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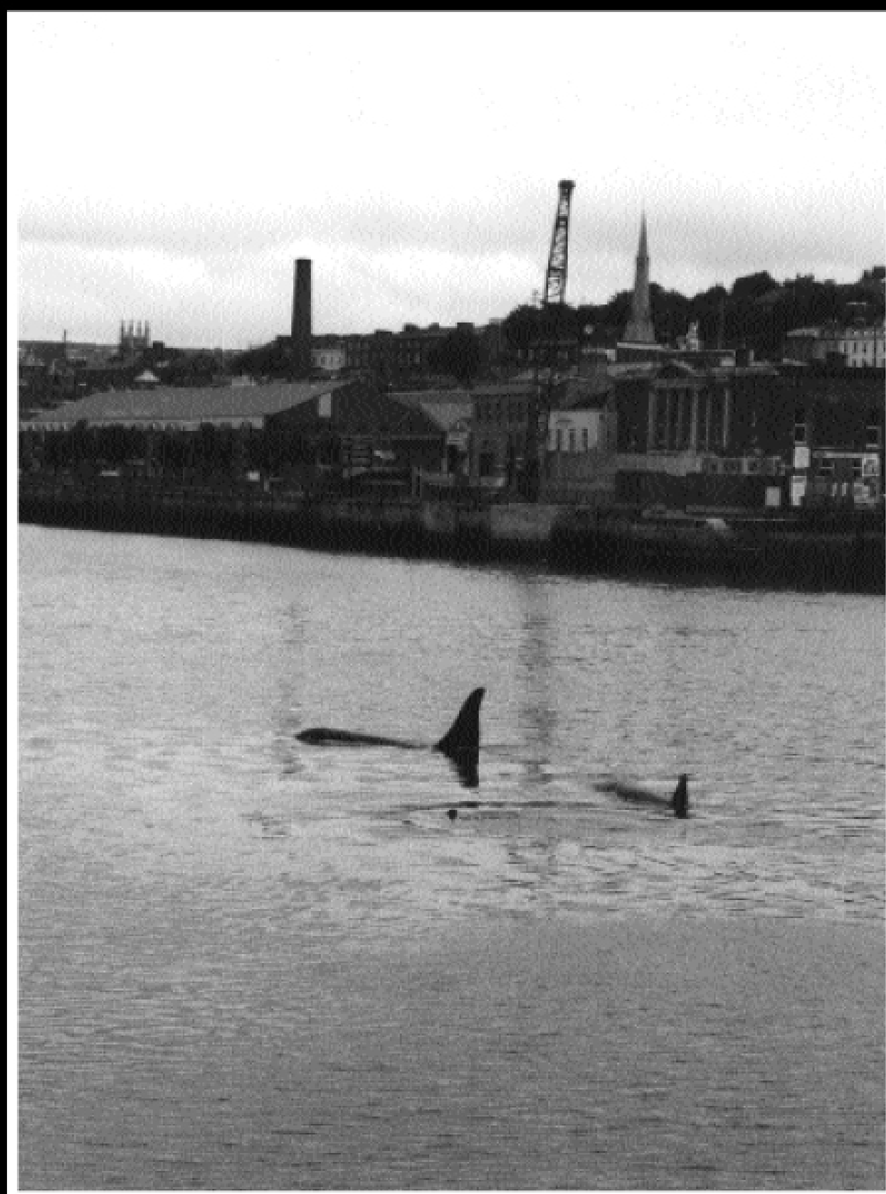

JOURNAL OF THE NORTHSIDE FOLKLORE PROJECT

Issue 6

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THE Archive

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Folklore Project's AWARD-WINNING VIDEO

What has 90 balls and drives women crazy? A bingo machine! Our video, A Night at Bingo, was released in 2001 in co-operation with Frameworks, a local video company headed by Eddie Noonan. It was developed from the original concept of Project member Breda Barry and is narrated by her.

The video won a Certificate of Merit at the 22nd Cork Youth International Video/Art/Film Festival and is due to be screened on TG 4.

Photograph & A STORY

Changes in currency are seen as historic milestones. The Cork City retailers in this photograph used the recent changeover to the Euro as an opportunity to advertise their goods.

The currency of the Irish Free State supplanted Sterling in 1928 and was in turn replaced by decimalised money in 1971. Viking settlers minted Ireland's first known coins in the late 10th century, while the Anglo-Normans minted coins in Cork during the late 13th century. In 1460 the Irish Parliament meeting in Drogheda effectively created the Irish pound, the coin having 75% of the silver content of its English equivalent. Money has little intrinsic value now; but its acceptance as a means of exchange makes it valuable and the subject of a vast folklore. Money may be "the root of all evil", but in many country areas there was a tradition that at the new moon people would pray in Irish for health and wealth. The practice of dropping coins into wells has roots in pre-Christian sacrificial practices. There are movies with titles like A Fistful Of Dollars and thousands of songs referring to money problems. A 1930s American blues pianist who had been a counterfeiter of forged banknotes was known as "Funny Paper Smith". Counterfeiting is still a thriving art, despite the advent of electronic monetary transfer. During the recent changeover, some "forged" banknotes that turned up in Co. Cavan were said to be fiendishly good imitations of "the real thing". It transpired that they were the real thing...

The study of coins and medals is known as numismatics. Experts display their wares at Coin Collectors Fair, last Saturday of each month at the Imperial Hotel, South Mall.

The Old Head Of Kinsale

by Billy McCarthy

Idyllic days when the Old Head was a favourite wild refuge for urban and rural visitors alike...

I, like so many of my generation have remained silent throughout the debate on the controversial development of a golf course at the Old Head of Kinsale. This is not the silence of apathy, but rather an acceptance of the inevitable, since modern logic dictates the power of affluence over sentimentality. It would appear that sight has been lost of the necessity of retaining and protecting the natural habitat of our wildlife. Lip service is paid to the protection of the environment, yet huge electricity pylons carrying high-voltage cables, as well as telephone, radio and television masts, have become an accepted feature of our once-beautiful landscape; all in the name of progress. We cannot lag behind in the area of telecommunications and other services, so if pylons and giant masts are essential, then so be it, but justification for the development of yet another golf course must surely be questionable. As an occasional golfer I have never failed to find accommodation on any one of the many golf courses in County Cork where green fees are accepted.

My long-standing love of the outdoors and close association with nature came about in the most unlikely manner. Born and reared in Cork City, my paternal roots are in West Cork, the previous generation having "emigrated" to the metropolis about 1920. My late uncle, Johnny, who was well known in game-shooting circles, introduced me to his "sport" at a very early age and I became a willing fellow-traveller of his. As any normal child of the day I enjoyed the wild country-side, and watching the big red setter and the little liver and white cocker spaniel working under my uncle's instructions. The shooting of a pheasant or wild duck was regarded as a bonus to a day spent in the healthy atmosphere of the country. In time I began to question the fate of the bird that was just "winged" and managed to get away from the searching dogs. It became obvious to me that such an unfortunate creature would most likely die a slow, painful death. But sportspeople can hold such diametrically opposed principles, which I believe makes them a unique breed. Perhaps the best illustration of this was an incident which happened in the Kildinan area one day during World War II. Johnny and my father encountered a fine cock pheasant with its leg caught in a gin-trap. My father, a humble, God-fearing man, proceeded to thank the Lord for this Heaven-sent gift which would grace the table for the benefit of his seven children. To his dismay Johnny put down his shotgun and gently held the terrified bird while he opened the jaws of the trap to release the captive. In reply to my father's vociferous protests my uncle explained that "the pheasant should be given a sporting chance until we meet it again when it will be o.k. to shoot it". Unable to reconcile this scenario with the name of sport I began to lose interest in these trips and though I missed the countryside, I felt happier staying at home. But fortune has a happy knack of smiling on youthful ambition and it was not long before my rural instinct detected an opportunity to re-embrace my passion for the outdoors.

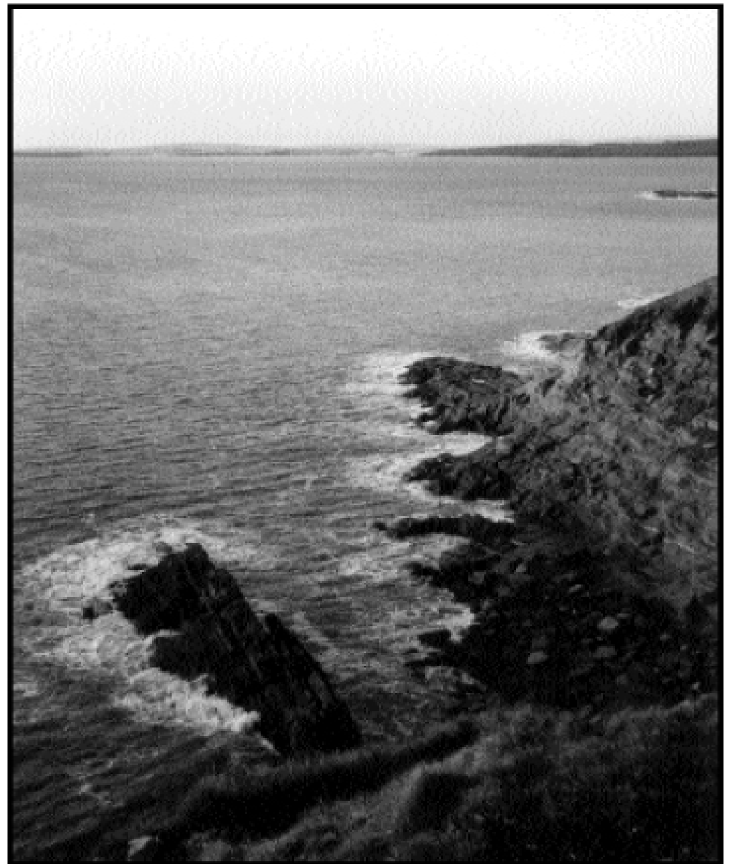
In 1953 our neighbour Mr. Ahern bought a second-hand motorbike; a green B.S.A. Bantam, 1-1/4 horsepower. It carried a round, four-inch transfer on top of the headlamp to show that it had travelled on the continent of Europe, taking in the great city of Heidelberg. This was all very exciting for us 12 year-olds since most of us were familiar with Heidelberg from "The Student Prince", starring Mario Lanza, which was one of the more popular shows of the time. Now Mr. Ahern (hereafter, Mike) was a family man with eight children of his own so we, who suddenly became his extended family, had to be content to stand in line when pillion-rides on the Bantam were in the offing. Displaying the patience of a saint our benefactor took each of us in turn for a spin to the top of the road, and back to where the next passenger was waiting.

Then one sunny August afternoon, as I and some companions played the usual children's games of the day, the sound of the motorbike, still something of a curiosity, drew me away from the group. Mike, a keen angler, was already sitting astride the bike, his fishing rod and tackle bag slung across his back. For some strange reason the engine had cut out as he was about to drive off and he was pumping the kick-starter to bring the machine back to life. He must have noticed the envious look on the face of this fascinated juvenile because his next words left me speechless. "How would you like to go fishing to Kinsale?" asked Mike, and he laughed aloud at the shocked expression which I obviously displayed with a mute, open-mouthed nod. "All right" he said, "But first ask your mother if its o.k." Five minutes later, maternal permission granted and my forehead still moist from the holy water, I hopped on the pillion seat to begin my first visit to Kinsale, which was also to be the beginning of a great and lasting friendship with the man who would be a huge influence on my love of the outdoors and on my general character. Place-names such as Ringabella, Robertscove and Kinsale became as familiar to me as the street-names around the Capwell district where I was born and reared. But the real magic was in the many trips we made to the Old Head. There was always something special there; I never tired of the fabulous views of the sea as the Bantam chugged along the narrow road towards the lighthouse or the beautiful walk along that same stretch.

Throughout the past 40 years as boy and man I enjoyed many summer days on this beautiful peninsula, sun-bathing and picnicking on the wild, broad acres or fishing for mackerel and pollack in the shadow of the Old Head lighthouse. For somebody reared in the city this was Heaven on earth; no traffic noise, factory smells or crowded areas; just peace and solitude accompanied by the song of the lark and the sound of the waves breaking on the rocks below. How often I told myself, "If I should leave this world without a penny, then this place of beauty I shall bequeath to my descendants". Nine years after that fateful first trip to Kinsale, Mike and his good wife Bridie introduced me to my future wife, reinforcing the great bond of friendship which has remained intact throughout a period of 44 years. Many tides have come and gone since that autumn day in 1953, laying their salty caress upon the shore around the Old Head. We have laughed together in times of joy and cried for each other in times of sadness.

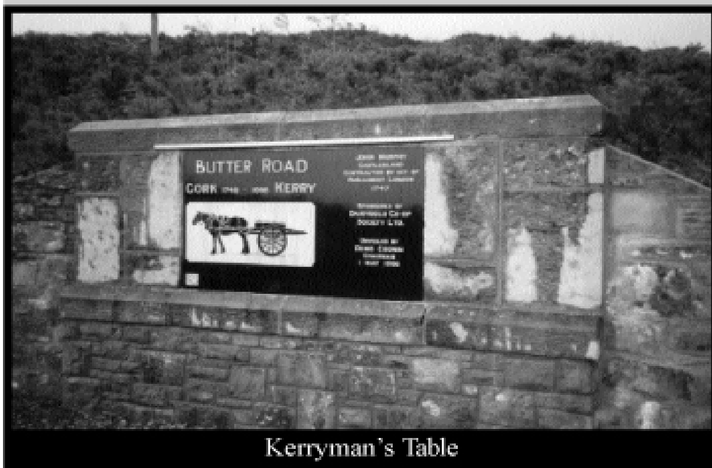
The faithful old Bantam is silent now, and Mike has gone to his eternal reward. Our heritage too, is fast disappearing under the euphemism of progress. But we will not be robbed of the memories that keep us in touch with the past, when Bridie kept the fire burning and the kettle was always on the boil awaiting the return of two tired and hungry travellers from a long day spent in the wild and wonderful countryside that was the Old Head of Kinsale.

Billy McCarthy © 1996.



Adventures on the Butter Roads

by Martin O'Mahony



Kerryman's Table

Within living memory, cattle were driven through Northside streets to markets near Shandon...

Even though he originally came from the Southside's Quaker Rd, what Seán McCarthy doesn't know about the history of the Northside of Cork City is probably not worth worrying about. Seán and his brother Billy, previously a librarian with the Northside Folklore Project, decided to make a video about the area. Seán wrote the script and I was delighted to film this blockbuster. With Billy as "sound man" we set out with a brand new digital video camera provided courtesy of the Documents of Ireland Project at University College Cork. The main theme of the video is the effect that the cattle trade has had on the City of Cork, especially the Northside. Our travels took us to Nadd, on the old road to Kerry. We were made welcome at a famous public house, "Nead an Fiolar" or "The Eagle's Nest", where we used the open turf fire as a backdrop while Seán spoke of the butter roads - one actually passes outside the pub - on which travelled the horses and their loads of butter destined for market in the city. Further out, we rested at "The Kerryman's Table", a huge flat boulder where the "butter men" of old used to stop for a bite to eat and to rest their animals.

One of many city shoots was done in the old Church of Ireland structure, St. Anne's Shandon, where Billy relished the chance to make those famous bells "talk". Declan Kelly, a photographer from Shandon Street, conducted us around an area encompassing "The North Cathedral", The Firkin Crane and many beautiful little lanes. Next door to the former Butter Exchange (now a thriving arts and crafts centre), we visited the Tony O' Reilly Butter Museum, where Dr. Colin Rynne and his staff greeted us with open arms. He has written the definitive work on the subject, At The Sign Of The Cow, which deals with the history of the Cork butter trade between 1790 and 1924. We filmed some of the old butter making machinery in this wonderful establishment. Memories of my youth came flooding back as I remembered using some of those items on my grandfather's farm near Dunmanway where I spent many a happy school holiday.

The district surrounding Shandon St, Blarney St and North Gate Bridge was once dotted with slaughterhouses, hide and skin merchants, cooperages, family butchers, shoe repair shops, cattle markets and other businesses connected to the cattle trade. The liquor trade also thrived wherever there were a lot of thirsty workers and indeed, we called to a number of pubs...all in the interest of historical accuracy, of course. We used to enjoy morning coffee served up by the affable Eugene at Eugene's Bar, Shandon St. and met several people there who to this day retain family connections to the cattle trade. The video took 6 months to shoot and we hope to have the finished product shortly. We met many wonderful people along the way and have already talked about going south of the River Lee to do something similar there. I'm sure that as a Southsider, Seán is looking forward to that. I know that I am.

MARYBOROUGH HOUSE

by Stephen Hunter

Maryborough resonates with echoes of an earlier grandeur that intrigues local visitor and international guest alike...

Maryborough House Hotel (021-4365555 e-mail: maryborough@indigo.ie) sits on sloping wooded ground above the Douglas River estuary 3 miles south of Cork city centre. The beautifully restored 3 storey over-basement house that now serves as the show-piece for a modern hotel and conference centre was built around 1715. Suburbia has gradually expanded into this once-rural setting, with 24 acres of the 400 acre demesne (which included a farm, orchards, woods and gardens) remaining. Since opening in 1998 Maryborough has gained an international reputation, while putting down firm roots in the local community. It offers an ideal destination for a drive or walk, with a mellow, welcoming ambience where the visitor feels totally at ease; a place for a delicious meal and a drink by the fireside, or for a stroll and a picnic in the grounds.

Photo C.P. Hudson

Proprietor Dan O'Sullivan takes an obvious pride in the establishment and a strong interest in its past: "There were three main families involved here. The Newenhams built the house and stayed for many years. During the 18th century they had a private bank situated first on Patrick St, then on South Mall, which issued its own 5 shilling bank notes and closed about 1825. Another branch of the family owned 'Coolmore', outside Crosshaven, which is still standing and was regarded as this house's twin. The Perriers, who were originally Huguenots and supplied Cork with several Mayors, rented Maryborough from the Newenhams for 14 years. Lastly, the Sherrard family were here for the next 120 years. They made the gardens famous for their produce and were suppliers of agricultural machinery."

"By 1995 the old house was in a bad way. We bought it and the restoration, mostly effected by Cork builders P.J.Hegarty's, cost £750,000.00. Rather than trying to completely reproduce a Georgian house, we enhanced surviving elements and combined modern features as tastefully as possible. The new extension was built in the footprint of the servants' quarters, stables and courtyards, which had gone beyond repair. We worked with Dublin architects Cody and Associates, experts in Georgian restoration, and we're proud of the result." Refurbishment work revealed traces of the foundations of an earlier, possibly 17th century house. "This previous house was smaller and probably faced up Maryborough Hill, rather than down to Rochestown, which is how the present house was orientated. There are wine cellars and a well which supplied the house with water." As the biggest establishment in the locality, Maryborough acted as a cog in the Ascendancy administrative machinery, including what passed for justice at the time: "There is a big stone cell which was sometimes used to hold prisoners temporarily. The place is steeped in history and we would have loved to put in a restaurant down there, but it wasn't possible with the fire safety requirements."

The grounds have their stories to tell also. Dan points to the old stone walls remaining on parts of the property: "There were little sentry posts in parts of one wall, which the Newenhams erected to charge tolls on the road that they had built in the direction of Carrigaline. Hugh Sherrard was good enough to supply me with a list of all the trees and shrubs, so visitors with an interest can go out and see what we have. At over 300 years old, some of the trees are approaching the end of their life cycle. We have a 25 year woodland plan to ensure proper replanting and the County Council has been very supportive of this. All sorts of wildlife roam the place, including rabbits, pheasants and foxes." He identifies a semi-ruinous rustic cottage by the avenue as "The Milk Maid's House", which he hopes to restore. "The last milk maid lived in it until 30 years ago and her daughter approached me recently to tell me that she was born and reared there."

Dan tells a story about a former resident and the "dew bath", which surely represents a survival of a very old folk medicine practice. "One of the Sherrards' gardeners dropped by recently celebrating his 85th birthday. He is a fine healthy man whose father was a gardener here before him. He said that every morning when he lived in the Orchard House he used to strip naked and run out and roll in the dew of the grass, and that's what he attributes his health and long age to! Whatever its scientific merits, it certainly didn't do him any harm."

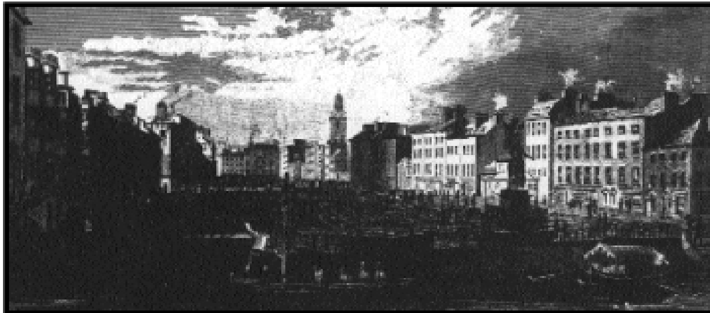
Photo C.P. Hudson

When Paganini Came to Cork

by Jim Morrish

The enigmatic violinist caused a sensation when he visited Cork in 1831

When you consider that the chances of seeing a world class act in Cork in this era of mass communication and international travel are rare, then you can imagine the excitement caused if the 19th century equivalent to U2 or REM were to have played Leeside in the 1830s. This comparison is entirely appropriate, for in 1831 the Jimi Hendrix of his day, Niccolò Paganini, came to Cork on an Irish tour. The visit was remarkable both for its novelty value and quality, for Signor Paganini's virtuosity on the violin can only be compared to that of Hendrix on the electric guitar, judging by the press reports of the day. Sadly, the maestro died some years before the advent of modern sound recordings.



So enthusiastic was his reception in Cork that he was persuaded to perform four times in the space of a week at the Theatre Royal (the site of the present G.P.O. on Oliver Plunkett St.) The Cork Constitution, one of the papers that preceded the Examiner, wrote: "The astonishing Paganini gave a CONCERT at the Theatre Royal on Saturday night, and though we were prepared, from what we read of him in the London papers, and the critiques we gave from them, to witness the performance of a man of extraordinary power and genius of the first order, yet we never could divest ourselves of the notion that there was a vein of extravagance in the description that could not be borne out by the perfection of human ingenuity in the art. But our notions were erroneously - very erroneously - founded. Paganini has not only sustained to the fullest extent all that has been said and written of him, but he has exceeded it; and that to an extent that defies the descriptive powers of man." (You don't get reviews like that anymore!)

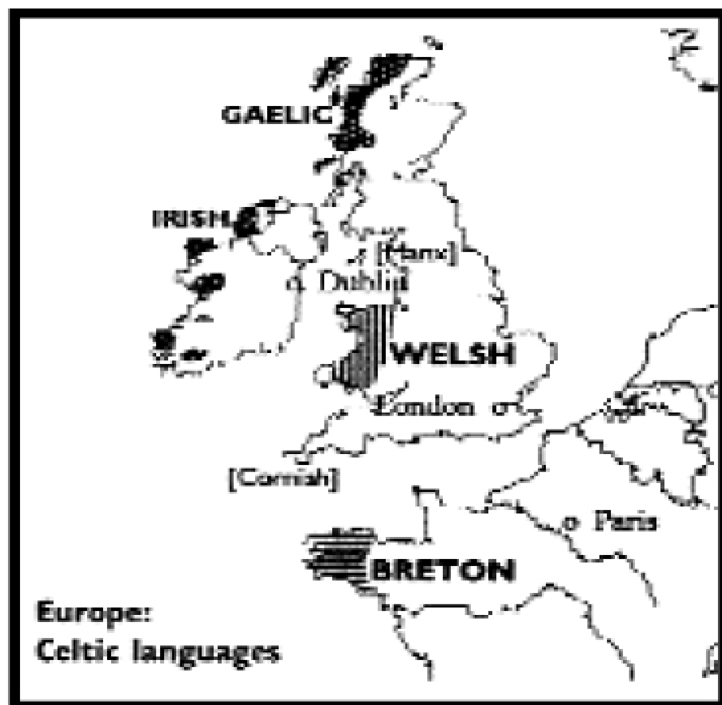
The reviews of the second concert were no less complimentary: "This astonishing man gave his second concert on Tuesday evening, and such was the anxiety to witness his performance, that upwards of One Hundred and Fifty Ladies and Gentlemen were obliged to accommodate themselves in the Orchestra and on the Stage, there not being room in the boxes, so crowded was every part of the house. Signor Paganini was himself throughout the night - his mastery over the violin has left no competitor in the art. All was surprise and delight accompanied by rapturous plaudits. We understand that Signor Paganini will leave on Sunday for Limerick, his engagements not permitting him to remain longer in this City."

At this stage the Constitution's music correspondent must have been dreading another Concert as he was fast running out of superlatives. None the less: "Paganini, the incomparable, the matchless Paganini, gave another Concert on Thursday evening at the Theatre Royal which was not so well attended as those that preceded it, in consequence of a generally perceived opinion that he had left town. The paucity of numbers, however, only appeared to give an additional stimulus to the Signor's efforts to astonish and delight; for if possible, he was more successful in this respect than at any of his previous Concerts. To convey a proper idea of the display of his unrivalled powers of execution in the Irish Air of Patrick's Day, with variations of his own composition on one string, would be a difficult task for the most accomplished and experienced in the science of Music. The raptures of the audience, the loud and vehement calls of encore, and the enthusiastic cheering that followed, when Signor Paganini responded to the call, were tests of the delight which his performance imparted! This evening Signor Paganini's fourth and last Concert in Cork will take place and already the Box Sheet indicates a crowded and fashionable audience."

Paganini continued on around the British Isles after his Cork visit and remains to this day one of the great names of classical music. The end of his days were most strange however. He was plagued throughout his career by rumours of liasons with the devil (not unlike those attaching to some Mississippi Delta bluesmen 100 years later) and stories that Old Nick was to be seen directing his bow arm during performances. He wore his hair long and his trousers EXTREMELY tight, which, it was said, caused ladies to faint at his concerts. When he died the Church used this supposed general aura of diabolism as an excuse to refuse permission to bury him in his homeland of Italy and so his remains were moved about among friends' basements in France for years before the Church relented and he was allowed home. In those days it was customary for Catholics to leave money to the Church when they died, which Paganini neglected to do. Retribution was firmly exacted, to the eternal displeasure of Paganini's family.

Our Linguistic Heritage

by John Mehegan



Origins

To chart the history of language is to trace the movement of peoples over a broad time span. At times this process saw the languages of recipient cultures subjugated, on other occasions it led to a fusion of cultural entities leading to the birth of a new language, and thirdly, it has seen migrant peoples adopt the language of their hosts. In tracing our linguistic roots it is necessary to look at how languages are classified, so that some insight can be gained as to where Irish is positioned amongst the several thousand languages spoken globally. In essence there are three methods of classification, the first of these groups languages according to geographical or political division. Secondly, there is the process which maps the historical development of the language from one form to another, as in the relationship between Old Irish and Modern Irish. The third method is based on typological evidence, which is dependent on the grammatical structure of the language. It is within these criteria that languages are categorised in broad family groups. Foremost among these groupings is the Indo-European language family with in excess of two billion speakers, and containing languages whose roots stretch from Western Europe to India, but of course which are now present in all five continents of the world. In the European context the only living languages falling outside its boundaries are: Basque, Estonian, Finnish, Hungarian and Turkish. Residing within this vast conglomerate are the Celtic languages, which comprise one small sub-group with roughly two million speakers.

The origins of the Celts are unclear, but they had emerged as a distinct people within Central Europe by about 500 BC. The area of Celtic settlement in modern day terms would have comprised part or whole of the following states: Austria, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Switzerland and areas of Southern Germany; from this central European base they spread throughout much of the continent bringing their language and culture with them. The quest for land had a consequence in the form of the dilution of the original mother tongue, for as the Celts intermingled with other cultures the language became infused with aspects from a variety of linguistic backgrounds. This fragmentary process saw the development of two broad linguistic strata within the Celtic family group. The first of these, based on mainland Europe became known as Continental Celtic and contained languages such as Celtiberian, Galatian and Gaulish, which were all to be later superseded by more powerful linguistic rivals. The second branch became known as Insular Celtic, and unlike its continental counterpart it has partially endured.

Expansion

The development of Insular Celtic is related to two waves of invasion into Britain and Ireland by the Celts in the 4th century B.C., events which were to lead to further divergence. What took hold in Ireland was a variant known as Goidelic (or Gaelic) with its British counterpart being Brythonic (or British). In linguistic terms Goidelic became known as Q-Celtic, because it retained the "kw" sound of Indo-European, writing it as "q" and later as "c", by way of contrast the Brythonic strand developed "kw" into "p". An example of this development can be seen in such pairs of words as the modern Irish Gaelic "ceathair" and its Welsh equivalent "pedwar", which both mean four. By 500AD these Gaelic (Q-Celtic) speakers had invaded Scotland by way of the expansion of the Dal Riada kingdom from Northern Ireland and their language eventually replaced Pictish as the native tongue, likewise the Isle of Man came under Gaelic influence. These events led to the development of Scottish Gaelic (sometimes known as Erse), and Manx Gaelic as the different literary and cultural traditions of these countries fused with the incoming language.

The spread of the Brythonic strain of the language took a somewhat different form, as by the 5th century A.D. the British Celts had to contend with an invasion of Anglo-Saxons. This saw the Celts being pushed into Wales and South-West England, while others migrated to Brittany in North-West France, as a consequence linguistic paths diverged once more, with the development of the Breton, Cornish and Welsh languages. There was also a more obscure language called Cumbric, spoken in Cumbria and south-west Scotland, but little is known of its development; suffice to say that by the 10th century A.D. it had fallen largely into disuse. With these developments the Insular Celtic group had reached its zenith in terms of the number of languages it encompassed. Yet as can be seen this only served to disguise the fact that this particular group was already in retreat from a more powerful linguistic neighbour.

Retraction

The subsequent fortunes of the Celtic languages are varied, with both Goidelic and Brythonic strata having lost family members. In relation to the former group, the Isle of Man had at different times come under Irish, Scottish and Viking influence, but was wholly Manx speaking until the 18th century when it came under the control of the English Crown, thereafter its position was eroded. By the early 20th century it had disappeared as a

language of everyday use with fewer than 5,000 speakers; unfortunately this decline continued, with the last native speaker Ned Maddrell dying in 1974. But Manx has at least retained its position as an official language at legislative level, with new laws being promulgated in both Manx and English.

Within the Brythonic group a similar fate has befallen the Cornish language. The westward advance of the Saxons led to the fragmentation of Celtic Britain, incursions through Somerset and Devon eventually led to Cornwall being conquered in 936 A.D. Despite this, the language survived for many centuries, though it had no official status. By 1600 the English language had permeated the Cornish cultural milieu, with nearly all of the native population being bilingual. From here on English rapidly gained ascendancy. The last Cornish speaker who knew no English was said to be Dolly Pentreath, who died in 1777. The very last native speaker of Cornish, John Davey, died in 1891. While there has been a recent revival of interest in Cornish it is highly unlikely it will ever recover its status as a language of everyday usage.

The fortunes of the four surviving Celtic languages have been interspersed with peaks and plateaux, with the position of Scottish Gaelic most fragile. The Gaelic language originally came to Scotland circa 500 A.D. with the expansion of the Dal Riada kingdom from Northern Ireland into the Western Highlands and Islands from where it spread. But the position of Scottish Gaelic was progressively eroded over time as the English language infiltrated, and by the 17th century it had retreated to the Highlands and Hebrides. Political events paralleled this situation with the union of the English and Scottish Crowns in 1603 and a little over a century later Scotland lost its parliament via the Act of Union of 1707. In the interim, a process of anglicisation took place, which not only promoted the use of the English language, but also saw the outlawing of Highland dress and music, measures designed to break the clan system. By the late 19th century the number of Gaelic speakers had declined to 1/4 million. The situation throughout the 20th century was one of further erosion with no official recognition of Scottish Gaelic as a national language until 1993. The vast majority of Scotland's 75,000 Gaelic speakers still reside in the Western Isles and Highlands. But despite this lowly figure, the language is starting to make tentative inroads within the education system. It remains to be seen if Scotland's new found political autonomy will herald a revival in the fortunes of its language.

The Breton language is the only member of the Insular Celtic language branch located on Continental Europe. Once a sovereign state, Brittany was united with France by treaty in 1532, but retained autonomy in fiscal, juridical and ecclesiastical matters. At this point Breton coexisted side by side with French, and went through a period of literary development in the mid-17th century. But the French revolution in 1789 marked a turning point, as Brittany's residual powers were abolished. French became the sole language of court, a change that was also reflected in the political and educational fields. Although a strong nationalistic resurgence took place during the late 19th century, World War 1 proved to be a catalyst for change, as many more Bretons came into contact with the French language, by way of service in the armed forces and the Breton language became even more marginalised. By mid-20th century there were about one million speakers, this figure has since been halved. Yet notwithstanding this reduction in numbers, the second half of the 20th century has seen significant inroads made in the area of education. Tentative steps were taken in 1951, with the enactment of Loi Deixonne (after the then French education minister). This law addressed the teaching of regional languages and dialects in schools and permitted the use of Breton as a facultative subject within the education system. This was followed in 1970 by a most significant measure, the founding of the Diwan Schools movement, which caters for the teaching of children exclusively through the medium of Breton. This initiative has been supplemented by the introduction of bi-lingual classes in Brittany's state-run schools since 1982. There has been a marked increase in literary output, as well as increased coverage across a variety of media. Taken together, these positive developments should ensure the survival of the Breton language for future generations.

Probably the most enduring Brythonic language is Welsh. Though Wales lost its independence in the late 13th century, its language remained unaffected until after the Act of Union with England in 1536. This event had potentially disastrous consequences linguistically, as English now became the sole language permitted in all political, administrative, legal and public circles. With the gentry now becoming anglicised, social differences in Wales became correlated with language difference.

Salvation for the threatened language arrived in the form of the Reformation. A small number of Welsh bishops now pushed for the presentation of the Gospel to the people in their own language. In an Act of Parliament in 1563, the bishops secured translations of the Bible and Book of Common Prayer into Welsh and the Bible now gained in prestige as a standard Welsh text. A parallel development was the printing of a large number of books in Welsh, across a variety of academic fields, taken together all of these activities helped to keep the language alive, but it was still excluded from official circles. In the18th century Welsh was introduced in a small number of schools as an optional subject, but the language remained weak in the country's south-eastern industrial heartland due to a heavy influx of English immigrants. At the dawn of the 20th century there were roughly one million Welsh speakers, the intervening period has seen this number fall to a half million. Yet the 20th century has also seen a large expansion in the use of Welsh in education at all levels. So much

so, that one can now be educated from nursery to university level in Welsh. The introduction of the Welsh language channel S4C in November 1982 has also helped to promote the language. Viewed collectively, these initiatives would seem to indicate that the Welsh language can move confidently through the 21st century.

The last stop on our linguistic journey brings us back to Ireland. From a position where Ireland was wholly Gaelic speaking up to the Early Middle Ages (despite Viking plundering of Irish monastic settlements which did much damage to Ireland's early literary heritage), events were to change over time with the extension of English involvement in the country. Initially this came by way of the Anglo-Norman invasion, but at this point no deliberate policy of linguistic hegemony existed. But with the consolidation of English rule during the 16th and 17th centuries, and also the enactment of the Penal Laws, the English language gained in significance as the position of the Irish speaking aristocracy and learned classes was severely eroded. By the 18th century English was in the ascendancy, being the language of the upper classes, and sole language of government and public institutions, with Irish remaining for a time the language of the greater part of the rural and labouring classes. The passing of the Act of Union in 1801 which united Britain and Ireland had little immediate significance for the Irish language. But with Ireland now absorbed within the United Kingdom, the language of the realm was reflected in the Education Bill of 1831, which established the national school system. This found no place for Irish within the school curriculum, encouraging young people to adopt English as a means of social advancement. The most devastating blow soon followed in the form of the Great Famine, which lasted from 1845-49, an event which impacted heavily upon the very classes among which Irish was most spoken, that is the rural labouring classes. The effects of the famine and the subsequent emigration led to a sharp decline in the spoken tongue. Furthermore, the ability to gain proficiency in the English language now became a prerequisite for would be emigrants.

At this juncture the outlook for the language looked bleak. Yet it was to be at this point, at a time when constitutional nationalism had temporarily lost its appeal in the post-Parnellite era, that the phenomenon of cultural nationalism arose. This movement saw an increased interest in all things Gaelic, with developments taking place in linguistic, literary and sporting circles. With regard to the language this development manifested itself in the founding of the Gaelic League in 1893, by the turn of the century this organisation had set up a number of branches throughout the country. From this base the language infiltrated all levels of the education system. The attainment of independence saw this process formalised to a greater degree with the 1922 Constitution proclaiming Irish as the national language of the state, a position which was reaffirmed in the 1937 Constitution. By now Irish had become a compulsory subject at primary and secondary school levels, and in state examinations. Other state sponsored initiatives saw the foundation of Gaeltarra Éireann (1957-79), later to be succeeded by Udarás na Gaeltachta in 1980, whose remit is to provide jobs in Gaeltacht areas. In the area of the media Radio na Gaeltachta was founded in 1972, and the Irish language television channel Teilifis na Gaeilge, (TG4) first broadcast in October 1996. Also the growth of Gaelscoileanna (Irish language schools) throughout the country has led to a resurgence in the language amongst younger segments of the population. Despite these developments, there continues to be a decline in the numbers speaking Irish as a first language, in areas classified as Gaeltacht, so the position of the language in Irish society is somewhat ambiguous. Presently, roughly one million people claim to have at least some knowledge of the Irish language, and while it would be unwise to suggest that it will ever regain its former status, there would certainly seem to be enough positive developments taking place to suggest that Irish will remain a living language.

Conclusion

In the overall context the Celtic "fringe" has had to exist under the shadow of extremely powerful linguistic neighbours, namely English and French, both among the world's most utilised languages. It is entirely understandable given this situation, in an era of globalisation, that there is a convergence towards those languages that offer greater mobility. Yet in saying this, the place of the lesser-spoken languages needs to be recognised, in that they are part of the identity of those peoples who speak them. In a European context, recent developments within the European Union have seen greater emphasis put on a "Europe of the Regions", and it can only be hoped that such initiatives will enhance the focus on minority languages within nation states. It has to be recognised that the extinction of a language not only represents a loss of the spoken word, but also the loss of that cultural entity of which it is part. Ultimately, the way forward is along the path of coexistence, whereby what is part of our particular heritage receives due recognition alongside that which is global.

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TRANSITIONS

BILLY FOLEY (1945-2002):

Many people noted with sadness the recent passing of Billy Foley after an illness. Billy began working at Millfield's Sunbeam Hosiery Mills during their Dwyer-led glory days in the mid-1960s, and stayed on as maintenance manager of the industrial park after the mills' closure. Billy had always a kind word for everyone and a wonderful supply of anecdotes about the Sunbeam and its history. Our sympathies go to his loved ones.

KEVIN DANAHER (1913-2002):

Professor Danaher was a towering presence in Irish folkloric studies who enlightened a broad audience in a way that was both accessible and erudite. His books such as The Year In Ireland: Irish Calendar Lore, Folk-tales of the Irish Countryside and In Ireland Long Ago have recorded much that is precious and might otherwise have been lost. He is remembered with fondness by all who knew him.

Ar dheis lámh Dé go raibh a anamacha uaisle.

Saint Thérèse of Lisieux

by Freda O'Donovan

Thousands crowded the North Cathedral and surrounding streets to honour the relics of this much-loved saint...

2001 will go down as a very special year in Ireland's history, the year that the relics of Saint Thérèse of Lisieux visited the Diocese of Cork and Ross.

Thérèse Martin was a French Carmelite nun who was born in 1873. She suffered much because of ill-health and difficult family circumstances, but always displayed the greatest fortitude, with kindness and compassion to others. Her attitude to life is well summed-up by her words: "All the Lord wants is our feeble efforts, a smiling face, a kindly word, doing the tiniest things well." Towards the end of her life she was in great pain, dying of tuberculosis in 1897. She felt an intense desire to be with God and her family members who had already passed away, saying "I am not dying, I am entering eternal life." In 1898 her writings were published as "The Story Of A Soul" and made a tremendous impact. She became an object of devotion to a great many people and was canonised in 1925. The correct veneration of sacred relics associated with holy and selfless people is part of Catholic practice. It recalls the saint's life; there is a tradition that sick people can be cured through the saint's intercession with God.

I went to see the relics at the North Cathedral (or North Chapel) on Wednesday, June 20, 2001 and was amazed at the size of the turn-out, which made a deep impression on me. People began gathering at 12pm and queued for up to two and-a-half hours. They didn't mind waiting for that length of time because of their devotion to Saint Thérèse. It was as if they sensed that never in their life time would they get this opportunity again. I was one of the first people to get through the gates at the cathedral and the first to actually touch the relics - it was a powerful experience for me.

Shown in the photos are some of the people who queued for hours to touch the relics. The neighbours living around the cathedral made a special effort to decorate their windows for the occasion. People were selling roses all along the streets to the devotees who bought them to brush against the casket containing the relics when they got to it. First there was a great buzz among the people when they saw the cortege come close to the cathedral. There were

people taking photos and a number of film crews there and it was a great experience for everyone. The relics were carried into the cathedral by a group of people who travel all over the world with them, while an Honour Guard of Scouts lined the way up to the cathedral and inside the building. The little Communion children threw rose petals over the relics the full length of the aisle and inside the cathedral, children did a special dance around the relics. Dr. John Buckley, the Bishop of Cork and Ross, blessed the relics. From that time on until 10.45 the following morning people queued. The cathedral was packed with people praying all night, while others were queuing outside to get to touch the relics. There was unbelievable spiritual power inside the building as people came and went. A lot of sick people visited and touched the relics and there was a great feeling of peace among those gathered.

The relics were removed from the cathedral on June 21st and brought to the St Joseph's African Missionary Fathers Church on Blackrock Rd, Ballintemple. They were displayed there for 24 hours and then taken to Kinsale Carmelite Friary, where they remained for another 24 hours before going to various places around the country.

Photos: Freda O'Donovan

Relics of Saint Thérèse.

Christmas In Shandon, 1948

by Declan Kelly

Shandon St., 1928
Courtesy Irish Examiner, ref 269A

For many children during the frugal 1940s, the magical build-up to Christmas was almost as much fun as the event itself...

The Christmas season started in our house around September when my mother would decide that we all, mother, father and son, needed new clothes or new "rig-outs", as they were referred to. My mother had been a seamstress in Cohen's Tailors in Winthrop St and it was there that we were taken to be measured for the Christmas rig-out. After about three fittings the clothes were made, and would be picked up on Christmas Eve.

During November I was told that Santa was coming and that I had to be a good boy from here until Christmas, otherwise no Santa. Santa knew all about me and my presents would reflect what he knew. Obviously if I was a "bad" little boy, then I had nothing to look forward to, but again, if you had been a "bad" boy during the year, you now had some redemptive time to make amends. Lots of us kids on the Northside at the time made super amends. One night we would sit down and actually write a note to Santa. The first draft was totally unacceptable to my mother and father. I was asking for way too much and if he were to bring all of those things, then he would have no space left on the sleigh to bring anybody else anything at all. That would insinuate that I was very mean and as such, a "bad" boy. I quickly changed the letter and under my parents' guidance it usually ended up with me asking for the following: First Choice was a cowboy suit, a gun, a holster and a box of caps for the gun or maybe a set of twin guns. Second Choice was a hurley and ball.

Unlike today, Santa only appeared in the stores from December 8, the day the country folk came to town and which was known as the Country People's Christmas Shopping Day. Mainly due to economic reasons, us city kids were never brought anywhere near Santa until maybe the week before Christmas Week. Of course, the more aunts you had dictated the number of visitations you were taken on before Christmas. Funny, I can't remember any uncle taking me. In those days Santa was all over town, even on the streets you got your photograph taken with him. If you wanted to purchase it later you called to the studios of G & V Healy in Oliver Plunkett St, or Happy Snaps in Paul St, looked at the result and invariably bought the photograph.

Santa resided in various shops. There was a beautiful model railway set up at Robert Day & Son of Patrick's St (now Dunne's Supermarket) and as we waited in the queue to enter Santa's Cave we were allowed to play with it. Obviously, we all wanted to be train drivers and this participation sold many an electric train set. Santa was also in the Munster Arcade, Patrick St, where Penney's is today and upstairs you went to the cinema. Pure magic was this treat. But my favourite place of all was Kilgrew's on Merchants Quay. Here you climbed the stairs and got your mat for the slide down into Santa's Cave. With the assistant's help you grabbed the rings at the side of your mat and she gently pushed you and off you went. It was like flying down through the Alps and after a few seconds you landed in the cave, at Santa's feet. Surprise, surprise, he knew all about you and that letter you wrote to him. It seems that the Santas of times past were a lot better than the present crop, or is it selective amnesia I am practising?

Christmas Week was one of feverish activity. We always went to the Coal Quay for the tree and the holly and walked up and down until my dad finally made the purchase. He had got the best tree in the whole place and the holly with the most berries on it for the cheapest price ever. I have often wondered, did him going into

Mary Burke's pub have anything to do with it? We struggled home with the purchases and once there, all that my father had to do was stand the tree in the bucket and the decorating was left to my mother. She wrapped red crêpe paper around the bucket, which gave the bottom of the tree a nice bright look. Smaller trees needed smaller buckets and this "bucket" could have been a Jacob's biscuit tin. My mother then produced the box of decorations, carefully put away the previous year. The Christmas lights were tested and once they were found to be working, they were placed, artistically, on the tree. At last the tree was dressed and didn't it look like the bestest tree in the whole wide world, ever? All my Santa parcels were placed under the tree.

Christmas Week was grocery week. This was before the advent of the supermarket and my mother shopped mostly in Shandon. Our turkey came from Con Murphy's Poultry Firm in Hanover St, where my father was a foreman. Turkey is useless without ham and so my mother went to O'Sullivan's in Shandon St for that. Christmas was not Christmas without the following: Jennings Raspberry cordial, or "Rasa"; Mi-Wadi Orange Squash; and Daly's Tanora. Then there was Thompson's Duchess Sultana -this will always be Christmas Cake to me, even if I eat it in the middle of July. Another essential was the tin of biscuits. If you were poor it was USA Assorted, but if you had a little money then it was definitely Afternoon Tea. At the start of September my mother joined a Christmas Club in Healy's shop, 42 Dominick St, and another in O'Sullivan's shop. She put a little money into the Christmas Club every week, so when it came to Christmas she had something put aside, which meant that she only needed to find a little extra to pay for the luxuries.

Coal Quay, Christmas Week

Healy's shop happened to be next door to our house as we lived in No 41, and we could get to it through our backyard. Mrs Healy had been very good to my father's family when they were left orphaned in the 1920s and I called her Nana Healy. We had a weekly account there and all our purchases were put "on the book". Every Saturday morning my mother settled up. Because we dealt almost exclusively with Healy's, we were given a Christmas present as a token of their appreciation of our custom. The size of the present was relative to the amount of business we did. All shops at the time operated this system and the custom lives on in some shops today.

So, we were all set for Christmas Eve. This day was my parents, treat to me, when they took me into town. We collected our clothes from Cohen's and I was taken to Kilgrew's and the slide. To cap off a great afternoon we had our "tea" in the upstairs restaurant at the Savoy cinema, consisting of chips and sausages with a plate of bread and a pot of tea. Very posh. Exhausted but happy, we made our way back to Dominick St, looking back time after time at the Christmas lights of the city. My parcel was put under the tree, along with the other ones I had accumulated from various visits with aunts, so that Santa could give them his blessing as he left "what I had asked for." I was washed and put to bed, but not before I had left a glass of Tanora and a carrot for Santa and Rudolph. Try as hard as I could, I found sleep impossible. Every so often I was asked, "Are you asleep yet?" and when I replied "No", I was told that Santa was approaching Ireland from America and would be here shortly and if he found me awake then that was it, he would pass by. This scared me so much that I shut my eyes tightly and forced sleep upon myself. Torture.

I awoke next morning bright and early and made my way to the tree, with my heart in my mouth, to see did he really know how bold I was during the year? I guess he was very forgiving, as everything I had asked for was there. Then off to early Mass, 8.00 am in the North Chapel, and after a big breakfast, it was time to go out on the street and shoot all those Indians and win numerous All-Ireland medals before I was called for my dinner around 4.00 pm. The world was a much better place for us kids in the Northside back then.

DIPLOMA IN LOCAL AND REGIONAL STUDIES

The Centre for Adult and Continuing Education at UCC is offering a two year diploma course in local and regional studies. This multidisciplinary course combines History, Folklore, Archaeology, Geography, Music and Irish studies. The focus will be on Cork city and its environs. Starting date October 2002; one lecture per week from October until April; fieldtrips will also be included. There is an evaluation / assessment procedure.

Contact Pat Murphy at Centre for Adult and continuing education, UCC

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WALKING ON WATER
Meitheal Mara and the River Lee

by Stephen Hunter

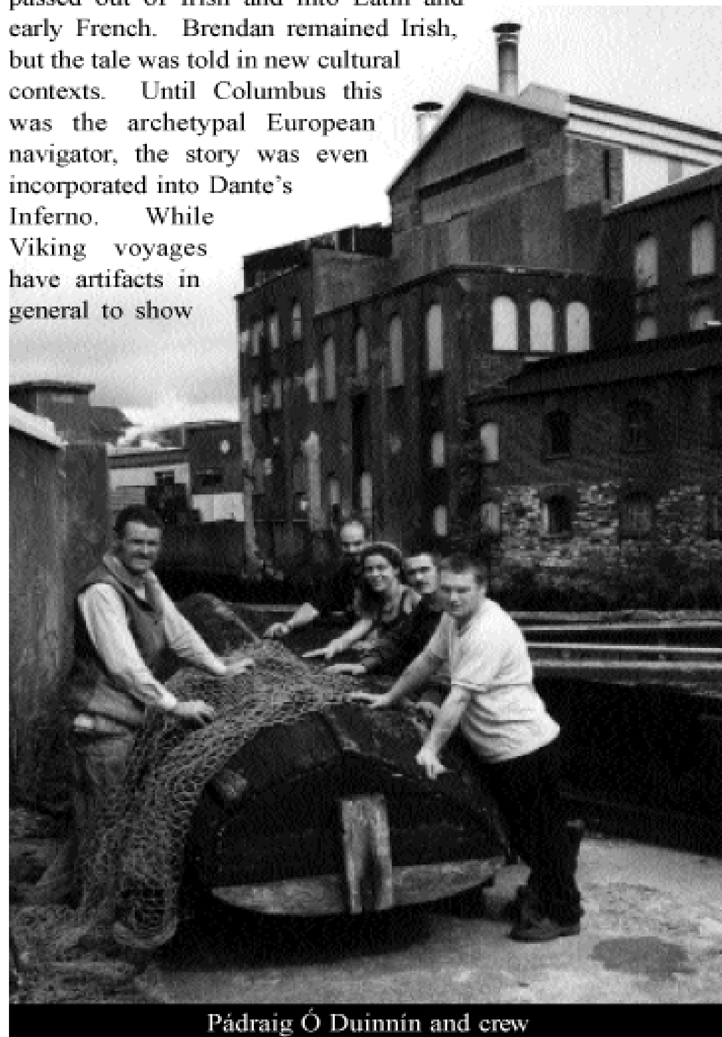
The dedicated members of Meitheal Mara work to raise awareness of Cork's rich maritime heritage...

Delighted crowds gathered on River Lee quaysides last June when three orcas swam into Cork Harbour and the city reaches of the river. Coming almost 10 years to the day after the Republic of Ireland declared its territorial waters to be a whale protection zone, the episode directed attention to the city's greatest natural assets, its magnificent river and harbour. Cork owes its origins to the river and its civic motto, "Statio Bene Fida Carinis" - "A Safe Harbour For Ships" reflects this. There is a fabulous mythic background: the name Laoi commemorates the Celtic deity Lugh, a multi-faceted sun god who was wise man, sorcerer, god of arts and crafts and a shining warrior leader. Place-names throughout Europe's formerly Celtic realms bear his name, including Carlisle and Ludgate in England, Lugos in Galicia and Leiden in the Netherlands. Lúnasa denotes the month of August and the harvest festival of August 1, one of the great quarter days of the Celtic year. Stripped of most of his pre-Christian potency, he lives on as Lugh-Chromain - "Little Stooping Lugh", familiar to millions as the Leprechaun. The same river may also have been called Sabhrann at some earlier time, a word cognate with the goddess Sabrina, who gave her name to England's Severn River and France's Sequana, or Seine.

Yet it has often been remarked that we neglect this aquatic heritage. Meitheal Mara is a group of people determined to keep alive traditional boat-building techniques and to see Cork's waterways better utilised. The project is based on the South Channel of the river at Crosse's Green House, which was built c1818 by the brewer Cashman. The meitheal was traditionally a co-operative harvest gathering of rural neighbours, so Meitheal Mara could be translated as "a coming together to harvest the sea's heritage". Director Pádraig Ó Duinnín is a man of singular vision and energy who grew up in an Irish-speaking background and traces the origin of his passion for the water to his childhood in Macroom at the confluence of the rivers Lee and Sullane. "You had an expanse of marshes that before the construction of the Carrig a Drohid Dam constituted an inland delta unique in western Europe, with incredible flora and fauna. That environment had a huge influence on me".

"We approached FÁS for support in 1994 and were well-received. We built six naomhóg (an elegant and seaworthy traditional West Kerry fishing canoe that was rapidly disappearing) to the specifications of surviving boats and this opened doors to the history and folklife attaching to them, as well as to exploring the harbour and river." The 15-person project has compiled an archive of maritime material, developed marketable theme products, participated in international cultural events and is accredited as a National Council for Vocational Awards training centre in wood-working. The boats can be fitted with sails as well as being oar-powered, with some being modified to go on cars or take outboard motors. Prices range from 1500 euro upwards. Says Padraig: "We provide training in currach rowing and introduce youngsters to the water. Once you leave the shore you form a unique group with the other people on a boat and this interdependency is extremely enriching. If the sea decides that you're not going out, all your plans will come to naught. That kind of contact with nature gives you a useful way of dealing with what we all meet every day. We've had speeds of around 7 knots over a three hour period. We saw Fungi (a famous dolphin resident off Dingle, Co Kerry) on a wild day. We were rowing away and I felt a presence at my shoulder. I turned around and he was standing up in the water like dolphins do, looking down at me."

The currach has strong Celtic associations, although its ultimate origins are even more ancient. Pádraig continues: "The earliest surviving written account of such boats is that of Julius Caesar in the 1st century B.C. He describes a boat off the Isle of Wight and actually calls it a currach. The Vikings often used Gaelic pilots for their explorations in the North Atlantic. The Brendan story passed out of Irish and into Latin and early French. Brendan remained Irish, but the tale was told in new cultural contexts. Until Columbus this was the archetypal European navigator, the story was even incorporated into Dante's Inferno. While Viking voyages have artifacts in general to show


Pádraig Ó Duinnín and crew

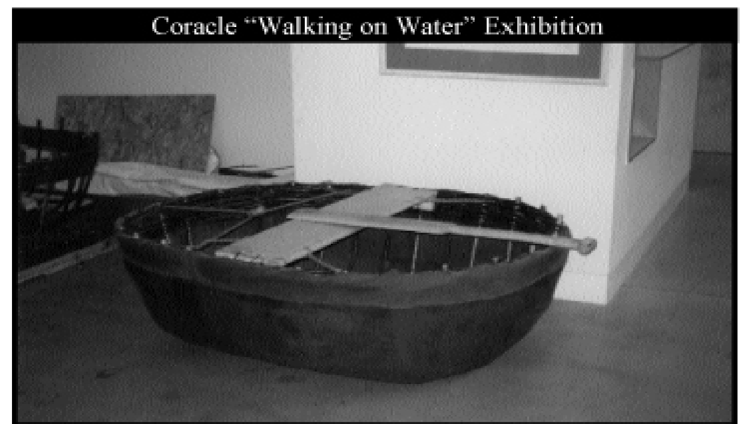
their connections, the evidence for Celtic voyaging is based more on oral sources. A lot of the literature is in Gaelic or Latin and has tended to remain outside general European historical consciousness."

"There are some 16 different types of currach today, ranging from 6ft coracles, which are round; to dunfanaghy - 15 ft hazel rod boats from Dunfanaghy, Co Donegal - and 27ft naomhóg. There are few early archaeological remains of these boats, but they were found wherever there were Celtic people and are related to kayaks and uniaks; boats of the Arctic Circle. Some were big leather-covered ocean-going vessels. Over time they were squeezed to Ireland's western seaboard, with a few surviving elsewhere, such as coracles in Wales and on the Spey in Scotland. There have been revivals in Brittany and Galicia in recent years. The boats were constructed out of cattle hides stretched over a wooden framework. Seal, whale and horse skins were also used and we found records of a goat skin coracle employed on a mountain lake in Iveragh, Co Kerry. Currach are still used in fishing on the west coast about as far south as Dingle. Coracles disappeared from the Boyne in the 1930s. We met someone recently who said that where there is poaching, coracles will never go away and that they are still on the Munster Blackwater, which is big news in terms of currach stories."

"These boats are all built upside down; the more 'primitive' ones made with hazel rods as the frame and pine, deal or ash as the stringers. Hazel is cut in the winter and bent when it needs to be seasoned. The ribs of the Aran and west Kerry boats are made of oak or ash steamed to get the shape of the boat. The coracle is the most basic and you stick the rods into the ground. The next stage is hazel going into a wooden gunwale, sticking in to hold the board in the gunwales. Then you'd go to rectangular-shaped ribs, with mortices cut into the gunwales. You'd run stringers from fore and aft, finally covering them with cloth. The boats don't have rudders or keels, which makes them seaworthy in big seas. Experienced oars-people can respond to waves very quickly. There are records of storms that wiped out modern boats, as in The Night of the Big Wind, Tom Murphy's poem about the Cleggan disaster that hit north Mayo, Donegal and Galway around the end of the 19th century. They say after that the currach became the main boat of that area again."

"There seems to be little folk memory of launching or naming the boats; it was 'the boat' that belonged to a person or group. In the Aran Islands they'd tie a little bag of sand from a churchyard to a fishing net and there was a story of a miraculous escape. There were prohibitions on anything with red hair, like foxes or red-haired women, being mentioned before putting to sea. I've spoken to people who recall lads playing a cruel trick on old fishermen in West Kerry years ago, saying proscribed words and causing them to abandon a trip. A famous Blasket Islands fiddle tune, Port na Buichi, heard out on the water one night in the 1920s, was said to be a 'ghost' tune, but it could have been a whale song that resonated through the boat - the skin of a coracle is like a drum. I remember being on the Lee at Blackrock; a ship was docking across the river at Tivoli. You couldn't hear its engine, but suddenly there was a clicking sound coming through the coracle; vibrations in the water were somehow finding the natural frequency of the boat and making the rotation of the propellers audible."

Coracle "Walking on Water" Exhibition



"Everyone knows the currach is an icon of this country and to see it out at sea tells an important story: 'This boat still exists, you can go for a spin in one.' We've won a 22 mile race on the Thames and I've met people who were watching TV in Australia and they saw us rowing around dressed up as monks in a film we did. Our website connects us with like-minded people. We meet Welsh and Cornish oars-people every two years at a festival at Douarnenez in Brittany and we have cultural links with Scotland through the Gaelic language. This interest brings together people of Unionist and Nationalist backgrounds in Northern Ireland, offering them a common platform on the basis of a shared Celtic culture and Celtic Christianity. A group up there built a big currach in honour of Colmcille."

The project's Walking On Water Maritime Map was launched at the Cork Vision Centre in June 2001. This recounts the story of the reclamation of the inner Cork and its environs from Corcach Mór na Mumhan, "The Great Marsh Of Munster". Through Medieval times and into the 19th century the growing settlement spread over what had been expanses of marshy islands. For a long time this was criss-crossed by numerous tidal waterways, giving Cork the title of "The Venice of Ireland". Eventually about 15 islands were consolidated into a single larger one (The Middle Parish), encircled by two main channels of the Lee. The map places all this in an historical context, while a coracle was built on the premises during the exhibition.

Graphic designer Edmund Smith had a guiding hand in the map's production. "We envisioned a map showing where all the original Cork waterways were. Starting in 1998, it took about 18 months and a great deal of research. The main river is in dark blue and the former waterways in shaded blue and pink, so you can see at a glance what Cork must have been like. We did other maps, from prehistory to the present, showing the various types of craft that were used on the river. Two researchers - Nick Duff (Dublin) and Alan Eliot (Belfast), were from sociology backgrounds and they found an enormous amount of material. Tony Twomey got some brilliant stuff on shipping in Cork from the 17th century onwards. We found a 16th century map in the Harbour Commissioners (now The Port of Cork Co) which gives a fascinating picture of the Saint Marie's of the Isle area. It's a typical Elizabethan-era illustrative map - author and provenance unknown, no scale or text, but quite detailed. It shows a wall around the Crosse's Green Dominican site of which no archaeological evidence has been found. You begin to wonder: 'Was the artist dreaming this? When was it taken down and why does no trace of it remain?' It wasn't until the Ordinance Survey maps in the 1840s that things took on a real scientific accuracy. We accessed 42 map sources scattered around all sorts of places,

but I'm convinced that there are others undiscovered out there, perhaps in Britain."

Some evocative reminders of the once numerous waterways can be sought out among the modern streetscape. The following survey is an attempt to give an indication of the richness that often lies unnoticed at our feet. I must acknowledge my debt here to Dr Colin Rynne of the Department of Archaeology, U.C.C., whose books have set benchmarks of excellence as references for anyone investigating Cork's past. His advice has been most helpful, illuminating an area that suffers from a lack of formal documentation and helping me to correct errors. I need hardly mention that any inaccuracies are my own responsibility.

On the Lee at Blackrock

Photo: Marie-Annick Desplanques

The name Drawbridge Street is suggestive of an earlier era, while the 18th century core of the Crawford Art Gallery began life as a customs house, with its frontage on King's Dock (now Emmett Place). The legal titles of some 18th century buildings on South Mall still contain references to mooring rights, with their raised entrance stairways built to provide dry access between boats and houses. The Château Bar on Patrick St is another example of this, while the street itself has a channel running beneath it. A kind of myth has grown up around an old 24-pounder cannon set into the roadside near Bishop Lucey Park. It is often supposed to have been used as a bollard by ships tying up in the days when the Grand Parade was a canal. In fact, this thoroughfare was culverted over during the 1780s and the gun was more likely installed there during the early 19th century, probably to prevent horses and carts cutting across that section of footpath.

A surviving backwater on the southern edge of the Middle Parish branches off the Lee's South Channel near O'Donovan Rossa Rd, where a few clumps of marsh grasses form tiny islets in the water, relics of the vegetation that once covered much of the valley floor. Sometimes known as The Millstream, it rejoins the South Channel about 300 metres downstream. The waterways enclose several acres of land called Bishop's Marsh, Bishop's Island, or Twig Marsh, on which stand Jury's Hotel and most of St Aloysius School. From 1887 to 1934 this was the location for the terminus of the Cork to Muskerry Light Railway; the stumps of two piers in the South Channel are remnants of a railway bridge. Certain spots hereabouts are favoured by anglers fishing mainly for sea trout and salmon. In the cliffs below Connaught Ave is the site of St Finbarr's Cave, which Edmund visited as a child in the 1960s: "I think that it was about 7 metres deep and 2 or 3 metres high. It was blocked in because it became unsafe, but it had strong folkloric associations with early Celtic Christianity. St Finbarr was said to retire there for contemplation."

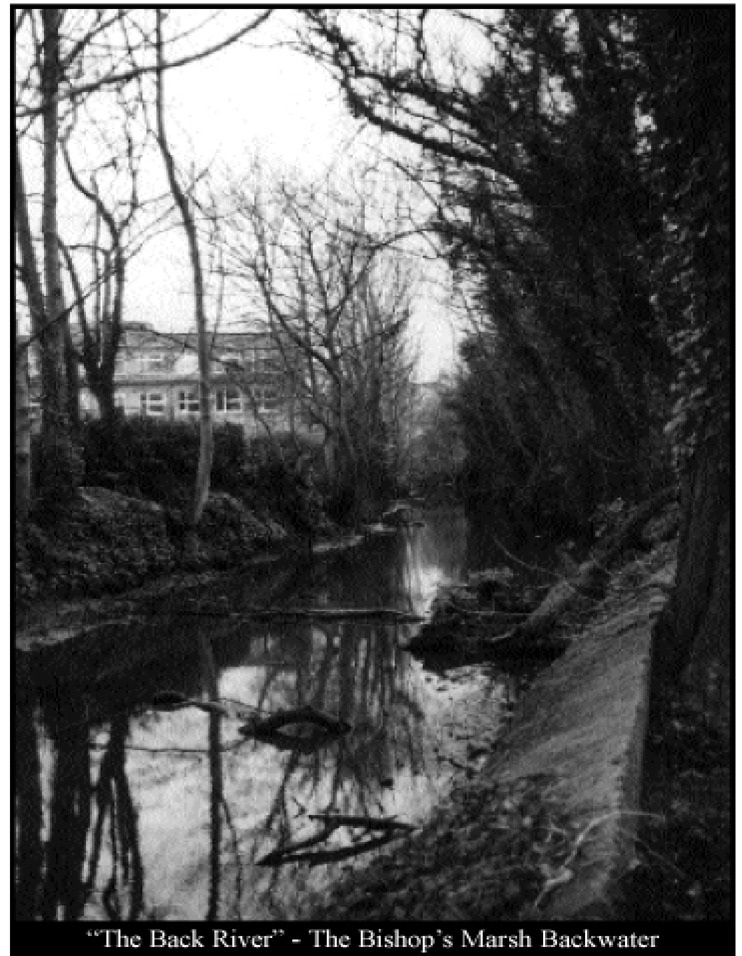
Pádraig and friends explored the backwater via its lower opening (since closed off by the building of the Lancaster Lodge complex in 1998). "We had a Canadian canoe that we had to prise through the initial, overgrown stretch. Naturally, we'd always be thinking, 'Could this be navigable?' The channel was some 15 ft wide, maybe 4 ft deep in places at high tide. We went under a concrete covering, then we came to a little paradise of tall trees and secluded water between the school and the Church of Ireland Bishop's gardens. Access into the South Channel at the western end is blocked by a big fence, but it is an interesting place and a haven for bird life." Ann Trinder, a secretary at St Aloysius, observes: "I don't think our pupils ever had a special name for it, it is just 'the river'. It used to be spanned in the middle of our property by a hump-backed bridge, which was demolished in the mid-1970s. You crossed the bridge to get from the primary to the secondary school, so that always seemed like a symbolic progression. The new development has covered in the channel as far back as where the bridge was." The nearby Bishop's residence is a stately 3 storey over-basement mansion built in 1782 as a summer house for Bishop Mann, who was based west of the city at Bishopstown. Its lightly wooded Lower Gardens adjoining the stream are sometimes used by pupils from the neighbouring Crawford College of Art and Design for work that requires a rural feeling.

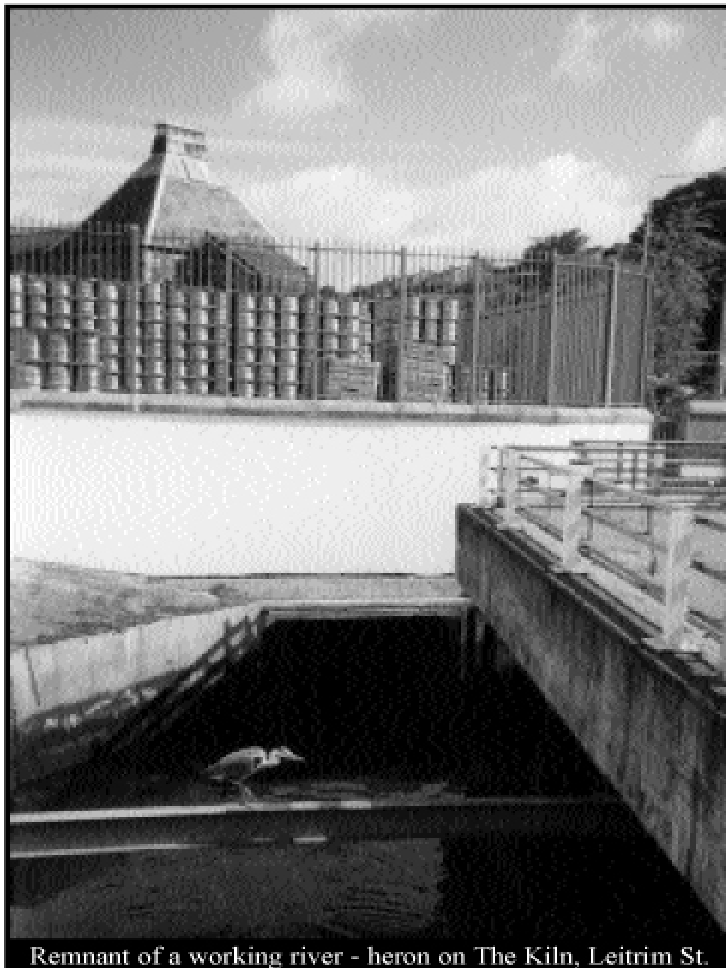
The anonymous 16th century Plan of Cork shows the backwater dividing near the modern Sharman Crawford St, and these channels go on to environ Abbey or Holy Isle, now the site of St Marie's of the Isle school, before joining the South Channel. One stream flows under the Dean's Hall development at the point where a fountain plays between two apartment blocks. A visual display at the southern entrance to the complex discusses the archaeology of the area. Another channel runs somewhat to the north of Bishop St, reaching the Lee through Proby's Bridge, which has been incorporated into the quayside. Part of this watercourse may have been open into the late 1920s. Pádraig reminisces: "Two of us went up there in a naomhóg. The tide was perfect, outgoing so you wouldn't risk being pushed up against the roof, but with enough water to keep moving on. We felt rather than saw our way, getting about 150 yards before being stopped by a wall, but in living memory it was possible to get

through into the Bishop's Marsh Backwater." Poachers used these channels as back routes in and out of the Lee. One elderly fisherman who remembers those days says: "We called that route 'The Back River' - this is going back 50 years and more. The water bailiffs were on bicycles, which gave them a lot of mobility, but generally we'd give them the slip."

Enterprises including mills, tanneries, breweries and distilleries have harnessed these streams for water power and industrial processes going back to the Dominicans of Medieval times. In the 1840s there were legal wrangles between the owners of various businesses over management of the water supply and the dumping of waste in the watercourses. In his Industry at Crosse's Green, (Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society, 2000), Colm O'Mahony recounts how scuffles broke out in July 1844 when a group of men forced their way into Saint Dominick's Mill and tore down a millrace sluice gate which they blamed for interfering with the movement of salmon on the river.

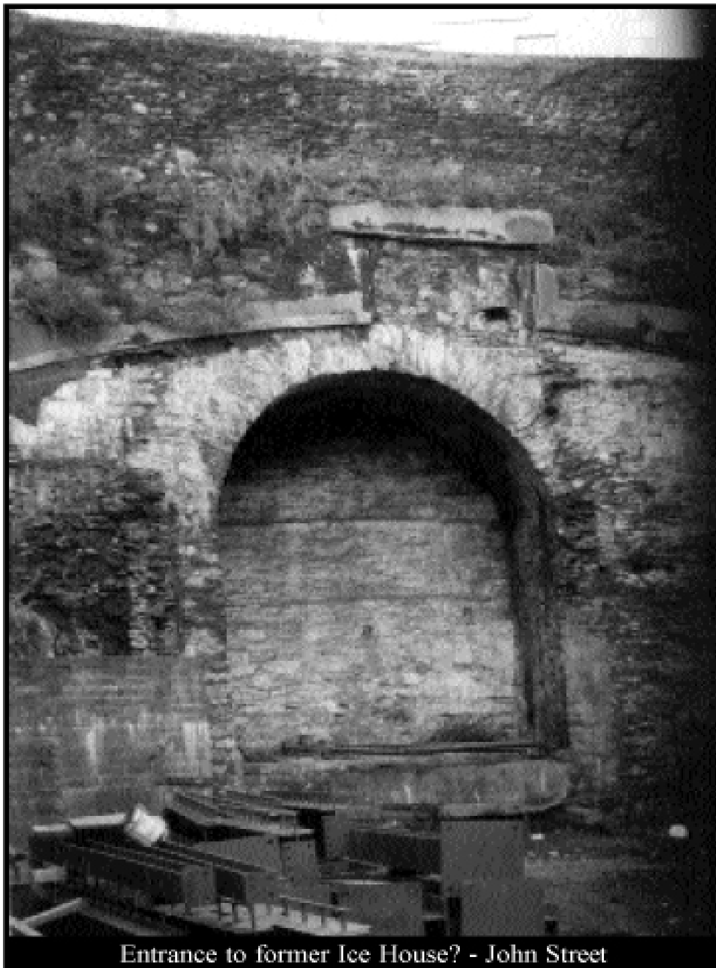
A longer backwater deviates from the Lee's North Channel at Sunday's Well, separating a nine acre area known as O'Reilly's Marsh or the Distillery Fields from the mainland. It flows under Alderman O'Reilly's Bridge (built c1760), where its north bank is known as Wise's Quay, rejoining the river just above Saint Vincent's Footbridge. This backwater was also called The Millstream and was utilised to drive a tidal mill by Franciscan monks, who became established in the area during the 13th century and operated salmon fisheries in the nearby North Channel. The stream featured in the large distillery reputedly founded by the Wise family in 1779 and the remains of a millrace can be seen today. Northside resident Matthew Kenneally fished this stretch of water as a boy in the 1960s and knew it as "The One Miler". Perhaps the channel was thought to be a mile long - it is in fact considerably shorter. The term "Rope Walk" was for long applied to land adjoining the hillside above it, a reference to rope production carried on during the 19th century. Mick O'Leary, who grew up near Blarney St in the 1960s, remembers it being pronounced "Ropork". "We'd play there as lads; we would hardly have understood what the term meant."


"The Back River" - The Bishop's Marsh Backwater


Remnant of a working river - heron on The Kiln, Leitrim St.

A few hundred metres downstream, the North Channel is joined at Christie Ring Bridge by the Kiln River, originally a tidal waterway that was part of a marshy estuary stretching up towards Watercourse Rd and the basin-like area known as Poulraddy Harbour. Here it receives the Ballycannon Bride, a stream that rises at Kerry Pike and flows through Blackpool. The name Kiln probably reflects the proximity of kilns going back to Medieval times, perhaps some relating to Saint John's Mills, an old flour milling establishment located on a canalised section of the Bride a little above the point where it debouched into the Kiln. These mills are recorded in the 13th century and according to one tradition had their origins in the enterprise of Christianised Danish settlers of the 11th century. An 1820 limestone structure occupies the John St. site today. Originally Daly's Distillery, it has been admirably refurbished into apartments. The word Kiln is often pronounced locally with a feature known as "the intrusive vowel", an extra syllable being inserted after the l to give "kill-in". Sailing ships docked here - the Sand Quay was in the vicinity of John St - and some were built near Leitrim St. The inlet is clearly visible in Nathaniel Grogan the Elder's painting (c1770), View Of Cork, now in the Crawford Art Gallery.

The lowest section of the Kiln bears the street name Carroll's


Entrance to former Ice House? - John Street

Quay, where plaques mark the sites of Carroll's Bridge and Punch's Bridge over the stream. Access for larger ships ended with the construction of these bridges in 1782, as did ship building in the area. It is hard to determine for how long smaller boats such as shallow draught lighters continued to enter the Kiln and how far upstream they ventured, but the construction of Murphy's Brewery in the 1850s would have put further limitations on such traffic. John Rocque's Map of 1759 shows four channels running out of Poulraddy, then under and around The Foundlings Hospital, a large building located in the modern brewery grounds. Two channels continue on its southern side and merge a little above Lady's Well Bridge, which crossed the Kiln in the vicinity of the Lady's Well shrine. An 18th century document refers to one of the destructive floods that periodically roared through the Blackpool Valley, saying "Lady's Well Bridge was broke and spoiled". The Foundlings Hospital entrance façade still stands on Leitrim St. This institution (founded 1749) was supposed to care for abandoned children, but possessed a grim reputation for neglect. R A Millikin (1767-1815) refers to it ironically as "that divine habitation" in his poem De Groves Of De Pool. As the river here would have received every sort of waste deposited upstream, its condition needs little imagining. The area was in-filled down the years and most of the Kiln's remaining channel was covered by the early 1990s as part of the enlargement of Leitrim St.

Paddy O'Connor has memories from his 1940s childhood in Roman St which call up echoes from an earlier era: "Many older people still used the term Sand Quay, applying this to the Lee's frontage at Pope's Quay rather than the Kiln River side. I remember hollows cut into the cliffside above John St. We wondered if they were used to store produce from the Butter Exchange up on Shandon, with the butter shipped out on lighters from the Kiln." This matches information given to local historian Richard T. Cooke in 1990 by Tony Mahony, who could remember his father saying that these caves were used to store ice when the Kiln River froze in years gone by; that butter was housed there before being shipped overseas and that liquor from distilleries was also placed there. A quasi-Classical archway recently exposed on the cliff face behind John St near Sand Quay House looks like the entrance to an 18th/19th century ice house; it is now being covered over by construction work. There are also stories of a flight of quayside-like steps and an iron ring set in a wall for use by boats docking in what are now the brewery grounds. Pat Daly grew up in John St in the 1940s and recalls: "Logs were brought in by lorry and left floating in the Kiln to rid them of their sap so that they could be used at Eustace's sawmill, which was near the present premises of builders P.J. Hegarty. Eustaces' had probably the last steam-driven lorry in Cork, which had a little funnel on a cab and was powered by wood fed into a stove."

A late 18th century warehouse building (now the Marian Health Centre) with a frontage on the remaining narrow waterway at Carroll's Quay provides a unique link with the days when goods were transferred directly in and out of boats. This distinctive 3 storey red sandstone edifice may soon be levelled and the adjacent water covered over to facilitate new development. The Kiln and its tributaries constitute elements of an ecosystem of interdependent life forms extending deep into the Northside's rural hinterland. Depriving streams of light and fresh air generally has a disastrous effect on wildlife, interfering with the movement patterns of fish that need to migrate upstream to

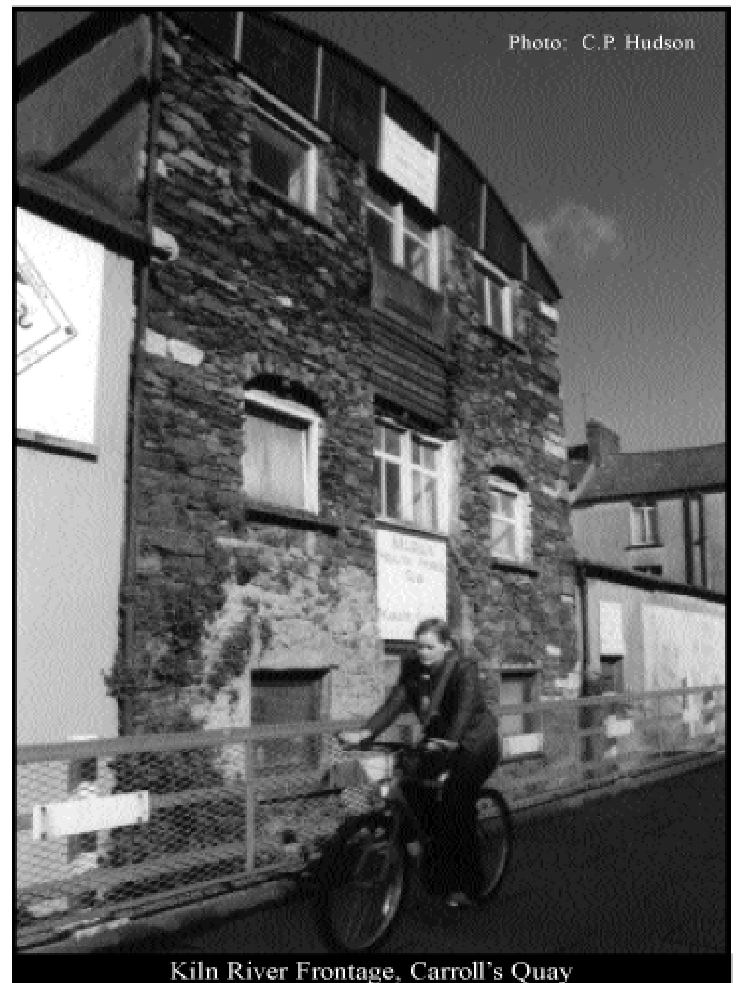


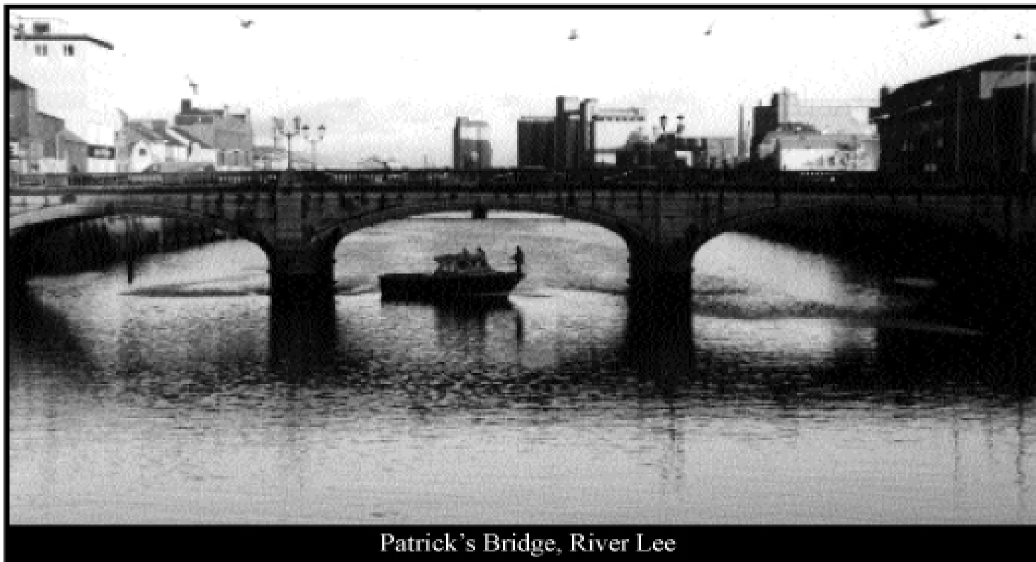
Photo: C.P. Hudson

Kiln River Frontage, Carroll's Quay

spawn. Pádraig Ó Duinnín laments the disappearance of such vestiges of historic waterways: "They are very positive assets to a city, from tourist, educational, environmental and economic viewpoints, and call for protection and upgrading."

The Dyke Stream also disappeared relatively recently. It drained the Mardyke-Fitzgerald Park area after the western end of the Middle Parish was reclaimed during the 18th century, running alongside what was the Mardyke Walk to enter the North Channel by Presentation College. Freddy Lambkin, President of the Cork County Cricket Club, says: "I can remember in the 1940s and '50s, three men used to mow the area, collect the clippings in a horse-drawn cart, then dump them into the stream. The stream had several small tributaries."

The Cork Main Drainage Scheme will obviously benefit the Lee. The urban reaches of the river once bustled with boats; now they seem almost devoid of life. Clontarf, Parnell and Brian Boru bridges all had opening sections which allowed larger vessels access to the heart of the city, but that option is gone. The construction of the De Valera and Michael Collins bridges in 1982 sealed off everything upstream to shipping. Still, there remains great scope for smaller craft to make more use of the river. Says Edmund Smith: "The South Channel is used by Meitheal Mara and the North Channel by rowing clubs, but we want to see the river accessed more by the wider community. It's sad that you can't take your children on a public boat trip from the city down to Roche's Point or somewhere. I don't know of another city of comparable size in Europe where such a resource would be so ignored. We are well-positioned at Crosse's Green, but there are only a couple of hours a day when it is practical for us to take boats on the river there, it all relates to currents and clearance over the weirs."


Patrick's Bridge, River Lee

Hopefully the orcas' visit augurs well for the future regeneration of Cork's waterways, especially now that the city has been awarded the status of European City of Culture for 2005 and the ambitious Docklands Plan calls for the Lee to be revitalised. On one occasion they ventured under two bridges to appear in the South Channel opposite City Hall. Edmund saw them in the North Channel: "A big dog-fish, at least 2 metres long, leapt out of the water at Patrick's Bridge, with an orca chasing it. It was amazing to witness something like that right up there. The orcas chased a very good food source into the harbour, then corralled it up the river. We were privileged to see them".

Meitheal Mara (Tel: 021-4316813 e-mail: mmara@iol.ie website: mmara.com) recently honoured Paddy Barry, one of Ireland's great sailors, with the first Gradam Meitheal Mara award. The award recognises Paddy's recent navigation of the North West Passage between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans in his yacht, Northabout. The Norwegian Roald Amundsen was the first to complete the epic journey (1903-06), which has only been successfully undertaken by sailing vessels 13 times since.

Orcas

The killer whale or orca, toothed whale, orcinus orca, is the biggest member of the delphinidae (dolphin) family, reaching a maximum length of 10 metres and weight of 10.5 tonnes. It is found in all oceans of the world, especially cool coastal regions, although it is unusual for it to come into harbours and rivers. The orca is highly intelligent, basically gregarious and the only whale that is known to prey on other marine mammals, such as dolphins and seals. The trio that visited us during June 2001 comprised an adolescent female, a mature male and an elderly female, which died soon before the others left Cork. They were part of a pod or extended family grouping - which some authorities call a pack - of about 20 that were observed near the harbour's entrance off Roche's Point. Males usually mate with females belonging to other pods and seem to play little part in raising young. The average life span for wild orcas is 30 years for males and 50 for females. Although authenticated cases of fatal attacks on humans in the wild are almost non-existent, orcas are powerful creatures whose space should be respected. A recent newspaper article described the experiences of a group of researchers off the coast of Papua New Guinea: After swimming in close proximity to an orca family for some days, the humans seem to have become accepted by them. They were startled when the whales began bringing back sharks and sting rays in their mouths, toying with them for a while, then dispatching them with a single bite, behaviour that seemed to say: "Look at me!"

On a recent trip to Greenland, Padraig Ó Diunnín was told by local Inuit people that they do not hunt orcas or eat their flesh as they regard them as carrion-eaters. Along the Pacific coasts of Alaska and Siberia the orca is revered as the master of the water. The Inuit believe that animals are spiritual beings endowed with souls and with potent guardians who must be propitiated if humans hunt them. The Inuit myth of the Sea Woman (Sedna or Nuliayuk) relates how Sedna's fingers metamorphosed into seals, whales and narwhals and she became the "keeper" of these creatures, whom she watches from the bottom of the sea.

JO ALLEN
A Northside Artist

by Claire Fitzpatrick

Jo Allen found inspiration for her art in Cork's vibrant street-life...

Jo Allen was born in Washington D.C. Although not of Irish extraction, hearing traditional Irish musicians in the States during the folk boom of the 1970s kindled in her a great interest in this country. She arrived here in 1980 on an extended holiday that turned into a permanent stay. After studying art in Cork and Dublin and teaching art history and painting at the Crawford School of Art, she went on to teach at Tig Filí (021-4509274) in MacCurtain St., where she later became artist in residence. The gallery offers facilities similar to a community centre and as well as the Poets' Table Café it has various innovative projects such as the Poetry Circle. She was recently appointed artist in residence at the Institute for Contemporary Dance, which is based at the Firkin Crane Centre (021-4507487), in historic Shandon.

Because Jo tends to work on a large scale, Tig Filí was an excellent venue, as it has the space to easily accommodate her paintings. Tig Filí gives artists who are just out of college the chance to exhibit their work and is a stepping stone for those building a reputation. She and curator Clare Byewater worked closely together; deciding whose work to take and how to hang it. Tig Filí also provides an information service for artists. In the '80s there were no artists' collectives in Cork and most people wanting to pursue an art career left for Dublin, Belfast or London. Nowadays there is a vital art scene with hundreds of artists and a

Jo Allen - From the artists' 'Domestic Gods' series

community spirit that has blossomed among them. Jo studied in Barcelona for her Master's degree, then returned to Tig Filí. The gallery has an altruistic philosophy, with a strong focus on bringing art to the people. "They are trying to encourage the public to come in and the café gives people another reason to visit."

I asked Jo about the relevance of Cork to her work. During her upbringing she had no exposure to the arts, and bearing in mind the social "pecking order" that she experienced in the States, "she did not come from the right class". This type of pressure hardly affected her in Cork; as an outsider social class was inconsequential. Art education was also more affordable. She has never felt "put down" in Ireland or been made to feel unsuitable in any way with regard to her art, so in her own words, "that knocked-down feeling of who am I, what right have I to want to be an artist?" that she felt in America, did not apply here. "Ireland is such a small country, it is easier to make contacts and to receive respect on lots of levels". Ireland has affected her painting in both physical and cultural terms. She became interested in soft tones because of the softer light we get and the atmosphere in general. Jo discovered to her delight that there is a healthy respect for eccentricity in Ireland, whereas in America she feels that there is a strong need to conform. She loves the wealth of "characters" on the streets here and the way friendships appear to survive huge differences of opinion. Even when actions are strongly disapproved of, friends do not automatically disassociate themselves; in fact they appear to relish the challenge of difference. She grew up believing that there was a special place somewhere that would provide her with a sense of belonging; she feels that place is Cork. In 1985 she became an Irish citizen and has become politically involved on a local level, believing that it is a lot easier for an individual's voice to be heard here than in a vast place like America.

She is not overly interested in the commercial aspect of art and does not work on commission. Much of her work draws on her own life experience. She feels a strong need to communicate, often working on several series of paintings at the same time.

One series was called "Family Games". It deals with the dynamics that exists within the family and how we relate to each other through the positions we occupy as members of the group. While she has experimented in different areas including landscape, abstract work, still life and craft work, she always comes back to the human figure, which is her favourite subject, working on it directly with a model, or utilising drawings done previously. She finds that "certain poses set off a whole chain of reactions" in her mind, or "a combination of poses which tend to react in a certain emotive way that lights up like an electric light bulb into an idea for a painting." She may carry ideas around for years; then they physically come together through the conscious discipline applied to sketching.

The major part of Jo's work is done in her garden studio at home. She has friends who are street performers; she has done performance painting, which is mostly improvisational and entails setting everything up in the street, painting during the performances. The excitement of foreign travel is a source of inspiration, but she also needs a comfortable space for her creativity to flourish. The fact that she has lived in Cork longer than anywhere else speaks for itself. Now she is looking forward to making a contribution at the Firkin Crane. She is very impressed with Cork's commitment to the arts. The colourful tapestry of the local community promotes creativity and helps the artist to develop different approaches. In America a relatively small city the size of Cork would not be in a position to offer such a variety of cultural activities. The opportunity for an enthusiastic artist to work in a convivial and creative atmosphere here is ever present.

A Myriad of Shopkeepers

by Dolores Horgan

The following excerpts are from taped interviews in the sound archive. They are representative of our multi-media archive of audio, video and photographic materials.

Excerpt 1: Denise Horgan talks about Monica's Costume World, Blackpool in the 1990s. Denise makes and sells soft furnishings and fancy dress costumes which she hires out for functions. "Mum left school when she was 14, and did her training in the Sunbeam. She worked in a few factories then, sewing and when I was four years of age, she decided she wanted to go out on her own, so she opened a small little shop in Blackpool and it has boomed since. She was doing clothes alterations and running a Fancy Dress shop as well, which was the only one in Cork when she started. We also introduced the curtains which keeps us very busy. I learned from my Mum when I was very young, picking up bits and pieces. Then when I decided to work here I did a FÁS course and I did other courses, making curtains but most of it was from my mother, picking it up over the years. There have been a few changes, when my Mum started off a lot of stuff was done by hand instead of machine. You really don't do anything yourself anymore, everything now is very fast."

Excerpt 2: Kathleen English talks about her shop in Gerald Griffin St., 1940 - '70s. Kathleen, now in her late 70s, was born and grew up in Farran St, situated between Saint Mary's Rd and Gerald Griffin St. "Starting the business, I thought about it for a while and eventually I said 'sure, I have nothing to lose and will have a go', and I did. Just a weeny little shop now first and actually it was not a very big shop in the end either. A nice little place, nice street and nice people. I came from the locality and had plenty of neighbours there. Anyhow, we started up the shop which was a sweet shop just being near the school and carried on for a length of time, doing good. Well then, I suppose one year after you added on to it a little bit by bit, not in the building but in the business. I sold sweets to the kids going to school, their lunch, biscuits, Tanora, and all these usual things as well as hair slides and little toys."

Excerpt 3: Catherine Fray recalls local shops in Farranree/Blackpool in the 1960s. "My earliest memories of shopkeepers are 'scales', women weighing poppies on the old type scuttle scales, with the different type of weights. You could get three pounds of potatoes or one pound of potatoes. Even the taste of everything was so different back then. Going to the shop and getting a penny worth of caramels and the lady using newspaper, making a cone shape and putting your sweets, your 'bon bons' and whatever you bought inside.

There were three shops on Pophams Rd in Farranree. One of them was Curtains', they were all family groups. There were Murphy's and Ormond's who are still there, they are very well established. I remember, going to Murphy's from my Nan's house in Farranferris Ave. and we would get Patsy Pop ice lolls, which were beautiful. I never tasted anything as nice as the orange flavour. I remember my first iceberger and they don't taste the same today because they were creamy, different."

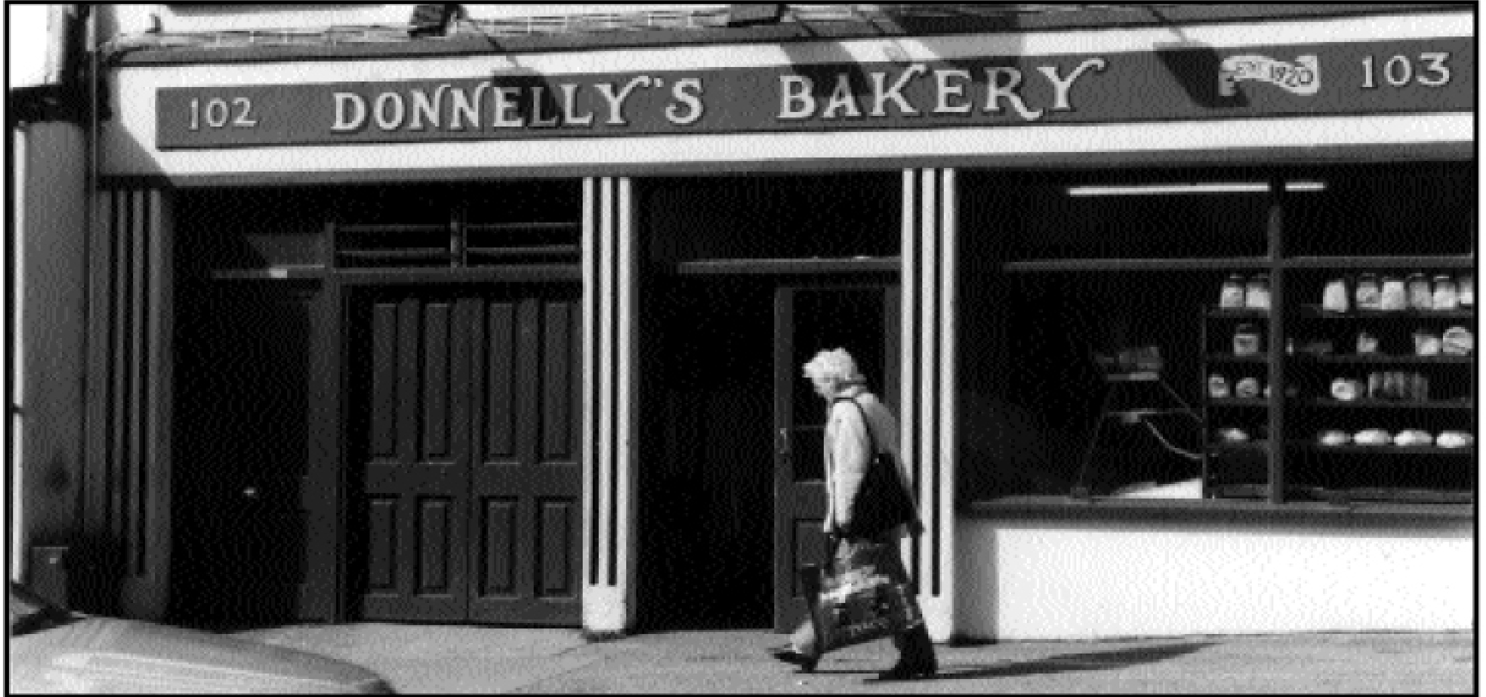
Excerpt 4: Interview with Noel Magnier about local shops in Gerald Griffin St in the 1950s. Noel paints a picture of life where people's everyday needs were met by local shops and where loyalty and support were important. "My memories of the shops, one would be Coughlan's butcher shop, number 23 or 4. At that time there was no window in the butcher's shop, not in this particular one. They were fairly open anyway. The meat was on display to anyone, you could come along and touch it, though it was not recommended. One time, myself and the lads were given a greyhound who would have been sent to the dogs' home to be put down. We would sort of bring him round and make him into

a champion. I remember, we ducked down on our hands and knees one day and a couple of us reached up our hands and we took some chops. We needed the chops ourselves more than the dog, but we gave them to him anyway. The follow up to that is the dog was never so well fed. I remember one day, he was kept in my house because we had a fairly big yard, the dog got inside and bounded up the stairs. Now, there was a big window at the top of the stairs, it was open and he bounded out the window onto a wall and he took off down Bulldog Lane and we never saw him after that."

MEMORIES OF THE NORTHSIDE

Wipe the sweat from your brow all the errands are done
With 6d in your pocket you're going to have fun.

Then your step gets much lighter - no hurry at all
Put away tuppence ha'penny to go to the hall.
You gaze at the poster - Dan Murphy was right.
Tom Mix and Horse Tony were in Friday night.



"My earliest memory, really, of being old enough to go for messages was just right across the road to Minnie Cogan, Now, Minnie Cogan seemed to me to be a hundred years of age. She was always alert. Her husband Dave, he looked to me also to be about a hundred but there they were and they looking after all of us. If I wanted to go for snuff for my grandmother, over across the road to Minnie Cogan. She would tear a piece of newspaper and fold it into a small little bag. She would have a sort of decanter for measuring the snuff into this, the snuff would go in and then into a bag. She would fold it up with meticulous care and I will always remember she would press it into my hand and she would say 'be careful now going across the road', in case I might get knocked down by a horse."

Lastly, excerpts from verses written by Tommy Mintern, who put pen to paper after watching a television show about the Fairhill Harrier Club.

Molly Owen's at the "Cross" selling apples galore
At the time you would pay a ha'penny for four.
For black and white puddings and rashers so lean
Paddy Twomey supplied them - he was spotlessly clean.

Leather harness by Manley's made to any design
John O'Connell's pork chops really tasted divine.

No shortage of bread - there were bakers galore.
Harry Ormond was champ - diplomas by the score.
There was Donnelly's Bakery - Fitzgerald's too
And Creedon's - O'Connell's - Simcox's we knew.
You'd get very good service wherever you'd go.
It was said they made bread 'cos they "kneaded" the dough.

From the "Dirty Boys" shop - spuds and green cauiflowers
To Larry O'Brien's for a drink after hours.
Then up Kearney's Lane for your tripe and drisheen.
With O'Reilly's and Butler's suppliers supreme.

The tap-tapping sound from the shop you would hear,
Dan Hurley - the cobbler - at the door would appear.
He said: "Stop your gaping or my patience you'll tax
Run away boy, and find an oul gaza to wax."

The views were delightful - whether sunshine or rain.
You could see "Bob and Joan" from the top of Step Lane.

'Cork's Crooked Spire'

by Rev. John Faris

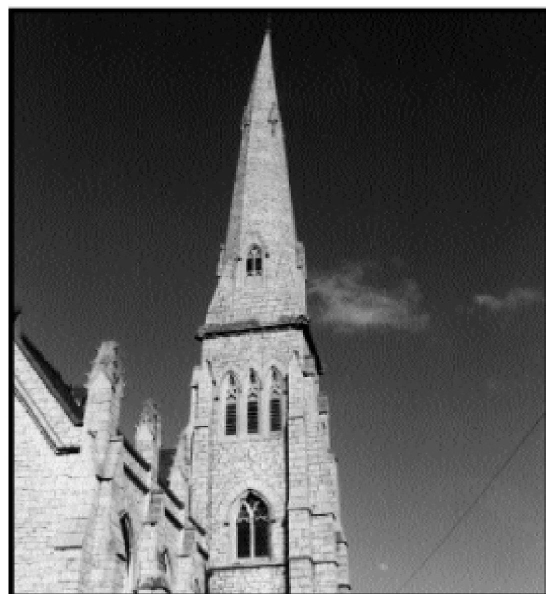
Trinity Church's crooked spire is a famous landmark...

You can see its crooked spire from many angles across Cork; if you know about grass cutting you may wonder how they manage that steep slope; you may have passed by all your life and never been inside or have thought that the church is closed. We are not closed, we use a Flymo and no, the spire is not expected to lean any further. Vincent Kerr, of the Grosvenor Bar in MacCurtain St. says that the church site was originally a field where drovers put their herds while spending the night at his premises. That was one way of cutting the grass.

Trinity Presbyterian Church at the foot of Summerhill North was built by Presbyterians, many of them of Scottish extraction, hence the description "Scots Church", as mentioned in Frank O'Connor's autobiography. Presbyterians had been in Cork since the early 18th century in the "Old Presbyterian Church", Princes St., also known as the Unitarian Church. When Scottish merchants moved to Cork in the early 1800s they wanted orthodox Trinitarian teaching. So they built a Trinity Church, first in Queen St. (now Father Matthew St.), and then this building in 1861. The theme of the Trinity God as three in one is reflected in the name "Trinity" and the three great stained glass windows which have symbols of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Church is part of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, which is more prominent further north. The decorated Gothic style here is more elaborate than the plainer classical "meeting houses", such as the earlier Fr. Matthew St. structure. A feature in common with many Roman Catholic churches is the choir gallery at the rear. The Reformed emphasis on the preaching of the word is seen in the large central pulpit. The organ built by the Cork firm of Megahy was added in the early 20th century. Early Presbyterians sang without musical accompaniment. Although the organ has a fine sound, the acoustics of the building are well suited to unaccompanied choral singing.

The church-like smaller building at the end of MacCurtain St., now leased to a dentist's practise, was originally the Carmichael School, later used as a youth centre. It was called after one of the benefactors of the church, who is said to have been involved in Cash's Store on Patrick St. ("Cash" was an acronym for Carmichael, Arnott, Smith and Hitchmough, the first three of whom had connections with Trinity Church). We have stored away a slightly damaged bust of Mr. Carmichael. The church hall, which has a small meeting room and a larger badminton hall, was the Summerhill National School, which closed in the 1960s.

Inside the church are several memorial plaques dedicated to ministers of the church, including those of the "original" Queen St. Trinity which continued until 1928 and which was the Media Factory and I believe is soon to become a pub. There are two plaques from the Great War, 1914 - 18. It may be significant that the Trinity plaque gives the ranks of those who served, whereas the Queen St. one does not. Trinity had the reputation of being for the "fur coat brigade", as a man who had grown up attending the more working class Queen St. church once remarked to me. The pulpit is dedicated in loving memory of Sir John Lunham of



Lotamore, the family once noted for its bacon factory. Curiously, that inscription is prominent above one in similar script on the communion table which says "Do this in remembrance of me". It is to be hoped that the Lord is remembered more deeply than past grandees.

The distinctive crooked spire is said to have originated from an argument between the architect and the workmen! Some say that they took their revenge when they were drunk. It was more probably an example of "Murphy's Law"; with the mistake only realised when the mortar had set and the scaffolding was removed. A plan to install a bell in the tower was deferred on account of cost (£9) and there is still no bell. Whatever the reason for the slanted spire, there was no apparent discord at the opening dinner at the Imperial Hotel in 1861. The minister Rev Magill said that he "had watched the erection of the building with great care, and never till then did he as clearly see that skilled workmen are the bone and sinew of the country". The architect, Englishman Mr J. Tarring, was complimented on having planted "on yonder hill a monument of his skill, in which he has happily combined the beautiful native limestone of this country with the Portland and Bath stone of his own country". An architectural survey describes the building as being the only example of this type of Kentish rag stonework in the city. Whether or not tongues were in cheeks back then, there is a saying among the congregation when someone is asked to do some maintenance job: "While you're at it, if you have a moment, see if you can straighten the spire out!" On a higher level, it has been suggested that the kink in the spire is a reminder of crooked human nature.

Former Queen St. church

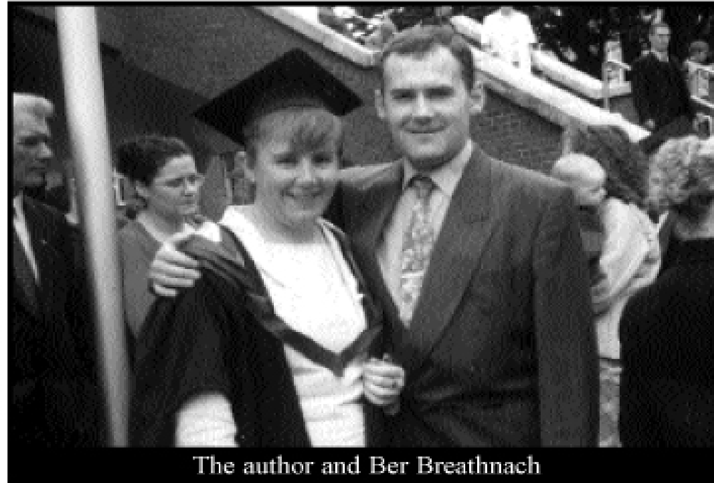
Although it is not always possible to keep the church open, visitors are most welcome. Rev John Faris, Tel:021-4891437 email: jfaris@presbyterianireland.org.

GAELSCOILEANNA
'Nurturing an Ancient Language'

by Seán Walsh

One of Europe's most ancient languages is finding a new relevance in the modern world...

Irish is theoretically the first official language of the state, yet it is not commonly spoken in the homes and workplaces of the nation. Most of us have memories of grappling with the language at school, and then more or less forgetting how to speak it over the next number of years. To look at one aspect of Irish today, I interviewed my sister Ber Breathnach, who is a teacher and guidance counsellor at Coláiste an Phiarsaigh in Glanmire, just outside Cork City. This Gaelscoil, where everything is taught through the medium of Irish, received a certain amount of media attention recently when one of its recent past pupils, Cobh girl Sinéad Sheppard, was selected to be a member of the Popstars group '6'. We discussed issues surrounding the use of minority languages in the 21st century.


The author and Ber Breathnach

SW Bí ag caint liom ar do chúlra sa mhúinteoireacht.

BB Chomh fada siar is cuimhin liom theastaigh uaim rud a dhéanamh le mo theangacha eorpacha agus theastaigh uaim a bheith i mo mhúinteoir. Thóg sé ceithre bhlian an cáilíocht a bhaint amach: trí bhlian do céim sna teangacha agus bliain ina dhiaidh sin don Árdteastas Oideachais. Chuaigh mé go dtí an Fhrainc ar feadh bliana agus nuair a tháinig mé abhaile thosaigh mé ag lorg poist múinteoireachta. Bhí jobanna ana ghann an uair sin. Tar éis bliana ní raibh faighte agam ach post i scoil teangan i Baile Atha Cliath ag múineadh Béarla mar teanga iasacht. Bhí an dara scoilbhlian tosnaithe nuair a fuair mé glaoch dul go agallamh i Gaelscoil i Gleann Maghair. Is ar éigin gur chuaigh mé go Corcaigh don agallamh sin mar bhíos cinnte nach bhfaighinn an post. Ní raibh focal Gaeilge ráite agam ó dhein mé mo Ardteist féin. Is cuimhin liom go maith cé comh neirbhíseach is a bhí mé ag tabhairt aghaidh ar an agallamh sin. Caithfidh go raibh sé dodhéanta ar an scoil múinteoir a fháil gur thugadar an post dom! Bhí mo chéad bhliain that a bheith deacair. Bhí mé ag iarraidh mo Ghaeilge féin a ath-fhoghlaim agus bhí daltaí agam a bhí líofa sa teanga. Fuair mé an-tacaíocht ó mo chomh-mhúinteoirí agus shocraigh mé síos sa scoil. Ó shin chuaigh mé ar ais go dtí an choláiste chun cáilíochtaí a bhaint amach mar comhairleor treorach agus tógann an obair seo leath mo chuid ama anois. Ní chaithim an méad chéanna ama sa seomra ranga anois.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION:
S.W: Tell me something about your teaching background.

B.B: As far back as I can remember I wanted to do something with European languages and I always wanted to be a teacher. I originally started as a French and German teacher and then I went back to college and qualified as a guidance counsellor. It took me four years to qualify as a secondary teacher, three years to do a degree in French and German and a year to do the Higher Diploma in Education. When I left college in 1981, secondary school jobs were very scarce. I had spent a whole year looking for jobs without success and the next school year was coming around. I got a call to come for this interview and I didn't really believe it was worth coming down from Dublin where I was working at the time. I got the job basically because they couldn't find anyone to teach French and German through Irish at the time. I had forgotten a lot of my own Irish from school and the first year was very difficult. I started from scratch and I had some pupils who spoke Irish at home and were fluent Irish speakers. Now I teach Senior German and am a guidance counsellor for half my timetable.

S.W: Tell me about the school.

B.B: The school comprises a secondary school of 400 pupils - which has been a Gaelscoil since its inception in 1974 - and a boarding primary school on the same premises. The complex belongs to the company which set up the school and is funded through grants from the Dept of Education. The students don't pay fees.

S.W: What would the size of a typical class be?

B.B: The guidelines state that a normal class can't be more than 30, a science class 24. In the senior classes and where subject choice comes into play, it depends on how many students picked the subject. In my present fifth year German class I have 11 students. We have Irish, English, French, German and Spanish at Leaving Cert. The Transition Years have an option to do some Italian. We do physics, chemistry, biology, PE, religion, home economics, history, geography, maths, with applied maths outside the school timetable. Also civics, social, personal and health education; art, music, and the business subjects.

S.W: That sounds like a much wider choice than they offered in my school. How do you keep order in the classroom?
B.B: Most of it is force of personality and the relationship that you have with the students. If they respect you, just a reminder

will quiet them down. You have to be consistent and be seen to be fair. You really have to walk in as though you were in charge of everything and you've seen everything before.

S.W: Do you have exchange students?

B.B: The only thing that's organised at the moment is a Transition Year school trip, where students go for a week to Europe. We have a compulsory Transition Year. When they leave school they've developed a whole range of skills that are not going to be tested in the Leaving Certificate, but are what you could call life skills - communication skills, confidence, dealing with the public, looking for a job.

Sinéad Sheppard, a past pupil. Photo Courtesy of Irish Examiner

S.W: What language would the students speak among themselves?

B.B: In an all-Irish school the rule is that you speak Irish from the minute you come in the gate to the minute you go home, covering every exchange with the teacher - in class or the corridor or in counselling. Its difficult because 99% of them don't speak Irish at home. When we hear them speaking English among themselves we have to remind them to speak Irish and over the years we've come up with various schemes, both "carrots" and "sticks", to increase the amount of Irish that they're speaking when we're not around.

S.W: Are the results in Irish very good?

B.B: Yes, because our students are totally immersed in Irish for the whole of their school life, so their exam results are way above the national average. I heard a teacher complaining the other day that results in one of his classes weren't much better than a class in another school. Obviously we start from a very high platform.

S.W: What are some advantages of being in an Irish-speaking school?

B.B: At an all-Irish school you are getting your education in a second language, so you end up being bilingual, like people in Belgium who are bilingual in French and Flemish. The part of your brain that learns languages is stimulated and more developed, so for learning other languages it's a huge advantage. Doing your Leaving Cert through Irish also gets you bonus marks in every subject, so people doing these exams through Irish will tend to get more points than people who don't.

S.W: Some people have complained that that's not a fair system.

B.B: I disagree, because there's a lot more work for somebody who's not a native Irish speaker to do their Leaving Cert geography paper, for instance, through Irish. Basically they have done double the work, because they have learned it, translated it and they have to look up terminology. In science subjects there's a lot of terminology, the words would be new to you in English and you learn both English and Irish versions. So I think it is a just reward for extra work and everybody in the country has a choice. There are also some scholarships to higher education only available to people who are doing Leaving Cert through Irish. Then there's the whole matter of helping to keep alive an ancient language and heritage; providing an identity for Ireland.

S.W: If you meet people from school outside working hours do you speak Irish?

B.B: It is taken for granted that if I meet a pupil in the street I will speak Irish to them. Because I've been speaking Irish every day of my working life for 19 years, Irish has seeped a little bit into my own life. If I am talking to Irish speakers alone, I'll speak Irish, but if there are other people present I won't, because I don't believe in excluding people by the language.

ORAL HISTORY NETWORK

The Folkore Project recently took part in an international seminar hosted by the higher Education Authority Women's Oral History Project and Dept of Applied Social Studies, UCC. Entitled Who's Telling Tales? the event brought together researchers working across a range of oral history and folklore related areas. An oral history network is being established that aims to give individuals and organisations the opportunity to share experiences and access research.

Interested parties contact: www.ucc.ie/wisp/ohp

Letters to the Editor

The Archive welcomes correspondence. You may wish to share a memory, comment on something in the journal, or answer a question raised by another reader. Letters should be short and may be edited.

Congratulations on a wonderful project and magazine. I was very interested in Breda Barry's article on "Little Nellie" because when I was young, her memory was kept very much alive by the older people in Waterford City. My grandfather was stationed in the Royal Artillery at the Artillery Barracks at the western end of Barrack St. Nellie's father, William Organ, was a native of Dungarvan, Co. Waterford and a trumpeter in the British Army at the Infantry Barracks, at the street's east end. Her mother hailed from Portlaw village, Co. Waterford. They were married in Portlaw parish church July 4, 1895. Nellie was born August 24, 1903, Waterford City, the last of four children. She was baptised "Ellen" by Father Egan in Ballybricken Parish church, Waterford. Her God-parents were William Power and Margaret O'Donoghue. After her death on Feb 2, 1908, Nellie was laid to rest in Saint Joseph's public cemetery, Cork, where local people came to pray and her grave became a shrine. 18 months later, her remains were transferred to the cemetery of the Good Shepherd Sisters, Sunday's Well. On exhumation her body was found to be incorrupt, the fingers still flexible and her clothing exactly as it was at her burial. Pope Saint Pius X commended Nellie as the Model of the Child Communicant and encouraged the faithful to early and frequent reception of the sacrament. The Pope wrote: "May God enrich with every blessing all those who recommend frequent Communion to little boys and girls proposing Little Nellie as their model." A memorial tablet in Nellie's honour was erected at Portlaw parish church, Dec 8, 1984.

David Smith, Waterford

I am attempting to obtain information about the former Lindville Private Psychiatric Hospital, Ballintemple, Cork. My grandmother and her sister were both matrons there. I live in Western Australia and know little about Cork. Any suggestions that you or your readers have would be greatly appreciated.

Barbara Martin

e-mail mbel@global.net.au

John Creedon enjoying The Archive on Bell's Field Photo Courtesy Evening Echo

Greetings from East Kent in the UK. I was thrilled to discover your website and the efforts being made to preserve Northside folklore and ethnology. As a young lad growing up on Fair Hill I spent many an hour in the Grand Parade Library and in a library in the Courthouse researching local history, but there were no facilities to aid me back then, so your publication is a revelation. I want to research "The theology of the Northside communities". Many years ago "A Theology of Mayo" was published and I always thought that I would love to do something similar for Cork. I am also anxious to find information on (particularly a photograph) the old Walshe's Lane in Blackpool, where my grandmother and her entire family were born and raised. I think the houses were demolished when the Blackpool Flats were built. I would be very grateful for any help. Keep up the super work.

Sean O'Callaghan

e-mail seanocal@aol.com

Kevin O'Mahony, of Blarney St, would appreciate any information regarding one of his ancestors, Patrick O'Herlihy, a 19th century Fenian. Apparently there was an article about this man in the Cork Examiner during the 1960s, but so far no one has been able to locate it.

There is a tradition in John Fahy's family that the Northside's Fahy's Well was named after one of their ancestors. John would welcome any information about the well, its location and history.

I just picked up a copy of Archive 5 in Liam Ruiséal's Bookshop, Oliver Plunkett St. It is super; how come I have not seen this before? I cannot wait to give a copy to my mother (aged 83), she will particularly love the articles on Nellie and on the messenger boys, not to mention the Blackpool pigeon men. I am going to send one to my uncle (formerly of Blarney Street) in South Shields, Northumbria. I would love to lay my hands on back copies. Can you tell me what are the usual outlets for The Archive and how often it is published?

Mary O'Carragain

e-mail maryocarragain@hotmail.com

Thank you for the kind words, Mary. Copies of Archive Issues 4, 5 and 6 are available from our base at Northside Community Enterprises Ltd, Mallow Rd, Millfield, Cork. Call in person or send a self-addressed 92c stamped A4 envelope.

All issues are on our website. The journal is published roughly every 10 months and is available while stocks last at outlets including: Dept of Folklore and Ethnology, U.C.C.; U.C.C. Downtown Shop, Grand Parade; Cork City Libraries; County Library; Old Gaol, Sunday's Well; city bookshops and music stores, O'Riordan Spa Store, Mallow Rd; Blackpool Shopping Centre, Maryborough House Hotel, Douglas and Denis MacSweeny Photo Shop.

BOOK REVIEWS

THE HERITAGE OF IRELAND:
Ed. Neil Buttimer, Colin Rynne, Helen Guerin;
Collins Press 31.74 euro (PB) 63.49 euro (HB)

I was impressed by the breadth of content of this magnificent volume. Covering the subject matter from a variety of perspectives, it will be of immeasurable assistance not only to experts in the field, but also to the layman who might be tempted to delve into specific areas of this vast subject. Comprising in excess of 70 professionally written articles, which are both self-contained yet at the same time interlinked, this is undoubtedly "the" definitive guide to Ireland's heritage.
John Mehegan

A SENSE OF PLACE
Mayfield History and Folklore Group.
Various authors
15.87 euro

The Mayfield History and Folklore Group are to be congratulated on their new book, which represents tremendous effort and dedication on the part of many people. Mayfield or Balienamought, the original townland name, takes in the area from the Old Youghal Rd to Glanmire, including Tivoli, Montenotte, Rathcooney, Ballyvolane and Dillon's Cross. Packed with facts, personal recollections and wonderful photos, it makes for fascinating reading and will appeal to Mayfield people of all generations. Books like this link the past and present and help to give the community, "a sense of place".
Freda O'Donovan

RORY GALLAGHER
A BIOGRAPHY
Jean-Noël Coghe, Trans. Lorna Carson & Brian Steer;
Mercier 19.03 euro

Aspects of this book irritated me, much as I hate to sound a discordant note about a tribute to one of the great icons of modern music, who passed away in 1995. The style is somewhat breathless and minor inaccuracies litter the pages. And what really is the point of telling us that some female factory workers in 1960s northern France were "actually quite shapely and attractive under their blue overalls"? That said, this is an informative read, with photographs and a handy discography.
Stephen Hunter

NAMING THE TRADITION:
Community Women's Educational Initiatives 20.00 euro
Tel:021-430-0307 e-mail: cwei@eircom.net

This is a book for women everywhere. It works both as a source of information and as a guide to the self-empowerment of women in the community - whether the settled or travelling community - as well as a reference for dealing with issues in everyday life, from domestic abuse to raising self-awareness. It focuses on women's experiences and builds on them to empower the reader in their own life, not only in relation to the way figures of authority were seen in days gone by, but to the changing face of society in general. This book will help the individual woman re-awaken the knowledge and will power inherent within herself.
Cheryl Langan

THREE BRASS BALLS
Jim Fitzpatrick;
Mercier 12.68 euro

Reading this was like embarking on a journey into the past, when the term "going to the pawn" was often used when describing the activity of someone other than oneself. No one of my acquaintance would admit to patronising such an establishment. Mr Fitzpatrick's description of the trade and his feel for the activities of those on either side of the counter derive from a great deal of research, replacing negative stereotypes of the pawnbroker and his client with a new tolerance and respect. The book can be recommended for historians, students of folklore and anyone curious about pawnbroking.
Billy McCarthy

INDUSTRIAL ARCHAEOLOGY
OF CORK CITY AND ENVIRONS
Dr Colin Rynne;
Duchas 31.75 euro

Dr Rynne is a U.C.C.-based archaeologist with an international reputation. In this superb volume, he also draws on a vast knowledge of history, architecture, economics, geography and folklore to provide invaluable insights into the make-up of Cork City. Which leads us to A Life Of Usefulness: Sitka Press E11.50. Co-authored by Dr Rynne and Billy Wigham, it discusses the life of Quaker humanist Abraham Beale and the history of the Monard and Coolowen Ironworks, the co-operative he founded in the Blarney River valley. The mills were the last enterprise in Ireland to employ waterwheels commercially and produced spades until 1960.
Stephen Hunter.

GHOSTS OF CORK:
CHILLING EYE WITNESS ACCOUNTS:
Pauline Jackson,
Irish Millennium Publishing • 8 euro

This is a wonderful collection of stories, many of them passed down from generation to generation. It will keep the reader intrigued as to the hidden past of many of our historical buildings, which I found fascinating, being a native of Cork. It could also be likened to the fireside tales told by parents to frighten their kids into behaving. This mixture of gentle humour and more serious tales makes for a read to set the imagination to work - the perfect bedside companion for those long, cold winter nights
Ger McAllan

SOUTHWORD VOL 3, NO 1,
Spring-Summer 2001,
Ed Patrick Galvin
6.00 euro

The first edition of the Munster Literature Centre's journal in its new twice-yearly format. An engaging exploration of Munster's cultural life in poetry, fiction, criticism and graphics. Paddy Galvin, Mary Johnson and others have here a product worth every Euro cent of its very reasonable price. Southword welcomes submissions of new poetry, prose, photography and artwork.

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26 Sullivan's Quay, Cork.

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www.munsterlit.ie

PROJECT MANAGER'S NOTE

We hope you enjoy The Archive. Here in the year 2002, it is ever more important to keep in touch with our heritage, our traditions, our ancestors - our folklore - to retain our local identities despite the rapid and ongoing globalisation of our planet. We will have done our job if this journal activates memories, old stories, tales told by a grandparent, a fragment of a song, if you are stirred to dig out those old photos, to investigate the folklore of your own past. But remember, folklore does not only exist in the good old days, it's all around us, in our homes, in the pubs, on the streets, and in the things we do and make and say. We are in the process of digitising our entire archive and continuing the upgrade of our website, for the information of Cork people everywhere. We have completed one video, A Night at Bingo, and are to the editing stage of another on the Northside's links to the cattle trade.

We are always happy to hear from you, our readers - so don't forget to write! Or send us an email at nfp@indigo.ie. -

Mary O'Driscoll

The Urban Landscape

ST FINBARRE'S CATHEDRAL AND THE RIVER LEE

William Burges' 1870 Victorian Gothic masterpiece is soon to house a new heritage centre. Christian worship on this ancient site may go back to a Celtic monastic establishment in the 7th century. Proximity to the water influenced the choice of locality; in the centre of the photograph Proby's Bridge can be seen, where a subterranean waterway joins the South Channel of the Lee. This stream is a branch of a backwater sometimes known as "The Back River", which years ago provided poachers with a discreet route in and out of the Lee.

(See: Meitheal Mara and the River Lee, p.14).

The Northside Folklore Project

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