Limerick’s great frosts recalled

THE SHANNON, FROZEN TO A DEPTH OF SEVEN, EIGHT AND NINE FEET BY THE HISTORIC BIG FROSTS OF 1683 AND 1694, BECAME A HIGHWAY FOR ‘ALL MANNER OF TRANSPORT’

"Turning Back the Pages" was an article which appeared in the Limerick Leader on Saturday, January 11, 1930 in which Christina Clare wrote about past centuries in Limerick City and County, about the big frosts of 1683 and 1694; she also wrote about Oppressions and other Misfortunes which beset the people of Limerick.

Not always did King Frost prove so averse to transport as when, during Christmas Week, 1683, the imperial spirit of modern road traffic all but crumpled under his fury’s steed. The Shannon, frozen to a depth of seven, eight and nine feet by the historic big frosts of 1683 and 1694, became a highway for “all manner of transport” - Men, women, children and cattle frequented its icy riverbed, and for seven- formidable citizens the usual constitutional was a walk through the ice from King’s Island to Parton. The frost of 1683 was the most severe hardship experienced in Ireland. It lasted from the 3rd November to the 8th of February, during which period all lakes and rivers were frozen. The terrible frost of 1689 lasted for forty days and carried away life and property of those already starved and down-trodden. Limerick was a city of the dead, and a “man might walk from John’s Gate to Thomond Bridge without meeting six persons.” The streets were strewn with unburied corpses, contagion possessed the air, and an epidemic raged for several years to come, carrying off many influential citizens, including the Mayor, a Mr. Joseph Roche.

A CHAPTER OF MISFORTUNES

Financial disaster added its quota to the general misery. “Money, gold and silver went with the wind, which in the reign of Queen Anne was 15 to 20 L. per lb., fell to 6 3/4, whilst a bushel of best wheat sold for two shillings at night - so bright were they, not only with the beams but with the light that gleamed from the shop windows of the citizens, who at that period took the greatest pains in endeavouring to show off their wares by candle-light especially.”

PARLIAMENTARY CORRESPONDENCE IN 1749: Concerning the manner in which the inhabitants of the county of Limerick have suffered from the late severe frosts, and in which the country was neglected in the year 1749. The complaint was that the inhabitants of Limerick had suffered greatly from the late severe frosts, and in which the country was neglected in the year 1749. The complaint was that there are great numbers of acres in their native state are not worth 2/-, perhaps not 3/- per acre, that by ploughing, burning, tilling, the land was made barren and good tillage for some years, may be made four years, and possibly of ten times that value, and to encourage the improvement of such kind of land the Act passed in 1731 gave the tiller the fives for seven years of hemp, flax and rape seed growing heron, but of no other grain. Now it is certain in my poor judgment that such lands after a vast expense to the tiler are not capable of rape more than the year or of other crops, more than one year more, and after must be harrowed bringing in of thousands that would be brought in if the encouragement had reasonable continuance. In such cases, if by the thought hard on the present incumbent, let them have 3d. or 5d. per acre for a reasonable term after the first year and no more; for, besides the encouragement extended to corn as well as hemp, hay, or flax which for want of such encouragement, I am ready to give the Church of Ireland a few goats and here and there a small cabin and garden.

ANOTHER EXCEPTION

There is also another exception in that Act in favour of the Church that I cannot think tends to its advantage. That any lands that did ever before pay tithes for hay shall be under the same Act to have any abatement of tithe for any term. Now it is certain that the Church are a great number of acres and such money, poor meadows that never was till not ever was worth the best situation at the price, but per acre, and yet for want of either mead or hay for a certain time out of mind and paid tithes and yet of those lands were once ploughed and burned and well tillled for

Limerick’s Ice Age

While Christina Clare spoke of the great frosts of 1683 and 1694, as well as the “terrible frost of 1749” and the great freeze of 1815, there was a more recent frost that saw people skating on the Shannon. That was in 1962-1963 when waterfowl gathered on the land as early as November 1962 and continued right through to March 1963. Not since then, though, have we seen such winter scenes for many winters.
The coldest ever freeze up: 300 out of work in clothing factory

LIMERICK ACHIEVED 300 out of work at Limerick clothing factory

Limerick: This morning with the temperature according to freezing point forecaster the coldest night ever with temperatures dropping to freezing point. Parts of the River Shannon in the city and suburbs were frozen over during the night, and today Limerick was a city of burst water pipes and frozen oil heaters. The Limerick Clothing Factory, Edward Street, where the city's oldest establishments, was closed today except for the elevator staff, as the oil in the boilers had frozen. This closure will cost hundreds of pounds.

The human cost of the freezing weather was they were being offered to send home until the weather clears.

Lemonade was frozen

Dripping water from burst pipes left ice on in some cases as long as two feet. Pipes of frozen water measured four inches thick. All quarters of the city were skating gaily on in perfect safety.

LIMERICK: While Christiina Clare slept at the great frost of 1830 and 1831, as well as the great frost of 1879 and the great frost of 1907, there was a night of frost that saw people skating on the Shannon. That was in 1962/63 when the water was frozen and continued right through to March 1964. Not since then, though, have there been sufficient streams or frozen lakes for people to walk or skate on them. Top pictures show Barcrahis from the river level to Ashlumbird bridge frozen solid. The bottom picture shows two ladies enjoying the Ice on Loughmore.

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