

Editorial, 1982

Much of interest has happened during the year in North Munster, not least the opening in September by President Dr. Patrick Hillery of Sinsearlann an Chláir/the Clare Heritage Centre, in Corofin, Co. Clare (see Frontispiece). This event was the culmination of our member Ignatius (Nacy) Clery's dreams and efforts to provide the Corofin district with a museum or exhibition centre worthy of its historic past. The new Centre is to be found in the old Protestant Church which was built in 1718 on the site of an old barn in which, according to local tradition, Mass used to be said during Penal times. The church went out of use in 1974 and two years later was generously presented by the Representative Church Body to the local community of Corofin, opening the way towards the realisation of Nacy's dream. What was particularly gratifying to those involved in the project was the discovery of a Charles II halfpenny dated 1680 when working on the conversion, a discovery which provides at least a *terminus post quem* for the pre-church barn and which now is one of the more interesting exhibits in the new Centre.

The Clare Heritage Centre is exceptional in many ways. Its display is attractive and instructive, suitably arranged in first-class exhibition cases made locally under the direction of AnCO. Genealogy is an important aspect of the Centre's work, being actively carried out on providing archives relating to the people of the area as gleaned from all types of records ranging from old newspapers, deeds, family papers, church and governmental registers, to old gravestones. While genealogy, or 'stud-book history' as one authority generally terms it, helps provide much of the history of a region, it cannot supply the whole story. The Centre appreciates this, and its display helps broaden the scope with exhibition cases devoted to local politics, music, local crafts, fishing and other sporting activities for which the area is noted, and to any and every aspect of the region's past, not to mention some archaeological relics illustrative of the period before history began. Taken all-in-all, the Centre's approach is admirable and worthy of being followed by other small towns throughout Ireland: a *display centre* for local history which is active in providing the basis for further research on the area, as opposed to a museum in the full sense of the word, something which would require a qualified, trained, fulltime curator and is really only suitable for a major town.

Congratulations, Corofin — go maire tú, a Naoise!

* * * *

Limerick Museum goes from strength to strength, and in December this year it opened a very successful exhibition of "Acquisitions 1977-1982" and at the same time formally launched *The Friends of Limerick Museum*, a body formed in September 1982 "to encourage a wider use and enjoyment of the Museum, and to assist in the enlargement of

the Museum's collections''. The annual subscription is ten pounds (£10) and will be used to form a purchase fund. This is a worthy cause, and our Society which always had an exceptionally close association with the Museum and has, indeed, donated material to it, encourages its members to support it by becoming Friends.

* * * *

One could continue. In 1982 restoration of the West Range of Holy Cross Cistercian Abbey was completed, and in it was incorporated an audio-visual centre, tourist offices, conference room, souvenir shop, etc. Meanwhile, elsewhere in Co. Tipperary similar moves to what was happening in Corofin were being initiated in Roscrea by George Cunningham, another member of our Society. The Craggaunowen Project, set up in 1973 by the late John Hunt [see this *Journal*, 20(1978), 1 and 3]. was meanwhile making great tourist-cultural progress also, the installation of the *Brendan*, the hide-covered currach-like boat Tim Severin sailed so adventurously in 1976-77 from Ireland to Newfoundland in the wake of St. Brendan the Navigator, proving an additional touristic and educative attraction. At nearby Bunratty Folk Park, the Manager and our Vice-President, Mr. Christopher Lynch, was, also in 1982, providing a major new attraction there: a reconstruction of a complete, functioning village street (public house included, of course!) in the manner of about the turn of the century, of a working horizontal mill, and of new traditional farmhouses; this fascinating new development incorporates The Elizabeth Talbot Memorial Museum which houses the fine collection of agricultural machines, presented to the Folk Park in 1976 by the Revd. M. J. Talbot, Dean Emeritus of Limerick, a member of our Society of long standing.

What with Knappogue Castle, the Burren Display Centre in Kilfenora, the Lough Gur Interpretative Centre [see this *Journal*, 22(1981), 1], and Coosheen Folk Museum near Kilkee, North Munster really seems at last to be waking up to the cultural, not to mention touristic, value and importance of its heritage. This should be a matter of pride to all in our Society, as it is surely something for which we can justifiably lay claim to no little credit.

* * * *

As will be quickly realised from even a quick glance at the Proceedings for this year (pp. 121-122), the Society continues to hold excellent lectures of high quality and to organise numerous interesting and worthwhile outings. All these are invariably well attended and are, indeed, the main elements in making the Society a success, especially for the local members. The lectures do not necessarily receive publication in the *Journal*, but some do, and those who had the pleasure of hearing Mr. Pat Wallace in October will no doubt be every bit as pleased as those who were unable to avail of the opportunity, to be able to now read his paper in this *Journal* (pp. 19-28) on one of the more important and interesting aspects dealt with by him then.

The Society annually includes at least one outing, sometimes more, outside of the North Munster region. The Society is clearly beginning to get somewhat more ambitious and,

buíochas le Dia, less provincial, and in 1982 three such outings were successfully held, one to North Connacht lasting for a whole weekend. Even more distant fields are being visualised, and the lecture on the Isle of Man in February was with that in mind; York and Stonehenge have also been mooted!

* * * *

The Society wishes to convey its gratitude to University College, Dublin, and University College, Galway, for generous grants-in-aid towards the publication of "Some Aspects of Social Tradition" by Caoimhín Ó Danachair and "The Early Iron Age in County Clare" by Etienne Rynne, respectively. As in previous years, the Hon. Editor wishes to record his personal thanks to our Hon. Secretary, Fr. John D. Leonard, for his continuous help of sub-editorial nature.