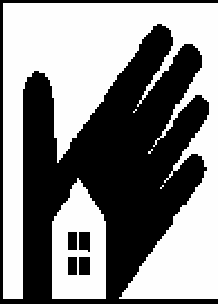


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JOURNAL OF THE NORTHSIDE FOLKLORE PROJECT

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PHOTOGRAPH & A STORY



Devotions

Mrs P.Kelly

Mrs P. Kelly of Ballinlough remembers the tradition of Cork people decorating windows of their homes on Feast Days with flowers, candles, holy pictures and statues.

She writes: "There is an old row of cottages in Ballinlough Rd. on the Southside whose occupants keep this custom alive. In this neighbourly way they celebrated Corpus Christi this June of the Millennium Jubilee Year. I have enclosed a photo for you as a record of this event."

The Northside Folklore Project



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FIELD TRIP TO MUCKROSS HOUSE

By Dolores Horgan

For one of our Folklore fieldtrips we decided to visit Muckross Estate, within Killarney National Park. On our arrival our first point of reference was Muckross House itself, completed in 1843 by Henry and Mary Herbert, who were married on September 2nd 1837 and had four children. This Victorian mansion, of grey limestone taken from a quarry close by, is softened by the lawns to the front, with the mountains and the famous lakes to the rear.

Sheila, our guide for the morning, greeted us in the entrance hall. The warm oakwood flooring added to the charm of this particular room. A feature of the house is its use of local varieties of wood in the making of furniture. The oval table, writing desk and davenport in the library are good examples of inlaid Killarney Furniture, often called "Muckross Abbey Furniture" because nearly all the pieces include a view of nearby Muckross Abbey. During the 19th and early 20th centuries the woods of yew, holly and arbutus were used locally to produce this inlay work.

In the main hall the Herbert family coat of arms is carved on the largest of the three sideboards which stands against the end wall. These richly carved figures and motifs of hounds, fish and hare reflect the pastimes of the estate owners. It is recorded in 1884 that the Muckross forest was let for 2,000 pounds, and the sport of deer stalking became so popular that the lessor was able to lease the stalking rights for considerable sums. Trophies of the hunt adorn the walls, each bearing an inscription detailing the weight of the animal, the date and name of the person who shot him. In pride of place over the chimney-piece are antlers of the Great Irish Elk, a species which became extinct over 10,000 years ago.

The rooms we visited were the dining room, library, drawing room, and main hall which doubled up as a ballroom. You also have a billiard room, gentleman's dressing room, bathroom, the south bedroom and the children's staircase. The views are beautiful to the back of the house, overlooking the lakes and mountains. The large windows allowed maximum light into rooms and were a necessity at a time before electricity existed. Items such as Chinese prints and Venetian Glass were brought back from trips abroad. There was also a teapoy, a circular wooden box where the tea was kept under lock and key in the drawing room, under the supervision of the lady of the house. Tea was such an expensive item that the servants would bring the boiling water to her in the drawing room, where the tea would then be brewed before being served up.

Of the family portraits, one, also in the drawing room, is said to be a copy of a portrait of Catherine, Countess of Desmond. According to legend, she survived to the ripe old age of at least one hundred and forty. This meant she lived through the reign of seven British monarchs and had been alive for part of the reigns of two more. Mary Herbert was



Northside Folklore Project Staff

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also a very fine artist and her watercolours were on display. The room used by Queen Victoria on her visit to Muckross House was very impressive. In 1855 it was announced that she would visit in 1861. Over the next six years the entire estate was prepared for the visit; she stayed only two days. One of these preparatory works was a fire escape. The queen was so afraid of fire that she would only sleep on the ground floor and the fire escape led from her window into the walled garden - it was used in later years by the gardeners delivering flowers.

In its heyday, the basement and kitchen area would have been a hive of activity, today it houses folk-life exhibits. These items illustrate the many aspects of the lifestyles and crafts of the people. In contrast to wooden floors "upstairs", flagstones cover the basement floors where light from two large windows in the kitchen highlight the sheen on the polished stone and the copper cooking pots hung alongside the range.

Copper ore was mined over four thousand years ago at Ross Island. In other parts of Killarney National Park you can see standing stones, fulachta fiadh, a stone circle and ringforts from the early Christian Period. A promontory fort on Dundag Point is suggested by the presence of a souterrain and possible fortifications. A monastery, Innisfallen on an island in Lough Leane is believed to have been founded by Faithliu in the 7th century. The historic "Annals of Innisfallen" were completed here between the 12th and 14th centuries. To the north, the monastic site of Aghadoe was founded around the same time.

In the afternoon we saw the traditional farms depicting the lives of the tenants on the estate. To a great extent the lives of country people were ruled by the natural world around them. Each season brought its own set of activities in the house, in the farmyard and on the land. These activities were governed by the weather and the requirements of the animals and the crops. The majority of our group grew up in cities and towns and so have little experience of farms, especially in the pre-electricity era. In Munster a holding of twenty acres constituted a small farm; that is a dwelling house with outhouses attached to it - close by was the labourer's cottage. Farming was mixed, with some dairying and tillage and of course chickens and maybe geese. Then we moved on to the medium size farm, one of forty to fifty acres. The large farmhouse with over fifty acres was com-

mon in Munster, Leinster and parts of east Connaught, and was made more elaborate by the addition of a courtyard. The house and outhouses to the rear are built around a rectangular farmyard. The holding consists of wheat, barley, oats, tillage and dairying. Some common pieces of farm machinery are to be seen and are very interesting as they are grouped according to the seasons of the year and are a far cry from the elaborate machinery used today. A mid-eighteenth century development in several parts of Ireland was the burning of lime in kilns, used in improving the fertility of the land and for the wash that gives the farmhouses their distinctive white colour.

Along the path linking all the various examples of farms, we also passed the well, with rituals dating to pre-Christian times and the water-pump along the road, both of which were vital to the community. In this rural setting the blacksmith was considered one of the most important craftsmen for the farmer. The forge was the meeting place for the men as they brought their horses to be shod and their tools to be mended. In this place during the cold wet winters, with its roaring hot fire, stories and current news of the countryside abounded as the blacksmith worked at his forge; repairing spades, shovels, slanes, forks, sickles, scythes along with gates, bolts, hasps and hinges. A carpenter's workshop is also represented, showing where tables, chairs, presses, beds and smaller items such as cupboards, knife boxes and salt boxes were made. The carpenter also made barrows, carts and wheels, windows and doors as well as structural woodwork in house building.

The interiors of all the farmhouses represented, are furnished in the traditional manner and a *bean an tí* is within each one. They talk about how the women organised the family, which could consist of ten or twelve children to feed and clothe, and how she looked after and worked with her husband, who worked long hours outdoors in all types of weather. There were also duties in the house which required specific skills. The woman who could sew was able to recycle material in a number of ways, repairing and handing down clothes from one child to another and making bedclothes and curtains out of the remainder. Knitting was also a very important skill and jumpers and cardigans were also ripped and the best wool reused. Weaving in homes went on to become associated with "first industries" or cottage industries in Ireland. Crocheting and lace-making played a valuable part in the "better off" houses, or when the children were all grown up and there was more spare time such as in the long summer evenings. Often it was the lady of the "big house" who passed on these skills. One of the few ways the woman of the house could earn some money for herself, ("pin money"), was through rearing chickens, making butter from milk and weaving. Time was set aside for women to gather in each others' kitchens, where techniques were handed down from one generation to the next. At the same time stories, poems, songs and local gossip were also passed on.

Life in the farm house was illustrated by showing us the implements used in the house at that time, and the methods the housewife used in carrying out her daily tasks. We were given a detailed rundown by the women in each house of how the farmhouses were built, using stones and wood with earth and turf for the roof along with straw. One of the women told us stories of the local matchmaker from her area

called Dan Paddy Andy, a person of high standing in the community. As we left the area of the traditional farms, a vintage bus passed by on its rounds, picking up weary travellers along the road running between the houses.

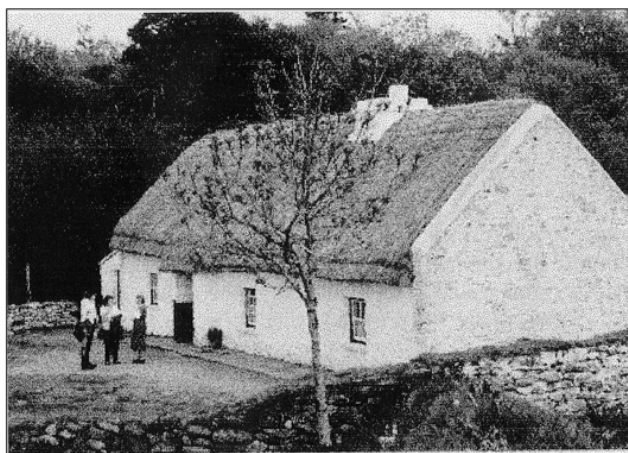
The aims of Muckross House and Traditional Farms Trust are to preserve the heritage and folklife of a country estate and community and it is one of the top tourist and home visitor attractions in the country. Plans for the future include expanding on areas of interest for school tours. The house holds an archive with historical documents which are of benefit to researchers and students. The development of the traditional farms section within the grounds means that traditional methods of farming have a place where they can be implemented and researched, and where the public can gain an appreciation for them.

Thanks to Muckross House and the Traditional Farms for hosting our tour and to Pat Dawson, and Toddy Doyle.



Muckross Traditional Farms

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Muckross Traditional Farms

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“THE BRAVEST HAND IN IRELAND”

By Stephen Hunter

The wail of Highland war pipes announced the arrival in Munster of a fabled warrior...

A late-Georgian house (built about 1800) on a ridge above Blackpool's eastern edge suggests a line of research stretching back to an almost-forgotten battle. The property, originally known as Pope's Hill House, was renamed "Knocknanuss" in the 19th century by its then owners, an O'Connell family of North Cork origin, to commemorate Munster's bloodiest recorded battle. This engagement was fought three miles east of Kanturk, on 13 November 1647, between 7,000 Royalist/Confederate and 5,500 Parliamentary troops. Cnoc nanDos, a long sloping escarpment rising some three hundred feet above the adjoining plain, is variously translated as "The Hill of Fawns", "Shrubhill" and "Hill of Sighs". It resulted in some 2,500 dead on each side, saw the death of more senior Parliamentary officers than any other battle of the Civil Wars and witnessed the demise under mysterious circumstances of the Royalist's deputy-commander, Alasdair MacColla Ciotach MacDonald ("Colkitto"), better known in Munster as Alexander McDonnell or "McEllestum". That such a large battle and so imposing a figure are little-remembered in Cork seems odd. Colkitto has usually been relegated to footnote status by historians, yet an examination of his life reveals a significant figure, celebrated in a major legacy of folkloric traditions and Scots Gaelic poetry.

Portents of war attended the birth of Alasdair MacColla on the Hebridean island of Colonsay one night in 1605, when all the weapons in the house shook and rattled. His parents were Coll Gilliespeck Ciotach MacDonald and Mary MacJames of Smerby. Coll was chieftain of the MacIain Mór (Clan Donald South) branch of the Clan Donald confederation of tribes. Their motto, "By sea and by land", says much about their far-flung territories, distributed through the Highlands and Western Isles of Scotland and the north of Ireland, principally Antrim, where they had been since the 14th century. The "Plantation" of Ulster by mainly Lowland Scots Protestant settlers from the early 17th century onwards is famous; the role of Gaelic-speaking Highlanders here is less well known. Many came as "galloglasses" – from "galloglaigh", "foreign friends" – in search of military employment with Irish chieftains. They formed the spearhead of some of the most effective Gaelic Irish forces, such as that which destroyed an English army at Áth in Chip, Co. Roscommon, in 1270. Later waves of these guests were known as "New Scots" and "Redshanks", from a supposed resemblance of the red legging-clad fighters to a common wading bird.

Alasdair grew up on Colonsay, spending time with kinfolk on Rathlin Island and in Ballypatrick, Co Antrim. He is said to have eaten a toad as a child, an act foretoking a martial destiny. The erosion of Gaelic autonomy by central authority, threats to the free practice of his Catholic faith and the prolonged struggle with his hereditary enemies, Clan Camp-



Knocknanuss House, Blackpool.

NFP Archive

bell and the House of Argyll, (Gaels, but supporters of the militant Presbyterian Covenanters) all shaped his mindset. A huge dark-haired man, nearly seven foot tall, he became a renowned leader determined to recover lost MacDonald lands in Kintyre and elsewhere. Fleeing Scotland in 1640, he settled in Antrim, where he led a small Irish/Highland army to victory over larger Planter detachments at the Battle of the Laney, Ballymoney, Co. Antrim, Feb.1642. This saw the first recorded use of the "Highland Charge" tactic, which he may well have invented. In June 1642 he was defeated and badly wounded at Drummacquinn, Co. Donegal. After convalescing in the house of one Father Crilly, Alasdair negotiated with the Covenanting army in Ulster. A folkloric tale supplies a striking motif for his career. Invited to a banquet at Dunluce Castle, he intercepted a note ordering his murder and ignoring protocol, he entered the function heavily armed. There was no need to part with his sword, he said, as it was in the keeping of the bravest hand in Ireland, and when asked the identity of the second-bravest, he replied, "This one", moving the weapon to his left hand before departing. The nickname "Colkitto", a contraction of "Coll Ciotach", can be seen as referring to an ambidextrous warrior. "Ciotach" – "left-handed" – also has associations with a crafty person, which his father certainly was. The appellation may have been transferred from father to son.

As the Civil War escalated, Colkitto led raids from Antrim to the Hebrides. In June 1644 he sailed for Scotland from Passage and Ballahack in Co. Waterford with 1700 men, Northern Irish MacDonnells/MacDonalds and their Irish allies, notably O'Cahans. They were courageous infantry, many with bitter family memories of dispossession in Ireland or Scotland and some with experience in Europe's brutal Thirty Years War. One tradition holds that while marching to the harbour Alasdair killed a travelling weaver in obedience to an ancient Highland superstition that at the start of a campaign the leader

should slay the first living thing that crossed his path. Such a sacrificial killing has obvious roots in pre-Christian heroic beliefs. The story could contain a core of truth, or it could have been adopted from a “hostile” tradition; it is exactly the sort of thing that many English-speakers wanted to believe about savage Papist Gaels. Another variant of the “bravest hand” story appears: Before embarking Alasdair delivered a rousing speech to his followers, ending, “And if all else fails, I have the bravest sword-hand in the whole of Ireland!” When asked the predictable question, he paused a moment, then threw his sword high into the air with his right hand, catching it by the hilt with his left and shouting, “It’s this one!”

At the precise instant that Alasdair landed in Scotland a sound like a huge thunderclap was supposedly heard throughout the land. Possibly a freakish meteorological occurrence, it was widely believed to have been a warning of things to come. It has been suggested that the 6th century period advanced for the death of the semi-legendary British Celtic resistance hero Arthur coincided with major volcanic eruptions in various places. The idea that momentous human events are accompanied by violent natural phenomena has enduring potency.

King Charles I’s deputy in Scotland, James Graham, Marquis of Montrose, assumed leadership of the Royalist forces, with Alasdair second in command. Many Highlanders and some Lowland horsemen were recruited and there followed “The Year of Miracles”, six major victories in a war of constant movement against much more numerous and better-equipped Covenant forces. Inverlochy was fought on 2 Feb 1645, the Feast of the Purification of the Virgin, Candlemas Day. Falling right after St. Brigid’s Day and the great Celtic festival of Imbolc, the date possessed special resonance. This resounding Clan Donald victory, revenge for decades of humiliation, came to occupy a fabled place in the clan’s mythology, and among other anti-Campbell Highlanders. A Royalist force of 1500 made an extraordinary 48 hour march from Fort Augustus across some of the highest mountains in Britain to shatter the Marquis of Argyll’s 3000 man army at Inverlochy. Royalist losses were 14, while the Covenant dead, including 16 Campbell nobles, outnumbered the whole of Montrose’s army. Lowland soldiers who surrendered were spared, but fleeing Campbells were slaughtered all along the side of Loch Linnhe in a brutal demonstration of tribal hatred intensified by religious and political animosities. Before the battle the mainly Catholic army invoked the aid of St. Patrick and St. Brigid (Saint Mary of the Gaels). Ian Lom MacDonald, bard of the MacDonalds of Keppoch, exulted:

*Through the lands of my fathers the Campbells have come,
The flames of their foray enveloped my home;
Broad Keppoch in ruin is left to deplore,
And my country destroyed from the hill to the shore.
Be it so! By Saint Mary, there’s comfort in store!*

*... Though the bones of my kindred, unbonoured, unurned,
Mark the terrible path where the Campbells have burned -
Be it so! From that foray they never returned.*
(Trans. Mark Napier)

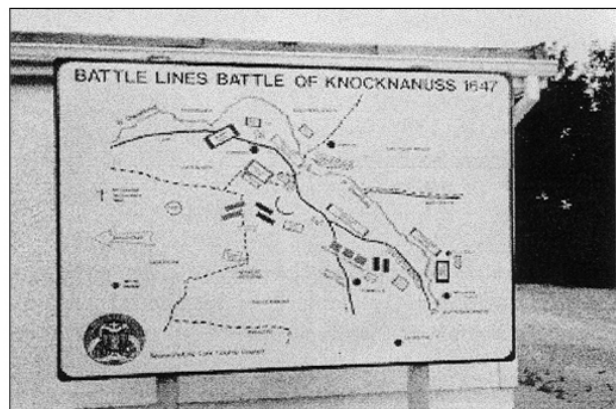
Two centuries later the Scottish poet William Aytoun celebrated the campaign in English:

*It was I that led the Highland host through wild Lochaber snows,
What time the plaided clans came down to battle with Montrose.
I’ve told ye how the Saxons fell beneath the broad claymore
And how we struck the Campbell Clan by Inverlochy shore...*

At Auldearn, May 1645, an itinerant tinsmith called Robertson is said to have fought bravely alongside Alasdair, killing 19 of the enemy and causing the leader to exclaim, “By Mary! I have killed only 21 myself! Would that I had a whole army of tinkers!” Alford, 2 July 1645, was fought on the Feast of the Visitation of the Virgin, reinforcing the Gaels’ belief that Christ’s Mother was aiding them. What the army’s small Protestant minority, including Montrose, thought of these coincidences is not recorded. A crushing victory was won at Kilsyth on the Assumption of the Virgin, 15 August, 1645, after which the Royalists captured Glasgow and Montrose knighted Alasdair for his services. The two men were demonised by their enemies, with huge rewards (£20,000) placed on their heads. Alasdair was vilified by one English writer as Montrose’s “Papist or rather Atheistical co-partner in blood and villany, Mac O Donnel, an Irish cannibal” and elsewhere as “that madman and his crack-brained crew”.

By autumn Montrose was eager to advance into England to assist the King; most of the Highlanders needed to get back to their families. Criticism of Alasdair by Anglocentric historians like John Buchan for leaving with 3000 men reveals how little history has been written from a Gaelic perspective. Alasdair saw that an invasion of England was doomed without popular support in the Scottish Lowlands and was alarmed by a revival of Campbell power in Argyll. Far from being obsessed with obscure tribal grudges, he was acting within the scope of what was reasonably possible, which meant securing his Highland power-base and maintaining links with Gaelic Ireland. The Gaels had borne the brunt of the fighting for scant reward; he had no desire to squander them in a hopeless cause far from their homes, saying “I would be no true Highlander if I preferred even the King’s cause to that of my own blood and kindred”.

Montrose’s small force, including about 700 Irish, was soon overwhelmed at Philliphaugh, in the Scottish borders. The appalled Alasdair never rejoined his former comrade. Over the next 18 months his followers ravaged Campbell lands in Argyll,



Map of Battle, Castlemagner.

NFP Archive

occupied the island of Bute and in Feb 1647 carried off thousands of cattle in a raid that brought them to within 30 miles of Edinburgh. Alasdair's childhood nurse had allegedly prophesied that bad luck would follow if he ever encountered "The Red Baron of Dunavich" or went to a place called Gocam-Go. He had already met the shadowy Baron when his standard twisted strangely to the left upon being planted in the ground, enquiry revealed that he was at Gocam-Go. He then threw a special lucky stone above his soldiers' heads; previously it had always been easy to recover, but now it disappeared into a bog. He retreated to Ireland in May 1647, becoming Lieutenant-General of the Royalist forces in Munster and Governor of Clonmel. The Covenanters had executed his father and two brothers; time was running out for him also.

In November 1647 at Knocknanuss Alasdair and Theobald Lord Taaffe faced the army of the infamous "Murchadh na Toitean" - "Murrough the Burner" - O'Brien, Lord Inchiquin, who had massacred 1000 civilians at the Rock of Cashel. Everywhere Alasdair went in Munster he was welcomed by crowds calling for Inchiquin's destruction. He felt misgivings about fighting on the thirteenth of the month with Saturn in a malign convergence. The incompetent Taaffe and the left wing of the Royalist army fled the field, with Inchiquin in pursuit. Alasdair's right-wing, including some 1000 Scots, smashed the left wing of Inchiquin's array, taking his headquarters and baggage train. Discipline broke down, many men getting drunk on captured liquor. Alasdair was regrouping them when Inchiquin's cavalry returned. After leading desperate resistance he surrendered on terms to save his surrounded followers. Shortly afterwards he was apparently shot in the back of the head, perhaps while stooping to drink at "The Chieftain's Well", near the Owenbeg stream, and died within an hour. He was hurriedly buried in a corner of the kitchen garden of Rathmaher House; a large ash, "The Chieftain's Tree", still marked the spot in the 1890s. After three days and nights his body was conveyed to Clonmeen, where it was laid to rest in an unmarked tomb in the O'Callaghan vault of the old church on a slope above the south bank of the River Blackwater. It was said that his corpse bore a hundred scars from a hundred battles. His passing evoked grief among the Gael. Ian Lom Macdonald wrote:

*I got news from Duncannon that has dimmed my eyesight,
my utter woe that Alasdair was dead...
The spirited princely youth would rouse thousands,
when he raised the pipe and the satin banner.
There would rise with him unwearied men and young fighters
from the small clumps of thicket where lies the mist.
Your desire was always to have a broadsword basket-bilted
With its biting edge of blue steel...*

The MacClean bard Eachann Bacach lamented:

*Alasdair has departed from us,
He fell at the hands of a baron in Ireland...*

Two anonymous verse epitaphs written in Ireland (one in English, the other Latin), compare Alasdair to the Biblical Jewish guerilla hero, Judas Maccabeus. He was described in action at Knocknanuss by an awestruck Parliamentary enemy, Captain Mulholland, in a pamphlet, "Aphorismical Discovery of Treasonable Faction" - "None durst come near him, no



Portrait of Alasdair MacColla, Editor & Rob MacDonald Parker
NFP Archive

such feats were seen by our progenitors acted by an ordinary man, (unless assisted by a higher Power) who could not be either killed, vanquished or taken prisoner but of his own accord." A century later Highland poets were still invoking the warrior's memory during the 1745 Jacobite Rising in which the disaster at Culloden swept away the remnants of the Gaelic order.

We tend now to see Cromwell's triumph in Ireland after his arrival here in 1649 as inevitable, but there is nothing predestined about history. Writing in the March 1968 issue of the Irish Defence Forces magazine *An Cosantóir*, Comdt. B.M. O'Brien suggests that had a victorious Alasdair gone on from Knocknanuss to link up with Owen Roe O'Neill and his army, events may have taken a different course. I have drawn heavily on the superb *Highland Warrior: Alasdair MacColla and the Civil Wars* (Saltire Society, 1994), by the eminent Scots historian David Stevenson. He describes Alasdair as the last major field commander of Europe to lead his men on foot and from the front and as "the first and perhaps the last great Celtic general of modern times, ushering in a century (1644-1746) during which the forgotten Gaelic peoples of Britain and Ireland nearly succeeded in regaining control of their lands and destiny".

It would be misleading to project modern pluralist attitudes onto such a man, but he does appear to have opposed the sectarian massacre of Protestants in Ulster. He was capable of both barbaric ruthlessness and mercy and generosity. In 17th century terms he was not a particularly cruel leader. He can be seen alternately as an archaic figure - the last Red-

shank - and as a precursor of modern Celtic nationalism. His loyalties were to a concept of "Gaeldom" rather than the nation state; to Clan Donald; to his kinsman and patron, Randal MacDonnell, Marquis of Antrim; to the concept of civil and religious liberties for Catholics and only coincidentally to the House of Stuart. Within a generation of his death the Scots Gaels had virtually disappeared as a distinctive element in Irish life.

Little is known of his personal life. He was literate in both Gaelic and English. One admirer was Dorothy Brown, from the Hebridean isle of Luinig, who wrote:

*My lyre, my harp, my violin, my music string wherever I might be,
When I was a young girl your coming would lift my mind
You would get a kiss without a word...*

In the 1640s he married Elizabeth MacAllister of Loup, Kintyre. North Cork writer Denis O'Donoghue states in his fine publication *An Account of The Battle of Knocknanuss, 1647* that they had at least three children. One son, Gillaspic Mór, fought valiantly against William of Orange's forces at Aughrim in 1691 and died in 1720. No contemporary portrait of Alasdair is known, but a modern impression was lodged in the Castlemagner Community Centre in 1997, following an Ecumenical Service of Healing and Reconciliation marking the battle's 350th anniversary. His followers left folk-memories in the Castlemagner area, including Scots family names (some battle survivors married local women) and "McAlasdair's March", an ornate piece of bagpipe music played on the morning of their last battle. Denis O'Donoghue's brother Geoffrey says a curious feature of this tune is that no modern piper seems to be able to reach certain notes in it. Writing in the Cork Historical and Archaeological Journal of 1899, James Buckley talks of Alasdair's sword (which disappeared from the Phoenix Park Arsenal after 1890) as being a massive weapon weighted with a ten pound steel ball and which a strong man could lift only as far as his knees. This is probably embellishment, but it echoes stories of weapons of other heroes that are special and can be used only by them; with Arthur and Excalibur, or Odysseus' bow.

Alasdair's career has parallels with those of other resistance figures who sprang from traditional societies undergoing great stress. Such leaders often arise from the edge of the society's ruling class rather than its apex. Like many Gaels, Alasdair boasted an impressive lineage, but he lacked both money and high titles and became famous through military ability and force of personality. The leader is credited with almost super-human strength, bravery on the battlefield and sagacity in counsel. He is also favoured by God or Fate for a time, until his lucky star deserts him. Even then, the traditions may present him as such a mighty warrior that he can only be vanquished by treachery, not by honest combat. There are interesting questions about the nature of collective memory here. Why, for instance, is Colkitto now less remembered than Rob Roy MacGregor or Grace O'Malley, when in practical terms he was more significant than either? Pubs and bars named after Rob Roy are to be found in many cities throughout the English-speaking world; Cork has one on Malboro St., but I know of none named after Colkitto. Even in Scotland he is not really famous. Unlike William Wallace he could not be readily assimilated as a romantic national hero. Much of his fighting was against other Scots and his Pan-Gaelic Scoto-

Irish identity probably created ambivalence towards him. At the same time, his Scots and "Royalist" antecedents would not have made him a natural symbol for Irish Nationalists.

With our world-view increasingly shaped by Hollywood, it comes as no surprise that many oral traditions are being lost, even in what were seen as traditional societies. One Scots friend noted that no one in the Kanturk hotel where he stayed in 1997 had heard of Knocknanuss. Even more surprisingly, a tour guide (Gaelic speaker, of Hebridean Catholic-background) who I met in the Western Highlands, was only vaguely aware of Alasdair MacColla, despite having wide local knowledge and being able to point to every crag and cove associated with "Bonnie" Prince Charlie's stay in the area, which of course is what tourists expect to hear about. I wonder if Alasdair's uncompromising assertion of Gaelic identity evoked memories that were so uncomfortable they were air-brushed from official culture? Perhaps now, with an agreed settlement in the North in sight at last and Scotland re-emerging as a self-governing nation, the descendants of Planter and Gael can evaluate their shared inheritance in a spirit of reconciliation and this fascinating character can be given his historical due. Our modern concerns are increasingly remote from those of his world, which was essentially rural, heroic and Gaelic. Beneath all the tales of heroism there lies the sad reality of wasted lives and bereaved families. The remains of hundreds who fought on both sides still lie beneath the North Cork countryside, many interred in mass graves. "The Women of Knocknanuss", a poem written about 1900 by Fr. Peter Mackessy, a Cork City priest, commemorates the tragedy as it affected ordinary people:

*And oft in Autumn's winds 'tis said
When evening spreads her ebon shen
And yet may hear the ghostly caoin
Of women waiting for their dead.*

Frank Creedon, for many years resident at Knocknanuss House, Pope's Rd., recently passed away. Affectionately known as 'The Doc' by locals, Frank will be sadly missed.



Knocknanuss Battlefield

NFP Archive

TOBAR RÍ AN DOMNAIGH

By Catherine O'Brien



Sunday's Well Flower Group display at the National Flower Week held at

The Well Of Sunday's King...

Sunday's Well is Cork City's oldest suburb, overlooking the city from the Northside. Sunday's Well, Tobar Riogh an Domhnaigh, has been a famous landmark for centuries and the district took its name from "The Well". In the Medieval Irish story of Aisling Mic Conglinne we are told that Mic-Conglinne was taken to "the Well named Bithlán, that is, 'Ever Full.'" This is identified with Sunday's Well. The story is that MacConglinne, having arrived in Cork, annoyed some monks at "The Monastery of Corcaigh" by singing psalms outside the monastery and reciting satiric quatrains about it. The abbot ordered that since MicConglinne had insulted the church, he should be crucified. The prisoner asked that he should be allowed to eat some food he had with him. The request was granted and he offered some of the food to some paupers gathered around the well. He delayed his execution by drinking water from the well using the point of his brooch as a spoon.

The neighbourhood of the well was a favourite "get-together" area for Cork people in the early part of the 19th century. The grounds of Shanakiel hospital were laid out as pleasure grounds and attracted family groups, especially at weekends.

*There is a trace, time can't efface
Nor years of absence dim;*

It is the thought of you sweet spot,

Yon fountain's fairy brim.

Father Prout.

On Sundays people traveled in great numbers to "The Well". They came up the hill from the city or across the river to do "The Rounds", which were a religious exercise in honour of the patron whose name the well bore. Some women wore hooded shawls and had rosary beads in their hands; some doing penance, others seeking cures. Medals, scapulars, rosary beads, walking sticks, bandages etc were left at the well by the praying public.

This historic landmark is no longer visible. In the early 1940s when the roadway was being widened it was decided by the powers that be at the time to remove the little stone building and run the road over the well. To mark the site the stone tablet bearing the inscription that was on the building was placed on the wall above the present footpath. It is still there today, but the people of Sunday's Well no longer "do rounds" at this holy well.

I. H. S., Sunday's Well, 1644

THOMAS KENT

1865— 1916

By Martin O'Mahony

Many people in Cork are of the belief that Kent railway station in the city is named after Eamonn Kent, one of the signatories of the 1916 declaration of independence. In fact it is called after a County Cork man who died fighting for his country in 1916. The man in question was Thomas Kent from Castlelyons. Thomas had been involved in one way or another in the struggle for Irish freedom from his youth. In the Land League years, he and his brothers, Richard, Edmond David and William were the leaders in the Castlyons district against British landlordism. All of them were arrested in 1889 for 'conspiring with others' to not pay their rents. That was but one of the many brushes which they had with the British authorities in Ireland. They were constantly harassed by the aforementioned, and they were in and out of prison, time and time again.

The crunch came in 1916 when the Kent family were at home in Bawnard House in Castlelyons awaiting their orders for the Easter Rising, which they knew was imminent. History has shown that there was a fateful mix-up on that weekend, but still the Kents were prepared for the fight. On May 2nd 1916 the family was woken up by loud banging on the front door of the house. They had been surrounded by a squad of RIC men who called for them to come out. Thomas answered: "We are soldiers of the Irish Republic, and there will be no surrender." Then the shooting began. The battle lasted for four hours during which time the Head Constable was fatally shot and David was injured. Having run out of ammunition, the Kents had no option but to surrender. On exiting the house, Richard Kent was mortally wounded when he tried to escape. Thomas was arrested and eventually was transported to Victoria Barracks, now Collins Barracks, in Cork City.

There he was tried with crimes against the British Crown, found guilty and sentenced to death. He was executed, and buried in what is now Cork Prison, on May 9th, 1916. His grave is still there to this day and is kept in great condition by the prison staff.

Glanmire Railway station was renamed 'Kent Station' in 1966 on the 50th. Anniversary of the Easter Rising. On May 14th 2000 a bust of Thomas Kent was unveiled by his niece, Kathleen Kent, in the gardens at the station. It was a group of Irish Rail workers who planned and organised that event and made it possible for future generations of Corkonians to know just who Thomas Kent was, and what he stood for.



Bust of Thomas Kent

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MEMOIRS OF A MESSENGER BOY By Denis Leahy

*Oh, it's tough, mighty tough up in 'Grawn',
All the people they are running to the pawn.
On a Friday they have plenty,
But on a Monday they are empty
Oh, it's tough, mighty tough up in 'Grawn'!*

In the 1940s the Corporation in Cork decided to clear the slum areas of the city. On the hills of the Northside they built huge housing estates for this purpose. I lived in one of these estates called "Gurranabraher", but everyone knew it as "Grawn". It was a big place with thousands of working class people crowded together and few facilities for work or play. Some people considered these areas to be ghettos, but to the inhabitants they were home and as precious as any place on earth. The residents of richer suburbs like Montenotte and Douglas seemed to have noses well developed for looking down on us. They thought that the children of the Corporation estates were bred to become messenger boys, and to make life easier for them. I suppose it was hard to blame them, for that was what most of us became. At school I thought that I was learning to read so that I would be able to decipher the labels on the parcels that I was destined to deliver. As soon as we left school it was the messenger boy's bike until you were old enough to join the army or go to England. Education finished at fourteen or earlier. Of all the boys in my area, I never knew one who had done his Leaving Cert. One fellow claimed he had, but when questioned he said that when he was fourteen his father had said, "You're leaving school son, and that's a cert."

My first job when I left school was as a gooseberry picker out on a fruit farm on the Douglas Road. It was a terrible job, your hands were cut to ribbons, the money was a pittance and of course it was not going to last. The only thing was, you could eat all you wanted to and we all nearly died the first night. My next job was as a messenger boy for a large hardware shop in town. I had a bike as big as a tank and it broke my heart pushing it up the hills. My immediate boss was a religious maniac named Flavin. He was forever talking about prayers and corporal works of mercy. Although he worried continually about black babies and children in Communist countries, it never cost him a thought to send me down to Blackrock in the driving rain a few minutes before closing time. In those days we were never paid on a Friday, in case we jacked it in and there would be no one to deliver the parcels on Saturday. I had been there a few months when one Saturday evening at about ten to six Mr Flavin gave me my wages and a parcel for Montenotte. It was a bitter December day, with icy cold rain sweeping down. I was already soaked to the skin and looking forward to going home to a hot meal and a seat by the fire. I got on my bike and headed off up Summerhill North in the teeth of the gale.

As I went along I decided to see what was so important that it had to be delivered so late in the day and in such atrocious weather. To my utter disgust, I found it contained a package of washing powder. I reached the house soaked, frozen and feeling very bitter. I rang the door bell and asked the woman who answered if she was Mrs Murphy, she said she was. I told her that she should be ashamed of her life to bring anyone out on such a night with a package of powder, which I practically threw at her. She was indignant at being spoken to like that by a mere messenger boy and said she would get me fired. I said, "You're too late, I've already jacked it in". On Monday I took the bike back to a scandalised Mr Flavin and that was that. My next messenger job was for a grocer in Oliver Plunkett St, a marvellous character who was only a few years older than me and always in debt. When any creditors approached the shop he



Denis Leahy with his grandson on a messenger bike.

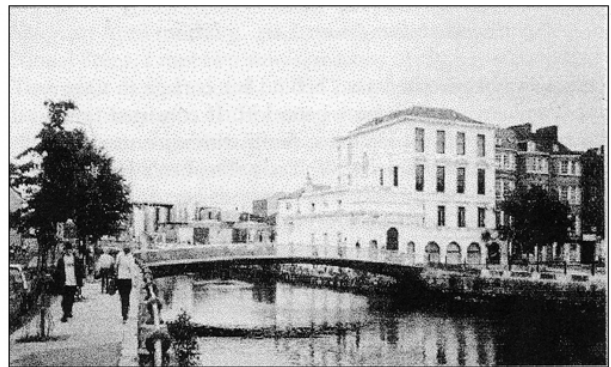
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would hide out the back and leave me to face the music. Once they had gone he would come out and call them all the names under the sun. He would give a graphic description of what they would have to do to recover their money. "I'm only robbing the robbers", he used to say. Every Saturday I used to wait with bated breath to see if I would be paid, I always was, he never left me a penny short.

Messenger boys were in many cases treated worse than the bosses would have treated their dogs. They were delivering parcels in all weather without protective clothing. Some didn't have a change of clothing at home and had to let their wet clothes dry on their backs. One lad had a messenger bike with no back mud-guard on it, so the rear wheel constantly threw water on to his back. One Saturday he got a very bad wetting, by Monday he was in hospital with pneumonia. On Tuesday his job was filled by another youth. On Thursday he was dead, and they buried him on Saturday. A meeting of infuriated messenger boys was called at the Berwick Fountain on Grand Parade and we decided to go on strike for protective clothing. My boss already provided it, but I joined the strike anyway, to have done otherwise would have been dangerous. The majority of the shopkeepers refused even to discuss the issue, so the strike turned bitter. It was an uneven struggle; well-to-do shopkeepers against a crowd of hungry ill-clad youngsters. The boys were under fierce pressure to go back, in many cases they were the only members of their households bringing in a wage and their families badly needed the money. We were determined to stick it out. The bosses tried to break us by bringing in other kids, often as badly off as ourselves, but we had an answer for this. The centre of Cork is an island between the two branches of the River Lee; the new boys had to cross a bridge to deliver their parcels. A reception committee was organised at each bridge and when the boys came along they were removed from their bikes, none too gently I'm afraid, and the bikes dumped in the river. There was talk of dropping the boys in too, but like us they were only trying to make a few shillings. It eventually got through to the bosses that it was cheaper to buy clothes than bikes, so they bought the wet-weather gear and we went back to work. Messenger boys were loyal to each other and could be trusted with anything. If two met and they had parcels for the same area one would always deliver for the other. Strange as it might seem, we never minded big loads, but the small

ones made us mad. It was very frustrating to deliver a pound of sausages or a half a dozen eggs to a big house five miles away. We used to call Douglas "Sausage Row" because that seemed to be the only meat that they ate out there. While the boys were completely honest with each other, many bosses were considered fair game. We knew that the job wasn't going to last very long and that if we left the boss could probably get someone to do it even more cheaply. On hot summer days we would deliver our parcels as quickly as we could. Then we'd go up to the baths or to Fitzgerald Park and lie around for an hour or two, before cycling back late. We would dismount down the road from where we worked and let the air out of one of the tyres. Then back to the shop to say we got a puncture at the furthest message. The employer would usually deliver a lecture on the stupidity of messenger boys in general and us in particular. Then very begrudgingly he would hand over two bob to go to the South of Ireland Cycle Co. to get the "puncture" fixed. We'd go down there, pump up the tyre and keep the two shillings for the movies at the Lido or the Assembly Rooms that night. Very often lads who had decided to go to England would say nothing to their bosses. On their last Saturday at work they would deliver all their parcels to their friends and relations, especially if it included meat. The families would enjoy great meals that weekend, probably the best of the year. It would be Monday before the shopkeeper found out from his irate customers what had happened. Much as the bosses would complain, the Gardai could hardly begin extradition proceedings for a few pound of steak and it was beyond the power of man or God to recover the stolen property.

Of course not all the bosses were monsters, although many of them were very bad. My own boss was one of the best, but his creditors were closing in on him. Every week I used to go to the Electric Corn Mills in Maylor St for a bag of flake meal and a bag of flour on credit. Eventually they refused to give it without payment. Young as I was, I could see the writing on the wall. I asked if I couldn't get the stuff, would they give me a job? As luck would have it, they were just taking on a boy, so I was given the position. I felt sad handing in my notice, but the boss said it was a relief to him as he was going to have to do a bunk himself. He gave me two weeks wages and a basket of groceries. I left him with tears in my eyes and never saw him again. I hope he did well for himself, because he was nice to the poor and he was selfless at a time when few were.



Nano Nagle Bridge

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THE BLACKPOOL PIGEON MEN

By Valerie Curtin



Feeding the Pigeons

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*Our band is out tonight boys
Our gallant fife and drum;
Let no one here insult Fair Lane
Or we will make them run.
We're in by day and we're out by night,
And we're always out for game;
Let no one here insult Fair Lane
Nor the cowards from Quarry Lane.*

"In a small white-washed yard behind his cottage in Quarry Lane, Stephen had built his pigeon loft. It consisted simply of a row of wooden soapboxes faced with wire mesh and fixed to the white washed walls. Today Stephen's back yard was silent. The pigeon loft was empty except for one exhausted bird that had succeeded in weathering the storm... the birds had been lost over the border returning from County Antrim. Stephen was feeling desolate.... "When you'd be waiting for your birds to come home from a long flight, suddenly you'd get a terrible start when some fellow shouted... Look at 'em, look at them over there - and he pointing to the north and there they are altogether up in the sky. Then you'd see the whole flock stopping up and wheeling round -

that's when the birds spotted home - the barracks over on the other hill, the North Chapel.'" (p. 203) Thus wrote John Marshall in "The Blackpool Pigeon Men", a valuable source of reference for me when I began my own research into the Northside's traditions of pigeon breeding and racing.

Jerome O'Callaghan, originally from Fair Hill, told me: "You weren't considered anyone at all if you hadn't some connection with pigeons. They used to fly them to and from Perth in Scotland. They had what they called clocks. A clock was made to three lofts. Do you know how they used to measure the distance between the clock and the loft? They'd have a fixed-wheel bicycle and every time the wheel would rev the pedal would move as well. So they'd have a little apparatus near the fork, and every time the pedal would turn 'twould count. That would go down to the clock, and when the bird would land they'd take the tube off and the tube would be passed out to a runner. I used to be running that time as a young fellow, very fast. They'd hand the runner the tube, he'd take off then like the hammers of hell and get the tube into the clock. When the tube got into the clock, that was confirmation of the time.

*It was only a shed where our lads did meet,
Halfway between School Lane and O'Connell Street,
The cream of Cork's Northside, all fine men,
Their equals never to be seen again.
The pigeons they kept were always the best,
Fast out of the baskets, home hours before the rest,
And if by chance one did get lost on its way
"He was killed by a kite", they were certain to say."*

The North Chapel, as the Cathedral of Saint Mary and Saint Anne is known, was a busy place during Jer's childhood. The much-loved Father Seamus O'Flynn served the people of the North Parish for 30 years and was not only pastor, but director of "The Loft" theatre, actor, musician and folklorist! Jer told me a story about his uncle, the late Seán O'Callaghan, author of "The Armoured Car" and "The Boys of Fairhill. Seán operated his own pony and trap hackney business, but even a famous bard can fall on hard times and Seán was often in need of the price of a pint. Espying Father O'Flynn out on a stroll up Fair Hill by the Croppy Boy memorial one day, Seán temporarily discarded his old shoes and asked, "A couple of pence Father?" Father O'Flynn replied, "If I gave you money you would only drink it." He looked down at Seán's feet and Seán said, "There father, no shoes and you won't give me a few bob." "That's right", said the priest, "You know Seán, when Our Lord walked the earth, he didn't have shoes". "That's true father, but he didn't have a car either", said Seán. He got his few bob.

*They fed their pigeons on a diet of maize,
With some wheat and some barley and a few maple peas,
No pills or injections did they ever get,
Yet they always made home in sun, wind or wet...*

*Then on over the border the pigeons were sent,
To places a man from Blackpool seldom went,
And when they crossed over to bonnie Scotland
Connie Cronin the conveyor was always at hand.*

This ballad, “The Blackpool Pigeon Men” was written by John Marshall and given to me by John Manley, The Saddlery, Great William O’Brien Street, Blackpool. John’s brother had kept pigeons and he told me about his neighbour Paddy O’Connor. He kept pigeons and had a reputation for being able to breed a linnet. Linnets are bred, not born, - quote: “I’ve a little bird that I sprigged out myself in Spangle Hill, that little linnet has the sweetest roll in all Blackpool”, - Danny. John Manley explained that Paddy O’Connor was known as the “Al Jolson” of Blackpool. Nora Coleman of Great William O’Brien Street told me that one wouldn’t object to being serenaded to by Paddy if he decided to sit on your windowsill in the early hours of the morning and if he was in good form!

*Blackpool I dread ya/ Fairlane I fed ya,
Take down yer birdcages/ Here’s down Fairlane!*

The years unfold as Jerome O’Callaghan recalls “I remember going to Mass with my mother and when you’d be coming home up Bailey’s Lane, Fairlane Band would be around the town playing and you’d hear - ‘Maggie take in the canaries, Fairlane are coming’, the birds would be frightened like”. I spoke with Tom Cahill, a pigeon enthusiast, outside his shop in Farranferis early in June. Tom explains “Racing begins at the end of April, starting with the sixty miles to places like Tramore. Last Sunday the sixth of June we raced the birds to Girvan in Scotland. In two weeks time the race is to Perth. Pigeon Fanciers have their club, The Northside Flying Club in Blackpool, affiliated to The Irish National Flying Club”. Bird fanciers and pigeon racers; the spirit and tradition continue on Cork’s Northside.



Winning Post, Gerald Griffin St.

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IT'S GOOD TO BE HOME AGAIN...

By Tadgh Ó'Dúshláine



Before Nano Nagle Bridge

C.P. Hudson

On a dirty bitter day in November. As he skipped towards me over Nano Nagle Bridge, his face contorted with cold, hands gesticulating with Mediterranean melodrama, he exclaimed: "Jesus, 'tis poisonous!"

I was dumbfounded at the accuracy and archaism of the description that came from his very marrow, echoing the language shift. As a race we were never short of words to describe the weather. Yeats’ famous line, “A cold wind blows from the left hand”, echoes back through the centuries. *Bimbeach* (sharp, poisonous) or *nimbmeach* (poisonous, biting) would probably have been used by my friend’s grandfather to describe the same wind.

The encounter brought a flood of Corkisms to my mind: My mother remarking that “the baby’s all ire” (ire – *oighear*, nappy rash). My mother remarking again on my father’s penchant for ornamentation that: “He’s all fal dals” (from the ornamental choruses of Irish songs: “Rex fal dal do etc). My father remarking that so-and-so’s a “proper gligin” (messenger); “only an old prizawn” (from the Irish *ptosa*, bit, small-minded, mean). Our earthy street talk, calling your mam “a right gowl” (*gabhal*, fork); calling your wan “a right old fla”.

All on an April morning. As I cut from Summer Hill to the Tunnel Steps, I met two winos, masters of all they surveyed. “’Tis a great day”, I saluted. “’Tis”, came the reply, ’tis a great day for a hanging”. And I envied them as they sat there, like philosophers in ancient Athens, stoically accepting the weather, oblivious to the practicalities of life, admiring their beautiful city. And I thought of Frank O’Connor’s wonderful descriptions and empathy with this same city. No hollow men or twentieth century alienation here, but a real sense of belonging: the murmuring of factories and the soothing sound of familiar trams:

The pathway dropped away to the bank of a stream where a brewery stood; and from the brewery, far beneath, the opposite hillside, a murmuring boneycomb of factory chimneys and houses, where noises came to you, dissociated and ghostlike, rose steeply to the gently-rounded hilltop from which a limestone spire and a purple sandstone tower mounted into the clouds.

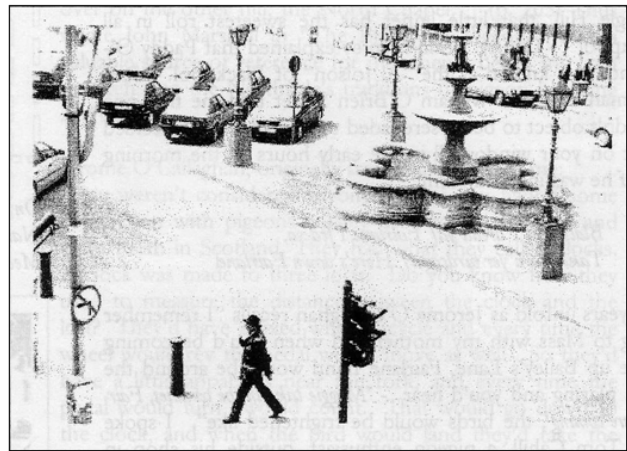
They could offer no substitute for the soothing squeak of the trams climbing Summerhill from the city.

On a lazy Monday afternoon of a glorious sunny week, at the supermarket checkout, the assistant's familiarity startled me: "You've a grand colour! Where were ye?" She almost demanded. "Only down the Marina and up the Dyke", I responded. And I was reminded of the celebration of the ordinary and lowly lanes of the city in a mock-heroic poem, written by Risteard Mac Gearailt in 1823, in response to a summons issued by Dáivi de Barra, the bard of Woodstock, Carraigtohil, against the robber who stole his ducks and cabbage. The following concludes the pursuit through the city:

*All up Shandon Street I searched
And the height of New Gate
And Blarney Road.
I searched till I dropped
Every lane and corner
At the foot of Gabhal an Spurra.
I thoroughly searched the length of Leitrim Street
And Youghal Lane for him.
I crossed the New Bridge
Into the South Main Street,
And searched Cove Lane for him.
I searched the length and breadth of the South Mall
And Shitten Lane for him.
I ran over Parliament Bridge
And searched every bit of Barrack Hill
I searched the Flags
And Mabon
And the Change
And I searched every house in Cook's Lane
To see was he having grub there.
I searched the Big Slaughter House
And the Prison
And all the quays for him.
Till exhausted with the thirst
And nothing to my name but a three-penny-bit,
I reckoned I deserved a naggin of grog
To clear my throat
So in I went to the Sign of the Black Cock*

Much of this topography is still intact, and though The Flags and Cook's Lane disappeared in our own time, the locations are still identifiable. But does anybody know about Shitten Lane or where the Sign of the Black Cock was?

As I head back to the ivory tower of academia and the anonymity of cosmopolitan Dublin, I'd like to think that these are part of our Cork Dúchas (linguistic, geographical, human, the sights, the sounds and the mentality), part of our genetic make-up that will survive the ravages of time. Cork is, after all, not just a good safe anchorage for ships, but a refuge from the stormy sea of life, but if we don't use it we'll lose it. *Tadh Ó Dúshláine* has just completed a tenure as *Writer-in-Residence with Cork Corporation and the Munster Literature Centre/Tigh Litríochta, Sullivan's Quay.*



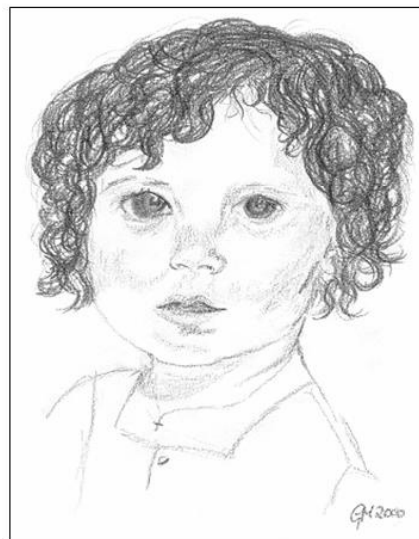
Grand Parade

C.P. Hudson

LITTLE NELLIE OF HOLY GOD

By Breda Barry

William Organ was married to Mary Aberne on the 4th. July 1896 in the village of Portlaw, Co. Waterford. Their marriage was blessed with four children: Thomas, David, Mary and lastly Nellie, born on the 24th. August 1903, at the Royal Infantry Barracks, where her father had enlisted in October 1897.



Sketch of Little Nellie by Grainne Maloney

From the age of two onwards, Nellie was showing a deep interest in God and holy names were the first words she learned. Nellie's father was posted to Spike Island in Cork Harbour in 1905. Mrs. Organ, who was suffering from consumption, and her children went with him. However, Nellie's mother died in Jan 1907, leaving

her husband with four motherless children. A priest then came to their rescue and placed Thomas, the eldest, barely nine, with the Christian Brothers; David with the Sisters of Mercy and Mary and Nellie with the Good Shepherd Sisters

at Sunday's Well, Cork. After a few months the Sisters saw how frail Nellie was. She walked unsteadily, as though she was going to fall. She was then given a fine pair of slipper shoes, as the regulation ones were too heavy. Nellie was a beautiful child. Her little white baby face was surrounded with curls, like that of a porcelain doll.

Despite her closeness to God, Nellie behaved in the usual way for a child and on occasion would go off and disobey the Sisters. When Nellie was corrected by the Sisters she would instantly go on her knees saying "Holy God, I am very sorry, please forgive me". At night she would cry silently to herself and when this came to notice a nurse examined her and found her to have a curved spine and crooked back. Because of this, class lessons now ceased for her and on some occasions she joined the kindergarten to play. Daily life for Nellie continued at the orphanage and her devotion to God deepened. She was told about Our Lord's life and she requested several times after to be told "the story of Holy God as a child". On passing any holy statue, Nellie would talk to it like a human being and one day she hugged a statue, put it on the ground and said "now little Jesus, dance for me". A girl beside her said "don't be silly" but Nellie's face was suffused with rapture and she said "look, look see how He dances!" But nobody else saw the statue dance and when it stopped, her face became calm as usual. One of the Sisters on hearing of this said "Dear Lord, if you really did dance, give us money for a bakehouse". A few days later money was received for the bakehouse.

She continued talking to Holy God, who now had become her closest and dearest friend, He became very real in her world. When she was shown the Stations of the Cross, she burst into tears saying "Poor Holy God! Poor Holy God!" During her stay in the orphanage's infirmary she had a little altar beside her cot and insisted on fresh flowers and an oil lamp, at all times. Katie was the girl who attended Nellie and would go to Mass daily, then one day she didn't go. Nellie somehow knew this and asked Katie why she did not go to Mass. Amazed how Nellie knew, Katie tried to trick her the following day by pretending to slam the back door and leave. Later when she went to Nellie, she was able to tell her "why did you not get Holy God this morning?". Katie was left puzzled.

Nellie bore her sufferings silently and never caused any trouble or made demands during her illness. She loved visiting the Chapel and the Mother Superior recalled meeting Nellie coming out of the Chapel. She said: "Well, how is Baby today?" - "Nellie just laid her face on my shoulder and wept silently. Her tears were all sweetness, it was holy emotion, the happiness of which overflowed in wordless weeping." In that moment it became known to the Mother Superior "that God had some special designs on the child, and that I, then Superior, was expected to co-operate with Him in accomplishing them".

Nellie's health continued to fail and they feared she would die, so they moved her to the school infirmary, which was better equipped than the cottage. The Most Reverend Dr. O'Callaghan O.P., Bishop of Cork usually would confirm the sick children and on receiving a letter from the orphanage he was inspired during Mass to go and confirm little Nellie, now aged four. On the 8th Oct 1907, Nellie received the Seven

Gifts of the Holy Spirit. Afterwards she said to the Bishop and those all around her "I am now a soldier of Holy God". She was in a lot of pain and when it was at its worst, she would kiss a crucifix shedding silent tears saying "Poor Holy God! Oh Poor Holy God!" If anybody comforted her she would say "What is it compared with what He suffered on the cross for me?"



Grave of Little Nellie

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After her Confirmation, Nellie requested that from now on she be allowed to sleep near her so-called "second mother", Miss Hall. She was to spend her remaining days in her room. One morning the nurse asked Nellie how she was and said "I thought you would have been with Holy God by this time". "Oh no", answered Nellie, "Holy God says I am not good enough to go yet". "What do you know about Holy God?" asked the Nurse. "He did come and stand here and He said that" said the child. The nurse and sister were astonished. "Where was He, Nellie?" enquired the Sister. "There", she replied, pointing to the same spot. "And what was He like?" asked the Sister. "Like that" - placing both hands together.

Nellie's appetite was failing and her throat was sore. The doctor came to examine her but could not find the cause. The child still could not eat and eventually the nurse examined her herself and found a new tooth had cut its way through the root of her tongue. Nellie was still the quiet suffering child and when the tooth was being extracted, she did not cry. Consumption was wasting her little body away. Her lungs were affected and her facial bones began to crumble. When her pain was at its worst, she always took out her crucifix to comfort herself. Nellie had a great longing and desire to receive Holy Communion and often she was heard saying, "Oh, I am longing for Holy God! I wonder when He will come! I am longing to have Him in my heart?". She had requested this several times and when it was not fulfilled, she had another idea. Nellie then asked Mother (nurse), that



Graveyard

NFP Archive

when she had Holy Communion, will you come back to me and kiss me?

Nellie recited the rosary with dedication and she kissed each bead as she prayed. She always insisted that the Mother Superior would remain on her knees until the rosary was finished. The Rev. Fr. Bury S.J., during a visit to the convent asked Nellie what Holy Communion was and she answered "It is Holy God. It is when Jesus comes on my tongue and goes down to my heart." Fr. Bury then wrote to the Bishop requesting that the child be given Holy Communion, explaining to him the child's natural devotion. The reply was "yes" and Nellie was overjoyed. On 6th Dec, 1907 she received Holy Communion for the first time. As she swallowed the Host, her whole being became calm and was in a deep trance of holiness.

It was noticed by the Mother Superior and others, that from there on, every time Nellie received Communion her face shone like a bright radiant light. Another strange happening was that the diseased jaw bone had become much better. On 8th Dec 1907 Nellie was made a Child of Mary and the little girl was elated, for the silver medal on a blue silk ribbon represented Our Lady. The following day Nellie was anointed and the Sisters said, "Our Nellie has received all the sacraments except Holy Orders and Matrimony". However, she did not die but she was weakening rapidly due to fever and consumption. Even though she was very ill and weak, she always requested Holy Communion. The child continued to have conversations with Holy God. On Christmas Eve she was very restless in her cot but on Christmas Day she was very excited and happy, for it was Holy God's birthday. By Jan 1908 there was little hope for her. She could not eat and the only food she took was Communion. Her devotion to prayer grew stronger and she would talk to her "friends", which were medals and holy pictures. Nellie went to Holy God at 4 o'clock on Sunday 2nd Feb 1908, a much-desired

happening for her. The little child was only four years, five months and eight days old.

Up until recent years Little Nellie's room was lovingly preserved in the Good Shepherd Convent, Sunday's Well. The little room contained all her toys – bunny rabbit and a tin bugle, as well as her altar, pictures and medals. Since the sale of the convent the artefacts have been dispersed among relatives and friends of the Order. The grave, in which her sister Mary is also buried, still remains on view in the former convent grounds.

A special thanks to Sr. Francis X. Collins of the Good Shepherd Order for her kind assistance.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Thank you so much for sending us copies of issue number four of *The Archive*. It is an excellent production and I can see that you put a lot of yourselves into it. I would go so far as to say, it is a labour of love. We in Number Twenty Nine are thrilled to be included in the "Dublin Field Trip" article. Your feeling for the house, its time, and the area is most informative. We do appreciate your seeing Number Twenty Nine as a jewel in the crown, we believe it to be so, it is even more delightful when others believe this also.

I wish further publications of *The Archive* and the Northside Folklore Project as a whole a long and successful future. Of the copies you sent to us, one is on file for posterity. One is on file for our guides, one is available in our Tea Room for guests/visitors to read, and another in the office. I am taking one home to read about Rory Gallagher and Jack Lynch. After all, I am a Co. Cork woman before anything else.

*Pauline Holland
29 Lower Fitzwilliam Street, Dublin*

I read with great interest the Rory Gallagher article in issue 4



"Brute Force and Ignorance" Rory Gallagher Tribute Band

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of *The Archive*. Mick O'Leary recalls a track Rory recorded called, "Pardon Me Mister", which he thinks was never released. That particular track, along with six others, was released in 1974. It was recorded by Mervyn Solomon in Belfast in July 1967, the Taste line-up being Rory(gtr), Eric Kitteringham (bass) and Norman Damery (drums). The other tracks were "Wee Wee Baby", "How Many More Years", "Take It Easy Baby", "You Got To Pay", "Worried Man" and "Norman Invasion". Rory would have been aged just 18 when these tracks were recorded. They feature some of his first ventures into songwriting and his first scating with guitar on "Worried Man".

When these tracks were released on a vinyl L.P. called *In The Beginning An Early Taste Of Rory Gallagher*, Rory was at the height of his career in both commercial and artistic terms. It was withdrawn soon after release, probably at the instigation of Rory's legal team, as Rory had contractual problems over his time in Taste for many years. Rory and the lads recorded many more numbers at this session, but they were erased by an engineer some time afterwards. All tracks were recorded live in studio, there is no overdubbing etc. on the released vinyl. It is a very early glimpse of the creativity of a man who will continue to provide millions of people with a great insight into the world of blues.

*Mick Leahy
Mabon*

A.D. 1732. That's not today or yesterday. If that date was on a stone in the wall of a great house, attention would be paid with regard to its preservation. Such a dated stone is on the wall of a derelict corner house in Farran Street, which is the only vehicular entry to the district generally known as St. Patrick's Arch. The area comprises Farran St., St. Patrick's Arch, St. Patrick's Tce., St. Patrick's Sq., Strawhill, Bunker's Hill and Wrixon's Ave. It dates not alone an area but also an era and affords an insight into close community living of long ago. The original houses have undergone refurbishment down the years but they could not widen more than the space available. The configuration of the houses hasn't altered in all that time, so it retains its unique character. Let me quote from a report drawn up for Cork Corporation some years ago:

"The distinctive character of St. Patrick's Arch derives from its high density of thirty dwellings to the acre, narrow streets and walkways and unusual entrances:- the stepped entrance at St. Mary's Rd. and the arched entrances at Gerald Griffin Street and Ger Griffin Ave. These elements give the area a very private feel. It merits protection, but in recent years it has become rundown, the public spaces neglected. Given that it is so compact, a relatively small outlay could effect tremendous changes. The poor surfaces of walkways and streets could be upgraded and replaced with concrete setts which would provide a suitable shared surface in keeping with the age and character of the area. This should be combined with new street-lighting of an appropriate style and a rationalising of overhead cables. The area is close to the tourist attractions of Shandon and the North Cathedral. A town trail and guide could include St. Patrick's Arch and provide visitors with some history. Interpretation in the form of wall plaques could be introduced, creating the opportunity for works of



St. Patrick's Arch

NFP Archive

public art similar to that displayed on Madden's Buildings, Watercourse Rd." In a world in thrall to ever bigger, ever brasher homes, buildings and lifestyles, a revitalised setting such as this old place, transformed, might bring a sense of proportion back into our lives. Such a contrast with the towering might of the North Cathedral and Shandon. Such a contrast with a simple past. To the tourist the comparison, one with another, enhances both.

*John Cullen
St. Patrick's Arch*

I was lucky enough to secure a copy of *The Archive* from Eason's at Kent railway Station after arriving in your beautiful city by train from Dublin. It really is an excellent little magazine and *The Northside Folklore Project* a brilliant concept. Collecting and archiving this sort of material is a great idea and a very valuable social service. I thoroughly enjoyed all the articles, but I was particularly taken by Carmel Higgins' "The Railway". I can identify with her feelings for trains because I come from a train-loving family myself.

The highlights of our Edinburgh childhood during the 1960s were family summer rail excursions, which we took in various directions. There were all eagerly anticipated, but favourites were trips into the Scottish Highlands, adventures of exploration along lines that must rate among the classics of the world's shorter rail journeys. Some wonderful lines in Britain have been closed since the 1960s. Your readers might have heard of a transport Minister called Dr. Beeching, whose name is synonymous with infamy in this regard. Despite his and subsequent depredations, some gems survive. There is the West Highland Line, from Fort William to Mallaig, and the line from Dingwall to Lochalsh. Trains also run from Perth through Blair Atholl to Inverness. Anyone planning to visit Scotland should really make time to travel on some of these, there is no better way or more enjoyable to see the country and they will be helping to maintain a national treasure whose future is by no means safe yet.

*Helen Graham
Stirling
Scotland*

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The Archive welcomes correspondence from readers. You may have a memory or idea you wish to share, or might like to comment on something in the magazine. Letters may be edited.

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Readers Questions Answered

In Issue 4 Mrs. L. McDonnell of Mayfield noted that almost identical stories of premature burial are associated with both Saint Peter's Church (Nth. Main St., now the Vision Centre) and Sth. Main St.'s Christ Church (now the City Archives). She wondered which building had the stronger historical claim on them. *Tuckey's Cork Remembrancer* is quite specific about one case, locating it in the graveyard of Saint Peter's: "A Mr. Francis Taylor was buried here on April 19 1753 and the following morning he was found sitting up in his grave, with his cap and shroud torn to pieces; his coffin broken and one of his shoulders mutilated; clay clutched in his hands and blood streaming from his eyes."

In *The Story of Cork* Seán Beecher supplies less background about another incident, which he places at Christ Church: "A widow, shortly before her death, had disinherited her son. About a week after the interment he entered the vault... having failed to prise the rings from the fingers he attempted to cut them off. At the first incision the corpse aroused itself. Apparently the woman had been buried while in a state of suspended animation. Still a young woman, she remarried and bore two children". Another version of what seems to be essentially the same tale is sited at Saint Peter's (see "The Cork Vision Centre," Archive 3). Premature burial was a distressingly common phenomenon well into the 19th century; both of these two old churches probably had their share. Details of some cases may have become mixed or transferred from one to the other. Both churches are ancient establishments. St. Peter's has its roots in Anglo-Norman times, around the 14th century, while the origins of Christchurch go right back to the christianised Vikings or Ostmen of the 11th century. An excellent starting point for research is the publication *The Modest Men of Christchurch* (1970) written by McKenna and Rev. Moore. - *Editor*

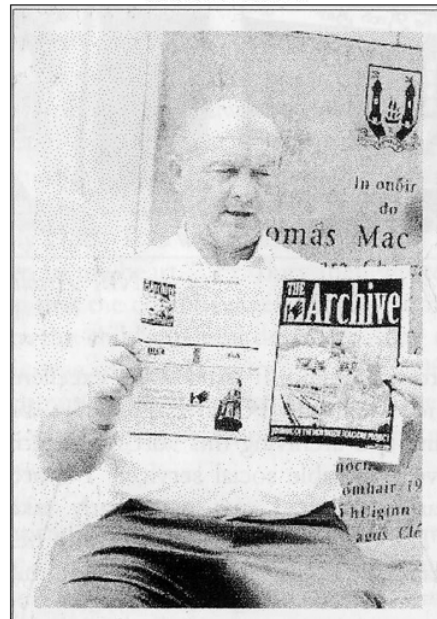
COMMUNITY ARCHIVE

The Northside Folklore Project was established to collect and record the folklore and oral history of the Northside of Cork City and beyond. We welcome public feedback and are always seeking to strengthen our ties with the community amongst which we are based. We would like to hear from you – it might be memories you would like to share, photos, books and pieces of memorabilia that are of interest, or suggestions you have. You can phone, write or drop into our base at the Sunbeam Industrial Park, access from either the Commons or Mallow Roads.

Our archive holdings consist of material documenting local traditional and popular culture. Topics being researched at present include coopers, calendar events, Anglican churches, and life on the Northside during the time of the butter and cattle markets. We have been following the progress of the construction of the nearly finished Blackpool by-pass. We are continuing our research into aspects and interpretation of our surroundings and natural environment such as the River Lee and other waterways. One specific project for instance focuses on the popular nicknames attributed to streets, buildings or areas of the city and beyond, researching local history and getting copies of maps of Cork through the years.

We are Northside based, but our interests are far wider than that, so whether you live north or south of the river or out in the county for that matter, do contact us.

THANK YOU



Our local 'Baldy Barber', Mick Moriarty enjoying The Archive

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BOOK REVIEWS

As a new addition to *The Archive*, we review some local books published during the course of the last 12 months.

The end of last year saw the publication of the Northside Folklore Project's first book, Life Journeys, which has had a gratifying public reception. Here we review a number of books that are of Cork interest and were published around the same time - taken together they seem to complement each other in a very interesting way, forming the beginnings of a comprehensive Cork library.

Echoes At The Fountain Jim McKeon

This book is impossible to put down once you've started to read it. I could not claim to be hooked by any intellectual brilliance contained within its 80 pages, but the continuity created by the strategic introduction of characters and places made for compulsive page turning. My first thoughts on finishing the book were "Why didn't I write it?" After all, I know most of the places mentioned and the majority of the characters are household names. But then such is the case with a large number of works containing a local Cork flavour. Yet I wonder if I would be prepared to forfeit my free time researching the history and folklore of such places as the Women's Gaol, the pawnshops and Washbrew Lane, as well as recording the background stories of the Pigeon men, Nancy McCarthy, Johnny O'Driscoll, etc. This is, I believe, why we have readers and why we have writers. I think every reader has a writer inside trying to get out. Jim McKeon has achieved that escape and given us, the readers, a new concept of our city and its characters, the colourful and the outstanding who trod the boards of our theatres, drew us to the sporting arenas around the country and those who graced the streets of Cork for many years. So I derived great pleasure from *Echoes At The Fountain*, a pleasure which I'm sure Jim McKeon experienced in writing it. - *Billy McCarthy*

My Home By The Lee Richard T. Cooke

A most useful and interesting book. Attractively laid out and illustrated with a wide-ranging collection of photos, maps, plans and other archival material, every page offers a narrative of fact, conjecture and anecdote. Simply amassing and presenting so much material in a coherent and accessible form is some accomplishment. It is enhanced by Catherine M. Courtney's drawings and a nice touch is the dedication to much-loved Cork Southside antiquarian scholar, C.J.F. MacCarthy.

Anyone one interested in Cork literature can check out *Southword*, the journal of the **Munster Literature Centre** (26 Sullivans Quay, Tel: 021-4312955, email:munsterlit@eircom.nethttp://www.munsterlit.ie). This excellent quarterly magazine contains poems, stories, reviews, interviews and a great deal besides, from memories of famous figures like Frank O'Connor to contemporary literary criticism. It is produced by a dedicated team including well-known writers Mary Johnson and Patrick Galvin.

Black Cat In The Window Liam O'Murchu

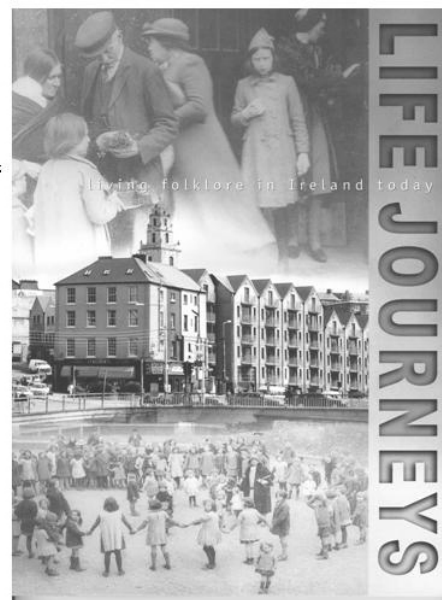
Broadcaster and journalist Liam O'Murchu draws on recollections of his Northside childhood in an enjoyable memoir. The youngest of 12 children, the author describes a time of physical poverty but emotional security, in a family where the members really did look after each other. - *Editor*

Life Journeys: Living Folklore in Ireland Today

Published by the Northside Folklore Project
Edited by Stephen Hunter

December 1999 saw the publication of the Northside Folklore Project's first book, *Life Journeys: Living Folklore in Ireland Today*. This volume has been a milestone for the Project, one made possible by the generous support of the Heritage Council. It is based on material collected in the course of fieldwork undertaken by project staff during 1998 and 1999. The twenty seven interviewees selected for the book range across the spectrum of age and social background and tell their life stories in their own words. Many have spent their formative years on Cork's urban Northside and all have a strong Northside connection. Their reflections illuminate life in Ireland over the last eighty or so years, from the last days of British rule up to the present time.

"Life Journeys" has been warmly received and was officially launched in early February 2000. The book is still available at £8.99 in selected bookshops around Cork. Alternately, readers can obtain it from the Project's Millfield base in person or by post. If by post please make cheques payable to *The Northside Folklore Project, NCE Ltd.* - £8.99, and include £3 for postage and packaging.



NORTHSIDE FOLKLORE PROJECT UPDATE

This year has been a busy and exciting one for the Northside Folklore Project.

The Northside Folklore Project is an oral history project set up by Béaloideas/ Folklore & Ethnology in University College Cork and Northside Community Enterprises Ltd. It is based in the old Sunbeam mill on the way out of Blackpool, between the Mallow and the Common's Roads. A staff of eleven collects urban folklore and oral histories on the work, pastimes and life of urban communities mainly, though not exclusively, from the Northside of Cork. The project manages a community archive and is involved in disseminating its research through *The Archive*, which comes out roughly every 10 months, through exhibitions and other publications.

One of our main projects at the moment is to create a database of our collection and make it available on the World

Wide Web. This will take the format of an interactive website which will also make excerpts of our sound recordings, photographs and video recordings accessible. The design for the site has already been done and can be seen at our present site (*address below*), but the fully interactive aspect is still a work in progress. We are also presently making a video on bingo, as a part of our contribution to a Community Video Forum due to take place this month.

THE URBAN LANDSCAPE Wrixon's Arch

The back page photo of this edition of *The Archive* depicts Wrixon's Lane, leading on to Gerald Griffin Avenue (formerly called Peacock Lane). The arch shown probably dates back to the eighteenth century and is not to be confused with the nearby Saint Patrick's Arch, referred to in John Cullen's letter in *Letters to the Editor*. St. Patrick's Arch gives its name to the area, one of Cork's best-kept architectural secrets, a compact cluster of lanes and terraces a few minutes walk from the North Cathedral. This issue's cover photo provides another view of the locality, in this case Gerald Griffin Avenue itself, as it was during the filming of the Frank McCourt novel, *Angela's Ashes*.



The Northside Folklore Project is a FÁS funded project under the management of Northside Community Enterprises Ltd., in partnership with Bealoideas/ Folklore and Ethnology, UCC.

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The Northside Folklore Project



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Wrixon's Arch

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