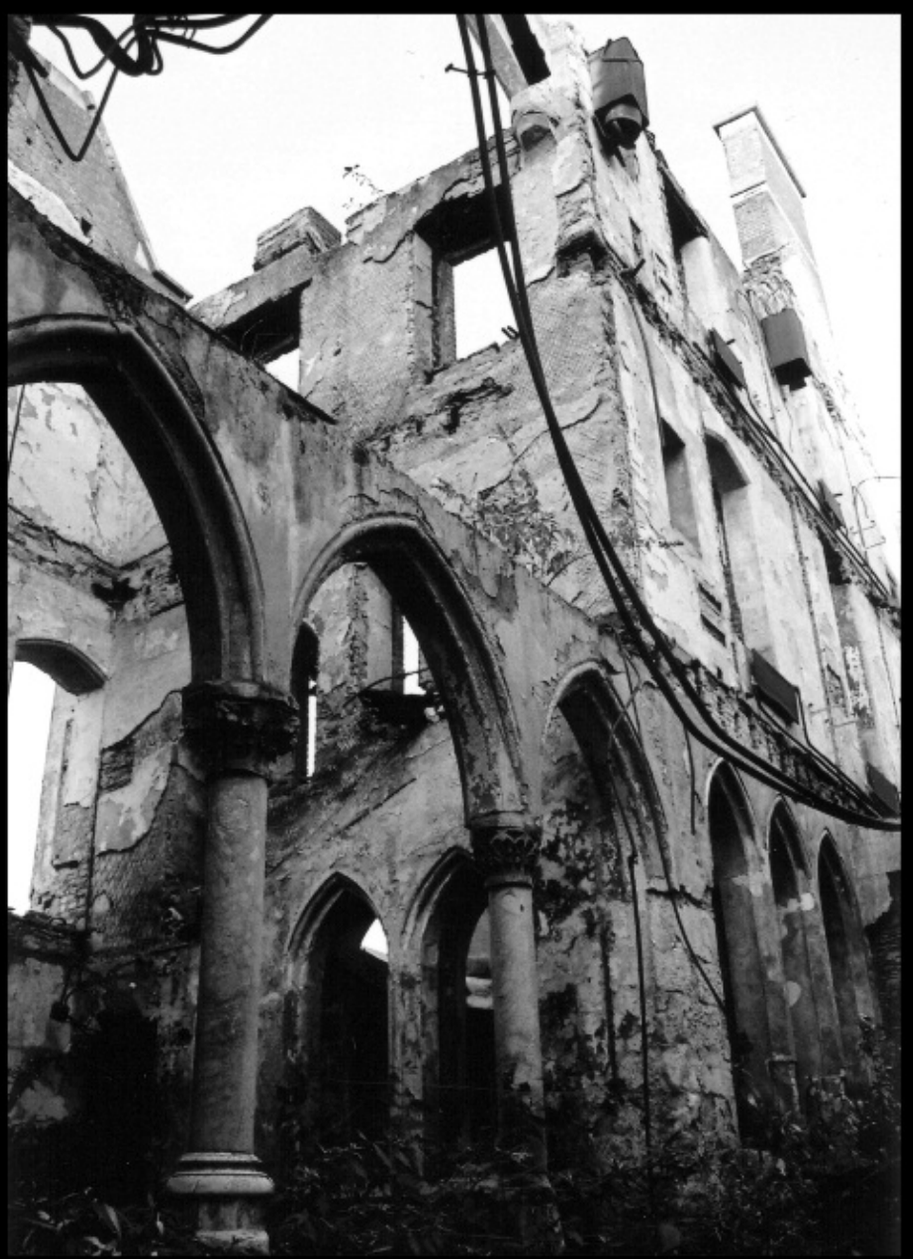
ISSN 1649-2943
FREE COPY

# THE Archive



JOURNAL OF THE NORTHSIDE FOLKLORE PROJECT

Tionscnamh Béaloidis an Chinn Thuaidh

Issue 14

Uimhir a Ceathair Déag

# THE Archive

## THE ARCHIVE ISSUE 14

Contents




Printed by Aleo print & design - www.aleoprint.com 2010
**Front Cover Photo:** Chris Wright

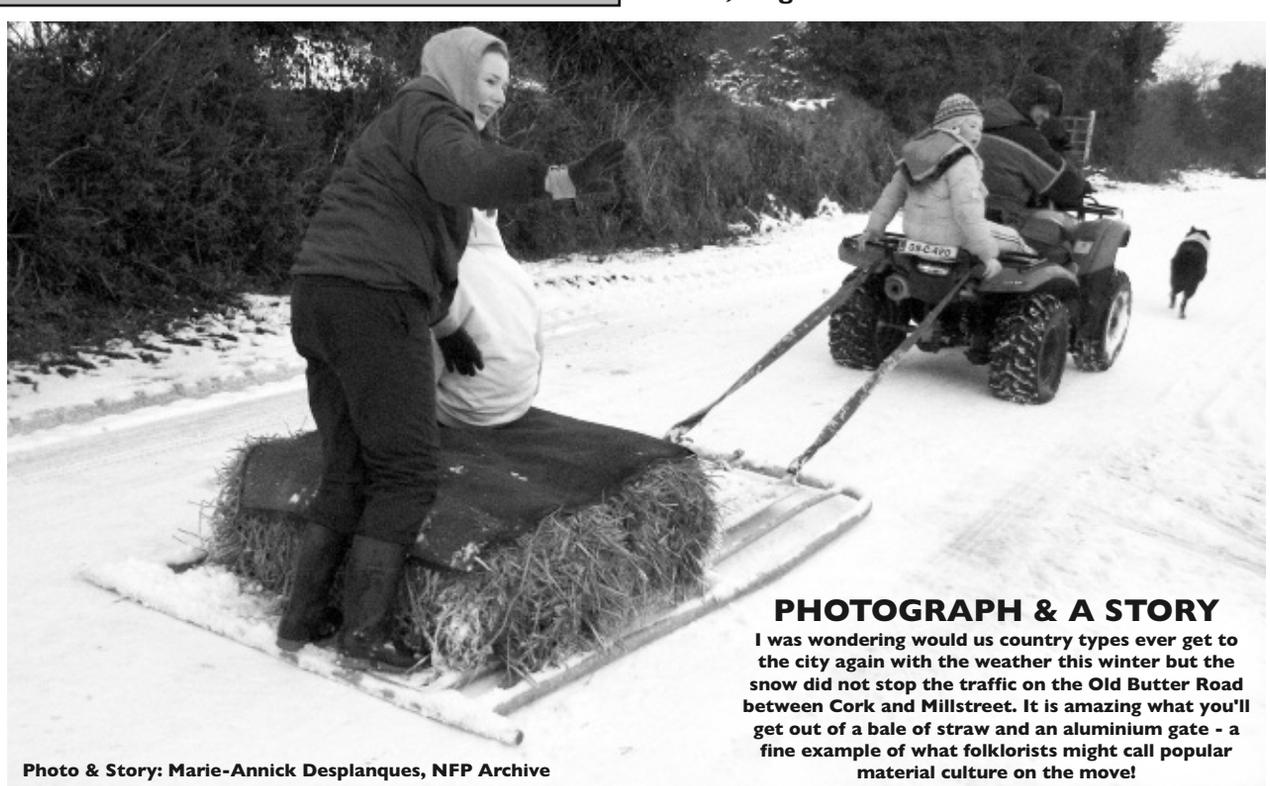

## PROJECT MANAGER'S NOTE

**Welcome to this 14th issue of *The Archive*. As you read this year's journal you may notice a larger than usual percentage of articles about contemporary and popular culture. This is a direct reflection of our current more youthful staff profile, and we hope you find these perspectives as interesting and refreshing as we do.**

**Our staff changeover has included the retirement of long time editor, Noel O'Shaughnessy, who made big contributions to the Project over the years. We wish him all the best - we know he's enjoying himself! Luckily, Michael Daly had just come on board and has stepped effortlessly into the role, bringing his own visual style to *The Archive*.**

**These are challenging financial times for non-profit organisations everywhere, and we are no different. Although we were fortunate to once again receive a Local Heritage Grant from Cork City Council towards *The Archive* printing costs, we have now lost all of our other funding for our free annual journal. If you would like to help make sure that *The Archive* #15 arrives next year, we welcome all donations, and you would of course be thanked in print.**

**Don't forget that the Northside Folklore Project archive is a public resource, available to individual researchers and groups. Our hours are Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 9am to 5pm and Thursdays 9am to 12.30pm, and by appointment. We'd love to hear from you and what you think of this issue, so write, email, ring!**



## PHOTOGRAPH & A STORY

**I was wondering would us country types ever get to the city again with the weather this winter but the snow did not stop the traffic on the Old Butter Road between Cork and Millstreet. It is amazing what you'll get out of a bale of straw and an aluminium gate - a fine example of what folklorists might call popular material culture on the move!**

**Photo & Story: Marie-Annick Desplanques, NFP Archive**


**Thanks to the Cork City Council Heritage Grant Scheme, whose continued financial support helps make this publication possible.**

# WASHBREW LANE

by JIM McKEON

Washbrew Lane was a spindly, twisting, red-bricked lane that ran from the bottom of Fair Hill up to a dead end at Fahey's Well near Kingston's farm. When I recall this playground of my youth it conjures up a deluge of paradoxical memories: simplicity, happiness, uncertainty, poverty, whitewash, ignorance, religion, Jeyes Fluid, beagles, bowlplayers, innocence, TB, polio, fleas and DDT. The lane was made up of 27 small houses, each one, with its own birdcage, more colourful than the next. It was an everyday cacophony of sound: dogs, cats, pigeons, goats, canaries, pigs and especially children; there seemed to be children everywhere, and it was as if being poor was a common bond. Lady Poverty was a constant companion and she seldom lowered her ugly head. Everyone was equal as they scratched and struggled to stay above the breadline. There were no jobs or money and even less education. Yet it was a hugely exciting place to live – alive with tremendous characters: Pakey Holland, Josher Walsh and his son Richie Boy, Lizzie Maloney, Spud Murphy, Annie Doyle, Hada O'Callaghan and his son Guy, Porridge Lynch, Maggie Webb and Agoo Murphy. Agoo was the proud owner of the very first car any of us wide-eyed children had ever seen. We stood around in awe of this strange gleaming object as if it were something from outer space.

Although they were Spartan times, humour and initiative were never very far away. Josher Walsh lived next door. For some weeks he was out of work and receiving welfare money. One day the social welfare lady was doing her rounds in the lane checking out people. Unfortunately, Josher was in the pub when he was supposed to be in bed. Panic set in. His wife, Annie, swung into action. Some men were playing cards nearby. She ran over and grabbed one, Cal Murphy, who was particularly pale-faced and half Josher's size, and dragged him protesting to the bedroom to act as a substitute husband. Moments later, the welfare lady entered the Walsh home and gazed sympathetically at the fearful Cal as he lay in bed with the blanket tucked up under his chin to conceal his clothes. She took one look at him and said, 'Oh my God, you look terrible, Josher. Stay in bed for a week!'

At the top of the lane there were the remains of a dancehall, and a boxing club that eventually blew down one stormy night. This area was where it all happened. We played: 'kick the can', 'spin the carrot' (we couldn't afford a bottle) and 'kiss and torture'. Being a natural coward I couldn't face any form of torture, so I kissed my first girl behind that club. I'll never forget that kiss - it was all saliva and vinegar. She was eating a bag of chips at the time.

Just up from the club was a rundown old well called Fahey's Well. For me two vivid memories sum up the fifties: one was that, every year, buckets of water were taken from the well and the local women would religiously scrub down every inch of the lane for the feast of Corpus Christi; and secondly, a girl got married one day; she borrowed a ring from Celia Hurley in the corner shop and walked down to the North Cathedral for the ceremony, with a flock of inquisitive children trailing in her wake. She got married, walked back up, returned the ring to her friend and had a knees-up in her little house. They were such practical times.

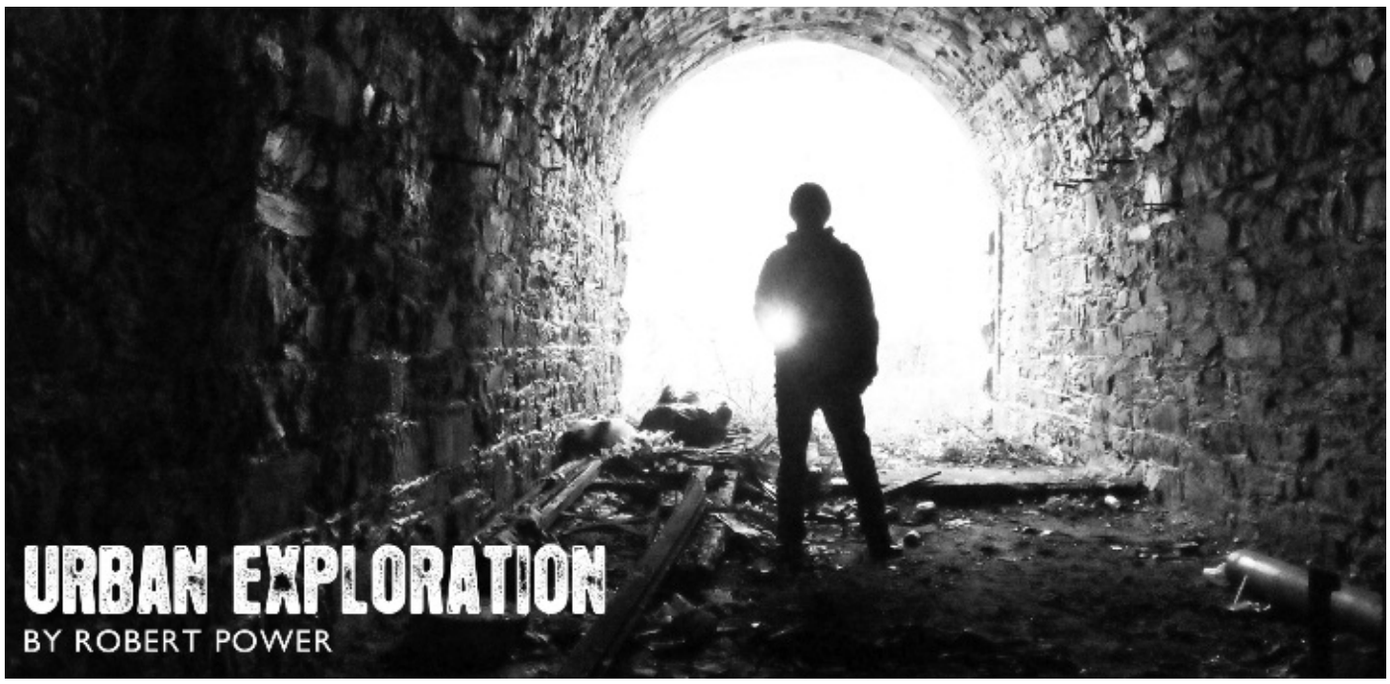
**Children in Farranferris, Cork, July 1998**
**Photo: Augusta McDermott, NFP Archive**

Opposite the well, a mangel (beetroot) field stood in splendid isolation. It was a bumpy, barren patch covered with nettles, but to us, it was heaven. Every game, whether it was hurling, rugby or soccer, was fought out with fierce passion. Past the top of the lane was an area called 'Bonties'. It consisted of a narrow stream that was banked up with sods every summer. Everybody learned to swim here. There were dozens of potato plots which were let out to local families and finally, the place was teeming with horses. Owners put their horses out to graze here every night, so all the boys were in the enviable position of playing cowboys on real horses.

There was a certain sadness when Washbrew Lane was demolished in the summer of 1956 to make way for the North Link Road. For the next 43 years the back gardens of one side of the lane were still visible. I knew every one of those gardens so well. Each sloping, craggy overgrown one of them was like an old friend. That's where we acted out our sporting dreams: throwing big rocks as if we were shot putting for Ireland; jumping over strings and wires in the high jump; scoring the winning goal in a cup final, always with a diving header. This was our field of dreams, our Croke Park, our Wembley, our Olympics. Alas, none of us ever really made it.

Those old gardens were like relics or headstones – daily reminders of a time long gone. Recently, they were removed and this very area was beautifully landscaped. Washbrew Lane is now a distant memory overflowing with laughter, tripe and drisheen, shawls, half-doors and unfulfilled dreams.

*Hada O'Callaghan, mentioned in Jim's story, was the brother of Sean O'Callaghan who wrote the famous 'Boys of Fairhill'.*



# URBAN EXPLORATION

BY ROBERT POWER

Urban exploration, urbexing or UE is the recreational exploration of the urban environment, usually, but not necessarily, derelict areas. It is a rapidly developing aspect of modern urban culture. Although it has been practiced in isolation for as long as there have been derelict buildings, recently it has seen a rapid increase in popularity as a self-contained activity. Although still obscure to most, this activity now thrives in the derelict spaces of Cork. What was originally a once off or sporadic activity is now a recognised pursuit. The relatively recent formation of urban exploring online communities allows it to be defined as an urban subculture. Typically, subcultures are tied to a genre of music or political movement while urbexing is based around a desire to explore restricted spaces off-limits to the general public.

Urban exploring is difficult, dirty and fraught with personal risk. It's viewed with hostility by non-practitioners and regarded as trespassing. Explorers risk arrest and prosecution on a regular basis but remarkably its popularity is mushrooming globally, including in Cork. This interest is overwhelmingly facilitated by the internet. Irish urban explorers practice alone using internet forums and blogs to communicate and share their exploits. There is a particularly strong connection to abandoned and industrial areas not designed for public use. This may include utility tunnels, storm drains, mines, abandoned hospitals, factories and even public houses. In Cork City 19th and 20th century institutional buildings are favoured. Their spacious interiors offer low risk explorations. In rural areas of Cork, and indeed throughout Ireland, shells of big houses and stone castles of the former landed gentry are chosen. The contrast of architectural grandeur and utter neglect draws interest. These targets stand in contrast to international urban explorers who place an emphasis on industrial sites.

Urban Exploring in its current popular form can be traced to a Canadian, the late Jeff Chapman, whose magazine *Infiltration*, which ran from 1996 to his death in 2005, and later his book, *Access All Areas: a user's guide to the art of urban exploration*, is widely acknowledged to have helped popularise urban exploring within and outside North America. Chapman, under the pen-name 'Ninjalicious', urged people to explore city areas not designed for public usage partly to appreciate hidden architectural wonders and secondly to reclaim these zones of the cityscape for public use. His writings served as 'how-to' guides and covered topics from basic stealth and concealment, to social engineering techniques and exploring ethics. He is accredited with popularizing the term 'creditability prop'. The term describes a device, uniform, piece of equipment or some other appurtenances used solely to reduce suspicion if one is encountered in a normally restricted area.The roots of urban exploring prior to the *Infiltration* magazine are obscure and only partly recorded through websites like Chapman's own website infiltration.org. The American anthropologist, Veronica Davidov, on her blog *Material World* has traced organised urban exploring back to groups such as the San Francisco Suicide Club who were inspired by the synchronous art movements Surrealism and Dadaism. They staged daring counter cultural events, often in derelict spaces. They were succeeded by the Cacophony Club, an anarchic urban arts group associated with culture-jamming. They were involved in whimsical pranks such as mass gatherings of costumed santas known as 'santacons', but also in infiltrating places off-limits to the public.

The explosion of internet use in the late 90s combined with media coverage of urban exploring from shows such as the Discovery Channel's "The Urban Explorers" and MTV's "Fear" have all played their part in raising its profile. However many urbexers would question the benefits of increased media coverage and ever growing popularity. There is a fear held amongst many that increased participation by the wider public could damage sites and encourage vandalism. Eventually this could lead to restricted access. Authorities who control a site may seek to prevent access once they realise what the derelict site is actually being used for. Those who distinguish themselves as urban explorers often encourage a strict set of ethics. Explorers are keen to distance themselves from other groups who may use these sites, for example vandals and graffiti artists. This an area where urban explorers demonstrate an autonomous ideology more related to environmental movements then urban subcultures. The phrase 'Take nothing but pictures, leave nothing but footprints' is repeated by many groups, though originally taken from the American conservation organsation The Sierra Club. Graffiti and stylised signature 'tags' in sites are frowned upon by

purist explorers. Taking items from a site is usually only justified if that structure is due for destruction.

As sites exist in an unrelenting cycle of decay, there is a desire to record these forgotten but often serene places. It is in this way photography holds such a strong link with urbexing. Many involved are amateur or even professional photographers. Some explorers are primarily photographers who have ventured into urban exploring for a particular photographic project. Many online galleries dedicated solely to urban exploring exist where individuals display their explorations (often shortened to 'expos'). Sharing photographs taken on trips is an important part of participating within the group. Many of these dedicated forums aim to give photographic advice to the aspiring photographer. There is a particular aesthetic of decay and abandonment common in this photography. The contrast between use and abandonment is usually emphasized. These photographs usually accompany trip reports, although many experienced explorers are reluctant to reveal the exact location of their favourite haunts for fear of damage and vandalism. These online reports allow discussion and communication, but also serve to give status to explorers in urbexing communities.

Participants engage in a self-made process on online communities. It is an important stage in gaining status and acceptance in the online group. The mutual exchange of knowledge about sites is appreciated as a means of garnering respect. Suspicion would be immediately aroused by a new member to a forum with no posts, and hence little credibility, asking immediately for valued information, such as an access to a new site. Reciprocity is encouraged but not in a formal manner. A contribution to the group is as important as exchanges between individuals, allowing development of these voluntary groups. As in many surreptitious groups, discretion about shared information is at all times expected. As Davidov has documented, if these unwritten rules are followed, social ties within the group are constantly forged and reinforced through contributions to the growing knowledge pool. Similar codes of cyber-etiquette exist across the web on many other special interest discussion forums, however, in urban exploring an additional risk is present if information is leaked. Pen-names are used to protect the identities of explorers from police identification and also to create a second online identity. Some forums require registration and may require webmaster checks before allowing viewing.

Certain international locations hold special importance as urbexing hot spots. The immense medieval mines and catacombs of Paris, which meander for over 200 miles under the modern city, have gained notoriety for popularity amongst French urban explorers or 'cataphiles'. Although officially all but a fraction of this subterranean network is off-limits to the public, it is widely used by groups and individuals as an alternative space in the city. Confident groups take their occupation to extraordinary levels. In September 2006, French police found an underground cinema, complete with bar and kitchen in a cavern previously unknown to French police. Internationally organised trips to visit this subterranean world are common among the international urbexer community. Other sites may hold special appeal for their perceived vastness and undisturbed nature. The countless decaying industrial and military facilities of the former USSR territory are often considered the 'holy grail' to many urban explorers. Entire abandoned towns of buildings near the Russian Arctic circle which shrivelled and died as a result of privatisation hold much appeal, bearing witness to the Soviet Union's industrial decadence.

What holds urban explorers together in common is a thrill of discovery; of exploring a clandestine world of neglect and abandonment. Many explorers see derelict buildings as 'negative spaces' where memories of the past stand still. In this way urban explorers develop a unique relationship with the cityscape. The human story of a building is important to the urban explorer. Traces of the last occupants are often valued and noted. Some explorers see their photographs as important documentation of forgotten built heritage. Some international teams combine historical photos and plans of buildings with recent photographs creating detailed graphic essays of a structure. They informally create a record of these institutions before they see further decay or demolition. The Irish explorers label it as 'documenting our heritage'. Explorers are in many ways guerrilla antiquarians of the 21st century; concerning themselves with our recent past. The different strands of urbex are held together by a constructed value system that puts worth on places and material remains. Davidov points out that urban exploring enables the creation of new social identities based on an alternative value system for a material infrastructure that has lost its use-value for mainstream society. These sites have lost their use-value for commercial society and are allowed to decay because of harsh market factors. In the cases of derelict hotels, hospitals and other institutions, they may be overtly extravagant in design, old fashioned and inefficient, which are often the very factors that attract interest by explorers. Urban exploring is beyond a doubt a rich and continually evolving subculture.

*Cover Photo and photo below: Chris Wright.*
*Photo opposite: Robert Power.*
*The author requested that the exact geographical locations of these photographs remain undisclosed.*

# The Auxiliary Fire Service in Cork 1939-1945

by PAT POLAND

In 1938, an expert from the British Home Office, Colonel Guy Symonds, was commissioned by the Irish Government to visit this country and advise on Civil Defence measures in general and fire protection, under air raid conditions, in particular. The war clouds were gathering over Europe, the Spanish Civil War was still raging, and the world had watched, horrified, as Spanish cities were used as a testing ground for Göring's vaunted *Luftwaffe*. In reality, it was a dress rehearsal for World War Two. Having seen the damage that could have been inflicted by relatively few incendiary and high explosive bombs from the start, great emphasis was placed on fire protection and fire extinction in the Air Raid Precautions Scheme.

**The 'Heavy Pumping Unit', built by the Ford Motor Company, was a typical wartime production and specially designed to pump large amounts of water. Photo: Courtesy of author**

The Chief Officer of the Dublin Fire Brigade, Major Comerford, was sent to England to study at close quarters the preparations being made there. With the outbreak of war in 1939 gas masks began to be issued to each household. Even the physical appearance of the city began to change; over 100 reinforced concrete air raid shelters were built, serving to remind people that the war was never too far away. Plans were drawn up for three underground shelters, each capable of holding up to 5,000 people, but by the time the project was viable, Hitler had opened his second front with the invasion of Russia and the danger of invasion or air raids had largely passed.

Among the many recommendations made to the Government by Symonds and Comerford was the establishment of a large civilian firefighting force to be known as the Auxiliary Fire Service (AFS). In the event of our cities being subjected to air raids (as indeed Dublin and a number of other places were, albeit 'accidentally'), it was obvious that the small peacetime fire brigades would be unable to cope; hence, the necessity for reinforcements on a large scale. Locally, Cork Fire Brigade was tasked with training the AFS volunteers, a duty which would preoccupy it for the duration of the Emergency.


**Training manuals for the Auxiliary Fire Service. Photo: Courtesy of author**

The influx of recruits exceeded all expectations. Within a short time hundreds of men and women had volunteered their services. Initial training was carried out at Friary Hall in Blackamoor Lane (behind Sullivan's Quay Fire Station) which, a hundred years before, had been packed with volunteers of another kind when the great 'Apostle of Temperance', Father Mathew, had held services in what was then the Capuchin Chapel. The most pressing problem was for locations for AFS 'fire stations' to be identified.

For operational purposes the city was divided into two AFS districts, South Lee and North Lee, with a fire brigade District Officer (Messrs McInerney, South, and Poland, North), responsible for the training in each, under the overall command of Chief Officer Liam Monaghan, who, wearing his 'ARP hat', was Commandant of the AFS. Stations, usually a garage or the like, were opened at key points about the city. On the southside, stations were commissioned at Victoria Road (O'Shea's Builders), Turner's Cross (Charlie O'Sullivan) and Glasheen Road (Adair's Garage).

On the northside, the premises were at Lower Glanmire Road (Harbour Commissioners), St Luke's (Kelleher's Buildings – now the Scout Hall) and initially, at Mulgrave Road (near the North Infirmary). The latter station was later moved to Wolfe Tone St ('Sweetland') and finally, to Gurranabraher Road ('The Hut', now the site of the fine new Community Centre).

Each station was equipped with a number of trailer fire pumps supplied by the Department of Defence. In all, seventeen pumps were allocated to Cork city in a variety of makes: Beresford-Stork (120/180 gallons per minute), Apex and Sulzer (350/500 gpm) and Tangye (900/1000 gpm). Two fire engines were also supplied, being stationed, variously, at Glasheen Road and Gurranabraher Road. The volunteers, under the command of their AFS Station Officer, gave up their spare time to train on two nights a week and more often during periods of competition for the various local and national trophies.

Route marches were regularly held. On Saturday

afternoons training was held at the Hive Iron Works on Hanover Street. The senior ranking AFS officer was Mr William Twitchett, Managing Director of the Eagle Printing Company, on the South Mall, and he had donated a silver trophy known as the 'Eagle Cup' for pump drill competitions amongst the various city stations. The cup was won on a number of occasions by the St Luke's and Gurranabraher crews. When the AFS was re-established in Cork in 1959 during the so-called 'Cold War' period, the Eagle Cup was once more pressed into service as a challenge cup, being won by sub-officer Séan Kennefick's crew on the last three occasions for which it was competed.

The social side was not forgotten. There were many dances, socials, quizzes etc., and romances blossomed resulting in a number of marriages. At the 'Stand Down' Dinner in Moore's Hotel in 1945, many were reluctant to let friendships which were forged during the war years come to an abrupt end, and it was decided to continue to meet informally on a regular basis. This coterie of old friends – known as the 'Old Boys' – met regularly for years in the Rob Roy tavern until, eventually, the passage of time took its inevitable toll.

Communications and efficient watchroom operation would, of course, be vital in an air raid, and to this end a women's section was formed. This branch of the service, under District Officer Jack Crowley, received training in watchroom procedures, clerical duties, first aid to the injured and basic firefighting. Civil Defence Control Rooms were located in the basement of the courthouse on Washington Street and O'Hea's Garage on McCurtain Street and a number of AFS ladies were seconded to each. Throughout the Emergency exercises were frequently held in conjunction with the other Civil Defence services – Warden, Rescue & Demolition, the Red Cross, St John's Ambulance Brigade. The AFS was called out on a number of occasions to assist the fire brigade at fires, most notably at the major fire at Grant's Department Store on the Grand Parade in March 1942.

The end of the war in 1945 saw the 'standing down' of the AFS. Stations reverted to their civilian use, all pumps and equipment being withdrawn and stored at the Central Civil Defence Stores at Dobbin's, McCurtain Street. Later the trailer pumps were reissued to fire brigades throughout Cork city and county where they remained in service well into the 1960s.

The Taoiseach, Eamon de Valera, summed up the sentiments of many, when he addressed the nation on Radio Éireann on May 16, 1945 - 'I know you all feel with me the debt of gratitude we owe to all those who, at heavy personal sacrifice, joined the Army, including the Marine Service, the various Auxiliary Defence organizations and helped to guard us against the most serious of all the dangers that threatened', he said. Having gone through the military and civilian services by name, he continued, 'To all of those, to the many voluntary bodies who helped in the national effort and to the men of our Merchant Marine, who faced all the perils of the ocean to bring us essential supplies, the nation is profoundly grateful'.

*The author is currently researching a book on the Great Fires of Cork and one chapter will contain a detailed analysis of the role of the AFS during the Emergency years. He would be delighted to hear from anyone who served in the organisation during that time, or who could supply photographs on loan for a short period. He is particularly looking for photos of any of the AFS stations mentioned above, or their personnel. Drop Pat Poland a line at Ballinglanna, Glanmire, Co. Cork.*


**Turner's Cross AFS station party, (Cork) pictured with Auxiliary Station Officer Charlie O'Mahony in 1945.**
**Photo: Courtesy of author**

# The Handing Down of 'Dr Gilbert's'

by GRÁINNE MCGEE

**Going 'on the wren', St. Stephen's Day**

*Irish Traditional music has been an integral part of Gráinne Mcgee's life since childhood. Coming on board the Northside Folklore Project, she intends to research the oral transmission of music from generation to generation. Here she relates her own experience of this tradition.*

My whole family played Irish traditional music. We grew up to the songs of the Clancy Brothers and Tommy Makem. My first memories of playing music, was with the tin whistle in the local *Comhaltas* group and going on the wren on St Stephen's day with my family. My sister and I went on to take up the fiddle and my brother the concertina, and not to be left out in the session, my father and mother took up the *bodhrán* and spoons.

Learning the fiddle proved very difficult for me. At first we practised simply open bowing the strings, which I found very cumbersome. Then to indicate where to place the fingers on the fingerboard to produce the right tone and note, yellow duct tape was laid in strips in the relevant places. There was plenty creaking, screeching, tantrums and bum notes, but eventually we progressed to learning our first tune.

I can still see the notes on the little lined notepad, in ABC format, with little apostrophes to indicate the higher notes. This was the method of teaching music at this level and time, reading sheet music was for the classically trained. In a time before tape recorders and minidiscs, people wishing to learn an instrument travelled out to nearby musicians, and by repetitive listening to the melody being played, tried to pick it up. This was known as learning tunes 'by ear' and was encouraged, as this was the age old tradition of passing tunes down from teacher to pupil and consequently the local style of playing was transmitted too.

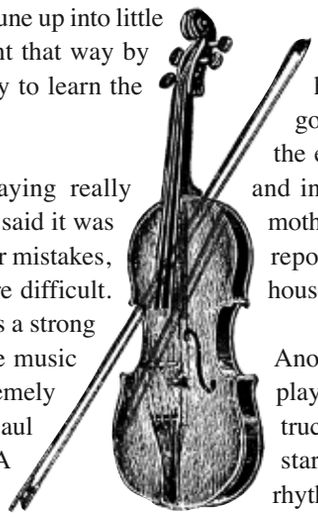
Around this time we had a summer cottage in Co. Clare and as luck would have it, a local Clare fiddle player, Michael Downes lived nearby. He had a great love for tunes and when he learned his new neighbours played music, he came up at every opportunity to pass on his music to us. Unbeknownst to us, we were partaking in this old oral tradition. He himself learnt from Martin 'Scully' Casey, who also taught Junior Crehan and his own son, Bobby Casey, two legends of the Clare style of fiddle playing.

The first few times he called to our house, he carried his fiddle under his arm, but soon enough he left it in the corner. He'd always sit in the same place, we had a big open hearth and he'd sit right in beside it and take the cup of tea from my parents and have the bit of chit chat. But we'd know his mind was on more important matters, and at the first opportunity he'd whip out the fiddle and the talking would be over. I'll never forget the first tune he gave us, a reel by the name of 'Doctor Gilbert's'. It was to become the bane of my life for a few weeks as it was the first time I learnt a tune purely by ear and in itself it wasn't the easiest tune to play.

In the learning of this reel, I got used to Michael's way of passing on his music. He couldn't describe in words how or what he was doing with the notes, he'd only play slower and slower. I took to watching Michael's fingers on the fingerboard in order to figure out what he was playing, as his ornamentation and technique was unlike anything I'd heard. I'd then have to play the tune back,

**Michael Downes**
**Photos this page courtesy of Gráinne Mcgee**

and if Michael didn't like it or felt I strayed from his version, he'd just shake his head and play the reel again *even slower* from the beginning, emphasizing with his bowing the parts I needed to correct. He'd make out he was quite deaf, but he never once missed a wrong note. He'd refuse to break the tune up into little parts to make learning it easier, he was taught that way by Scully Casey and he said it was the only way to learn the music properly.



*Clipart courtesy FCIT*

Another thing Michael insisted on was playing really slowly. Michael hated fast playing, he always said it was easier to play a tune faster, as you can hide your mistakes, whereas to play it slow and well is much more difficult. This also hailed from the dancing, as there was a strong tradition of set dancing in the locality and the music had to have the correct timing. This was extremely important to Michael. He'd often say, 'All that aul flying is useless. It's only aul scutching'. A 'Scutcher' was a person who couldn't play, didn't have the respect for the music, its timing or tradition.

He also gave great importance to the name of the piece, when he knew it. And there were some lovely titles; '*Poll an Madra Uisce*' or 'the Water Dog's Hole', 'Mammy's Pet', 'Hurry the Jug', 'the Great Grathspey', 'Colonel Fraser's' and many more. When the playing was over, he'd relax properly for the tea and chat, his main job done. Hand in hand with the learning of his music, would come the stories of where, how and from whom he learned the tunes.

There was once the time, as a young lad, he put the fiddle on the back of the bike and cycled up to Scully Casey's house. Junior and Bobby Casey were there and Scully was giving them this one particular tune. It was a time before recorders and they had to keep the melody in their head to practise when they got home. But by the time Michael cycled the way home, the tune had gone clean out of his head. So he got the fiddle and went down to a little deserted house at the end of the field by the road. He stayed there all night and into the morning, trying to bring out the air, until his mother came looking for him. She said the neighbours had reported hearing fairy music that morning from the little house.

Another time, there used to be a lime truck driver who also played the fiddle. One day he called to Michael in the lime truck and took in his instrument to play. When the music started, the man took to stamping his boot along to the rhythm of the tunes. When the mother arrived in from town, to her horror the whole house was filled with lime dust from the man's stomping and they couldn't see a thing. She cleared the whole lot of them out of the house.

He had great affection for the musicians he grew up and played with, a lot of whom had since passed on. He'd say 'out of nineteen, there's only 6 of us [musicians] left'. As time went by, this number dwindled and you could sense his sadness that this era of music he grew up with was becoming a thing of the past. He'd often say, he was delighted to be able to pass on his tunes and the old way of playing them, as he had learnt them from those before him.


**Gráinne Mcgee (centre) with her sister Niamh and Michael Downes in Clancy's Bar, Milltown Malbay.**
**Photo courtesy of Peter Laban (peterlaban@eircom.net)**

# The Demise of the Blackpool Weavers

by BREDA SHEEHAN

Throughout the course of Irish history, recession has been the norm. The economic roar of the so-called Celtic Tiger that brought unprecedented prosperity in more recent times has now faded away, leaving a cloud of uncertainty hanging over Ireland's economic future. Historically, economic booms have always been followed by a recession. None wreaked more devastation on the Irish population than the boom and bust of the early nineteenth century.

Edward Donegan is perhaps a lone voice echoing down the centuries. Born in 1787, he lived through Cork's industrial boom in the late eighteenth century and the economic recession that followed. Very little is known about the private life of Donegan. He almost certainly hailed from the northside of Cork city. An avid reader, he was well educated and believed that the Act of Union with Britain (1800) was responsible for the downturn in the Irish economy. During the 1820s and 1830s, Donegan actively highlighted the plight of the unemployed worker. A cotton weaver by trade, Donegan not only exposed the severe distress experienced by unemployed textile workers, but he was also involved in organising a mass demonstration through the city, that included many other branches of industry. His prominence as a social activist is reflected in the fact that he was one of only three people called to give evidence before the Poor Law Inquiry Committee (1836) on behalf of the working classes.

**James Brenan (1837-1904), Detail from *Patchwork* (1891)**
**Collection: Crawford Art Gallery, Cork**

The economic growth of Cork city during the eighteenth century was unprecedented, and by the end of the century, the population of the city had increased from 41,000 in 1750 to 57,000 in 1798. Employment was plentiful and those employed in the textile industry would have enjoyed a modest prosperity. Donegan tells us, 'In the village of Blarney before the Act of Union there were one thousand, seven hundred and sixty persons employed in weaving, winding, spinning, calico printing and paper-making' . In the northern suburbs of the city, lacemaking gave employment to about 600 women. He states: 'It was clean work and a woman might sit at her fireside and toss her bobbins perhaps with more content than a Duchess at her toilette'.

In Blarney Lane (now Blarney Street) and the adjoining areas, several hundred women were employed knitting stockings in their own homes. Donegan states that they were, 'earning a comfortable livelihood for their families by their industry'. In addition, the weaving of woollen and worsted stockings on frames, also provided much employment in the northern suburbs of the city. During the second half of the eighteenth century, according to David Dickson (2005), 'From the Red Forge at the foot of Dublin Hill to the heights of Mallow Lane (Shandon Street) and in all the adjoining lanes and streets, the busy sounds of looms were to be heard'. As the city expanded so too did the aspirations of the Cork business community who hoped that the Act of Union with Britain would ensure continued economic growth. However, such hopes failed to materialise.

When the last of the government protective tariffs under the Act of Union were removed in 1825, the textile industry was unable to compete with the massive importation of cheaper, higher quality cloth, from the highly mechanised industrial centres of England. This had a devastating effect in the northern suburbs of the city particularly in the Blackpool area. In the Watercourse area alone, five factories that had once employed over 400 workers had closed down. Donegan tells us, 'the class to which I belong (weavers), thirty two years ago were thousands, now alas we are reduced to hundreds'.

In 1826, utter destitution forced hundreds of textile workers and their families to march through the city to highlight their plight. The day chosen was May 26, a holy day, and the march was timed to coincide with large numbers of people leaving city churches. The group of about 500 included mainly the families of unemployed textile workers who carried placards proclaiming, 'We want employment – ourselves and our families are starving'.

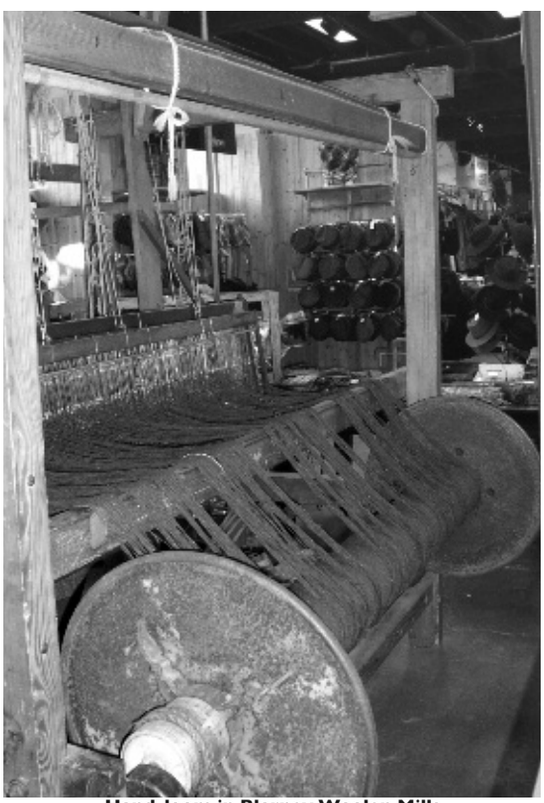
From a starting point in Blackpool, the demonstrators planned to walk to the Mansion House (now Mercy Hospital) via Patrick Street, to petition Mayor Thomas Harrison, for assistance. The march was halted by Sheriff Spearing at Patrick Street. Accompanied by a number of 'Peace Officers' he told the crowd, he had every sympathy for their 'forlorn state.' Nevertheless, he demanded that they put a stop to the 'foolishness of their present proceedings'. When asked to give up their placards, they resisted, and a scuffle broke out. The Sheriff having received a facial injury, possibly from a flying object, was forced to take refuge in a nearby shop. Within a short time, the mayor arrived on the scene, as did reinforcements from the nearby Tuckey Street Guard. The march, described in the *Cork Constitution* as 'a ragged procession through the streets of Cork', did generate a lot of sympathy among the city's elite.

In times of severe economic crisis, the mayor, bishop, or other high-ranking officials in the city generally called for a relief fund to be set up, and appealed for voluntary contributions from wealthy citizens to alleviate chronic distress. Insofar as public funds allowed, a limited amount of employment was made available in public works schemes. In 1826, two hundred and sixty men found employment breaking stones for the construction of roads. Martin Mahony, a worsted manufacturer who had earlier operated a very successful textile business in the Blackpool area,

offered employment to one hundred weavers and also donated £20, to enable them 'get conveniences (materials) for their looms'.

It has to be remembered that at that time Cork was a very unhealthy place to live. Devoid of any proper sanitation or water supply, disease was rampant. Typhus and cholera, the former in 1817, the latter in 1822 and 1832, had a devastating effect on the city. Those with some form of employment appeared to enjoy an adequate standard of living. Nonetheless, destitution was rife in the northside of the city. By the 1830s, the number of 'distressed' increased to nearly 40% in St Mary's parish, Shandon. In St Anne's parish, Shandon the level of distress fell from 39% to 33% and was possibly due to mass emigration from the area. Donegan told the Poor Law Inquiry that, 'emigration had been going on since 1810' and that '4,000 to 5,000 families in that time had gone from Cork to manufacturing districts in England'. By 1830, the textile industry in Blackpool was almost completely decimated.

In 1832, a public meeting attended by various branches of industry was held in St Mary's parish Shandon, to discuss the state of manufacturing in the city. Chief among the concerns of those in attendance was the vast amount of English imports into Ireland, such as: textiles, candles, soaps, tacks, and hemp. It was noted at the meeting that in 1822, a year that saw the country devastated by cholera and food shortages, 'manufactured goods' valued at over three million pounds were imported into Ireland. In the same year, Irish exports of grain, meal, salt provision, and livestock to Britain were estimated at three million pounds. Following the meeting, a 'buy Irish' campaign was initiated in Cork city in an attempt to revive local manufacturing. While this gave some temporary relief to the city, it did not resolve the chronic unemployment situation. The problem in Cork as with elsewhere in Ireland was that the labour force far outnumbered the availability of employment.



**Hand-loom in Blarney Woolen Mills**
**Photo: Breda Sheehan, NFP Archive**

In 1830, hunger and despair once more forced those out of work to take to the streets of the city. Donegan was one of the organisers of a demonstration through the city to the House of Industry which at that time served both as an asylum for the distressed and as a house of correction. Six men representing various branches of industry that included 450 unemployed coopers, 200 carpenters, some 150 weavers, 80 smiths, 40-50 nailers, and 10 stonecutters, handed in a petition to the city Mayor who was at that time attending a meeting in the House of Industry. They informed him that many of the large peaceful group that congregated outside were starving, and appealed for his support in gaining admittance to the House of Industry (that was already overcrowded), finding alternative employment or financially assisted emigration. By October 1830, over 300 unemployed weavers were assisted to emigrate to Britain. Two hundred and twenty four men were provided with temporary employment in public works schemes that included whitewashing dwelling houses, improving and repairing roads, cleaning sewers, and watercourses. Another 100 men found employment working on the city quays.

Employment in public works schemes did help alleviate some distress, even so, the scheme was unable to cope with such large-scale unemployment. In the first half of the 1830s, Donegan was only able to find casual employment. His income had dropped to one shilling a day compared to two shillings in the 1820s. He told the Poor Law Commissioners, 'accommodation for his class cost from 6d to 9d a week with two families sharing one room,' and that he worked long hours, and often on one meal a day, consisting entirely of potatoes. He stated that offal (cheaper cuts of meat) that had once formed part of the basic diet of the working classes was scarce as it was increasingly exported out of the country.

After the 1830s, Donegan fades from the pages of history. It is highly probable that his strident efforts in highlighting the plight of the weavers were instrumental in the establishment of the Blackpool Weavers Association. The Blackpool Weavers Association (run on voluntary lines) provided much needed financial assistance to weavers and their families throughout the 1830s and 1840s after which time the occupation seems to have completely disappeared. Ironically, when Mahony's of Blarney (formally Blackpool) resumed the weaving of worsted cloth (Blarney tweeds) in the late 1860s, they had to bring over English weavers to train the local workforce.

Historically, Ireland has experienced more economic busts than booms, however, the prosperity enjoyed in Ireland from the late 1990s to 2008 encouraged a sense that the good times were here to stay, and recessions such as the one experienced during the 1980s were finally a thing of the past. We have still to experience the full aftermath of the Celtic Tiger; even so, it is impossible to envisage any recession (excluding the great famine from 1846-1850) inflicting such hardship on the population as the one that visited Ireland in the 1820s and 1830s.

**Bibliography**

David Dickson, *Old World Colony: Cork and South Munster 1630-1830*, Cork: Cork University Press, 2005

Henry Alan Jefferies, Ellis Stack, "Eighteenth Century Cork", *Cork Historical Perspectives*, ed. Henry Alan Jefferies, Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2004, pp 135-154

*Cork Mercantile Chronicle*, June 13th 1832

*The Constitution or Cork Advertiser*, February11th, 13th 1830

*The Southern Reporter and Cork Commercial Courier*, May 16th 1826, June 3rd, 15th, August 17th 1826, February 18th 1830, August 18th 1832

*Royal Commission on Condition of Poorer Classes in Ireland*, Appendix (C), Part 1, State of Poor and Charitable Institutions in Principal Towns, 1836, pp 26-30

http://myhome.ispdr.net.au/~mgrogan/cork/ships2.htm

# Gaming in Cork

by GEARÓID O' DONNELL


Warpcon 2010

My first experience of gaming was as a youngster; when rooting around at a jumble sale I encountered a strange game known as *Hero Quest* which depicted a group of intrepid adventurers battling their way through a dungeon populated by evil creatures to acquire riches and magical items. The game itself was a wreck, with several of the figures broken or missing and the whole thing needed reassembling. But I took to it with gusto, poring over the rules, excitedly explaining them to younger brothers who would much rather have a thrilling game of *Snakes and Ladders*. We played the game a few times, but being children we quickly found something else to distract us. The game itself soon receded into memory but that sense of wonder, of hidden depths yet to be discovered remained with me. It wasn't till my first year of college that I was fully introduced to the world of gaming.

What, may you ask, is gaming? Gaming to the un-acquainted is the catch-all term for board-gaming, wargaming, card-gaming and role-playing. The individuals who engage in these activities are called Gamers, your archetypical Gamer is generally male, under 45 and has a keen interest in science fiction and fantasy, but this is not to suggest that there are no female gamers and that an interest in fantasy and sci-fi is compulsory. Apart from classic board games such as *Monopoly*, *Risk* and *Cluedo* there are thousands of board games in every possible setting, though the most popular are those in a science-fiction or fantasy setting. Wargames consist of squads of metal or plastic figurines engaging in combat using dice to determine who emerges victorious. Popular incarnations are *Warhammer Fantasy*, *Warhammer 40k* and historical war-gaming.

Role-playing is the most difficult of these activities to explain to the un-acquainted. The best way to describe role-playing games such as *Dungeons and Dragons* is that they are something similar to an improvised radio drama where one member of the group known as the game master acts as a narrator of sorts, setting the scene and playing the antagonists and other minor roles, while the protagonists are played by the other members of the group. The outcome of the adventure is decided by the player's actions and dice rolls. These adventures can take place in any setting, be it fantasy, science-fiction or horror and can be run in either a once-off three hour time slot or as an ongoing campaign, some of which can last years, with the group meeting up once a week to continue the adventure. Some of the most popular role-playing systems are *Dungeons and Dragons, Traveller* and *Vampire*.

Gaming by definition is a very sociable activity and it was this aspect which seemed most attractive to a first year student recently arrived in a new city. So the first week of term I joined the UCC War-gaming and Role-playing society or WARPS. At first it was a little overwhelming but I slowly began to figure out what people meant by certain terms such as D&D (*Dungeons and Dragons*) and GM (gamemaster) references to books and films I had never heard of before such as the *Culture* series by Iain M Banks and films such as *Nauiscaa of the Valley of the Winds* and *Highlander*. I also became acquainted with the stories and folklore of the group. One story is that in the course of a game a member of WARPs burst into the Old Bar wearing a balaclava and wielding a toy gun while the British ambassador was there and if it wasn't for the intervention of a barman, who knew him, might have come to an untimely end at the hands of the ambassador's bodyguard. Another story was that a group was sitting at a table in the basement of the Boole library playing a role-playing game which entailed a simulated drug deal. Apparently someone overheard this conversation and assumed that it was the real thing and alerted Campus security, which left the group of gamers with some explaining to do!

Over time I became more and more involved in the society and I became Chairman or Auditor of WARPs four years later and thoroughly enjoyed my term and hopefully served as an able custodian. Over the years WARPs and gaming in Cork has gone from strength to strength with the formation of the Wargaming Association of Cork (WAC) and the Rebel Alliance which holds regular gaming sessions.

Another very important part of gaming is attending gaming conventions. There are currently gaming conventions in every major city in Ireland and in Britain, Europe and America. The biggest Irish conventions would be Q-con held in Queen's University Belfast, Gaelcon which is held in Dublin and then Warpcon which is held in UCC. Warpcon is the largest student-run games convention in Ireland. For the last twenty years it has drawn hundreds of people to UCC on the last weekend of January. The social side of the convention is very important, with pride of place given to the Charity Auction, where gamers bid large amounts on a collection of rare donated games and memorabilia raising more than €7000 for worthy causes in 2010.

One of the gaming experiences I enjoyed the most was a role-playing game involving over 30 players as we were asked to help hammer out a peace deal between Heaven and Hell, sadly negotiations broke down. Despite the outcome the game was extremely enjoyable and would have put a primetime TV drama to shame, with suspense, betrayal, shocking revelations, shady backroom dealings and political infighting. For nearly four hours over 30 people suspended disbelief and became completely immersed in another world entirely. After nearly eight years spent gaming, that initial sense of wonder still remains and there are still new frontiers for me to discover. Gaming to me is exciting because it allows you to travel to another world entirely where the only limitation is your imagination and allows you to share the experience with others.


**Two combatants engaged in a game of 'Shuuro' at Warpcon 2010**
**Photos by Gearóid O'Donnell**

# Memory Dress - A Public Art Project by MARIE BRETT

'MEMORY DRESS' was a public art project which explored dress as a cultural symbol of personal significance and was based at St. Finbarr's Hospital in Cork. I worked with Charlotte Donovan, staff, patients and visitors over a period of one year and asked for stories and memories associated to items of dress which in turn were interpreted through the making of artworks.

The project was inspired by the hospital seamstress and a chance encounter with one of her jobs in the sewing hall; that being the making of tiny dresses for still-born babies at the hospital. Over time throughout the project, amazing stories were revealed by the hospital community; cherished and chilling moments re-lived, memories lost and found.

One artwork 'The Lost Children' was made based on memories of the hospital's laundry, a place similar in nature to the infamous Magdalene Laundries. Another artwork, '3 Dresses', was made in collaboration with a staff member psychic who undertook psychometric readings (the laying of hands on an object enabling a psychic reading) on three gowns, each worn by the same person. The resulting artwork charts the unlocking of a family narrative spanning three generations, of ceremonial rites of passage and of cultural symbolism.

Over the period of one year, a large series of artworks were made; individual and collective pieces which were intimate, ethereal and contemplative. The works were finally exhibited at Triskel Arts Centre in Cork through 4 gallery spaces and offered silent witness to a collective cultural experience. 'Memory Dress' was commissioned by Triskel Arts Centre and funded by The Arts Council via CREATE and The Health Service Executive, Southern Region.

*Marie Brett is a West Cork based artist making work about social memory, cultural heritage and its relationship to place. Her work is shown internationally and often involves extensive research and public collaboration. She is currently working on a research project based at the CUH Maternity Unit called 'The Amulet Project' exploring the use of good luck charms and amulets for babies with the Ballyphehane & Togher Community Art & Craft Initiative. She can be contacted at - mariebrett44@hotmail.com. Photos below are by Marie Brett and Charlotte Donovan.*

*3 Dresses* - Artists Book

*The Black Dress* - Photograph

*The Lost Children* - Installation Photograph

# SOUND EXCERPTS

*These sound excerpts come from interviews conducted for our new film about the iconic North Infirmary Hospital, now the Maldron Hotel. Made in conjunction with Frameworks Films and Cork Community Television and funded by Sound and Vision, this half hour programme retraces the history and collective memory surrounding the building. Here is a small taste of some of the wonderful material collected; a great addition to our permanent archive.*

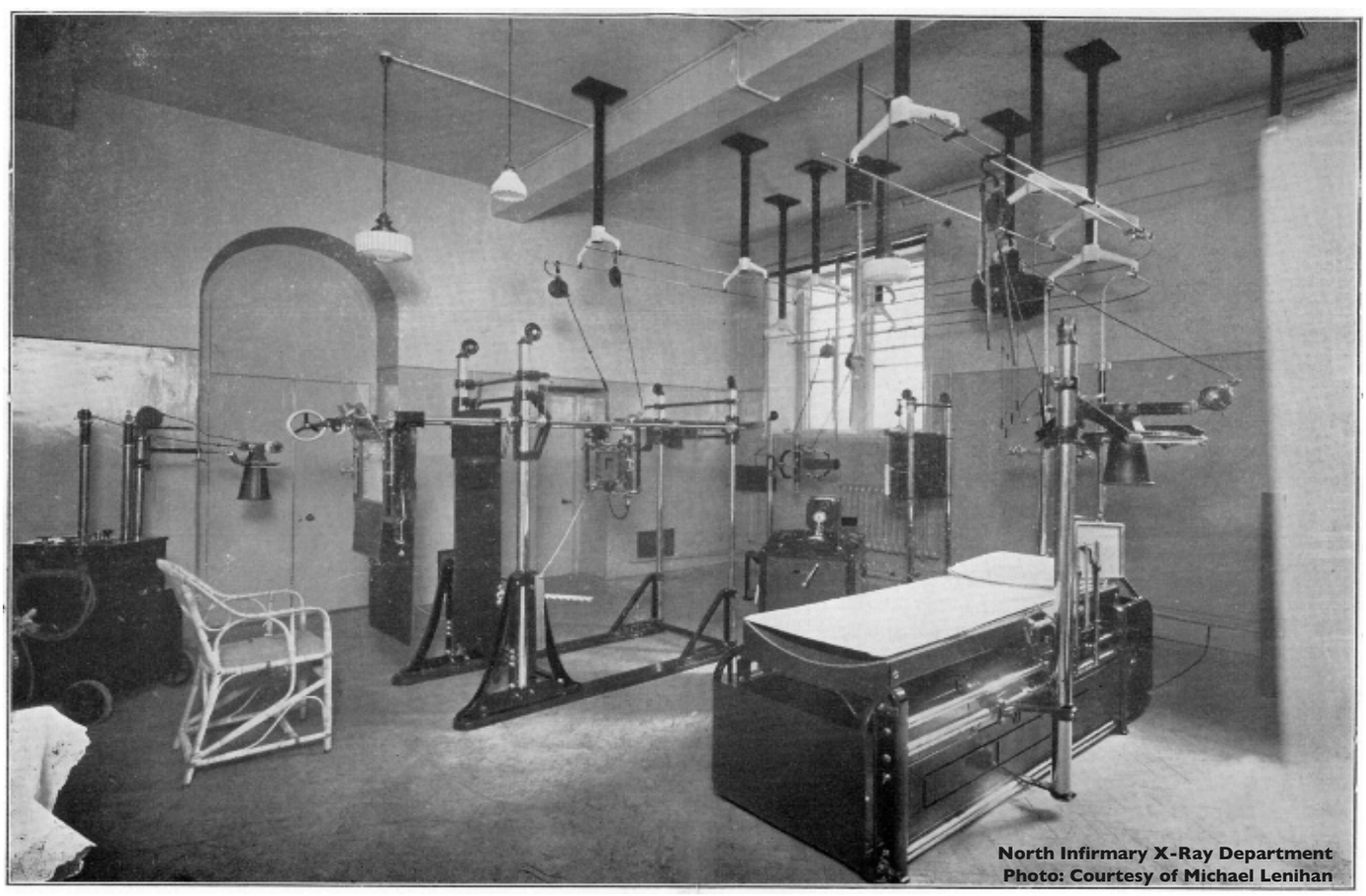
**Excerpt 1: Dr. Carol Dundon, third generation doctor at the North Infirmary**

My grandfather was on duty for the burning of Cork, the burning of Patrick Street. The city was under martial law at that time and there were just six passes for citizens, because there was a very, very strict curfew on. So my grandfather had one of the six passes to allow him to come and go freely from the North Infirmary and they had to deal with an enormous amount of trauma coming up from Patrick Street, it really was an enormous workload. Times were very dangerous and very dramatic and the surgeons and the nurses and the nuns and the doctors, they had to dig very deep into their reserves, both mental and physical to cope with the workload. Hospital work is demanding enough at the best of times, but they were living through some of the most difficult periods of Irish history.

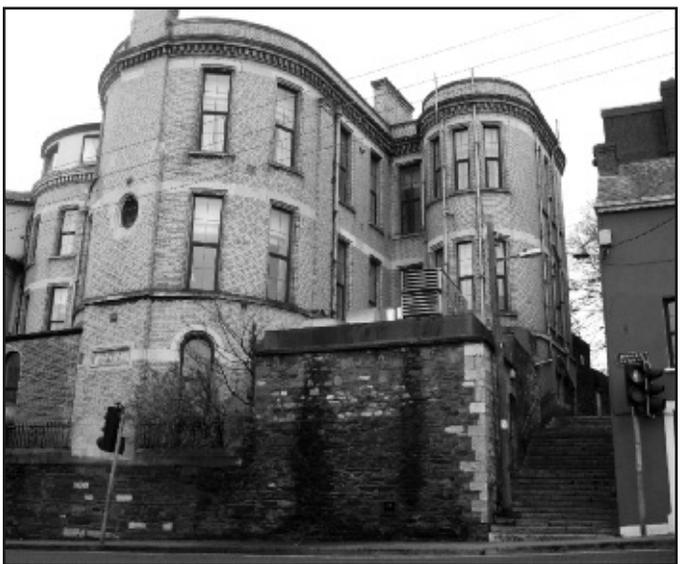
In my grandfather's time, the whole place was lit by gaslight, so my father told me that the shadows used to dance on the walls, and the patients used to lie in the beds and they would watch the shadows dance on the walls. I think at times the gaslight would be very faint and flickering, apparently due to the pipes being so old, and then the shadows would really get going. I think the old wards must have been quite stunning then, with the bells of Shandon playing and the shadows on the walls and all the people in the beds looking up at them. I think there was a very strong atmosphere.

The bells of Shandon sounded very loud in (the operating) theatre and when you looked out the theatre window, you were looking straight on to one of the faces of Shandon. In the summer you'd hear the tourists come, and they would play, play endlessly on the bells of Shandon, so there'd be operating lists going on and they'd be accompanied by the bells of Shandon. But it was lovely and I developed a great love of the Shandon bells, of the sound of them. I developed a great love of that sound and whenever I hear them now it brings back the Infirmary very strongly, very strongly.

After Vatican II, when nuns were given more leniency, the North Infirmary nuns started to go to the cinema but they always went in pairs to the old Savoy. They told my father this was causing great disturbance to the citizens of Cork because anyone who sat behind them couldn't see anything because there would be two huge headdresses in front of them. People started to ask for their money back if they were sitting behind the North Infirmary nuns.



**North Infirmary X-Ray Department**
**Photo: Courtesy of Michael Lenihan**



**The North Infirmary Gibbings Memorial Buildings with Bob & Joan's Walk to the right Photo: Michael Daly, NFP Archive**

It was lovely, I suppose in a way, the big old coronet. There was a lot of work involved, they had to be starched every single night and prepared for the next day and going out in the rain if they got wet at all, the wings would flop, so that's why North Infirmary nuns always carried umbrellas.

I remember it as a child, an enormous big brass gong, a huge thing, with a big thing to strike the gong with, and it was to let the hospital know when the different surgeons had entered the building, and they each had a different number of strokes. In his day my grandfather was one strike of the gong, and the next surgeon would be two, and then the third surgeon would be three. It went in order of seniority, I think. It was a marvelously efficient way of letting the hospital know that the surgeon was in. The extraordinary thing is that nowadays nobody knows where the gong actually went to.

**Excerpt 2: Kathleen Lynch, former patient**

I don't believe there's anyone on the Northside that didn't have an experience of the North Infirmary. Whether it was a very small experience, you know a bump on the head, or whether it was a relation dying here. It was part in parcel of the community. And it was a pivotal part of the community. It was a big employer. And it was all of those things. You know, if I hadn't run out underneath a bus, I probably would think of it more fondly.

It was the safety net for this community without a shadow of a doubt. It employed loads of people that we all knew, you know? And it was good, it was permanent employment and they were working with all of the people they knew. All of the people that came to the North Infirmary knew one another and it provided an extraordinary good service. It never turned anyone away. It didn't matter whether you could pay or you couldn't pay. It never turned anyway away. The nuns were extraordinary people. They were extraordinary people who dedicated their lives to serving this community. And I think that can't be forgotten either. That can't be forgotten.

**Excerpt 3: Padraig Kelleher, former worker**

The North Infirmary was extremely important to the community in the sense that it provided employment from generation to generation. When people were going on holidays it would be their sisters or their mothers, some of the sons of the men who were working here, would have done the replacement work during the summer, as I did myself. A lot of the staff as they get older, would have become ill and then they'd become patients. And they would still have connections with the people working in the wards and with some of the nurses. It was a whole social enclave. It was part of the community. It was vibrant, in terms of employment and providing a service. You know it was like a big, whole family.

It was like a subculture really on the Northside and a lot of the people wouldn't venture out, they'd hardly cross the river. This was where they lived, and worked, and died and got sick and came to the North Infirmary; it was a part of their identity. And when the North Infirmary closed, particularly for the people who worked here, they would've lost part of their identity. I know there would have been a slight psychological balking at crossing the river and not being able to go to the North Infirmary.

**Excerpt 4: Jim McKeon, local historian, actor, writer**

The Cork Shakespearian Company, founded in 1924 by Father O'Flynn, that's connected with the North Infirmary because they used to put on (plays) regularly on the flat roof of the North Infirmary, and that roof is still there. It wouldn't be every month; it would be only maybe once or twice a year. I know some well-known actors in Cork and their parents appeared on the roof of the hospital. It's a natural theatre in many ways, it's dead flat, overlooking the city, and they just put chairs there and it was a concept way before its time. That's being done now all over the world, in parks and in streets, but for the thirties and forties that was a way, way before its time.

There are lots of very funny stories…one I love, 'twas told to me by the great Con O'Leary who had great time for the hospital. There was a woman, she was very, very ill, she was unconscious for days and they were waiting for the poor woman to die. They sent word to her family up the country and in England and they all came over. She was on life support and the bishop was there around the bed, Con Leary was there. And they symbolically pulled the plug and ten seconds later she sprung up from the bed and she says 'Jesus, I'm starving. Will you give us a bowl of soup'? And she lived another twenty years.

Oh, 'twas like losing a close friend, you know, and the sadness of that last night in 1987, twenty two years ago. There was about a thousand people with candles in the darkness and symbolically the top floor lights went out, the next floor, the next floor down to the ground floor, until all the lights went out. And the last woman, Mrs Murphy, was taken out and put into an ambulance and removed, and people were crying openly. You know it was very sad as I say, 'twas like a loss of a close friend.

**Excerpt 5: Christy Kelleher, long-time worker**

The North Infirmary meant everything to me. At the time I left school I was shy, you go into the North Infirmary; it gave you great confidence, because as I said before, dealing with doctors, nurses, you know, they were the nicest people to work with. It meant everything to me, like, gave me a great outlook on life. I make it my business to go down every Sunday, pass it, I go to mass now in St. Mary's, and I just pass it up and give one look up, and I say to myself, 'thanks for the memories,' you know, thanks, 'cos I had very happy years there.

# The Popular Pastime of Card Playing

by DR MARGARET HUMPHREYS

*Margaret Humphreys lectures in the Department of Folklore and Ethnology at University College Cork*

In the course of his travels around Ireland during the late seventeenth century, John Dunton, an Englishman, noted the popularity of card playing amongst rural people. This was an era when most individuals were illiterate and socially dependent on their neighbours. They needed some form of diversion to while away the time on the long winter nights when there were few other forms of amusement apart from storytelling, gossiping, or attending house dances. While some of these card playing sessions took place in designated houses (known as 'free houses'), the custom was also popular within family circles. Young and old would look forward to gathering around the kitchen table or any flat surface such as a stool, in order to engage in this form of recreation.

The game may appear to onlookers who are not familiar with it to be very complicated, but the majority of adults would have been experts in this regard. They would have been well tutored in the rules of card playing when they were growing up themselves. It was customary to introduce younger children to the pastime by teaching them simple games such as 'snap' or 'beggar me neighbour' which required swiftness rather than skill. On some occasions the youngest members of the family might be allowed to win in order to cultivate their interest as well as to stop them crying if they were beaten. The participation of the older children would be limited during school term however, and they would usually be banished to bed at around 10 pm, despite their vehement protestations. On the other hand, the grown-ups would often play cards until well past midnight.

**Another intense day of scholarly research in the NFP office**
**Photo: Michael Daly, NFP Archive**

While card playing within the home was an important social pastime in traditional times, the men folk also liked to play cards in the local public house. This venue was not considered suitable for women however. The custom of competing for prizes such as turkeys, hams and tins of biscuits, was especially popular prior to Christmas. A more formal type of gathering became fashionable during the 1930s and 1940s. 'Card parties' for invited guests were held in different houses throughout the winter months. Elaborate preparations preceded the hosting of these sessions. The house would be thoroughly cleaned and a substantial supper would be prepared for the visitors. While everybody would be in high spirits at the beginning of the evening, the atmosphere would deteriorate if disagreements arose in the course of the card playing. It was not surprising that a lot of women banned the holding of these parties in their homes if they felt that the disputes might cause permanent tension between the relatives and neighbours who had participated. Elements of rivalry in terms of the quality of the supper and the housekeeping skills of the hostess were another important component of these social gatherings.
It is a matter of some interest that the Catholic clergy frowned on recreational pursuits such as card playing during the Lenten season, and some devout parents implemented these regulations strictly. The pack of cards would be ritually burnt in the fire on Shrove Tuesday night lest any mischievous member of the family might be tempted to break the rule.

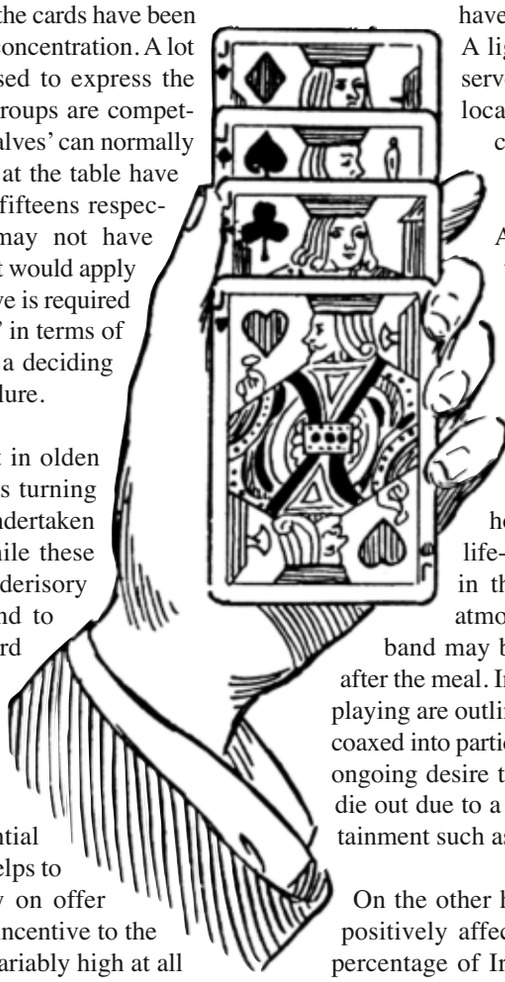
The games of 'forty-five' and 'one hundred and ten' were especially popular in most parts of southern Ireland while people in the west of Ireland preferred to play a game called 'twenty five'. While a series of distinctive rules were determined locally, particular core regulations pertained throughout the entire countryside. This common uniformity meant that people could easily participate in card games at different localities when they were away from home.

The overall objective was to attain the required 'score' relevant to the specific type of game being played. A criteria for success was the quality of the hand in one's possession at a particular time. It was usually necessary to have some trump cards in hand in order to make tricks which would facilitate progress towards winning the game. The turning over of a particular type of card by the dealer would determine that cards from one of the following suits i.e diamonds, hearts, clubs or spades would be 'trumps', the suit deemed most valuable for the duration of that particular game. Picture cards, which depicted a King, Queen, Knave or Joker, as well as the Ace were deemed to be more valuable than numbered cards. A variety of other expressions such as 'cutting for a deal' (a process which determined who would distribute the cards) and 'robbing' (a rule which allowed a player who had been dealt a suitable Ace to swap the worst card in his hand for a 'trump card' for the duration of the game) were also generally used. If it was found that anyone had 'reneged' on 'robbing' (when they were entitled to do so) they would be bitterly challenged. The cards would have to be re-dealt and the game re-played in most instances. If the dealer allocated the incorrect number of cards to the participants (through human error) the same rule would be applied as these games were essentially based on five cards. If a player was given too many they might gain an advantage over their opponent whereas if they were given too few they would likely be at a disadvantage.

Although family members rarely play cards together, in contemporary times its popularity has survived amongst certain groups. A lot of middle-aged and elderly community members travel considerable distances in order to play cards at community halls

or large public bars on designated week nights. These sessions are advertised in the local newspapers. The participants usually favour a type of co-operative game which involves playing as partners for a shared stake. In these instances people play in groups of four, six or more. The scores of the partnered players are then aggregated. Errors are not easily tolerated. Bitter arguments arise between players from time to time if it is felt that an individual has unconsciously cheated or has beaten a partner by not playing a suitable card at a particular time.

The necessity of clarifying the situation at the end of each round, of each game, until the required score has been achieved by a certain couple is all important. Players are not allowed to make an enquiry regarding the score once the cards have been distributed as this indicates lack of concentration. A lot of distinctive terminologies are used to express the 'count'. In instances where three groups are competing, jargon such as 'thirty and two halves' can normally mean that just two sets of partners at the table have achieved scores of thirty and two fifteens respectively, whereas another couple may not have achieved any 'trick' at all. This count would apply in instances when a score of forty-five is required to win the game. Elements of 'luck' in terms of getting good cards are regarded as a deciding factor with respect to success or failure.



It is a matter of some interest that in olden times a variety of practices such as turning one's cap or coat backwards was undertaken in order to change one's luck. While these beliefs might be regarded in a derisory fashion nowadays, people still tend to associate their bad fortune at card games with particular symbols and happenings. For instance, certain seats or partners may be considered lucky or unlucky.

Participants pay a fairly substantial entrance fee at these venues. This helps to finance the generous prize money on offer which in turn acts as an additional incentive to the players. The standard of play is invariably high at all of the tables as some people engage in this pastime five or six nights a week and might not be able to afford to play if they did not win occasionally. The sense of achievement derived from triumphing over others is undoubtedly gratifying to dedicated devotees of the game as well. The often quite elderly participants are usually highly skilled and clever in terms of adhering to the rules and in terms of maximizing the benefits of their cards. Serious errors of judgement rarely occur in the course of these card games due to the experience, concentration, and intense attitude of the players.

While the participants spend a certain amount of time in the analysis and re-construction of the sequence of play at the end of every game, a more thorough procedure or post-mortem takes place at the end of each night. All the formulaic possibilities of different strategies (which could have been employed) are outlined and discussed at length by the players who seem to derive immense satisfaction from these somewhat argumentative investigations. The retentive skills of some of these people seem remarkable insofar as they are capable of re-constructing the exact sequence of events in terms of almost every game which was played at their table during the night. Any type of a written notation system would be regarded as ridiculous.

The proprietor of these venues usually keeps a watchful eye on the players in order to ascertain whether any types of 'tokens' or signals are exchanged between partners. These might involve scratching one's ear, blowing one's nose or coughing in a distinctive manner. The offending partners may even be asked to leave. These rules are invariably appreciated by the genuine participants who favour 'fair playing' conditions. Accordingly as the night progresses the proprietor usually offers a series of ancillary prizes which help to maintain the excitement and impetus for those who have little hope of winning the main stake on offer. A light snack such as tea and sandwiches is often served at the close of play. While a certain amount of local gossip may be outlined and discussed, the conversation is usually dominated by an ongoing lively analysis of the night's proceedings.

A notable feature of these gatherings is the fact that certain husbands and wives (whose spouses do not like this pastime) play cards on a regular basis with other married men and women (whose spouses are not interested in the game either). These types of customary partnerships are accepted as the norm by the others present at the venues. Non-players and players all meet on a celebratory night prior to Christmas however, when the participants and their bona fide life-partners are treated to a more substantial supper in the aftermath of the card game. A party-type atmosphere prevails on these occasions and a local band may be engaged to play some old-type dance tunes after the meal. In the course of this gathering the delights of card playing are outlined and praised and many non-players are often coaxed into participating in the future. This behaviour suggests an ongoing desire to maintain the popularity of the pastime lest it die out due to a contemporary focus on passive forms of entertainment such as watching television or surfing the net.

On the other hand, certain forms of card playing have been positively affected by technological change. For instance, a percentage of Irish country people now play both bridge and poker 'online'. Older men and women may engage in these pursuits in order to combat feelings of loneliness and isolation, while also harbouring hopes and aspirations of winning a portion of the large stakes which are on offer. While this phenomenon suggests the beneficial influence of the internet in terms of preserving a very old pastime (if participants do not gamble too heavily), the solitary nature of playing cards 'online' seems to mirror the changing ideology prevalent in modern Western society generally. The custom of sitting around the fire instilling the intricacies of card playing into young children or strolling into a neighbours' house at night to engage in this activity while also enjoying a friendly chat is no longer a feature of contemporary life in rural Ireland.

**Bibliography**

Mac Con Iomara, Liam, *Ireland of the Proverb*, Dublin: Town House, 2007

*Clipart courtesy FCIT*

# Childhood Days Gone By

by GERALDINE HEALY

In the early 1960s my father brought our family to settle down and rear us in Cork city. We moved into a house called *Clocan Barra Nefa* on the Western Road near what was then the county boundary limits. It was a vibrant neighbourhood, with many other families renting flats around where we lived. Nowadays, the people have grown up, dispersed and only the memories remain. My earliest memories are of this house and its environs, a quiet area bristling with life beneath the surface. The following is a glimpse into what life was like there, at that time.

**Geraldine Healy on the occasion of her First Holy Communion Day 1963 Photos: Courtesy of author**

Settling in, we started to explore our surroundings. Our house was a large house divided into two flats. There were four of us – my parents, my younger sister, Mary and myself. We lived upstairs over a quiet family. Our rooms were on one floor. The furniture was heavy and it seems (looking back) that it had a somewhat Dickensian air about it. Many games were played on these sturdy structures. Childhood games and birthday parties alternated with our school homework. Our dolls were dressed and enjoyed. They were halcyon days of pure bliss and never long enough for all our activities. A bright green telephone provided a lot of fun, with imaginary dialling to relatives and friends. My sister also had a miniature size grand piano and little tunes were often hammered out on it. This was our nest. We were happy and content within its protective environment.

Slowly, we ventured out into the wider world. I loved to go for walks with my father out the Lee Fields. The wind in the Lee Valley was strong and I can remember the force of it blowing against my father and myself as we struggled to advance along the pathway. A solitary swan in the waters added a touch of gracefulness to the scene. The long grey building of Our Lady's Hospital looked down on us and it intrigued me as we walked along the riverbank. A brisk trek out the Lee fields was always nice. After a while we'd turn back; we'd have done 'enough'.

The centre of town was only a quarter of an hour away from *Clocan Barra Nefa*. Back then, going to town was hazardous when we'd take the bus. The double-decker buses in those days, had an open end; with a pole to hold onto at the rear. I refused to climb up the stairs of those vehicles, because they were not well protected. One could 'fall off the bus'. Also, the problem was, that adults smoked on the upstairs section. The bus would carry us across the city and up Richmond Hill to where my Auntie May lived. She had a grocery shop with sweets and an ice cream fridge. I would stand politely as I made my choice of what I would like to have. Not every child was lucky enough to have access to a shop on a regular basis. My auntie always had a dog and sometimes a cat as well, on the go. She had one dog famous in the family lore, called Patsy. Patsy was a black and white cocker spaniel, who had a lovely nature. There was a story confirmed by the conductor of the no 8 bus, that Patsy used to hop on the bus in McCurtain Street, and travel to a relatives house near Military Hill. The clever creature knew which bus stop to alight from the bus!

Altars in honour of Our Lady were set up and festooned with bluebells in the month of May. My relations paid regular trips into the city centre churches as they went about their daily business. As a young child I was often taken along for a visit. In the dark light of Ss. Peter's and Paul's church, my mother lit candles for the holy souls. My parents were devout and passed on the gift of faith to us; which has stayed with me to this day.

All things maritime were present in my consciousness from an early age. My father had been to sea for ten years as a radio officer. Resplendent in his navy uniform he married my mother Grace de Courcey, in the South Chapel in Dunbar Street in 1952. I have memories of early ferry trips from Glasgow (where I was born) arriving at the North Wall in Dublin, and peering out the cabin window as Ireland came into view.


**Geraldine Healy, seated (Right) sitting outside her Auntie May's shop (Marian Stores) 2001**

The seaside was an attraction from an early age. In summertime, like a lot of Cork people, my mother used to pack us up and board the train for a trip to Youghal Strand beach. Music was always present in our house. My father was a lyric tenor and opera airs wafted around the place. Richard Tauber and the songs of Sigmund

Romberg were favourites. Sometimes he boomed out Verdi's *La Donna è mobile* and other times *Questa o quella* could be heard in the early morning as we got ready for school.

Our school was St Brigid's College, on the Mardyke; run by a Miss O'Callaghan. Most of the children in the neighbourhood went there. Situated near the entrance to the university (UCC) gates, our school was a sheltered place. Several classes took place in the one room. There, I learnt my 'ABC's', my tables and read my first history book.

Quiet evenings were spent doing embroidery in the falling shadow of a winter's afternoon. A hurdle before Christmas was the Christmas tests at school. Having got through the exams, one was free for the holidays. A party in our school with a box of *Lemon's* (hard boiled sweets) set the festive season in motion. A glass of rasa (raspberry cordial) was one particular favourite of mine. As we waited for the big day, the crib was decorated and the tree put up. We loved our toys, and had a great selection of them. I can remember: tea sets, a jumping rabbit, pandas, teddy bears - not to mention dolls. Money came in the post for us from Auntie Bridget, (who lived in London), in the form of a crisp English pound note. Two orange ten shilling notes also came from our relatives in the city.

On St Stephen's Day, the 'wren boys' knocked early and I can remember their songs. After Christmas there was the trip to the Variety Stores in Daunt Square, to spend this fortune. It had a toy section upstairs. Waiting there was a veritable Aladdin's cave of small toys: bubbles, mechanical mice, pee wee dolls but the main attraction - 'scraps'. Scraps were glossy shiny bits of paper, representing girls, flowers, comical characters (such as Noddy) and then there were angel scraps as well. These scraps were inserted in pages of books and exchanged with friends for one's collection.

The school summer holidays began at the end of May. Endless days of freedom; they did seem longer then - and the weather better. My father brought us away every Sunday in our little Ford Anglia. We always sang as we went along the road in the car. On visits to the seaside, a picnic was brought. We had a little stove, fuelled by methylated spirits to make tea. I can still remember the smell of the stove. On arrival at the beach, a sheltered spot had to be found at once, where it could boil without the flame extinguishing. I never learnt to swim but the water was always great fun.

Some days stand out from those early years. The events leading up to my First Holy Communion are some of my earliest memories. Getting the dress was a great day, trying out all the lovely white dresses in the Queen's Old Castle, Grand Parade. I longed for a shop-made veil but my mother and my Auntie May had other ideas. They would make my veil. This veil was made with love and I ended up with a veil which was individually hand-crafted and a lot nicer than any factory-made version. I think that I had a light blue coat. My bag was an American bag, brought to me from so far away by another relative. Ss. Peter's and Paul's church was buzzing the morning of our communion and sometimes I revisit that day as a powerful memory. My dad stood at the back of the church and then went directly to work.

My parents gave me a sixpenny bit to 'start me off'. I think that it was one of the first times that I handled money in my life. A wonderful banquet was provided by our teacher, Miss Moloney, with Thompson's cakes and other little treats. Our photograph was taken with the five other children who made their communion that day. We watched our dresses carefully for fear of dirtying them. That night my dress was wrapped away carefully, for my younger sister to wear a few years later. I went to sleep very happy that night. It was a special day to remember.

The library on Grand Parade looms large in my memory from those days. It is a stone building with Celtic motifs and has an adult and a children's lending section. I began with the children's section and progressed with age to the adult section. The first book I got from the library was a book on the crusades about *Peter the Hermit* and *Godfrey of Bouillon*. It started me off on a pattern of library visiting which persists to this day. My perambulations about Cork city still often lead me there. The traffic on Washington Street and the Western Road was less busy then. I remember starting my book *Sense and Sensibility* by the old Ritz cinema and reading it as I walked out along the Western Road.

At the age of ten, I was sent shopping for the first time to town, on my own. I can remember how grown up I felt as I got the messages. A walk down memory lane paints a picture of Patrick Street and its environs back in the 1960s. Shopping was more elegant then and indeed courtesy was of a higher standard among the shop assistants. The big shops were the Munster Arcade and Cash's. The Munster Arcade was housed in the building now trading as Penney's. It was a big department store selling clothes, curtains, haberdashery etc. I can remember a metal container which used to fly up on a wire to the central office to get your receipt and change. Chairs were provided for customers use while the change was being sorted out. It all seemed like magic to me. Ah, memories!

**This building (on the Mardyke) was formerly St Brigid's College, where the author went to school. It now operates as a B&B.**

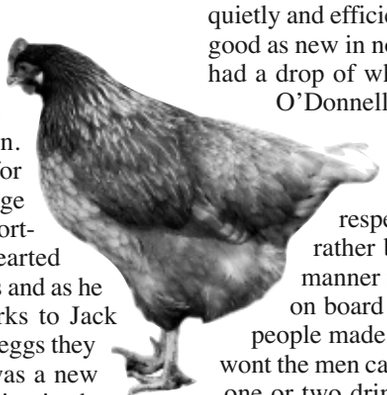
# One More for the Road

by BILLY McCARTHY

*Thanks once again to our faithful contributor Billy MacCarthy.*

The little green and cream Ford 8 van was known far and wide. For most people who lived in the countryside around Knockraha, Watergrasshill and Glenville during the 1950s it signalled the day of the week when housewives stocked up with bread and groceries, for many more it presented an opportunity to catch up with local gossip or news from the city. My father, the van driver known affectionately as 'Paddy the Coop', was regarded as a great authority on all things from Dáil Éireann debates to the ongoing Korean War.

As proprietors of a travelling retail business, many of the characters who were part of our customer base you would need to experience before you could understand or appreciate them. For instance, a major meeting point each Saturday night for those who would be waiting for our van to round the corner was the Pound Cross in Kildinan. Here would gather people from maybe ten families who came to purchase their supplies for the week ahead; some would have a quantity of eggs ranging in amount from half a dozen to five dozen, depending on the number of hens they would be feeding and how well the same birds were laying, or perhaps a few pounds of farmers' butter which they would trade in part payment for the goods purchased. On those Saturday nights the craic here at the cross could only be described as 'mighty'.



I well remember a night when my father was conducting business with Jack Bowen, a bachelor farmer who kept a few hens mainly to keep him supplied with eggs for his own consumption. This gentleman would not have enough eggs for the purpose of trade, but having a good knowledge of his neighbours he would never make this shortcoming known. Dad, being of a light-hearted disposition, began to count the non-existent eggs and as he did so he passed some complementary remarks to Jack about the prolific nature of his fowl and the fine eggs they produced. Jack agreed, and stated that there was a new breed of hen would be coming in from America in the New Year and he hoped to acquire some of them. These birds, he said, would lay twice a day and eat only half the food that the Irish hen would consume. The talk carried on in this vein for a time until Jack discretely paid for his purchases and made way for the next customer. However, down the line awaiting her turn was Mrs. Casey, a widow woman who lived about half a mile from the cross and had heard every word that went on regarding Jack Bowen's super-productive hens. By the time the poor old lady got to the head of the queue she was in such a tizzy that my Dad got a right earful over the likes of Jack Bowen who had no woman in the house and yet he could produce a bucket of eggs for sale every Saturday night. She made out that there wasn't a housewife in the parish who could compete with such industry.

Just around the corner from the Pound Cross was a public house owned by Mr. John O'Donnell, who ran a first-class establishment ably assisted by Mrs. O'Donnell. These premises, together with the open-air dance platform nearby up the road, was the centre of the local social scene. Here the senior male members of the community would meet to quench a well-earned thirst, smoke a pipeful of tobacco and pick up the latest gossip to be taken home for the benefit of the woman of the house. One could also purchase a pair of boot laces, Punch's black and brown boot polish or a large square of Sunlight soap.

A regular at O'Donnell's was the unofficial barber who never travelled out on Saturday night without the tools of his trade, so if some neighbour required a haircut or shave, a chair was borrowed from the bar and brought outside, a jug of warm water was supplied by the proprietor and the barber proceeded to do the honours. I can recall one very fine September evening when daylight was fading and with the job only half done the bystanders were discussing the prospect of whether the task would ever be completed before nightfall. They began to lay shilling bets on the prospects and it's likely that this put pressure on the little man wielding the scissors. The barber, aware of the goings on, unconsciously quickened his pace to ensure the success of his endeavours. 'That will be no problem for Charlie' says one old stager shaking his head to emphasise the opinion, and not having a tooth in his head, the full pipe of tobacco which had just been nicely reddened, departed his mouth and ended up in a roadside drain in a shower of sparks. In the confusion that followed the barber stepped on some uneven ground and staggered, causing the scissors to stab the unfortunate client behind the right ear. The victim let out an unmerciful roar, bringing a dozen patrons rushing from the bar and adding to the confusion. The blood trickled down the side of his neck staining the collar of the clean white shirt that had been put on for the evening and would be expected to be worn to mass the following morning. The debate started as to whether the doctor should be called or if a local farmer would be asked to drive the patient to the hospital in Fermoy. As is so often the situation in such circumstances, voices were raised and a number of arguments were going on at the same time when Mrs. O'Donnell arrived on the scene with a bowl of water, a towel and some Band-Aids. She quietly and efficiently took matters in hand and had the patient as good as new in no time at all. Both the barber and his client each had a drop of whiskey and the haircut was completed in Mrs. O'Donnell's kitchen.

One Sunday regular was a gentleman by the name of James Frogget, a man greatly respected in the neighbourhood. Mr. Frogget was a rather big man who spoke in a somewhat authoritive manner and when he expressed an opinion it was taken on board almost as gospel. On one particular Sunday as people made their way homeward from church, as was their wont the men called to O'Donnell's where they would be served one or two drinks to shorten the journey. Just as they settled down with the first thirst quencher a knock was heard at the door; a knock that didn't comply with the accepted code. Then came the dreaded order, 'Guards on duty, open the door'. The door was duly opened and the local sergeant entered with a self-congratulatory expression on his face. He first approached James Frogget and with a deep frown this upholder of the law addressed the gentleman thus, 'Mr. Frogget, of all the people in the parish you are the last person I would expect to find drinking after hours, now what have you got to say for yourself?' To which the 'found on' in his usual calm and measured tone replied, 'sure don't you know sergeant, it's the regular custom'. These few simple words drew a stony silence from the publican and his few customers which quickly changed to a nervous burst of laughter when James put a half crown on the counter and addressed the wife of the proprietor saying, 'Can I have a pound of black pudding please Mrs. O'Donnell, and I'll be off home to lunch?'

All present appeared to enjoy the comical side of the situation and the clientele, with the exception of Mr. Frogget, quietly finished their drinks and departed the scene, their good record unblemished. The big man having the full attention of the proprietor cleared his throat and declared, 'I'll have one more pint for the road, John, and one for my good friend, Sergeant O'Sullivan.'

# The Metropole, 1897 – Present

by ESTHER MURPHY

The Metropole Hotel when it was opened in 1879 was owned by the Cash and Carry Group Musgraves. It was designed by architect, Arthur Hill, and built by John Delaney & Company Builders, who the year previously were awarded the building contract to build the sweet factory behind the hotel. It was built to the highest standards and opulence of the day. Most guests of the 'Met'( as it is locally known by Corkonians) were travelling salesmen and businessmen. The hotel at the time was a temperance or 'dry' hotel. This had practical advantages for the company as the guests, being mostly travelling salesmen including those employed by Musgraves themselves, accommodating them in an establishment without liquor helped to keep them on the 'straight and narrow.'

**Metropole Hotel, with retail shops on ground floor**
**Photo: A. H. Poole**

Edward VII is reputed to have had tea on the roof of the Metropole when he visited Cork in 1903 for the city's great Exhibition. Down the years many more famous personalities have been guests of the Metropole, including Gregory Peck, James Mason, Frank O' Connor, John Steinbeck, Vittoria de Sica, John Huston, and Walt Disney. However, it was Dawn Adams, the 1950s British film star, who created the greatest stir when she stayed at the Metropole. When she was attending the Cork Film Festival she requested a bath of milk, Jersey cow's milk to be precise. Douglas Vance the famous hotelier of the Metropole refused such a request as the people of Cork were finding it hard to make ends meet. The story made the headlines around the world at the time.

In the 1930s and the early 1940s the hotel was run by Jimmy Musgrave. Jimmy was president of the Irish Rugby Football Union and it is largely because of him that the Metropole has always been associated with rugby. Indeed Musgrave Park is named after him. When Jimmy was killed in 1944 in a motoring accident, Douglas Vance was appointed Manager. Douglas was then a young man in his twenties. He ran the hotel until he retired in 1982. In that time he transformed the hotel into a top class venue. He raised standards and implemented staff training. Indeed he insisted on the front house porters changing their socks and washing their feet daily The importance of not putting one's fingers into the glasses and the washing of their hands after using the toilet was stressed to the bar staff. Douglas Vance believed the hotel needed a liquor licence as he felt this was the way forward. The guests were allowed to bring in their own drink for such events as a wedding and were only charged a small corkage fee. When Douglas Vance pointed out to Stuart Musgrave the amount of alcohol being consumed one Saturday when several weddings were taking place, Stuart could see that everybody was getting very drunk. As there was no control of the amount of alcohol being consumed the Musgraves decided to sanction an application for a licence in 1956.

When the Northern Ireland Troubles began around 1969 much of the Metropole's traditional British business was lost. It was estimated by Douglas Vance in 1972 that the Troubles cost the Metropole between 5,000 and 6,000 bednights that year alone. The Metropole, under the assistant manager, Jim Mountjoy, came up with the idea of starting up a Cork Jazz Festival in 1978. This festival has grown into a world-renowned occasion usually held around the October Bank Holiday. It was initially sponsored by John Player but is now sponsored by Guinness.

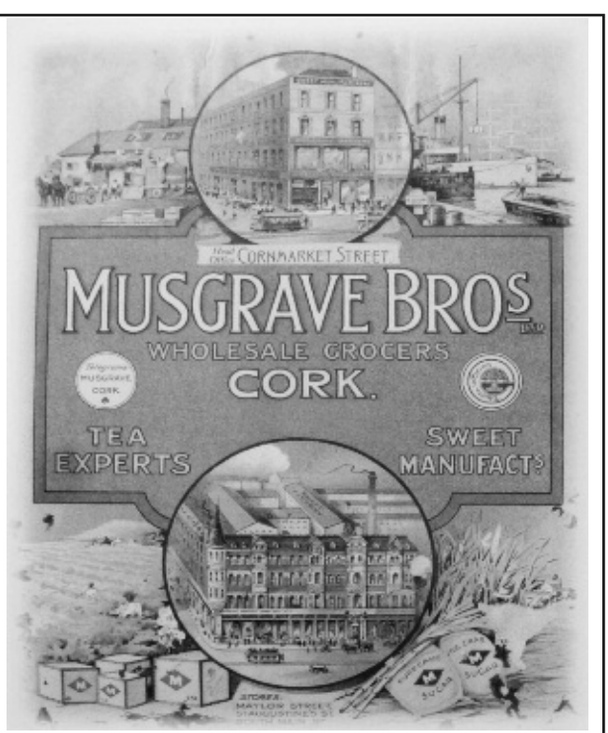



**Image from *A History of Musgrave*, by Dan White**
**(Cork: Musgrave Group, 2001)**

Up until recently there were four shops, two on either side of the hotel entrance. One of the most famous was Hadjii Bey et Cie with its Turkish Delights. Many Corkonians today still remember Hadjii Bey's. Lawson's Mens' Outfitters was trading next to Hadji Bey's and indeed the name of Lawson can still be seen today over the doorway.

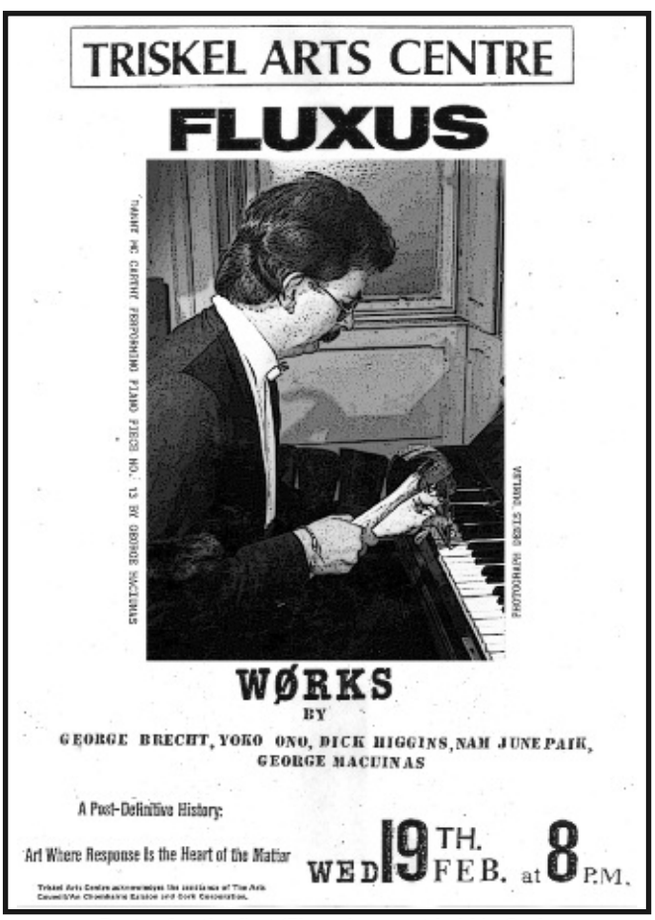
In 1977 the hotel was sold to a consortium of businessmen. In 1999 it was sold once more and is now part of the Ryan Hotels Group. It underwent a major refurbishment costing 9 million euro. A leisure centre was added and all bedrooms were furnished with bathrooms. The Metropole was, and is still today, a landmark of Cork City.

# Sound Art in Cork: A Brief History

by MICHAEL DALY

In America, Nashville is sometimes referred to as 'Music City, USA'. Would it be unreasonable to apply the same title to Cork city within Ireland? It bears repeating – Cork is a small place. It would be considered a town rather than a city by the criteria of many other countries but there is no doubting that despite its size it more than punches above its weight musically speaking. The list of outstanding musicians and bands that have lived and played here over the last 40 years and more is long indeed. But what really sets the city apart, I think, is the sheer diversity of music on offer. Whatever genre of music you like, be it Rock, Bluegrass, Classical, Hip-Hop, Irish Trad, Jazz or all of the above, then there are plenty of opportunities to hear that music being performed live and quite often free of charge. Go for a walk downtown on any night and just open your ears; the streets are buzzing with music.

And happily for those with 'open ears', the city has also witnessed in fairly recent times the appearance of a thriving community of musicians who practice a form of music that, while it could be considered to lie outside the 'mainstream' music world, nevertheless has a tradition and history all of its own. The Sound Art/Improv scene is flourishing in Cork these days and there are a growing number of local and international artists working within the city and performing their work regularly to sizeable audiences. The musics of Sound Art and Improv can be seen as being quite distinct from each other, however there is a large crossover evident here in Cork and artists frequently work between the two areas. What's more, the scene here is attracting attention on an international level and continues to go from strength to strength.




**Poster for the first 'Fluxus' concert held in Cork. Image: courtesy of Danny McCarthy**

But what are Sound Art and Improv? A strict definition of Sound Art is difficult and beyond the scope of this article, since there is still a lot of debate amongst art theoreticians as to its precise nature. Suffice to say, that it is generally a form of music with a defined visual aspect that focuses on the physical act of listening and the nature of sounds in themselves. The phrase 'Sound Art' was coined in the early 80s to describe pieces by visual artists who were producing conceptual works involving sound, and it grew out of various 20th century artistic movements such as Dada, Performance Art and Fluxus in particular (Fluxus was an art movement active in the late 60s and 70s, which was highly irreverent and questioned traditional art making practices in a humorous and provocative way). 'Improv' refers to improvised music which is performed freely, 'in the moment' and without rules.

The scene in Cork has no one particular 'sound' as such and the music's scope is very broad – practitioners may perform using electronics, noise, machinery, the spoken word, self-made instruments, or indeed silence, to make music. Since this music is sometimes made by people from an art rather than a music background, elements such as video, sculpture, and physical performance are all utilized during concerts and there is often a conscious effort to engage the audience visually in some manner.

In Cork the first Sound Art related evenings were put on in the early 1980s by the artist and founding director of the Triskel Arts Centre, Danny McCarthy. An ardent admirer of the Fluxus group, McCarthy had read about the work of its foremost artists for years but never actually heard them performed, so he decided to organize a night and have the pieces presented by both himself and other Cork-based artists in the Triskel. The event was well postered around the city and drew a strong crowd. The audience that turned up did not perhaps know anyone on the bill aside from Yoko Ono but may have guessed they were in for something unusual as the poster depicted McCarthy hammering nails into a piano.

Some of the pieces on offer that night included a piece performed by Gunter Berkus called Guitar Piece where a guitar was kicked out of the auditorium into the street and around the block. Most people in the space followed Berkus on his journey along South Main Street, on to Tobin Street , the Grand Parade and back to the Triskel. Another interesting work presented that night was George Brecht's Danger Music which consisted of a person being shaved onstage. Berkus grew a beard in advance and a microphone was miked up to a razor while McCarthy held an umbrella over both Berkus and the person doing the shaving, Tony Sheehan. McCarthy noted, 'we were all dressed up in suits etc, looking very respectable and all the works were presented in a serious manner which added greatly to the proceedings'. The general audience reaction to the night he reckoned was 'bemused, perplexed but positive'.

Over the next few years further nights of experimental music and performance art were programmed by McCarthy in the Triskel under the title 'Sound Works' and the numbers of people that attended varied from packed houses to a few evenings where there were more performers onstage than audience members. These events were regularly reviewed by the arts critic, Hilary Pyle, in *The Irish Times*, which provided a good deal of encouragement for the artists involved, especially since *The Cork*

*Examiner,* at that time somewhat infrequently reviewed the performances. In the The *Irish Times* of April 2 1987, Pyle called one 'Sound Works' evening 'versatile and entertaining' and went on to describe a piece called 'Newgrange' by Bríd O'Brien, which was inspired by the prehistoric site where the artist drew comparisons between Indian and Celtic religious cults 'in slide images, her own commentary, her own yoga poses, performed with a superb Celtic mask and in an evocative blue leotard'.

Since then Sound Art has become firmly established in the Cork musical environment and there have been many festivals showcasing the form. One of these, the 'Intermedia' festival which ran from 1990 to 2002 in the Triskel, brought recognised sound artists from all over the world to Cork to perform including David Toop, Pan Sonic, Max Eastley and Scanner. Indeed, one of the most enjoyable exhibitions I have ever had the pleasure of going to formed a part of that festival in the year 2000, an exhibition of 'music sculptures' by the French artists the Baschet Brothers. At the opening of this show, most of the gallery-goers, I seem to remember, worked themselves up into a state of giddy excitement as they were encouraged by the brothers to play their beautifully made sound instruments, using things such as metal bars and jets of water to create various sounds, which hugely delighted children and adults alike.

Currently there are lots of Sound Art/Improv related events going on in the city. Upstairs in The Roundy Bar one can find 'Stetlab' a monthly night focusing on improvised music curated by Hanearl Park. Over in the Granary (usually) there is the 'Black Sun' weirdo/outer-limits music event run by Vicky Langan and Paul Hegarty, which features performances of a perhaps slightly more psychedelic flavour and whose aim is 'to present exciting performers to an Irish audience and give local weirdos an opportunity to play in a really cool setting'. And right by Shandon Bells itself on Chapel Street is 'The Guesthouse Project', a house that facilitates 'other kinds of artistic practice outside of the studio' and regularly hosts Sound Art performances. These also sometimes double as Sunday lunches where guests are encouraged to participate by bringing food in to help make the dish of the day, as well as listen to the music of course. The Triskel is also continuing its long held support for Sound Art and programmes events frequently.

I asked the German sound artist, Roland Etzin, founder of the Gruenrekorder record label and former artist in residence at the Guesthouse Project, what was notable about Cork musically. He replied, 'For me Cork has an amazing creative atmosphere with an open mind for input from outside. There is a very good feeling about connecting and supporting artists and also a great chance for beginners to express themselves'. I also questioned Danny McCarthy about what makes Cork different from elsewhere in relation to Sound Art, and he suggested that the special thing about here perhaps is the lack of barriers between the various strands of experimentalism that occur. In Cork, sound artists, contemporary composers, experimental rock musicians and improvisers work side by side, whereas in other places the individual 'scenes' are possibly more separate and there is less of a synergy going on between the different musics. In any case what is beyond doubt is that Cork at this moment is a very fertile place indeed for those seeking to expand their musical horizons as both listeners and performers, and as McCarthy overheard recently during a conversation amongst some music lovers – 'THIS is Cork's golden age of Sound Art'. If that is the case then get out there and hear it while it lasts!

Some websites which may be of interest:
*The Guesthouse Project, http://www.theguesthouse.ie*
*Danny McCarthy, http://www.dannymccarthy.ie*
*Black Sun Music Night, http://www.myspace.com/solnigerire*
*Stetlab, http://www.busterandfriends.com/stet*
*Gruenrekorder Records, http://www.gruenrekorder.de/*
*The Triskel Arts Centre, http://www.triskelart.com*

**Vicky Langan and The Quiet Club perform in the Triskel Arts Centre, December 2009** **Photo: Patricia Klich**

# Seán Ó Cróinín – Bailitheoir Lánaimseartha Béaloideasa[i]

by SEÁN Ó DUINNSHLÉIBHE

Bhí Seán Ó Cróinín (1915-65) fostaithe ag Coimisiún Béaloideasa Éireann mar bhailitheoir lánaimseartha i gcomhair chontae Chorcaí idir na blianta 1938-44 agus 1959-65. Bhíodh sé ag obair as a stuaim féin mar bhailitheoir páirtaimseartha i bparóiste Bhaile Mhúirne (a pharóiste dhúchais) ó am go chéile ar feadh cúpla bliain roimis sin. Is mó an taighde atá déanta ar an gcéad cheann den dá thréimhse seo, .i. na blianta tosaigh úd ó dheireadh na dtríochaidí amach. Ba nós leis an gCoimisiún bailitheoirí a chur ag obair ina gceantar dúchais ar dtúis – rud a luigh le ciall toisc aithne a bheith orthu ann agus eolas acu ar an gcanúint áitiúil is ar thraidisiúin na háite. Níor thaise don Chróiníneach é agus cuireadh ag bailiú é timpeall Bhaile Mhúirne sa bhliain 1938, áit a raibh an Ghaeilge á labhairt go forleathan agus fáil go héasca ar fhaisnéiseoirí ann. Is go dtí Breac-Ghaeltachtaí nó go dtí ceantracha go raibh an Ghaeilge i reachtaibh báis iontu a aistríodh é nuair a bhí an 'phríntíseacht' so istigh; dealraíonn sé ón gcomhfhreagras a mhaireann idir an bailitheoir agus muintir an Choimisiúin go mba dheocra le Seán í mar obair de réir mar a ghaibh sé níosa shia amach ón nGaeltacht nó ó dhúichí lasmuigh dhi go raibh cainteoirí Gaeilge le fáil fós iontu.

**Seán Ó Cróinín**
**Photo: courtesy of Coimisiún Béaloideasa Éireann**

Ar fhágaint a chomharsanachta féin dó, chaith sé seal i mBaile Mhic Óda sarar thug sé aghaidh siar ó dheas ar cheantracha an Sciobairín agus Scoil Mhuire. Casadh seanchaithe air sa dá thaobh tíre a chuaigh i bhfeidhm go mór air, beirt díobh go sonrach: Seán de nGeard ó Bhaile Mhic Óda agus Seán Ó hAodha (*alias* Hamit) ó Chuan Dor. Soinseáladh ansan é go Dúth Ealla, ceantar a bhí gallda go maith fén dtráth san. Bhuail fadhbanna éagsúla leis ansúd – idir easláinte agus chailliúint misnigh – agus níorbh fhuiriste leis bailiú leanúnach a dhéanamh sa dúthaigh ar an abhar san. Seanchas i mBéarla is ea cuid mhaith den bhfómhar a tharlaigh sé ann ach is díol suime é gur aimsigh sé roinnt mhaith des na cainteoirí donna deireanacha Gaeilge a bhí chun comhnaithe timpeall Mhuisire agus Chill Chóirne. Aistríodh é an athuair go dtína bhaile féin mar ar chnósaigh sé seó abhair i mBaile Mhúirne agus i gceantracha máguaird idir na blianta 1942-45 (bhí ina bhailitheoir páirtaimseartha i gcomhair na coda deireanaí den dtréimhse seo). Is ar an obair a dhein sé ansan is túisce a chuimhníonn daoine inniu toisc gur foilsíodh cuid mhaith den abhar so i ndiaidh a bháis, rud a chuir go mór lena theist mar bhailitheoir, a bhaochas san dá dheartháir, an scoláire Donncha Ó Cróinín. Mar leis sin de, tugtar an chraobh, de ghnáth, don abhar a bhailigh sé ó Amhlaoibh Ó Loingsigh, Cúil Aodha.

Chaith an Coimisiún scarúint le Seán sa bhliain 1945 toisc cúrsaí coigiltis aimsir an Chogaidh agus b'éigean don bhailitheoir malairt oibre a dhéanamh, gnó peitril agus an tábhairneoireacht i measc rudaí eile. Fostaíodh arís é mar bhailitheoir lánaimseartha acu sa bhliain 1959 áit ar fhan sé ag obair gur rug an bás air go hobann sa bhliain 1965. Is léir ós na dialanna a choinnigh sé go raibh áthas air filleadh ar an gcúram agus iarracht de chathú air, leis, toisc an oiread san seanchaithe agus scéalaithe a bheith imithe ar shlua na marbh idir an dá linn. Fé bhun fobhlúire a foilsíodh thall is abhus, níl eagar curtha ar an abhar a bhailigh sé le linn na tarna tréimhse, rud a fhágann dall sinn go fóill ar an gcuid seo dá chúrsa mar bhailitheoir. Siúd is nár choiméad sé an méid céanna dialann le linn na tréimhse deireanaí, tá eolas luachmhar le fáil iontu súd, leis, ar dhearcadh an bhailitheora i leith na hoibre a bhí ar siúl aige.[ii]

Cuid d'obair Sheáin ab ea scríobh na dialainne, ar ndóin, agus ní hannamh cuntaisí beo sna dialanna ar chuid des na faisnéiseoirí a casadh air ina shiúltaibh nó neachtar acu ar mhilieu na hinsinte féin. Níor cumadh na cuntaisí uile beag beann ar ghnáthshaol an bhailitheora, áfach, agus is minic a dheintear tagairt iontu d'fhéilte na bliana, cuir i gcás, nó d'eachtraithe a bhain don Chróiníneach. Tá an bailitheoir ag cur is cúiteamh leis féin san iontráil a leanas; scríobhadh í Lá 'le Pádraig 1940 is baineann an plé inti le tábhacht na féile seo an bhliain áirithe úd:

> Lá 'le Pádraig agus Domhnach na Pailme i dteannta ' chéile. Bhíodh sé ráite gur ámharach an rud é an tseamróg agus an phailm do bhualadh umá chéile ar an gcuma san. B'fhéidir go bhfuil sé amhlaidh, ach tá daoine eile ann adeir ná fuil – ach a mhalairt ar fad. Is fíorannamh a thuiteann sé amach mar tá sé céad bliain agus dachad nó mar sin ó tharla a leithéid cheana. Dob'ainnis é staid na tíre seo an uair sin, dar ndóigh. Ceist is ea í le cur ar sheanchaí éigint. B'fhéidir go mbeadh tuilleadh eolais le fáil mar gheall uirthi … (CBÉ 724: 217-18)[iii]

Ag so sampla a bhaintear as an iontráil dheireanach aige i gcomhair na bliana 1959; tá an bailitheoir ag dul siar ar bhóithrín na smaointe Oíche Chaille:

> Sin deireadh leis an mbliain seo 7 go mbeirimíd beo ar an am so arís. Tríd is tríd, níor dhrochbhliain í. Bhí na barraí go maith 7 aon bhliain go mbíonn barraí maithe ag feirmeoirí ní gearánta dhúinn. Do ghaibh libhré éigint tríd an mbaile seo tímpeall uair an mheán oíche, iad ag amhrán 7 ag feadaíol i bhfoirm ag fágaint slán ag an seanabhliain 7 ag fáilthiú roimis an mbliain nua. Do bhíodh banna ceoil againn i mBaile Mhúirne i gcóir na hócáide 7 is minic a bhaineamair macalla as na gleannta i n-am mhairbh na hoíche le píb 7 le drum ... Ach d'imigh an saol san ... Níl aon bhanna ceoil anso 7 sin easnamh mór. Is beag is fiú port feadaíola le gaoith i lár sráide: agus dar ndóigh do bhí cosc ar an obair sin riamh – bheith 'ag feadaíol istoíche ná ag ínsint scéaltha fianaíochta sa ló!' (CBÉ 1653: 238-39)

Buailtear nótaí pearsanta sna dialanna ó am go ham nuair a luann sé a theaghlach féin nó nuair a thagraíonn sé don bhás: tugann sé cuntas corraitheach ar bhás anaibidh a charad, Conchbhar Ó Cuileannáin, mar shampla. Tá tagarthaí don saol mór le fáil ann, leis: cuir i gcás, nochtar i ndiaidh ar ndiaidh sna dialanna luatha an suaitheadh a lean an Tarna Cogadh Mór. Ní fada go mbíonn gannchúise na hÉigeandála ag cur isteach ar obair an Chróinínigh: 'Ní ró-mhaith an earra an choinneal aon uair agus is beag a shíleamair tamall go mbeimís ag brath uirthi. Ach tá sé tagaithe chomh fada leis sin anois – agus níosa shia, fiú amháin, mar tá na coinnle gannchúiseach, leis' (CBÉ 944: 369). Is éachtach an díolaim scéalta agus seanchais a bhailigh Seán Ó Cróinín – lán 30,868 leathanach lámhscríofa – ach is é an trua é go bhfuil cuid mhaith den abhar so fós gan foilsiú. Stór eolais de shaghas eile is ea na dialanna a choinnigh sé mar a míniodh thuas; is í an tábhacht is mó a bhaineann leo ná an radharc a gheibhimid iontu ar theacht in inmhe an Chróinínigh mar bhailitheoir agus ar a chúrsa sa ghort.

**Breis léitheoireachta**


Briody, Mícheál, 2007, *The Irish Folklore Commission*, Helsinki: Finnish Literary Society.

Ó Cróinín, Donncha, 1964-65, 'Seán Ó Cróinín (1915-1965) Bailitheoir Béaloideasa' in *Béaloideas* 32-33, 1-42.

Ó Duinnshléibhe, Seán, 2008, 'An tAmharc Déanach ar an Laom-luisne: Seán Ó Cróinín agus Seán Ó hAodha' in *Béascna*, 4 (2008): 33-63.

Ó Duinnshléibhe, Seán, 2009, 'Seal ar Seachrán: Siúlta Sheáin Uí Chróinín in Iardheisceart agus i dTuaisceart Chorcaí' in *Béascna*, 5 (2009): 98-122.


[i] Ba mhaith liom baochas a ghabháil leis an nDr Ríonach uí Ógáin, stiúrthóir na Cartlainne i Lárionad Uí Dhuilearga de Bhéaloideas na hÉireann agus Cnuasach Bhéaloideas Éireann, An Coláiste Ollscoile, Baile Átha Cliath as cead a thabhairt dom na sleachta as dialanna Sheáin Uí Chróinín (agus an grianghraf) a thugtar san alt so d'fhoilsiú. Tá an t-abhar uile a bhailigh an Cróinineach ar coimeád sa Chartlainn. Ina theannta san, tá mo bhaochas ar Chiarán Ó Gealbháin as an alt a lé agus as leasuithe áirithe air a mholadh.

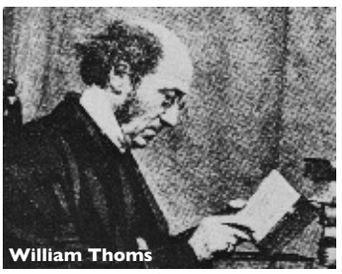
[ii] 19 dialann (cóipleabhar) ar fad atá againn uaidh. Baineann a bhformhór mór (17 cóipleabhar) leis an gcéad thréimhse (ón mbliain 1938 amach, feic CBÉ 622; 673; 724; 725 agus 944); tagann deireadh leis na cuntaisí cín lae seo gan choinne ar 28-02-'42. Níor scríobh sé ach dhá cheann i rith na tréimhse deireanaí (ón mbliain 1959 i leith, feic CBÉ 1653). Tagann deireadh leis an gcuntas cín lae déanach gan choinne ar 30-09-'60.

[iii] Bhí an tairngreacht fé chaibidil go mór i mbéal an phobail um an dtaca so; cuir i gcás, tagraíonn Seán Ó Ríordáin di ina dhialainn féin mar leanas: 'Dé Domhnaigh, 17 Márta: ... Bhí an t-seamróg agus an phailm á gcaitheamh i dteannta a chéile ag daoine indiu. Tá tarngaireacht ann ā rádh go mbeidh Éire saor an uair a thuitfidh an phailm agus an t-seamróg ar an lá gcéadna. Do dhein an Taoiseach tagairt do'n tarngaireacht san ag craobhs-gaoileadh dho go dtí's na Stáit Aontuighthe aréir: *An old saying has it that this country will be free when the Palm and the Shamrock – that is when Palm Sunday falls on Patrick's Day. That has occurred I believe only once in the last 140 years. It occurs again this year.* Ach níl Éire saor fós ...', Seán Ó Ríordáin, 'Cín Lae, 1940' in Mícheál Ó Cearúil (eag.), *Aimsir Óg* 2000 (Cuid a hAon), 85-114 [101]. Tá normálú áirithe déanta agam ar litriú na sleachta a thugtar san alt, ach ní dheintear aon chur isteach ar dheilbhíocht na canúna iontu.

---


*Seán Ó Cróinín (1915-65), a native of the Ballyvourney Gaeltacht, worked for the Irish Folklore Commission as a full-time folklore collector in Co. Cork during the years 1938-44 and 1959-65. Now highly regarded for the Irish-language material which he collected, Seán occasionally experienced difficulties in finding suitable informants, particularly in the early years when he found himself working in districts in which Irish had not been the language of the community for many decades. Nevertheless, he remains a collector of the first rank as the volumes edited by his brother, Donncha Ó Cróinín, amply attest; the lore and tales collected from Amhlaoibh Ó Loingsigh, Coolea, are a case in point. As well as collecting folklore, Seán was required to keep a field diary during his full-time employment with the Commission. Unfortunately, these diaries do not span the entire length of his career; he kept field accounts consistently in the course of the early years of both periods of employment, but the diaries break off without explanation in 1942 and 1960 respectively. These journals furnish the reader with lively and vivid descriptions of the time he spent in the field seeking out informants, as well as providing valuable insights into his work methods once the necessary rapport between collector and tradition bearer had been established. Allusions to Seán's personal life and to events in the outside world occur throughout the diaries; for instance, the journals he kept in the first phase of his career contain numerous references to the Second World War and its effects on Ireland. Seán died unexpectedly at his home at Casement Street in Macroom, on March 14 1965 and was buried locally. He was the only collector working for the Commission to die 'in harness'.*

*Seán Ó Duinnshléibhe is a Lecturer in the Department of Modern Irish, University College Cork and is on the editorial board of 'Béascna', the UCC Journal of Folklore and Ethnology.*


William Thoms

# What is Folklore?

by DR STIOFÁN Ó CADHLA

*Dr. Stiofán Ó Cadhla, Ceann Roinne, Head of Roinn an Bhéaloidis, Department of Folklore and Ethnology at UCC, offers an academic snapshot of the many meanings of folklore.*

When a monk in Mount Melleray was asked whether he believed in God or not, his answer was that it is a monk's calling to think about that question. It may well be a folklorist's calling to consider whether folklore exists or not. I say this primarily because folklore is, like all other ideas, the product of a certain era. It is a construction or an invention, a creative result of international intellectual work and very Victorian social engineering and imagination. It is not the oldest nor the only word of course just as English isn't the only language. It was not handed down readymade on a tablet from the skies. The English word was coined in 1846 by a genteel English antiquarian called William Thoms. He considered it 'a good Anglo-Saxon compound'. Compounds of a different kind were being mixed in the construction of Queen's University near the County Gaol on the western road at the same time. More than a century later in 1959 an American firm published *Funk and Wagnall's Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend* (edited by Maria Leech) in which they give no less than twenty one definitions of folklore. There is little doubt but that this number could easily be increased. Some are in agreement with each other but some contradict each other completely.

Here is a brief survey of some of the Funk and Wagnall ideas in summary. Folklore is (i) traditional creations of peoples, primitive and civilized (J. Balys) (ii) old-fashioned, grey or white-headed (M. Barbeau) (iii) myths, legends, folktales, proverbs, riddles, verse and a variety of other forms of artistic expression whose medium is the spoken word (W. Bascom) (iv) in a purely oral culture everything is folklore (B.A. Botkin) (v) the cumulative store of what mankind has experienced, learned, and practiced across the ages as popular and traditional knowledge, as distinguished from so-called scientific knowledge (A.M. Espinosa) (vi) pretty much what one makes of it (G. M. Foster) (vii) beliefs and practices, customs and observances of general currency (T.H. Gaster) (viii) folklore may crop up in any subject, any group or individual, any time, any place (M. Harmon) (ix) the study of the unwritten literature of any group, whether having writing or being without it (M. J. Herskovits) (x) literary and intellectual phases of culture which are perpetuated primarily by oral tradition: myths, tales, folk song, and other forms of oral traditional literature; folk speech and dialect as the medium of these materials; folk music and folk dancing because of their intimate relationship to folk song; also customs, beliefs, and 'folk science' (G. Herzog) (xi) myths, legends, traditions, narratives, superstitions, religions, rituals, customs, dances and explanations of nature and man, acceptable to individual ethnic groups in each part of the world at any historical moment (R.D. Jameson) (xii) the science of traditional popular beliefs, tales, superstitions, rimes, all dealing pre-eminently with the supernatural, and picturization of these beliefs in festive customs, games, mime, song, dance (G. P. Kurath) (xiii) the accumulated knowledge of a homogeneous unsophisticated people (M. Leach) (xiv) ambiguous (K. Luomala) (xv) ancient popular beliefs, customs, traditions, which have survived among the less educated elements of civilized society (xvi) a lively fossil which refuses to die (C. F. Potter) (xvii) the study of verbal materials in all their varieties (M. W. Smith) (xviii) materials that are handed on traditionally (A. Taylor) (xxiv) something handed down from one person to another and preserved either by memory or practice rather than written record (S. Thompson) (xxv) various genres of orally transmitted prose and verse forms existent in primitive groups (E. W. Voegelin) (xxvi) art form, comprising various types of stories, proverbs, sayings, spells, songs, incantations, and other formulas, which employ spoken language as its medium (R. A. Waterman).

Some forty years later in 1998, an American Regina Bendix argued in *The Journal of American Folklore* that the word carried too many negative connotations to be useful to the study of culture at all. While it is instructive to consider all meanings and nuances it is also clear that we should use the habitual or orthodox nomenclature critically. It can also define people and their behaviour in subtly negative and derogatory ways.

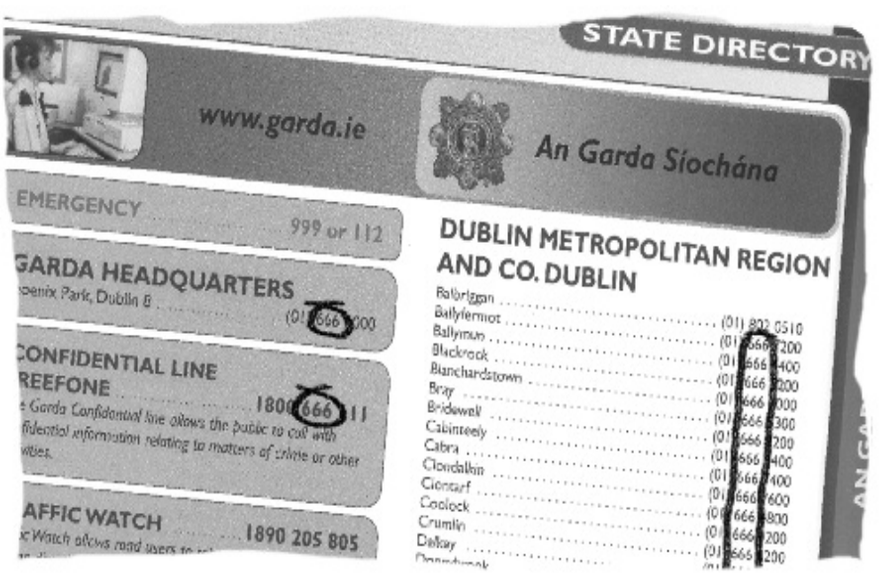
# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

*In response to Marie-Annick Desplanques' 'Photograph & Story' piece in Archive #13 which showed a '666' emergency phone number in a lift at the County Hall, Mary Ellen Cronin writes -*

Dear Marie-Annick Desplanques,

I enjoyed your photograph and the story in the 'The Archive' as well as the rest of the magazine. I enclose a leaf from the phone directory. Have you ever noticed the numbers?

Thank you and God Bless
Mary Ellen Cronin



# BOOK REVIEWS

**The Rambling House** by The Court Writers Group, published by The Court Writers Group, Cork 2008
**Price: €10**

*The Rambling House* is a wonderful selection of photographs, poetry and prose from the Court Writers group at O'Connell Court, a project that provides supported sheltered accommodation for older people in Cork City. Gently and eloquently the book supplies the reader with the benefits of a wisdom that comes from the sharing of collective lifetime experiences by the members of the group. They impart their observations in a rich tapestry of words and images, which is aesthetically very satisfying. The beautiful colours of the photography illustrate the age-old search for contentment, which can be found speckled throughout the pages of this lovely publication. 'Happiness is peace of mind, to sit in a quiet place and be at one.' There is courage in these pages - 'The last days of my life stare me in the face, go forward relentless.'

In these pages we read of the intensity of love, the exhilaration of youthful holidays, the quiet enjoyment of a peaceful home and the spirit of fortitude to accept whatever each day brings. There is a peace in this book that soothes. I like this book. It will be a resource of serenity to come back and dip into, time and time again. Proceeds from this book are being given to the Cork Simon Community.

***by Geraldine Healy***

---

**Walking Shandon - A guide to Cork's historic heart** by Peter Foynes, published by Cork Butter Museum, Cork 2007
**Price: €5**

Invaluable as a guidebook for tourists to Cork city. The easily followed historical walk charted in the booklet starts off at the site of the Old Custom House that now forms part of the Crawford Art Gallery in Emmett Place, joins Christy Ring Bridge and continues up Mulgrave Road.

As well as charting the history of Cork's famous Butter Exchange and the area's important cattle trade, it also gives an historical account of the area's local history, such as: the Dominican Order, North Infirmary, Skiddy's Home, The Green Coat School, North Presentation Convent School and The North Cathedral. Of particular interest are the many illustrations that include: old maps, development plans, documents and photographs that highlight the many physical changes that have taken place over time.

***by Breda Sheehan***

---

**Cork City – A Field Guide to its Street Furniture** by Tom Spalding, published by Finchfortune, Cork 2009
**Price: €15**

Each page of this book provides loads of information. Tom Spalding shows us street furniture and its chequered history in a very entertaining and educational way. How many have noticed the two shell-shaped drinking water fonts near the base of the statue of Fr Theobald Mathew standing on St Patrick Street since 1864?

The multifaceted structures made by several wrought and cast iron foundries around Cork, include well-known objects such as: ornate railings & gates, bollards, wheelguards & mooring posts, pillar letter boxes, milestone-markers and boundary markers, fonts & fountains and even bench seating. The 130 colourful photographs also help to identify the actual locations of the street furniture for the native and tourists alike. Many of the iron products cast during the eighteenth century especially, display the wonderful craftsmanship and artistic expression of a bygone age. Perhaps it will stimulate some, to go and explore the terrain that houses the living street architecture of Cork's beautiful past and present.

***by Noel O'Shaughnessy***

---

**Hidden Cork: Charmers, Chancers and Cute Hoors** by Michael Lenihan, published by Mercier Press, Cork 2009
**Price: €19.99**

When I first picked up this book I was struck by the physical appearance of the book, with its curious water colour photographs on the cover, the quality of the paper itself and the many beautiful illustrations and photographs throughout the book. The book is unashamedly a popular history and miscellany as it hops from century to century and place to place.

It details the many weird and wonderful individuals that have called Cork home throughout the centuries from the outlaw Art Ó Laoighre, the quack doctor Baron Spolasco to the infamous poisoner Dr Cross. It also covers the major events and strange occurrences that make up the history of Cork, from the Muskerry Tram Crash to the Big Freeze and Flood of 1820. One of the strangest stories is that of the Battle of Starlings in 1621 when a massive flock of Starlings descended upon Cork city and for several days attacked each other in massive airborne battles *(for more information on this story see The Archive #13, pgs. 22-23)*. I was also struck by the enthusiasm and genuine affection the author has for his native city which comes across on every page. All of the illustrations and photographs come from the author's personal collection. I would recommend this to anyone looking for an entertaining introduction to the history and heritage of Cork.

***by Gearóid O'Donnell***

**Horse trough on the grounds of St. Finbarr's College, Farranferris**
**Photo: Michael Daly, NFP Archive**

# THE URBAN LANDSCAPE


Washington Street, November 2009 Photo: Caroline Murphy

# The Northside Folklore Project


## Northside Community Enterprises Ltd

**St Finbarr's College, Farranferris, Redemption Road, Cork, Ireland**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Tel:** | **+353 21 422 8100** |
| **Fax:** | **+353 21 422 8199** |
| **e-mail:** | **nfp@indigo.ie** |
| **website:** | **http://www.ucc.ie/research/nfp** |
| **Research Director:** | **Dr Marie-Annick Desplanques** |
| **Project Manager:** | **Mary O'Driscoll** |



| | |
|---|---|
| **PROJECT TEAM:** | |
| **Layout:** | **Michael Daly** |
| **Editorial Team:** | **Marie-Annick Desplanques, Mary O'Driscoll, Noel O'Shaughnessy** |
| **Project Researchers:** | **Tom Doig, Geraldine Healy, Gráinne Mcgee, Esther Murphy, Majella Murphy, Gearóid O'Donnell, Breda Sheehan** |
| **Printing:** | **Aleo print & design www.aleoprint.com** |

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The Northside Folklore Project would like to thank: FÁS, Susan Kirby; Management and staff of Northside Community Enterprises, Fr John O'Donovan, Noreen Hegarty, Pat O'Leary and John O'Leary; Dept of Folklore and Ethnology, UNIVERSITY COLLEGE CORK, Dr Diarmuid Ó Giolláin, Dr Stiofán Ó Cadhla, Dr Clíona O'Carroll and Bláthnaid Ní Bheaglaoí; Cork City Council; Cork City Heritage Officer, Niamh Twomey; Cork County Heritage Officer, Sharon Casey; Cork City and County Archives, Brian McGee; City Library; Crawford Art Gallery, Dawn Williams; Frameworks Films, Eddie Noonan, Emma Bowell and Rob O'Halloran; the Musgrave Group, Olivia Trought; Michael Lenihan; Julia Thornton; Danny McCarthy, Patricia Klich, Vicky Langan; Caroline Murphy and Eamon Morrish.





THE Archive