil War. The early years saw a core of youthful performers such as Eddie Golden and his brother Geoff, James Stack, Eileen Curran and Gus Healy, hone their skills at The Loft. In 1927 the young company truly announced its arrival on the scene with the staging of eight plays in six days at the Opera House. These huge undertakings saw The Loft tackle such diverse Shakespeare works as Othello, Richard II and Twelfth Night with actors required to switch between roles on alternate nights. Over the years Fr. O'Flynn consolidated The Loft's role in enriching the cultural lives of all who walked up its creaking stairs. Some of those who passed through The Loft became household names in time,



Fr. O'Flynn Courtesy of Cork City Libraries

such as Edward Mulhare, Joe Lynch, Niall Tóibín, and Chris Curran.[6]

The post-war decades welcomed members who would do much to shape the long term future of The Loft, like Pearse Gunn who joined in 1952 and his younger brother Pat who made his debut later in the decade. Pat Horgan joined shortly after Pat Gunn. They were all witness to the twilight years of Fr. O'Flynn's tenure of The Loft. In the intervening years he had been appointed Parish Priest of Passage West and the Indian motorcycle had long since been replaced with a big black Dodge car which became a familiar sight in Shandon as it transported the priest to his beloved Loft. As part of a series of interviews that the author conducted with Loft members in late 2016, early 2017, Dr Carol Dundon recalled in February 2017 that:

He used to arrive in a huge black American Dodge car. There were very few Dodge cars in the city at the time and you could see this huge Dodge driving slowly up the road past the North Infirmary and parked outside The Loft and he used to drive very, very slowly which I always thought was unexpected. I would have expected him to drive rather fast because he was full of vitality and that' (Cork Folklore Project (CFP), Sound Recording (SR), 600, Dr. Carol Dundon, 2017).

It was another aspect of Fr. O'Flynn's work, however that brought him and The Loft to wider international fame. Drawing on the experience he'd gained under McHardy-Flint he helped those with severe stammers overcome their speech impediments through a combination of breathing control and posture. His success in this field reached the BBC who in 1960 made contact with him and offered to shoot a TV documentary about Fr. O'Flynn and The Loft. The elderly

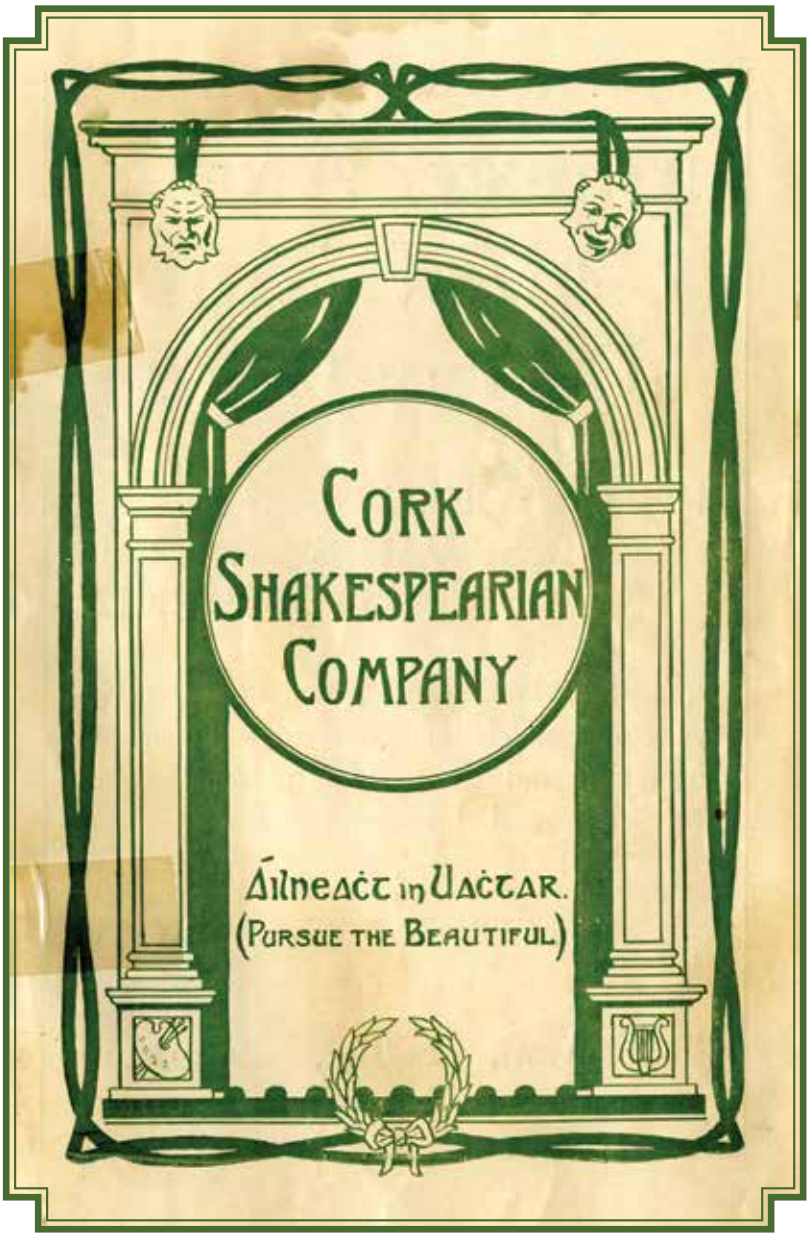
priest was simultaneously flattered by the honour but saddened that recognition of this sort had to come from abroad rather than at home.

The BBC spent four days filming with Fr. O'Flynn and the Loft. The finished documentary aired in January 1961 and struck an immediate chord with viewers all over Britain. Central to the thirty-minute film was a sequence where the priest worked with a youth, John Crowley who suffered from a severe stammer.[7] In the sequence where his difficulty in speaking contrasted with a later filmed section where, with the encouragement of Fr. O'Flynn he declared 'I *will* play Hamlet one day!' Following broadcast, the priest received a deluge of correspondence by mail, including pleas for advice from those suffering from speech defects. He tirelessly worked to reply to those who reached out to him.

Later that same year the aged priest took seriously ill. When the author interviewed Pat Gunn on behalf of the CFP in January 2017, he recalled that for Fr. O'Flynn's last session with The Loft everyone was assembled for a rehearsal of *Macbeth*.

He went around, shook us all by the hand, and went to the top of the stairs, turned around and he says 'You know, I'm like an old donkey whose burden has got too much for him' and he went down the stairs and we saw him no more after that then (CFP, SR 598, Pat Gunn, 2017).

Fr. O'Flynn died on the 18th of January 1962. After his death, The Loft continued its work with some of the long-term members such as Gus Healy, Pat Lehane and Pat Deasy along with newer recruits. Eileen Curran assumed the mantle of director and during the 1970's The Loft staged a series of ambitious productions in the Opera House such as *King Lear*, *Hamlet* and a rare staging of *Coriolanus*.



Title page for Cork Shakespearen Company programme, November 1928
(Courtesy of Cork City Libraries)

Eileen Curran passed away in 1977 and the work set down by Fr. O'Flynn was continued by Pearse and Pat Gunn. Another important contributor during this period was Englishman John Morley, a retired actor resident in Cork.[8]

In the late 1970s a new theatre venue opened in Cork. The Cork Arts Theatre proved an invaluable outlet for amateur drama groups in Cork and it became the main staging ground for Loft productions, something which continues to this day. The year 2000 saw the company move from the space above Lenihan, which led to a period of temporary homes, before settling in its current location at Eason's Hill Community Centre, just a stone's throw away from the old Loft building.

These days the baton has passed from Pearse and Pat Gunn to Kieran O'Leary who joined the company in the late 1990s. As well as playing such roles as Macbeth and Falstaff he has directed most of The Lofts' recent productions. Guest directors have occasionally come on board, such as Declan Wolfe and Sinéad Dunphy who co-directed 2015's sold out run of *King Lear* at the Unitarian Church on Prince's Street.

The Cork Shakespearean Company in 2017 has a long and proud history behind it and the story is far from over. At the time of writing this rehearsals are underway for a production of *Julius Caesar* which the company last staged in 2003. The upcoming 100 year anniversary will be marked accordingly and plans are ongoing to celebrate this milestone which gives The Loft the distinction of being the oldest amateur dramatic society in Cork and one of the oldest in Ireland. Rest assured Fr. O'Flynn's legacy is in good hands and is guaranteed to flourish for many years to come.

David McCarthy is a researcher with the Cork Folklore Project

References & Endnotes

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2 O'Donoghue, Richard, Like a Tree Planted, p. 8
3 O'Donoghue, Like a Tree Planted, p. 53
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5 CFP, SR 197, Mary O'Donovan, 1998
6 Geoff Golden's obituary, Irish Times, 13 December 1996, p.4
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The Cork Folklore Masonry Project
By Michael Moore

In 2015, when I started as a researcher with the Cork Folklore Project, as well as learning archival and oral history skills, I was encouraged to explore the area I was passionate about. I served my time as a stonemason and after several years working with stone, I developed my own thoughts and recollections on the trade. My time as a mason ran parallel with the height of the Celtic Tiger, when the country was awash with construction and cranes dotted the urban skyline. It was all hustle and bustle, as tradesmen rushed from one job to the next. I knew nothing of the traditions, the folklore and history of masonry. To be honest, I never even considered it. During this period people were busy, and societal discourse was centred on economic expansion. It is only now that I am coming to some analysis of how profoundly the trades as well as Ireland itself, has changed over the last fifty years. A major part of this understanding is resultant on the research I have conducted for the Cork folklore Project. Critical to this deepened appreciation has been the recording of people central to the trade. When conducting interviews, I simply sit down and listen quietly, as people carve out their personal histories, opening a world that few are ever given the chance to observe.

The importance of the research undertaken in this project lies in the opportunity to record, analyse and gain a better understanding of the society we live in from those who have gone before us. This article, a follow-up to *A Tale of Two Masons* published in *The Archive 20* (2016), will give a brief description of how the research is conducted and how it is progressing. This will be followed by excerpts from the people interviewed, with commentary and analysis to provide context for the quotes given. As there has been such a depth of high-quality material gathered, a key aim of the overall project is an in-depth publication within the next twelve months. This quality is reflective of the passion and generosity of all the people who gave their time. As one mason recorded for the project mused; 'Always leave your mark on the stone'. We at the Cork Folklore Project strive to record the mark left by others.

The Cork Folklore Masonry Project began in November 2015 and from its inception aimed to interview masons born into the trade as part of familial ties, stonecutters, sculptors, labourers and anybody else that would have been associated with the masonry trade. By expanding the number of voices recorded, a nuanced and comprehensive understanding of our recent past is achieved. As of July 2017, a total of thirteen in-depth interviews have been recorded containing nearly 1,000 minutes of original audio material. As the research developed, many themes emerged which offer a fascinating insight into localised Irish history. The average age of people interviewed is sixty-nine, which means they have lived through a period of rapid transformation in Irish society. During that epoch, much of the country moved from a rural-based agrarian society to a more urbanised setting. As a consequence artefacts have been lost in that change, ways of life have fallen away and new ways of living have emerged. This research is not an attempt at sentimentality. The men interviewed gave an honest and sometimes brutal account of the masonry trade in the late twentieth century. They spoke of the good, the bad, and the ugly of masonry without airs or graces and the material is all the better for it. I am indebted to all the people who gave their time to this project and shared their stories. It is also important to mention Jim Fahy, a

Top: Masons on their break
Below Opposite Page: Masons working in Farranree (Courtesy of Jim Lynch)

fourth-generation mason who has provided countless interviewees and shared all the material he has gathered from his own research over the past number of years. The Cork Folklore Project believes that not only is it vital to record this heritage but equally as important to share it with others. The following passages will represent some of the themes which emerged from the men themselves, in their own words.

The concept of hierarchy was strong throughout the interviews. Most interviewees recalled that you had to learn fast and that as an apprentice you were at the bottom rung of the pecking order. The sites were hierarchal environments where you had to show respect. Older masons could also be unforgiving if you were adjudged to have made an error. However, sites were also a place where you could enjoy your work and the natural camaraderie alleviated the tougher aspects of the trade. Consider the following excerpts from Joe Fahy, interviewed in March 2016. But first John Steele interviewed in April 2016, recalls his experience as a young apprentice:

A LESSON LEARNED

You know and he just said, "John there's only one thing left, will you join masonry?" I said, I will and I did. And I remember going out one day with my dad, we'd do foxers together. I loved working with my father on the foxers, it was fun from early morning until late at night, weekends and any days you'd have off, you'd go away foxing. And I remember we were down in, there used to be a little quarry down in Little Island, it's gone now, and he was showing me how to cut stone like you know, bang, crack it, and I was a big man I can assure you like you know, and I had strong arm and I said I'll show him now about this. And I laced the stone, well it was like you'd see in a film, everything started shaking (Gasps) and he just picked it with his hammer, cha, he never told me about the grain because he knew I was going to be a bit of a kaffer, in saying I'll show him up here. So, I hit it the wrong way, never smashed it, it nearly smashed me, and he just flicked it with his hammer and bang, cracked it. So, that was a lesson I learned very early on. But we'd great men, we'd great camaraderie (Cork Folklore Project: (CFP), Sound Recording Number (SR) 570, John Steele, 2016).

THE TEA GALLON RUN

But I remember this time, the first time I got the job of looking after their gallons, I got about six gallons, these guys now would be in their late fifties, early sixties like, they were fairly old and ah (Slight Laugh) they gave me this they said right now you go young fella and do the gallons make the tea and whatever and I said, 'fine sir, I will do that sir'. It was all sir like that time, so I went away with the gallons anyway, I'd see the state of the gallons, sur, they were filthy inside, so I went out into the sand and I cleaned the gallons like. I cleaned the inside of the gallon, got it good and clean, made their tea and put them up on top of the benches where they sit down, the tables, the tables where they come in and sit down. So, they came in and Jesus next thing I knew all the gallons were been fired at me. Now, there was scalding water inside of these bloody gallons like … And their firing them at me and what they didn't call me, they said, 'It took us about twenty years to get a taste into that billy can … And you, five minutes you have it in your hand and you're after taking out the taste of twenty years out of it'. So, I said that was another thing I learned from the old fellas like, you know. I was after destroying their billy cans, as they said, but like that now they were the things, and it was a pleasure to go to work (CFP: SR 569, Joe Fahy 2017).

One striking feature which many masons implicitly referred to, was how their work often served as a marker for the passing of time. Over the years, their built heritage represented not only different methods of doing things, but also different stages of their lives. It is profound to think of all the journey-men masons who worked on building jobs all over Ireland. They moved from place to place following the work and after a life lived, they left behind a legacy in stone, brick or block. Tom McCarthy interviewed in April 2017 was the fourth-generation of his family in the sculpting and stonecutting line. He recalls that in 1951, two years into his apprenticeship, old stonecutters had to be brought out of retirement to work on the building of St. Francis Church on Liberty Street, Cork. Tom explains that some of their specialist skills for church building had already been lost due to the introduction of mass-concreting. McCarthy, a retired mason with a reputation as a top-class sculptor also modestly described how back in the 1950s, stone sculptors used to make their own tools. Thomas Lysaght, a stonemason specialising in restoration work who was recorded in October 2016, reflected on the skill and lives of the men who went before him, as he tried to replicate their work. The following passages illuminate some of the skills lost along the way:

FORGING YOUR OWN TOOLS

When you start learning your trade, you'd have to be acquiring tools, you know, chisels and points and hammers. Now a lot of the older stonecutters could sharpen their own tools, with an open fire and an anvil and all this kind of thing and temper them. I was never very good at it, I'd always lose the temper when the blue would run out of it, there's a blue band would run down the bit of steel, and you had to keep the copper end ... You'd have to get 'em red hot in the fire, take them out, punch them out on the anvil, until you get the width that you wanted in the chisel and then you'd have to temper that in the water, you'd just gently put it into the water and get the steel running up (CFP: SR 610 Tom McCarthy).

RESTORING FAMINE WALLS

What I love doing is if there's a piece of wall missing or whatever and I look at what was done a-hundred-and-fifty years ago by, doesn't matter the quality, that doesn't matter to me, but it's the person that done it, it's me then trying to replicate what I can

see on both sides and see does it marry in over time. So, it's not even about purism, it's about respecting what was done before, at whatever level they were, and working with the same stones. What I like about stones that were knocked from a wall, I'm using the same stones that were used, most of these walls that I was building, they were famine walls. These walls were built during the famine, because that's when people really would need to get in, do you know what I mean, so it's ironic, actually, these people would have got us, Irish people, to build the walls to keep us out from getting food. The irony isn't lost on me. So, I was working on the same walls as them, and trying to replicate that. So, that would be my benchmark, for better or worse, sometimes I got to it, and a lot of the time, I didn't, because they were just so skilled at the time (CFP: SR 589, Thomas Lysaght 2016).

As traditional skills were being taught and expressed, there was always banter and wit on the building sites. Every mason could fondly recall funny stories, colourful characters and the nicknames that went with the job. Anybody familiar with Irish custom may realise the ingenuity of how people can acquire nicknames and that usually the person with the nickname would be the last to know. Joe Fahy recounts how he was called the 'Messiah' in the 1960s, because he had long hair. He only found out about this nickname many years later. His cousin Joseph Fahy, who was interviewed in July 2016, recalls an amusing story from his working days. But first, come the words of Patrick Varian, a retired mason who emigrated to Boston, America in the 1960s. When recorded in October 2016, Varian gave a powerful insight into the differences between life growing up in poverty in Ireland and the opportunities that America offered. He never forgot his time working in Ireland where you had to watch what you said:

HAM FOR JAM

It was enjoyable to go to work. The things I remember would be in the shack, the masons never mixed with the carpenters, and definitely not with the labourers, and the youngest mason would light the fire. 'Cus they heated the billy-cans on the fire, and you'd hear somebody saying, 'Ham for jam!' And this isn't a joke, so they nicknamed this mason, he might have been one of the Murray's or the Sullivan's, they nicknamed him 'Ham for Jam', because he was always swapping his jam sandwiches for ham, and you know, the first thing that came out of your mouth, they stuck you with it (CFP: SR 590, Patrick Varian 2016).

A MORNING LUNCH

I remember a fella one day, we used have a break at ten o'clock, they all did at that time. And we were above in the Bons [Secours] again, so, the foreman told this guy, now he had one of these carts with big iron wheels. There was no transport and that, no vans or small trucks. There was this thing, you'd have to go down and pick up bricks or something on top of it. This guy was told to go down and get a window, a levered window for an incinerator room and the foreman, at half-past eight, told him to go down after lunch and it'll be ready. So, the guy goes down anyway, around quarter-past-ten, there was a foreman there, Neil Mackey, and he said to him, 'What do you want?' He said, 'I come for the lever window, for the Bons.' He said, 'I told your foreman that it'll be ready after lunch.' But, he said, 'I had my lunch at ten o'clock' (CFP: SR 577 (Joseph Fahy 2016).

One concept which became very clear as the research progressed was how complex and nuanced people can be in the analysis of their lives and the social world they inhabit. A person can hold completely contradictory views about something and be at peace with that. One mason exclaimed in an interview how it was so tough in the trades, with untold hardship. Yet, in the next breath he would gasp at how much he loved the job and how important it was to him. Dan Jones was interviewed for the project in May 2016. A retired mason originally from Bandon Dan asserted that respecting your fellow worker was paramount to the learning of the trade. However, Jones also appreciates that at times there was exploitation in the masonry trade, something which he never agreed with. John Steele, another mason who loved his time working as a mason can still openly acknowledge that it was a job full of hardship:

RESPECT YOUR LABOURER

And they had a saying which was a funny thing you know, you had a labourer tending you, as you know yourself. But my grandfather always used to say to me, 'respect your labourer', and my father had the same. Now I've seen labourers disrespected by tradesmen, but I never did, because I think, it 'twas built into me or driven into me, it was something they said you shouldn't do because they always said 'the labourer is your helper and he will always be there for you if you treat him properly'. That's only immaterial I suppose, but it's part of what I felt about the trade (CFP: SR 574 Dan Jones 2016).

A HARD LIFE

But like we knew, we knew no better because we knew that this is it, this is your life type of thing, you know. You see fellas with smashed fingers, I was lucky that way, I didn't, the only place I cut was somewhere there on my thumb, I don't know, I sliced it with the trowel or something and you didn't bother going to the hospital. I just wrapped tarry tape around it and I was told afterwards I should have got six stitches, and you just keep on working away you know. You were up to your neck in mud and filth and wet because the climate isn't … warm like, you'd be frozen, you'd be, and it could be frozen, wet and sunny all in one day. And it just, it was a very hard life, I've always said and I'll stand over it, it was the hardest life of all (CFP: SR 570 John Steele 2016).

One of the most profound disclosures revealed during this research, was that there was an ancient language spoken by the masons. This was called the Béarlagair na Saor and it was a language passed orally from generation to generation in the masonry fraternity. Few people have heard of it, as it was never written down. The Béarlagair was a practically-based working language as it was used on sites by masons to communicate with each other or to pass on skills and knowledge used to build which they did not want to share with outsiders. Unfortunately, this language has largely died out and although there are a few masons left who have some knowledge, its full vocabulary is lost. However, this project was able to recover a certain amount of knowledge on the language which illuminates its value in both the masonry trade and in the broader linguistic and cultural heritage of Ireland.

Edward Buckley, a retired mason from Cobh interviewed in April 2017 is fluent in Irish, speaks a reasonable amount of Latin and has knowledge of the Béarlagair, which his uncle passed some of it on before he died. Buckley remembers as a young labourer, his two uncles' having an argument in the back garden over a stone arch they had built. Smiling, Edward remembered that there was not one word of English or Irish spoken as they 'effed each other' in the Béarlagair na Saor. Below Buckley also offers an insight on the etymology of the Béarlagair. This is preceded by a contribution from retired mason Jack Johnson, originally from Monkstown who was recorded in August 2016. Jack recalls that when he began his apprenticeship in the late 1940s, he would row across the harbour with his father to get to work. Johnson remembers a story about his grandfather on a job in Mallow, as told by his father:

Edward Buckley (2016) Cork Folklore Project Collection

THE BÉARLOG WIDOW

They were staying in this house, she was a widow so one night there was two or three masons there together and at that time they could, they used to be able to speak the Béarlog, which was the mason's language. 'Twas reckoned to be first spoken in The Tower of Babel. But anyway, they had tripe and drisheen for their dinner and my grandfather said to the fella next to him, and he said it in the Béarlog that, 'you could half-sole a pair of shoes with that 'twas so tough'. And didn't your wan answer him back in the Béarlog. She blew the ears off him. She was the wife of an old stonemason that knew the Béarlog and she learned it from him and of course the grandfather and the rest of them didn't know that. What a drop they got (CFP: SR 583 Jack Johnson 2016).

LEARNING THE BÉARLAGAIR

I learned some of the Béarlagair from my uncle and I asked him to teach it to me one time back in the [19]70s, I'd a picked it up from him like that you know, knowing both languages because it comes from Latin and Irish you know … It comes from a mixture of Latin and Irish, for instance, Jim [Fahy] said to me one day, I heard him saying the 'glaidin' and I had never heard the word, glaidin. But, I knew it was a knife straight away because 'gladius' is a sword in Latin, the gladiator and you have that in English, you know. But whether my uncle wanted to preserve the language or not, I don't know, he mightn't have wanted it to be known, you know. They were kind of secretive about it, but I asked him to teach it to me and he said, 'you have to learn your trade first'. So, and then he died in 1976, he died at the age of 56, so there wasn't time you know (CFP: SR 611 Edward Buckley 2017)

If the value of oral historical research is ever questioned, one has only to read the final excerpt to glean an understanding of how important our shared history is. An interview with Patrick Cooney in March 2017 really emphasised the importance of preserving our heritage and culture. All the interviews to that point had been from the perspective of people who had been reared in, or experienced the world of masonry. They knew their history because they had lived it themselves. Their knowledge, though incomplete, gave them a sense of memory, place and perspective.

But the interview with Cooney was different, growing up in London, the son of Irish migrants, he had heard the stories and traditions and though they were fiercely proud of their heritage, they had lost that connection with the past. Cooney felt a sense of dislocation and disorientation because this link was broken. A long time ago his mother set out to correct this by engaging in painstaking research to trace their familial ties in Ireland. Her arduous journey finally led to a breakthrough in Cork. Cooney continued this research and now they can document their lineage back to the 1600s. This last excerpt highlights the joy and raw emotion Patrick's mother felt, when she finally tracked down one of her long-lost relatives in Cobh. It is important to remember that for every person searching and fumbling through the past, there might just have been one person, at one moment in time, who left a map for others to follow:

THE TREK HOME

So, we would always come back to Dublin, dad bought a house there, we didn't really come down to Cork because the link had been lost, it was a long, long time ago, it was 1880s, and it was over a hundred years. And my mother always had a yearning to find out more about her side of the family and if there was anybody left down here … But she went digging and she decided one summer … and she went to the local library on the Grand Parade … she went in and spoke to the librarian and she said; "we'd come out of Cork and the name was Hogan and they were stonemasons". And luckily enough in the local history section at that time, they said "there's a historian, a local historian living out in Cobh and his name is Liam Hogan, and we think he's a stonemason". And so, mom thought to herself well obviously that's a great link. So I remember dad wasn't around. We didn't have the car so we had to jump on a train and go out to Cobh … I remember going up with my mom and I was kind of bored really. I wanted to go off and have fun, but she was dedicated on doing this and we went up and she knocked on the door and I was standing there, and the door opened; "sorry to trouble you but my name is Eileen Devaney and I'm looking for Liam O'Hogan because I need some family history, and he might be the man". So she said, "Oh uncle Bill he's inside". This man came out and he was, he looked quintessentially, I suppose, West Coast Irish! He had very high cheek bones and he had a moustache and a blue geansaí on. He looked very dramatic. He looked like he had just stepped out of *The Quiet Man*. I remember my mother getting really emotional and saying, "I know I'm in the right house". He said, "oh come in" and she went in and she said, "I know we're related". She told me later "it was like meeting a ghost". It was like meeting her grandfather. And she told him what she knew… he knew his history and he said, "yeah, the Hogan's who went to London, I'd heard of those". He was an old man at the time, he said, 'I'd heard of them" he said, "we don't know what happened to them'. And that was my great-grandfather who went over, so we'd found the connection, he was thrilled, we were thrilled (CFP: SR 609 Patrick Cooney).

Michael Moore was a Researcher and Database Manager with the Cork Folklore Project from 2015 to 2017 and now continues as a volunteer with the project.

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The Early Days of Irish Television
By Geraldine Healy

Seán Ó Riada on RTE telvision in the 1960s (Roy Hammond Collection)

In 1960, the only television signal available to Irish people was on the east coast of the country, and it consisted of English television channels received from across the Irish Sea. The rest of Ireland was 'beyond the Pale', so to speak, as regards television reception as the signal didn't go very far inland. The situation changed on New Year's Eve 1961, with the opening of our own Irish television station – *Teilefís Éireann*, on a snowy winter's night in Dublin.

On that night, the distinguished Cork photographer, the late Roy Hammond, was working for the station.[1] He was involved with one of the first night-time programmes called 'Review of the Year'. Hammond wrote in his autobiography *Media Memories of Cork*, of how he had two stories relating to this programme; one was on the floods in Patrick Street and the other on the opening of Cork Airport. He wrote 'that the first Cork man ever to appear on the television news was the one and only Joe Kerrigan as I filmed him paddling up Winthrop Street in a canoe through floodwaters indicating left turn as if he was cycling, and heading into Patrick Street'.[2] Subsequently, in 1968, Roy Hammond was offered a full time contract with the new station. He went to work for *Radio Teilefís Éireann*, as it became known, for twenty four years and retired at the end of October 1992.

I was all of six years old and the launch of the station was watched with great interest by my late father, Pat Healy, who was a television engineer. Having relocated back to Cork from Dublin, my Dad worked with O'Leary's Television Rentals in Marlborough Street shortly after the new station began to broadcast. These were exciting days and a whole new world of entertainment opened up for us. Everyone was so enthralled by the new technology that even the black and white test card seemed fascinating at the time. At 5.30p.m. every day, *Teilefís Éireann* 'came on'. It broadcast for just seven hours a day. Programmes before six o'clock were devoted to children and we relished the offerings of the station. *Daithí Lacha* was one of my favourites and we loved to hear him say 'Aililiú' at the end of each show. In those days, every child loved 'Yogi Bear'. Yogi lived in Jellystone Park and he and his constant companion, Boo Boo Bear, would often try to steal the picnic baskets from campers in the park. Yogi often said of himself in his deep voice, that he was 'much smarter than the average bear' but he didn't always live up to this statement!

Another favourite in the early days was the *Top Cat* cartoon. He was the leader of a gang of Manhattan alley cats. The story of how policeman Charlie Dibble NYPD tried to evict those lovable feline creatures from Hoagy's Alley thrilled us as did the opening song. Even earlier than these shows was a British children's programme, first transmitted in 1952 called *The Flower Pot Men*. The show always took place in a garden, behind a potting shed. While the gardener was away having his dinner, the two Flower Pot men, Bill and Ben, emerged from their pots. Having overcome some mishap or other and on the sound of the gardener coming back to work, the two Flower Pot men went back down again into the depths of their pots.

An Irish show which I well remember was devised by Eugene Lambert in the early 1960s. The programme was aired as *Murphy agus a Chairde* – Murphy and friends. Murphy was a giant who lived in a magical kingdom. The kingdom was ruled by An Rí, tormented by two witches, Feeny and Babóg. For the adults there were a variety of shows to choose from. Comedy centred on *F. Troop*, *Green Acres* and of course, *Get Smart*. Don Adams starred as Maxwell Smart (Agent 86) and Barbara Feldon as Agent 99 in this spy show. The slamming doors and the opening musical sequence are well remembered. People of a certain age, recall also the antics of Eva Gabor and Eddie Albert in *Green Acres* as they struggled to adapt to life in the country, away from the 'Big Apple' (New York City).

David Janssen appeared as Richard Kimble from 1963 to 1967 and during these years we were anxious from week to week as he struggled to evade the determined chase of Lieutenant Philip Gerard played by Barry Morse. The series culminated in the complete vindication of Janssen and the capture of the real culprit – the one armed man. One of the most famous shows to grace our televisions was *The Virginian*. It starred James Drury as 'The Virginian' and Doug McClure as Trampas. The Virginian was the foreman of Shiloh Ranch in Medicine Bow, Wyoming. Every Friday night at home in Cork, the adventures of this mysterious cowboy were eagerly anticipated. In the early days of

television not everyone could afford to rent or buy a T.V. set. Neighbours here in Cork were known to gather in each other's houses on the Northside of the city to view this programme together.

From 1968 onwards, we enjoyed the exotic landscape of Hawaii as a stage for the programme *Hawaii, Five O*. Jack Lord played Lieutenant Steve McGarrett, the chief detective in the series. Every show finished with the words 'Book 'em Danno'. *Teilefís Éireann* spawned its own homebred stars in this period. Gay Byrne hosted *The Late Late Show* from 1962 to 1999. He explored many diverse topics and instigated much debate on subjects which had not been aired nationally before that time. He also became the country's confidante with his early morning radio programme. Charles Mitchell was the station's first newscaster. His clear concise rendering of the daily news brought the nation's stories to us every evening for decades. He made his last broadcast in 1984. Thelma Mansfield served *Teilefís Éireann* for many years as a continuity announcer. One must not forget also the great Jimmy O'Dea with his lovely programme called 'Once Upon a Time'. O' Dea and Maureen Potter appeared in pantomime together. Potter, who died in 2004, is well remembered for her singing and acting. Every year she livened up Christmas night's viewing with her comic antics. Much loved of the nation, she received, The Freedom of the City of Dublin in 1984 in recognition of her life's work.

Growing up in the house of a television man, I was surrounded by all the paraphernalia of the trade. Our home was often packed with parts of television sets waiting to be repaired - valves, screwdrivers, phase testers, plugs and all my father's knick knacks for repairing the sets. It was great when Dad gave my sister and I one of the big cardboard boxes that the sets came in to play with. Many a happy game of 'house' was had in these large boxes. In those days, if a set was faulty my father often needed to make a house call. This could be compared to a visit from the doctor to a sick patient. Every call was dutifully done on the day; he didn't like to see anybody 'without a set for the night'. It was said in my locality that if Pat Healy could not repair a set, nobody could!

Even as a child of eleven, I acquired some skill myself in getting a set going from watching my father in operation. Sometimes all a set needed was a somewhat gentle bang on its side to restore a picture. Other times, it needed an elaborate twisting of the little knobs at the rear of the set to settle the screen. I distinctly remember the jumping, rolling horizontal lines, which seemed to have a life of their own. In 1970, there was great excitement in our home for the World Cup was being televised live that summer from Mexico City. The excitement was due to the fact that the matches were being shown experimentally in colour for the first time. I can well remember watching pink playing fields with blurred players running about the screen. In time, colour transmission became very familiar to us. Nowadays the younger folk could hardly imagine our fascination in the early sixties with black and white television reception.

In the mid-1960s, a great production like Sir John Galsworthy's *The Forsythe Saga* was made completely in black and white. We watched the Apollo rockets head for outer space in the same medium. The American astronaut, Neil Armstrong, took his first steps on the lunar surface in the days before colour transmission. One of the loveliest of these early colour transmissions was that of *The Undersea World of Jacques Cousteau*. With this programme, watching the myriad shoals of beautiful fish, we could really appreciate the full potential of the new colour medium.

Many a day has passed since the early days of *Teilefís Éireann*. The high aerials on rooftops are no longer a feature of modern day life. The visit to pay the T.V. rental bill every week has ceased to be a job for the housewife. The T.V. repair man no longer drives up in his van to sort out your broken T.V. set. Sometimes however, I think back on the early days of television and I am glad that I grew up in a television man's house, to be witness to and part of all the excitement of those great times.

Geraldine Healy was a Folklorist with the Cork Folklore Project and now continues as a volunteer with the project.

Endnotes

1 The Roy Hammond Collection, consisting of extensive photo, negative and video material, was donated to the Cork Folklore Project in 2011.

2 Roy Hammond, *Media Memories of Cork,* (Cork, 1994); A copy is available at Blackpool Library (941.95)

‘Era boy, them who dies for Ireland never dies’ Tomás Mac Curtain in Memory

By Dr Tomás Mac Conmara

Tomás Mac Curtain (middle) prior to a Gaelic football match between Clare and Cork in the weeks prior to his death
(Courtesy of Clare County Express)

With an almost imperceptible movement, Dr. William F. O’Connor drew the heavy curtains back until he had enough space to peer nervously out of his second floor window on Saint Patrick’s Hill in Cork. Lamp lights, awaiting their nightly extinguishing, enabled O’Connor to make out the regimented shapes and movements of a significant body of uniformed men, descending in the direction of Hardwick Street and Blackpool. Slowly releasing his tender hold of the curtain, he moved quietly back to his bed and lay down, uneasily. The same sound of ‘heavy footsteps of a body of men marching on the hill’ that led to O’Connor’s cautious exploration, also drew the attention of Bridget Mary Daunt, a nurse who lived just four doors up from O’Connor (O’Donoghue, p. 62). It was late at night on Saturday 20 March 1920. Ireland was fifteen months deep into the Irish War of Independence and for the people of Cork City, such sounds in the dark of night were invariably a prelude to violence. As Daunt and O’Connor lay down to an uneasy rest, the sounds faded from Patrick’s Hill. Approximately twenty minutes later, less than a mile away on Thomas Davis Street, two members of Cumann na mBan were interrupted from their sleep by sounds, which to their increasingly experienced ears, foretold serious danger.

Earlier that same evening, sounds heard on Thomas Davis Street were of a much more jovial and defiant tone. Mary O’Donovan, a native of Sarsfield Terrace, was then just nineteen years old. Sixty-eight years later, Mary would return to that evening in her memory and to the sweet sound of ballad songs echoing across Blackpool. Mary’s recollections add to the enduring nature of what occurred that night at 40 Thomas Davis Street, the home of the republican Tomás Mac Curtain. In one of the earliest interviews in the Cork Folklore Project (CFP) archive, ninety-seven year old Mary O’Donovan was recorded on 11 May 1998, on a Sony TCM Tape recorder. The forty-five minute interview captured a reflection of Mary’s life and background, from flashing childhood recollections of her black caped grandmother, to clear and vivid personal testimony. As a young woman Mary worked as a shirt maker in Dwyer’s factory. In the charged years of the Irish revolutionary period (1916-1923), the business was taken

over by Tomás Mac Curtain, for whom Mary continued to work. Aware that she was born in 1901, the interviewer invited Mary to offer personal recollections of the Black and Tans, ex-British servicemen who first arrived in Ireland in March 1920, as support to the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC). Casting a dark and lingering shadow over social memory in Ireland, the Black and Tans endure as an evocative and emotive category within the Irish historical consciousness. To many people who lived through the period and to many who inherited associated stories, the Black and Tans were the embodiment of British repression, violence and malevolence (Kautt, p. 109). Despite the presence of RIC, Auxiliaries and regular British Army, the Black and Tans endure as an all-encompassing category of blame from that period. When presented with such a landmark in her memory, Mary O'Donovan's voice became appreciably amplified declaring to the interviewee; 'Oh, don't be talking girl, they done terrible things. First of all, you know, they shot Tomás Mac Curtain' (CFP, Sound Recording Number (SR) 197 Mary O'Donovan, 1998). What followed was a moment of profound disclosure, which with the passage of time and the ever decreasing circle of contemporaries, has taken on an increased value as a piece of memory, since its collection in 1998.

Yeah, I was working with him [Mac Curtain] at the time ... that night ... in the month of March you know and I was going out and it was wet and dull and it was misty. And I was going out, and the factory was at the back of that shop, that I told you. And I was going out, I was finishing off an order or something myself and I was going out and this man was singing outside the shop door. Ballad singing, it was around that time you know now. And I was going out the door and Tomás, the Lord have mercy on him now. He called me back and he said "give that to the poor fella singing outside the door". I dunno was it ... a shilling he gave me now. He gave me something to hand to the poor singer outside the door ... And he was singing 'Wrap the Green Flag Around Me Boys', that's the song he was singing (CFP, Mary O'Donovan, 1998).

The song projected across Blackpool by the unnamed ballad singer had been written by veteran republican John Kevin O'Reilly, a public accountant from Cavan (Ebenezer, p. 26). By 1920, the song had become an anthem for the republican movement and their supporters. When an impressed Tomás Mac Curtain asked Mary O'Donovan to reward the singer with a shilling, Mary approached the grateful balladeer, as Mac Curtain walked away towards the city centre. In 1998 Mary recalled poignantly: 'It was only that night that he was murdered. The Black and [Tans]. His wife was expecting, a baby, shur they had twins after. The same night ... they shot him dead ... I dunno the exact date now, in the month of March' (CFP: SR 197 Mary O'Donovan, 1998).[1] Her memory of Tomás Mac Curtain's death seemed inseparable from the song. The trigger for that memory was set and whenever the tragedy would be invoked, the song would drift to her mind.

Tomás Mac Curtain, a native of Ballyknockane in Mourne Abbey, was a senior figure in the Irish Volunteers when the Easter Rising of April 1916 broke out in Dublin. Frustrated by the Eoin Mac Neill countermand and the failure to land arms in Kerry, during the rebellion Mac Curtain and Terence MacSwiney spent much of the week travelling to outlying battalions, informing them to suspend activity (Walsh, p. 3). At Bweeing in west Cork, Michael F. Lynch and his comrades were addressed by both leaders. Standing on the roadside fence, Mac Curtain told the men that 'they had expected the enemy would attack on that day but it had not come off, the men were to return to their homes, keep their organisation intact, safeguard their arms and be ready when called upon again'. Mac Curtain was arrested soon after and spent almost fifteen months in Wakefield, Frongoch and Reading jails. By the time of his murder in March 1920, Mac Curtain was a Commandant of the Cork No. 1 IRA Brigade and had been elected as Cork's first republican Lord Mayor three months previously.

'They are at Tomás's house'.

On Thomas Davis Street on 20 March 1920, the day had given way to night and the ballad singer was gone, content with his day's earnings. Mary O'Donovan had returned to her house nearby and at the home of Cork Cumann na mBan member Peg Duggan, she and her sister Annie settled down to rest. Duggan's home at 49 Thomas Davis Street was located directly across from Mac Curtains. Writing in February 1957, Duggan vividly recalled how earlier that evening she had 'met Tomás going in to town with his brother-in-law Jimmy Walsh'. She further explained: 'On my way back home with my sister, I noticed, on the tram, R.I.C. men in civilian clothes. They went in the direction of Blackpool R.I.C. barracks, close by' (Duggan, pp. 9-10). That evening, part of a seemingly endless cycle of violence saw the shooting dead of Constable Joseph Murtagh of the RIC at Pope's Quay, by two IRA Volunteers who were later sheltered by Duggan and her sister. Murtagh was shot on the instruction of the No. 1 Cork IRA Brigade, in retaliation for his alleged torture of captured IRA Volunteer Martin Condon (Murray, pp, 11-12.).[2] At approximately 12.30am Peg Duggan recalled the lights on Thomas Davis Street being extinguished, her sister Annie simply remarking; 'There is old Keane putting out the gas lamps'. Darkness now concealed movements within the city and after a period of expectant stillness, both Annie and Peg were startled by ominous sounds from across the street. Peg recalls: 'Very shortly afterwards, we heard a thundering knock at a door, followed by shots up and down the street. My sister Annie looked out a window and said: "They are at Tomas's house". Inside, Tomás Mac Curtain's thirty-five-year-old wife Eilís opened the door to onrushing men, recalling later at the inquest into her husband's death, 'one with blackened face and eyes shining like a demon' (O'Donoghue, p. 65). The masked men forcibly entered the Mac Curtain home, roughly pushed the pregnant woman against the wall and rushed up the stairs. At that moment, Peg Duggan was already moving towards her door across the street: 'Next we heard another few shots ring out and then a cry "A priest, a priest, will someone go for a priest?" (Duggan, pp. 9-10). Before long, Peg found herself watching on helplessly as Father Burts, the local curate she had tracked down, anointed Tomás, who lay dying on the landing. Thirty-seven years later, Peg described the tragic scene in her witness statement: 'Tomas was lying there where he was shot, but was conscious. We were present while he was being anointed and, after the anointing, he died where he lay' (Duggan, p. 10). Tomás Mac Curtain had just turned thirty-six years of age that day.

A very detailed inquest into the incident was carried out under Coroner James J. McCabe, during which ninety-seven witnesses were interviewed, including sixty policemen, twenty-one civilians and two members of the British military. The jury found a verdict of wilful murder, which they attributed to the RIC, as well as the British Prime Minister David Lloyd George and senior officials in his administration. Significantly, the findings implicated District Inspector Oswald Ross Swanzy and 'some unknown members' of the RIC (O'Donoghue, p. 55). Florence O'Donoghue offered a detailed analysis of the incident in *Rebel Cork's Fighting Story*, in which he clearly detected a sinister motive and plot to murder the Lord Mayor. The killing of Constable Murtagh

Officers of the Cork IRA including Mac Curtain (middle of front row and Terence McSwiney (second from right in back row) (Courtesy of North Cathedral Visitor Centre)

occurred less than two hours before the shooting of Mac Curtain, which would indicate revenge as motive. However, this theory is somewhat undermined by the arrival of an order for the arrest of Mac Curtain at Union Quay RIC Barracks on the 19th of March, the day before the incident (O'Donoghue, p. 62). As the Lord Mayor of Cork and a prominent republican, Mac Curtain's death was almost instantly treated as martyrdom. As with the deaths of leading republicans, like Tomás Ashe before him, Mac Curtain's funeral was the occasion of an overt demonstration of solidarity, with the local press describing 'scenes of intense popular grief' (Cork Examiner, 23 March 1920). In the Brother Allen Collection at the Military Archives of Ireland, a handwritten diary entry for Sunday 21st records how 'The remains of the Lord Mayor are laying in state in City Hall today'. The unnamed author, who was among the 'immense crowds' present, also observe poignantly 'his comrades kiss the corpse before it is coffined' (Brother Allen Collection, IE/AL/1917/50). The Lord Mayor of Dublin, as well as the Mayors of Limerick and Waterford were in attendance as were over 100 priests. The cortege slowly left the North Cathedral at 1.00pm and headed towards St. Finbarr's Cemetery. The diarist recorded that such was the magnitude of the crowd, 'the cortege took one and a half hours to pass a given point' (Brother Allen Collection, IE/AL/1917/50). Within republican circles, RIC District Inspector Swanzy was held responsible for the attack. Quickly, they established it was not the Black and Tans, as claimed by Mary O'Donovan, but undercover members of the RIC who were responsible. The directing hand, it was determined, had been Swanzys (Coogan, p. 143). In a powerful illustration of the intimate and personal nature of the war, thirty-eight year old Swanzy was tracked down by a special IRA unit five months after Mac Curtain's murder. The unit, led by Seán Culhane and Dick Murphy of Cork's No. 1 Brigade, shot Swanzy dead as he left a Protestant church in Lisburn, County Antrim. That intimacy is further deepened by the later disclosure that the IRA unit used Mac Curtain's own revolver to kill Swanzy (Coogan p. 149).

'She did hear the shots'- the revolutionary period in the CFP archive

The Irish revolutionary period has not been a central focus of the Cork Folklore Project since its inception in 1996. However, the principal role which Cork played in the revolutionary period, as well as the enduring nature of that memory, meant that associated tradition frequently emerged within broader explorations of memory. The levels of activity across the county are indicated by Cork's War of Independence Fatality Register', which records the deaths of 528 civilians, policemen, British soldiers, and IRA Volunteers who died in the conflict from the beginning of 1919 to the Truce of 1921.[3] Because of the inherently local nature of these activities, localised memory, over time, overtook more national memory and the vernacular experience became a more immediate reference. For example, Liam Foley who was also interviewed by the Project in 1998, testified that oral tradition about the struggle for independence had been a consistent backdrop to his upbringing. In the recording, Foley tells a story about his mother avoiding a hand grenade thrown at British soldiers. In addition, he recalled hearing how the barber shop his father worked in was raided by the Black and Tans, during which a gun was held to his father's

face. He also informs that his mother recalled hearing the shots that killed Mac Curtain. In 2010, Paddy Marshall from Great William O'Brien Street also testified to the endurance of Mac Curtain's death in local tradition.

Mary O'Donovan is the only voice in the Cork Folklore Project's archive offering personal testimony on the period. Her experience of the War of Independence in Cork was not limited to observation alone. In the interview Mary recalls her role in public solidarity with imprisoned republicans, including singing and saying a nightly rosary outside Cork prison. Despite her own personal activism, it was to Mac Curtain's death that Mary's memory gravitated first. Since his murder in March 1920, the people of Cork have sought to ensure the preservation of Mac Curtain's memory. Memory and remembrance are central aspects of Irish and in particular Irish republican culture. The writer Micheál Mac Liammóir once commented that Ireland would have been a paradise 'if it had as much affection and respect for the living as it has for the dead' (Dolan, p, 148) Mac Liammóir's comment reveals the deep roots which memory and ritual hold in Irish society and helps underline the significance of Mac Curtain's death, funeral and place in the social memory of Cork. King's Street in the city was quickly named after the Lord Mayor, as was Mac Curtain's Villas later. In the 1930s, a bust of the former Lord Mayor was placed at Cork City Hall, where it remains today. In September 1999, the community of Blackpool also memorialised Mac Curtain when they erected a large stone monument in his honour. The CFP collector in 1998 Catherine Fray, endeavoured to draw out additional information on Mary's unique insight. However, the ebb and flow of a life story interview inevitably moved on to other memories, which formed part of Mary's ninety-seven years of experience. Given her personal connection with Mac Curtain, the listener will always wonder what else Mary may have been able to testify to. It is very likely that Florence O'Donoghue was referring to the above interviewee when he described a Mary O'Donovan who 'heard the shots and rushed into the street'. He explained that O'Donovan 'saw a motor car with the engine stopped but with the headlights full on' and that she 'saw a number of men outside the Lord Mayor's house, one of whom roughly chased her away'. (O'Donoghue, p. 63).

The capturing of Mary O'Donovan's memory adds a profoundly important component to the story of Tomás Mac Curtain. The value of that memory and story is deeply understood by the people of Cork. In a separate CFP interview, a story is relayed about a young schoolteacher in Cork, who was delivering an oration in Cork city, centred on the republican struggle in 1940. At that time, the IRA was pitched in a battle against both the continued occupation of the six counties in the north of Ireland, as well as an increasingly oppressive Irish state. In 1940, Tomás Óg Mac Curtain, who was five years of age when his father was murdered in 1920, had been sentenced to death for his leading role in the republican campaign. Several republicans were also on hunger strike and two IRA Volunteers had been hanged in England. While speaking, the orator was distracted by an increasingly vociferous female bystander. The woman, seemingly indifferent to the proceedings, continued to speak loudly to her friend. When the orator Eoin Mac Cárthaigh finally lost patience, he informed the attentive crowd that; 'there's a lady over there and I'm afraid my listeners can't hear me she's speaking so loud'. In a further rebuke, Mac Cárthaigh charged that 'there's someone in the crowd that doesn't know that James McCormick and Peter Barnes have died for Ireland, they had been hanged you see in England'.[4] While portraying indifference, the unnamed bystander quickly revealed her intimate understanding of the Irish historical consciousness, roaring back across the crowd, 'Era boy, them who dies for Ireland never dies'.

Tomás Mac Conmara is Manager of the Cork Folklore Project.

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Note: Considerable historiography has been amassed relating to Mac Curtain. The work of his granddaughter Fionnuala Mac Curtain in particular has drawn attention to status of Mac Curtain the in history and folk memory of Cork.

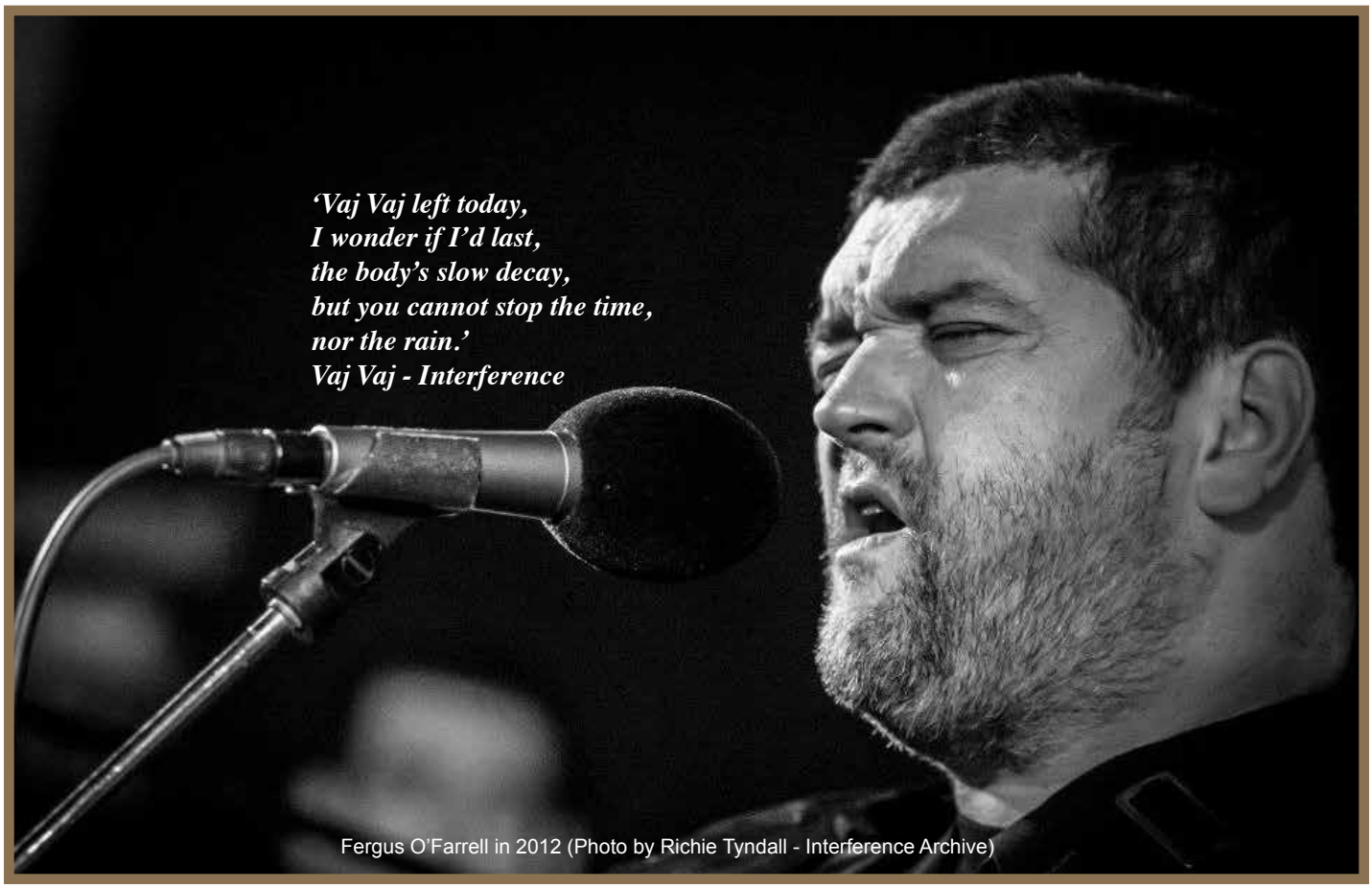
Endnotes

1 Mac Curtain's son, Tomás Óg, who was five years old when his father was shot dead, carried on the republican tradition and in the 1940s was sentenced to death by the De Valera government for his part in shooting Detective Roche on St. Patrick's street in Cork city. In 1940, Tomás Óg, who had assumed the same status as his father in the Cork No. 1 Brigade, IRA referred to the night of his father's murder. He recalled how 'men broke into the house and knocked at my father's bedroom door. They said, "we want you Mac Curtain". When my father opened the door, he was shot dead', See MA, Brother Allen Collection, IE/AL/1940/17

2 Patrick Murray, a captain in the First Battalion of Cork's No. 1 Brigade, claimed that Murtagh was shot by Christy Mac Swiney and a Volunteer named O'Connell. Murray testified that Murtagh had been torturing a captured IRA Volunteer Martin Condon, at the military barracks in Cork, where he was held (NAI, BMH, Patrick Murray, WS 1584, pp, 11-12).

3 The Cork Fatality Register can be viewed at http://theirishrevolution.ie/cork-fatality-register/

4 James McCormick from Mullingar in Westmeath and Peter Barnes from Banagher in Offaly, were Irish republicans found guilty of the IRA Coventry bombing of 1939 and despite claims of their innocence, were hanged at Winson Green Prison in Birmingham on 7 February 1940. Their deaths caused outrage within the republican movement in Ireland with innumerable leaflets and pamphlets condemning the 'judicial murder', See IE/AL/1940, Brian O'Higgins, Martyrs For Ireland, The Story of Mac Cormick and Barnes, (Dublin, 1940).



Fergus O'Farrell in 2012 (Photo by Richie Tyndall - Interference Archive)

Fergus O'Farrell
A personal reflection of a Cork music pioneer
By Mark Wilkins

One evening, at the beginning of February 2016, I was enjoying a pint with a friend in Cronin's Bar in Crosshaven. At one point our conversation turned to what we both agreed was the worryingly high rate of recent deaths amongst musicians we had grown up listening to and whose music had very much featured in our lives over the years. A few months earlier in November 2015, Phil Taylor, drummer with British rock legends *Motorhead*, passed away. Shortly after, on the 28 December, the band's seemingly indestructible founder and creative driving force, Ian 'Lemmy' Kilmister followed suit. Less than a fortnight after Lemmy's passing, on the 11 January 2016, news of David Bowie's death went viral around the globe. Here in Cork, *Stump* singer, Mick Lynch, passed away in December 2015 and the following month, English singer-songwriter and West Cork resident, Colin Vearncombe, died following a tragic car accident.

Formerly known as 'Black', Vearncombe had briefly tasted international pop stardom in the late 1980s with his hit 'Wonderful Life'. In recent years he settled in West Cork, with his wife and family, and had collaborated with some local musicians, notably one Fergus O'Farrell, singer and founder of the influential Irish band, *Interference*. Shaking our heads at the bewildering roll call of deceased talent, our conversation veered away from the tragically morbid, to more light hearted matters and after a few more drinks we drifted off to our respective homes.

The next morning I got a phone call from my friend telling me it had been announced on national radio that Fergus O'Farrell had died the previous day. We were both stunned at the news and the awful irony that Fergus' name had come up in our conversation the previous night in relation to Colin Vearncombe. It had never occurred to me that Fergus might be 'next to go' as, despite his having muscular dystrophy, an incurable hereditary condition, he had for such a long time been at the forefront of contemporary Irish music that I felt he would always continue to be.

'I was born with a silver spoon' - Gold

Originally from Kinsale, Fergus O'Farrell was born into a wealthy family and was educated at Clongowes College, one of Ireland's most exclusive private boarding schools. It was here that he formed the original nucleus of his band *Interference* in 1984, with fellow boarder and guitarist James O'Leary. They were later augmented by the Cork rhythm section of Kevin Murphy and Cal McCarthy, along with a keyboard player and violinist. His father was a successful business man and Fergus seemed to inherit a similar ambitious sensibility. He wanted to compose compelling music and write evocative songs but he also wanted to make records and shift units. Despite having a degenerative condition, which resulted in his being confined to a wheelchair in his early twenties, his disability was always secondary to his artistic prowess. Like his English counterparts Robert Wyatt and Ian Dury, he was not a disabled artist: he was an artist with a disability who pushed beyond his limits to produce transcendent art.

'You ask me who am I' - Breaking Out

I first came across Fergus O'Farrell and his band *Interference* way back in 1988, when they appeared on the cult RTE television programme Nighthawks, performing one of their signature songs 'Breaking Out.' The band stood around an upright piano, playing their respective instruments while Fergus sat in front with

his acoustic guitar and vibrato-rich tenor voice. *Interference* had a definite hint of the fashionable folk-rock purveyed by many Irish bands at the time, though with an experimental edge that separated them from their peers. They were of Cork but musically they had not originated in the urban punk explosion that spawned the likes of *Nun Attax* or *Belsonic Sound*. Basing themselves in both Dublin and Schull, they possessed more of a pastoral West Cork sensibility, the bohemian side of County Cork that attracted the likes of English folk legend, Roy Harper and one-time Jimi Hendrix bassist, Noel Redding, to take up residence there.

The following year I saw *Interference* play live in Mojos Bar on Georges Quay, then one of Cork's vibrant live music venues. At the tender age of sixteen, I was old enough to appreciate the music of *Interference*, but two years shy of the official age to gain admission. However, the guy at the door took pity on my sorry attempts at trying to look and sound older and allowed me stand inside the door to listen for a brief few songs. I craned my neck to see over the usual assortment of potbellied, hirsute, pint swilling bikers bopping enthusiastically whilst perched on their barstools before being turfed out by the doorman again. A few months later I finally got to witness a full *Interference* performance when they played a double bill with Galway outfit *The Swinging Swine* in Sir Henrys, another era defining venue. Although still well under the age of admittance, a friend of mine who worked as a glass collector would often sneak me in past the bouncers if there were any live acts I wanted to see. While opening act, *The Swinging Swine,* peddled a loose raggle-taggle set, *Interference* were a far more eclectic band whose sound contained elements of rock, blues, worldbeat, folk and even a touch of opera. Despite the individual prowess of each band member, their songs were, foremost, a vehicle for O'Farrell's extraordinary voice. His voice was an instrument that could beguile and soar in one instant and drop to a soothing whisper the next. He had photogenic good looks but as he frequently pointed out in interviews, a band with a wheelchair-bound frontman is going to find it difficult to appease the marketing men in a callous music industry that depends as much on image as it does on artistic integrity for sales.

The first time I met Fergus was in the summer of 1992. I was playing bass in a rock band and our guitarist, who was a friend of his, told him we were looking to record a demo of our music. On hearing this, he immediately offered us three days of free recording time at his home studio in Schull. This was typical of his character; he took a genuine interest in other people's art and was very encouraging and nurturing of aspiring musicians. I remember he sat in on our sessions, listening intently and offering creative suggestions without in any way trying to control the recording process.

It was during these sessions that I became properly familiar with Fergus and his music. I had seen *Interference* play live on two occasions and been impressed, but when he played me some of his more recent songs along with old demos it was obvious that it was in the recording studio that O'Farrell's talent truly shone. He also impressed me, over our many conversations about music, with his openness as a listener. He was a fan of opera, African music, new wave rock, folk, psychedelia, sean-nós, hip-hop and everything in between. This eclecticism was reflected on the first full length *Interference* album released a few years later.

In the early to mid-1990s, O'Farrell and *Interference* relocated to Dublin and quickly established themselves as a highly regarded and popular live act. Around this time I was also playing with a band in Dublin and when I told Fergus that we were looking for a rehearsal space, he kindly let us use the rehearsal booth in his recording studio in Christchurch. O'Farrell's own living area was adjacent to the studio and occasionally he would ask us to leave the door of the booth open so he could listen to our progress. In between songs he'd often shout out 'turn it up ... sounds great!' which we always took as a sign we were on the right track.

By early 1995 *Interference* had run its course and the band went their separate ways, despite the release of a critically acclaimed album that year. I moved back to Cork and did not see or hear of Fergus for some years until I bumped into him outside Crowley's Music Centre in Cork. He was with his girlfriend Li, a Chinese nurse whom he would later marry. He told me he was back living in Schull and had been writing and recording new material. His physical condition had deteriorated and, as a result, he was no longer able to play the guitar or piano as deftly as before. He had been up for the day to buy new digital recording equipment and said he was looking forward to using this latest technology to compose with. He always spoke philosophically about his condition and as his physical strength deteriorated he consistently and creatively adapted his approach to writing new material.

The next time I saw Fergus and *Interference* was in 2003 when they appeared on the opening series of *Other Voices*, a new television programme showcasing Irish talent. The series was produced by another Cork man, Philip King of the band *Scullion*. King had long been a champion of O'Farrell and *Interference* and had regularly played their music on his radio show *The South Wind Blows*. Broadcast in early

Fergus O'Farrell with Interference band members,1989
(Photo by Susie Whyte - Interference Archive

Glen Hansard with Fergus O'Farrell in Philadelphia, 2008 (Photo by Rian McCarthy)

2003, the programme showed the newly reformed outfit in a stripped down acoustic guise without their customary drummer. Their performance received widespread acclaim and a live CD of the show was released, featuring a guest appearance by O'Farrell's friend, Glen Hansard of *The Frames*. Indeed, many prominent artists on the contemporary Irish music scene gravitated towards and collaborated with O'Farrell over the years. The likes of Gavin Friday, Bill Whelan, Liam Ó Maonlaí, Maria Doyle Kennedy, film composer Maurice Roycroft and the aforementioned Colin Vearncombe were all beguiled by his unique creative talents and natural warmth.

> 'Cause if your skin was soil
> How long do you think
> before they'd start digging?
> And if your life was gold
> How long do you think you'd stay
> living? - Gold

The final time I was ever to meet Fergus was by chance outside the South Infirmary one day in September 2007. I was carrying a guitar case and when I told him I was still gigging and recording he smiled and said, 'ah good man, at least you haven't capitulated and gotten a job in a hotel or something.' He had been enjoying a resurgence of interest in his music and told me that one of his earlier songs, 'Gold', was soon to be featured in a new Irish movie *Once*. That film went on to huge international success, winning an Oscar and eventually being adapted into a Broadway musical and successful soundtrack album.

Despite his continued physical decline, the last years of his life produced a surge in his creativity. He formed the acclaimed band *Dog Tail Soup* with Colin Vearncombe and his wife Camilla Grieshel, released an album of experimental pop with producer David Bickley, and continued to work on the next *Interference* studio album. Indeed, it was after a few days recording with Glen Hansard and *The Frames* at his home in Schull, that he sadly passed away on the 02 February 2016.

In a way it almost seems tragically fitting that Fergus O'Farrell died in 2016, a year in which so many other musical giants left us, and less than a month after David Bowie, one of his biggest musical heroes. After hearing of his passing, I remembered back to those early recording sessions at his home in Schull and the many times I spent rehearsing in his studio in Dublin. For some reason I recalled the door into his living area in Dublin had two posters pinned to it; one was of David Bowie, the other was of Michael Collins. The former, an inspirational singer and composer, the latter a bona fide Cork legend. Though only forty-eight when he died, O'Farrell was both. Rest well Fergus.

Postscript

Earlier this year on 02 February, the first anniversary of his passing, there was a flurry of activity to celebrate O'Farrell's life and music. His band *Interference* reconvened to perform his songs to a packed Cork Opera House with the likes of Glen Hansard, Liam Ó Maonlaí, Jerry Fish and Camilla Griehsel deputising on vocals. The same evening saw the release of *The Sweet Spot*, the second full length *Interference* album, which O'Farrell had been painstakingly working on in the years leading up to his death. Filmmaker Michael McCormack launched a successful crowd funding campaign to finish *Breaking Out*, a feature-length documentary on O'Farrell's life. The response was overwhelming with over €40,000 raised in a short time, ensuring the film's completion and release in the near future.

A few days later, on 05 February, a similar event took place at Dublin's Vicar Street with many influential singers and musicians again joining *Interference* to perform O'Farrell's songs to a thrilled full house. It would seem O'Farrell's voice, music and art are finally reaching the wider audience and acclaim they always deserved. His legacy intact, his influence will only continue to grow.

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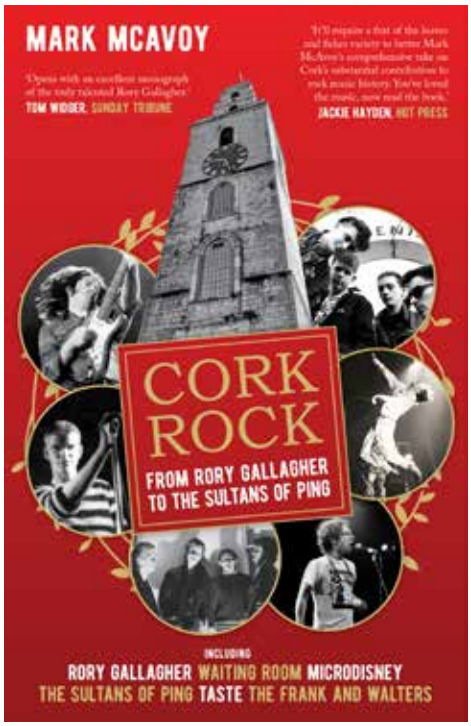

Cork Rock: From Rory Gallagher to the Sultans of Ping

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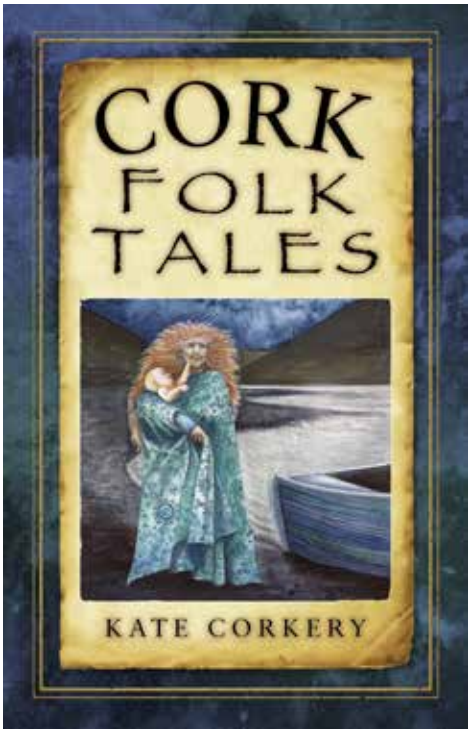
The re-emergence of this highly sought after tome earlier this year, has reignited this reader's passion in alternative music once again. Although first published in 2009, *Cork Rocks: From Rory Gallagher to the Sultans of Ping* is the go to guide for the Cork alternative rock scene. As the title suggests, the focus of the book is the period from the mid 1960s to the mid 1990s, what is now perceived as the golden age of the Cork scene. While the book is sold by the inclusion of the big acts of Gallagher and the Sultans, the strength of this book is the illuminating treatment that the McAvoy gives to the 1980s punk scene that sprung from 'the Arc'. Bands like *Nun Attax*, *Five go down to the Sea?* and *Mean Features* get their rightful dues as ground breaking acts that paved the way for the commercial success of the radio friendly *Frank and Walters* and *Sultans of Ping*. McAvoy brings together the testimonies of the artists who formed the scenes, creating a great oral history of not only the music of the city but of the city itself.

Now back in print and available for the first time as an eBook.

By Jamie Furey



Cork Folk Tales

By Kate Corkery
The History Press Ireland, 2017
ISBN 9781845885182

This beautifully presented collection of folk tales from Cork's hinterland really emphasises how traces of the past echo all around us in place-names, half-forgotten stories and local legends. Kate Corkery has perfectly weighted this selection to entertain, inform and pass on localised knowledge in an intriguing and accessible way. The meandering tales are easy to dip in and out of, and draw upon every human emotion and experience imaginable, from love to hate, age to beauty, and good to evil, all are encapsulated here.

Have you ever gone to Kinsale and wondered who the white lady was? Or heard whispers of a moving graveyard in bygone times? Well, in this little trove you will find out this and more, as the stories our ancestors told around the fire are brought to life by Corkery's deft hand. She has spent a life time listening, researching, and telling stories and this compilation is all the better for it. The final tale moralises that, 'Maybe we can't outwit the hour of our death, but we can ensure that our stories live on after us'. The collection of folklore will outlive us all, and this book is a healthy addition to the cannon. This is a very fine endeavour and that it is based in Cork, quite simply adds to the allure.

By Michael Moore

Boxcars, broken glass and backers: A glimpse at the Ballyphehane Oral History Project.

By Jamie Furey

In 2016, the Cork Folklore Project (CFP) began a collaboration with the Ballyphehane 1916-2016 Centenary Committee, to develop the Ballyphehane Oral history Project to collect the memories and stories of the suburb's residents. Ballyphehane, originally a townland consisting of market gardens and orchards, was ear marked for social housing development by visionary City Manager, Philip Monahan, in 1940 (Henchion, 2003: p. 66). By the 1960s the Cork Corporation's housing development had become home for hundreds of families from the condemned tenements of the inner city's marsh area. These newcomers brought with them a vibrancy and charm that mixed seamlessly with those of the townland's original inhabitants; together, they have blossomed, like the cherry trees that line Pearse Road, into a wonderful community The following are excerpts, transcribed from interviews conducted as part of the project over the past year. They powerfully illuminate the sense of pride and belonging that emanates for the 'Hane', as it is known locally.

Marie McAllen grew up on lower Friars Walk, across from where the Marian Pharmacy is located in 2017. In her interview, Marie described the lay of the land, as it was prior to the corporation development. She remembers, in detail, the area from her parents rented house, which was surrounded by market gardens, to further along the dirt road where her maternal great grandparent's orchard was, now replaced by the Parish church. Within the orchard walls were three dwellings: the main house, and two smaller cottages where her aunt and grandaunt lived:

'twas massive, there was people employed picking the apples, you know, for the markets and that, you know. It was massive, it went all the way over to Pouladuff Road nearly, the orchard (CFP, Sound Recording (SR) 617, Marie Mc Allen 2017).

The 'Halloran Orchard' also features in Ballyphehane resident Arthur Walker's account of early life. Arthur grew up on Evergreen Road in his grandmother's house. To supplement her pension, she used to sell apples to passing school children from her front window. Arthur recalls his childhood job of collecting the apples, which also led to his first encounter with Ballyphehane:

Where the apples came from was the end of Friars Walk there, where the church is. And I had to go out and collect at the weekend and I can tell you 'twas a nightmare, like. I often cried. A boxcar, if you've heard of a boxcar, I had my own little boxcar and two little pram wheels on it and I'd go out all the way to Friar's Walk and half-way down Friar's Walk. Now, there's the Marian Pharmacy, but before you come to that, there's four cottages in there on the right. Well, there was a pump on the road, with kind of a lion's head, and there was an iron cup and I used be gasping, like on a day like today, to get that far and the cup down my neck with the water and walked the rest of it with the boxcar to the end of where the church is. That was another old farmhouse belonged to Paddy Halloran, and he had a massive orchard and the orchard was going up to the field over here and the school used to be below here on the corner and he had a lot of fowl in the big, country yard, like, you know, farmyard. He was a nice man and I used to have to go there then and get a bag of apples and he'd put them into the boxcar for me, and I wouldn't get home 'til about seven or eight o'clock in the evening, after walking all Friars Walk for a young fella and I'd get in to my grandmother then. He used always give me one for myself and he'd say, he'd tie it with an end of a rope and he'd say, "Don't you dare open 'em, or I'll tell your grandmother!" [chuckles] He used always say that to me, but he'd give me an apple. That's where the apples came from, there. There was. Where the church is standing now, that was an orchard. The corporation decided later on to start building down the road in Ballyphehane and as they built one road and they were moving up further, they needed his bit of land there and he sold it to them and he moved up, he bought a pub up in the Kinsale Road, 'tis called Bull McCabe's now (CFP, SR 587, Arthur Walker, 2016).

Boxcars also feature in John Chute's first memory of Ballyphehane. John, who hailed from a tenement on Sheares Street, thought the development in Ballyphehane was terrific. He had already witnessed the development of Gurranabraher and was delighted to now be a part of this new suburb. John had a job in Hickey's on the Kinsale Road, making roof tiles which were used in the Corporation's development of Ballyphehane. At Christmas 1949, he and his mother received the keys to their new home on Connolly Road. Here, John, who sadly passed away only one month after this interview, remembers the simplicity of life and the people who would become his lifelong neighbours and friends:

It was priceless, when people started moving in – myself and Denis [John's friend] have great *craic* over this like. We came out and we had a horse and car bringing out our furniture, right? Sure, you would've got it on a bike, what we had. A wheelbarrow would bring out everything we had. They

The Ballyphehane 1916-2016 Centenary Group, with the Cork Folklore Project at the launch of the project.

Homestead of market gardener, James Crowley Ballyphehane, c. 1950s (Image courtesy of Don Crowley)

came along after [Denis's family] and they had three boxcars, we often talk about that, like. That's the way life was that time, oh yeah, I tell you something, it was a great way to be. The people were very down to earth and there was no codology with people then (CFP, SR 592, John Chute, 2016).

Delight with the new development was also evident in Elisabeth 'Lizzie' O'Sullivan's recollection of her first encounter with her new home. Originally from Wolfe Tone Street, Lizzie has lived in Kent Road since the early fifties. Here, she expresses how she felt crossing the threshold of her new home:

I got the house, and I only just put my foot inside the gate that day and I knew that I'd be here 'til I be gone. I loves it, I still say to them [her family] I love this house (CFP, SR 643, Elisabeth O'Sullivan, 2017).

Lizzie also revealed how in those early days, Ballyphehane also had its downside, particularly to a young woman who took pride in herself and her attire:

There wouldn't have been much of Ballyphehane built that time now. The little house now in O'Growney Crescent - now I don't know if they were all there but there was some of them there. Parts of Pearse Road was there and a part of Connolly Road (formerly Muddy Lane). You know up by the cross, when you go up before you come to the park? That was only all earth from that down and I remember one day – I thought I was glamorous then, you see. You'd have the high heels and you'd have the bit of glam – and I was saying "I'm not walking down there, I'll destroy my shoes" and he [her husband, Jimmy] gave me a backer up on his back. That is true now, he could be listening to me! Lord ha' mercy on him, and he gave me a backer down before I destroyed my shoes (CFP, SR 643, Elisabeth O'Sullivan, 2017).

The lack of amenities and designated play areas pre and post development helped foster a sense of freedom amongst the children of Ballyphehane, a dimension explained by Marie McAllen:

It was a fabulous upbringing really, there was a great freedom, you know. Whereas today they are afraid to leave the children out of their sight, there is no freedom for children today compared to then. You think about it, we used to leave our house when we had summer holidays and we'd go out the Well Field – take our togs with us, and we'd have no towel and we'd dry out on the grass and we'd go out and spend the whole day there till five o'clock in the evening, there was no worries about us, you couldn't leave children go out like that at all today, you know? So we had great freedom, you know? (CFP, SR 617, McAllen, 2017)

Hillary Lyons (nee O'Brien) was born and raised in Fr Dominic Road. Although, a generation later than Marie McAllen, Hillary reiterates Marie's feelings:

We would have gone to Ceela's – Ceela's which is straight across from Donsworth Office equipment – and this isn't far from my grandmother's house, so I presume we would have called in to her then as well. It was by Forge Hill, on the right there was a little stream, a gorgeous stream with beautiful coloured – I can remember – they were beautiful coloured stones, because they used to have the sun in it and it facing south so there was always healthy looking water, we used paddle in there. Now, some days you could go in you could end up with a big open bottle and you could rip your foot off, but other times, more often than not, you'd have a great time down there, like, because you were firing stones in – like, we'd all go down there, my sister would bring us down there and we'd have a little picnic and all, there was a bit of grass there. Looking at it now I'm saying "how did we all fit there?" It looks so small, there must have been more green land. We spent our summer down there, you know? Oh it's fantastic – I know there is a big mass rock up from there, but we never ventured there. Lehenaghmore is up the other way and that's on the left of it, if I'm right. We used to call it Ceela's, why it was called Celia's – Ceela's, Celia's – there must have been a pub there, Celia's pub. But I can't ever remember ever going in there, but it must have been a haunt of my mother and father or whoever, and everybody knew it as Celia's – Ceela's we used to call it as kids – but it was Celia's now that I think of it. Of course, there was always a pub, wasn't there? Where was Fr Mathew then? Down there we used to go, we had a ring on the road, we used to have cycle races around there. As I said, we made our fun (CFP, SR 586, Hillary Lyons, 2016).

The above thread of Ballyphehane memories, represents only a small sample of the depth of memory documented in the project, a project that will continue over the coming years, with the ultimate aim of recording and sharing the wonderful story of Ballyphehane and its people.

Jamie Furey is a research and Database Manager with the Cork Folklore Project

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A Taste of Tripe

By Kieran Murphy

Much of the material from the Cork Folklore Project's (CFP) audio archive is easily appreciated on its own merits. We can listen to audio clips or read interview transcripts where the stories – poignant and funny, factual and fanciful – need little or no explanation to be enjoyed or understood. They are immediate and self-contained. Sometimes, however, a story does not emerge whole from a single mouth or memory. It is partial, with fragments scattered across many memories and books. Such stories need to be gathered from their disparate sources and pieced together with context and connections. This method of threading a story together is needed to explore one particular aspect of Cork's food culture: tripe.

Tripe is considered a type of offal. It consists of an animal's stomach, more specifically the stomach of a ruminant,[1] which in Cork is cut into small pieces,[2] boiled and served with milk and onions. It is often paired with drisheen, a kind of blood sausage.[3] This article will give just a flavour (pun intended!) of the material on tripe in the CFP archive, with some discussion of its place in Cork's food culture, and history as well as identifying areas worthy of further exploration.

Food can be a powerfully evocative stimulant for the memory. It can aid in resituating people in a particular place or time. This may be because food strongly engages many senses: sight, smell, taste and touch. Even sound can be relevant: imagine the noise of sizzling rashers, a pot on a rolling boil, or the snap, crackle and pop of Rice Krispies. It is the pungent smell of tripe cooking which strikes you before even daring to taste it. Many interviewees in CFP archive have recorded how they 'love tripe and drisheen', in spite of the fact that the 'smell would be all over the house'[4]. But for one interviewee the odour was enough to put him off tripe for life, so much so that he is 'still frightened by the smell in my mother's kitchen!'[5] For those who had tripe cooked at home it was almost invariably the mother who did the cooking. Gender roles were much more rigidly defined in mid-twentieth century Ireland than they are today. Hence, many memories about tripe are simultaneously connected with memories of mothers and as a result evoke powerful childhood reminiscences.

While it may have been the woman of the house who cooked the tripe it seems to have been the man who set the menu, at least according to this interviewee from 1999: 'I was never a lover of tripe, but my father really loved it and would make us take it.'[6] Whether or not someone experienced tripe may thus have been determined entirely by the tastes of one person: the father. And not everyone's father liked tripe. One interviewee, Patricia McCarthy, explains that 'my father wasn't from Cork so he wouldn't eat any of these dishes, so we never had them, do you know? He just wouldn't, I think they were traditional dishes. I think they had to be used to them, reared on them.'[7]

Although tripe is often regarded the way Patricia describes it, as a distinctly Cork dish, especially in the city, it is not unique to Cork. (Adding drisheen does appear to be a practice singular to Cork, however.) There is, for instance, a tradition of eating tripe in Limerick.[8] Anecdotally I have heard that tripe used to be eaten in both Kilkenny and Waterford. Outside of Cork, the 1901 and 1911 Irish censuses list tripe-sellers in Dublin, Down, Waterford and Antrim. On the census forms, workers in the tripe industry are variously termed: 'Tripe Wiper', 'Tripe Cleaner', 'Tripe Dresser', 'Tripe Dealer', 'Worker in Tripe Yard' and 'Labourer in Tripe Factory'. There is a slight complication to this, however. For instance, the Ó Drisceoils mention a man named Michael Hinchin who ran a tripe stall in the Grand Parade Market for the period 1900-07,[9] but a man of the same name appears in the 1901 census with the occupation 'Victualler' while his sister Mary is recorded as 'Butcher Stall Assistant.'[10] It seems likely, therefore, that more people worked with tripe than might initially be assumed from the census. In any case, what is worth highlighting here is the emerging pattern of tripe preparation and, presumably, consumption, mainly in urban areas, which suggests that exploring the tripe traditions in these cities may yield fruitful insights, contexts and comparisons for Cork's own tripe story.

The entry on tripe in the ever-worthwhile Oxford Companion to Food considers how 'in the north of England, and no doubt elsewhere, being a tripe dresser was a specialised calling,'[11] which appears to chime with the array of apparently different tripe-related roles in the census returns mentioned above. Unfortunately, these tantalising hints about the lives behind the labour involved in tripe production are similarly under-discussed in the CFP archive so far. One interviewee 'worked in Reilly's in St. Philomena's in South Douglas Road … a slaughterhouse'[12] while she was studying one day a week in school. Another remarks that 'the women worked very hard in those slaughterhouses … I mean they really worked hard, you know? But I mean they all had big families and 'twas money.'[13] Again we see the role of women in connection with tripe, this time not in the home but in the workplace. This is all the more striking since, for much of twentieth-century Ireland, the 'view was that the male partner was the 'provider' and that most women were expected to marry and to devote themselves to the care of their children to the exclusion of any role in the paid labour market.'[14] Yet here are women who, out of financial necessity, did not or could not conform to that view. Tripe was not just a meal or an object of heritage: it was a livelihood for individuals who lived and worked in the communities where it was bought, cooked, eaten, enjoyed and reviled.

Just as the smell of tripe divides opinion so too does its taste. There appears to be no middle ground. It is 'a delicacy for some, a horror for others.'[15] No one is indifferent. The devotees of tripe make bold claims for its flavour, declaring that 'you'd get beautiful tripe, like',[16] 'I'd ate it like chocolate',[17] 'they're delicacies now, you know?'[18] and 'it's fine and fresh, boy.'[19] Meanwhile, tripe's detractors use equally strong language to communicate their dislike, even revulsion of it: they 'hated it',[20] or thought 'oh God, they're revolting',[21] they 'wouldn't touch that',[22] 'the thought of it now would make me sick.'[23] It is hard to convey the tone of disgust that accompanies many of these denunciations. Curiously, some seem to enjoy the feeling and expression of being disgusted by it. Perhaps this paradoxical reaction (if true) is similar to the pleasure we get from being frightened by horror films.

For those who detest tripe, there are – according to the interviews in the CFP archive at least – two possible ways to be converted. One woman who did not like tripe claims 'I eat tripe now because somebody cooked it and invited me up for a meal and I said "oh gee," but I ate it and I like it.'[24] What changed for her is not explicit but it seems that eating in different surroundings and with different people may have influenced her perception and thus its taste. A new con-

text may change one's memory of taste. Many of us have similar experiences on holidays where the exotic local cuisine tastes wonderful while abroad but once home seems to lose its charm. A second route to tripe connoisseurship is shared in the following wise words: 'When I tasted tripe first I wasn't that much gone on it. But later, I kinda … It's like a pint: you kinda develop a taste for it and then you can't stop eating it, you know?'[25] We tend to think of developing palates in relation to haute cuisine, reserved only for fine wines or fancy cheeses. Yet we may have overlooked this simpler dish, not giving it enough of a chance to win us over. Some interviewees and commentators think that we have become 'too uppity for them'[26] or developed 'squeamish attitudes'[27] towards this food made of the 'by-products of animal slaughter'[28] which was once 'a staple of the industrial districts'[29] in Britain and, as we have seen, perhaps in parts of Ireland too.

Throughout much of its history (and this essay) tripe has been associated with the working class, both as a source of employment and nourishment. In Italy it is considered a '"blue collar" dish'[30] and Cork's English Market historically offered 'good cuts [of meat] for the wealthy, cheap offal for the poor.'[31] It may come as a surprise then that tripe and drisheen now graces the table of one of Cork's most prestigious establishments, The Royal Cork Yacht Club (RCYC) in Crosshaven. Every winter when the club's boats are taken out of the water the occasion is marked with the annual 'Laying Up Supper' where tripe and drisheen are served. This tradition can be traced back until at least the early 1970s[32] but more research might establish its true provenance and full role in the yearly ritual. This seemingly unlikely story of tripe's apparent journey of upward social mobility may partly be explained by three factors. Firstly, tripe and drisheen have become so synonymous with Cork that it 'was known as Drisheen city in the nineteenth century.'[33] Secondly, the RCYC, as the oldest yacht club in the world,[34] is as proud of its long heritage and history as it is of its 'Corkness'. Lastly, some of the club's members themselves have fond childhood memories of tripe at home, even those who do not partake of it. In short, 'it's a heritage; it adds continuity to the night.'[35]

Tripe in Cork has been more than just a food or a trite piece of nostalgia. A real, tangible part of the city's economic, social, class, gender and culinary history is intertwined with this unassuming offal. It has been a source of employment, a cause for pride, and a yacht club tradition. It has inspired as much affection as animosity and continues to be part of the lives and memories of many Corkonians up to the present day. The future of tripe is less certain, however, with the trend 'in the last half of the 20th century [being a] move away from offal.'[36] Even though its taste is divisive, the fate of tripe may yet unite opinion. Although he does not eat tripe himself, one interviewee in the CFP archive may articulate the fears of both tripe's enthusiasts and abstainers. He lamented the likely disappearance of tripe from the annual RCYC dinner, and its decline more generally, with all the pragmatism and romance of a sailor: 'In years to come, when I'm long gone, probably [even] bacon and cabbage will vanish … Oh I think it's a shame … I think it should be kept really. But it will change, as night follows day.'[37]

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