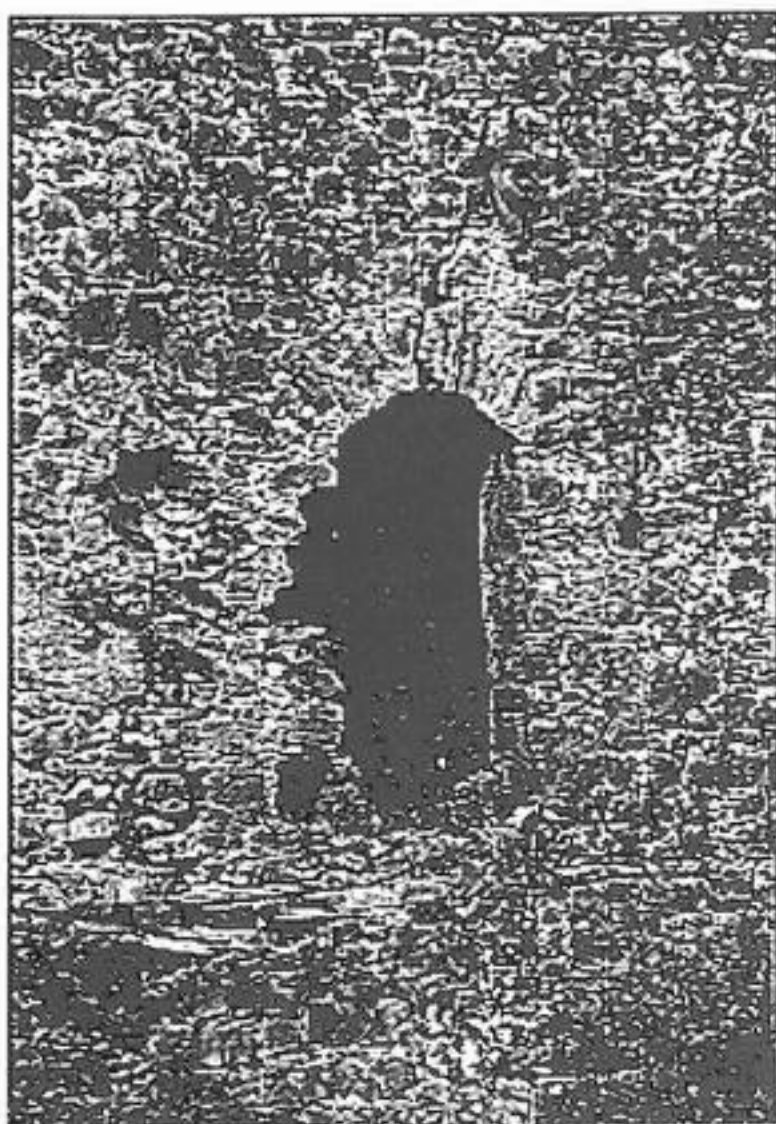


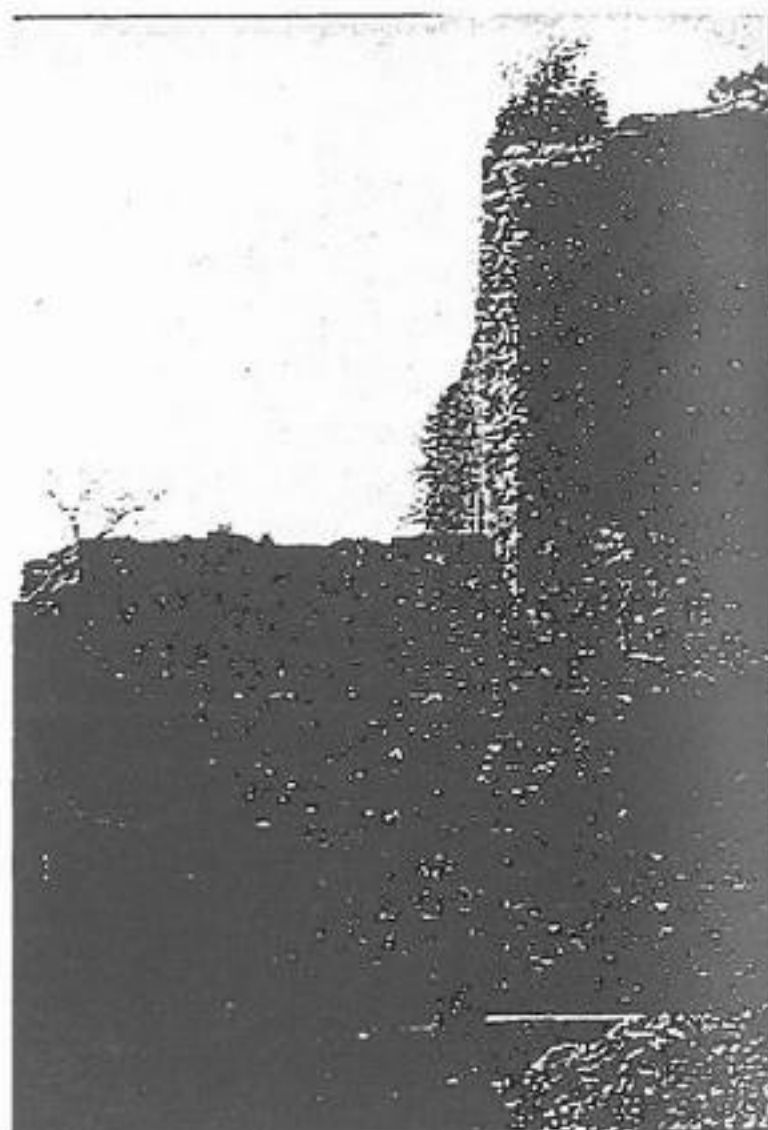
## CLOHASKIN, CO. TIPPERARY



Illus. 1 East wall of hall house, showing slit opes and NE tower.



Illus. 2 First floor doorway, with support-holes for wooden stairs at base of door.



Illus. 3 Chamfered quoin stones, with prominent base batter and 19th-century building at SE angle.

*(Photos: C. O' Brien)*

# MISCELLANEA

## A 13TH-CENTURY HALL HOUSE AT CLOHASKIN, CO. TIPPERARY

Situated in the townland of Clohaskin, near Carrig, Co. Tipperary, and visible from the main Borrisokane – Birr road, stands an imposing rectangular hall house of 13-century date (Illus. 1). The present remains consist of a rectangular building (external measurements 13.2 m N-S by 18.5 m E-W; wall thickness 2.5 m) built of roughly coursed limestone rubble with a prominent base batter. Originally three storeys high, but with only two now surviving. The main entrance, consisting of a small segmental arched doorway, is located at the eastern end of the southern wall. Access to the main entrance, at first floor level, was by an external wooden stairs, now destroyed, the support-holes of which are visible at the base of the main entrance (Illus. 2). This doorway gave access to a long hall with no evidence of internal wall partitions. Access to upper and ground floors was by internal wooden stairs, now destroyed. All floors were wooden, being carried on the thickness of the wall. The rooms were lit by long slit opes set into large segmental arched embrasures, and there is no evidence of a fireplace at any level. An unusual feature of the hall house is the use of chamfered quoin stones (Illus. 3), while the presence of a corner tower at the NE creates a distinctive channel running down the eastern face of the building (Illus. 1). This angle tower was accessed from the first floor main hall and appears to have been built contemporaneously with the hall house. A later building of probable 19th-century date was added to the SE angle (Illus. 3), and may well be contemporary with the surrounding farmyard in which the hall house is located. The poorly preserved remains of an enclosing earthen and stone bank with drystone wall facing is now visible at the western side only; elsewhere it is destroyed. However, from the 1st edition of the O.S. map it is clear that this feature enclosed the hall house and acted as a bawn wall delimiting the bawn areas.

The hall house is a descriptive term used to describe a long rectangular building, usually with no structural partitions, up to three storeys high and with a first floor entrance. This type of building appears to be contemporary with the Anglo-Norman thirteenth-century keeps such as at Clonmacnoise and Athenry. All share common architectural features such as a first floor entrance with wooden external stairs as at Athenry Castle, lack of large elaborate windows, and a long rectangular ground plan. The use of chamfered quoin-stones has parallels at Shrule Castle, Co. Mayo, which is also dated to the thirteenth century. It is therefore, perhaps quite appropriate to see the hall houses as the fortified houses of the lower ranks of Anglo-Norman society, while the keep castles are the main military strongholds of the Anglo-Norman lords of Ireland. It is this social factor that separates the two buildings and offers a social link between the hall houses and the types of fifteenth-sixteenth century tower houses which are the fortified residences of the gentry of later medieval Ireland.

Another interesting feature of Clohaskin hall house is the presence of a circular bawn wall of earth and stone construction, similar to other enclosures found at Castle Barret, Co. Cork, and Castle Grenan, Co. Kilkenny.

Four hall houses have so far been identified during field survey of North Tipperary, all of which display similar architectural features to Clohaskin Castle. These buildings may be



associated with the subdivision of crown land into counties which were administered by royal officials under the supervision of sheriffs and their deputies. The county of Tipperary was established in 1211 and these hall houses may well be the residences of the officials who administered English law in the North Tipperary region.

### Acknowledgements

I wish to thank Mr. David Sweetman for his advice and help on the writing of this article and to Professor Etienne Ryne who initially encouraged me to undertake this task.

CAIMIN O' BRIEN

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<sup>1</sup>Par. Loughkeen; Bar. Lower Ormond; Co. Tipperary; O.S. six-inch sheet 8; Nat. Grid. Ref. N.200, 203.

<sup>2</sup>D. Newman Johnson, "The Irish Castle", *The Irish Heritage Series*: 49, Dublin 1985, pl. 12.

<sup>3</sup>T.E. McNeill, "The Origins of Tower Houses", *Archaeology Ireland*, 6:1 (Spring 1992), 13-14.

<sup>4</sup>M. Richter, *Medieval Ireland: The Enduring Tradition*, London 1988, p. 147.

### SOME LIMERICK PERUKE-MAKERS

Lenihan, in a comment on trade in Limerick City in the late 1760s states "some trades ... have ceased to exist with alternating phases of fashion" and in a footnote to this adds "the peruke makers are all but extinct"<sup>1</sup>. In the eighteenth century wigs were an essential item of fashion and so every large urban settlement had its quota of wig- or peruke-makers. There were fourteen such individuals in trade in 1767<sup>2</sup>. Whilst Lenihan names one from this period, the names of two others survive in wills dating from the earlier part of the century.<sup>3</sup> No doubt other names survive and may yet surface, such as that of the peruke-maker admitted as a freeman to the Guild of Masons, Bricklayers, Slaters, Plasterers, Painters, Pavours, Lim-burners, etc., *circa* 1750<sup>4</sup>.

The three peruke-makers that have been positively identified are as follows:

1. MOODY, Samuel — made a will on 15th July 1726, which was registered in the Registry of Deeds, Dublin on 13th November 1740. In his will he left his lands without West Water Gate in the County of the City of Limerick to his mother Ann Deaves.
2. EVERITT, Joseph — of Limerick, acted as witness to the will in 1726.
3. HAMILTON, William, described by Lenihan<sup>5</sup> "as a fashionable wig maker of the day [*i.e.* 1760-70] in Mary Street — his charge per week for dressing the wig of a fashionable coutourier was the moderate sum of 1s. 2d." (*i.e.* 6p. in today's currency).

PAUL DUFFY

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<sup>1</sup>M. Lenihan, *History of Limerick*, Limerick 1866, p. 364.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 362.

<sup>3</sup>P.B. Eustace, *Registry of Deeds, Dublin: Abstracts of Wills, vol. I (1708-1745)*, Dublin 1956. The relevant wills are at p. 276, Calendar nos. 631 and 632.

<sup>4</sup>Listed, but no names, on page 128 of R. Herbert, "The Trade Guilds of Limerick", *Nth. Munster Antiq. J.*, 2:3 (1941), 121-134.

<sup>5</sup>Lenihan, *op. cit.*, 364.

## TURF, STEAM AND THE STEIN BROWNE DISTILLERY CHIMNEY

One of the great, but almost totally unexplored, assets of Lenihan's *Limerick*<sup>1</sup> is his calendar of happenings — loosely called 'Progress of Events'. This calendar covers the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries, and lists a wide variety of events of varying levels of interest and importance.

One such event is recorded for August 22nd 1822 as follows: "A chimney erected on the distillery concerns of Messrs. Stein and Browne, 115 feet high — the first of its kind ever seen here"<sup>2</sup>. The entry obviously relates to the construction of the first custom-built steam power plant in the city. Whilst this would appear to be of interest only to Industrial Archaeologists, the dating of the introduction of steam power in any locale is important. However, the most interesting thing is the fuel used. It seems reasonable to presume that the fuel would be coal, and indeed it most probably was in the early stages of the plant's operation. Lenihan is silent on this point.

The timing of this event is of interest in regard to the question of fuel. Lenihan states that the Limerick-Killaloe canal was opened to Newtown Bog in 1771 "to the great joy of the citizens of all classes"<sup>3</sup>. Obviously this development meant a cheap and plentiful fuel supply for the city, which was well utilised, as Lenihan adds as a footnote to this that the "bog of Newtown is in a great measure reclaimed" (by 1866, the date of the original publication of Lenihan's *Limerick*). The Second Report of the Shannon Commissioners gives some data on the Limerick Navigation Company. In a brief statement on the tolls, John Moore, Accountant, stated that the Stein Browne turf boats paid a flat rate toll of four shillings per load as these boat-loads could not be weighed<sup>4</sup>. This rate of toll was fixed by the Directors-General of Inland Navigation with the Distillery. As the canal was transferred to this body in 1813 and remained under their control until 1830 the agreement had to be reached between these years. This means that Stein Browne and Co. were using turf to generate steam no later than 1830, and possibly from as early as 1822 when the chimney was first constructed. Due to the almost total neglect of the industrial history of the area a precise date cannot, at this point in time, be fixed for the commencement of turf-generated steam power in Limerick.

Some clues can, however, be gleaned from the activities of one Charles Wye Williams in the locality. Williams, a Dublin-born barrister, was an active pioneer in the early development of steam power in Ireland<sup>5</sup>. He also had a great interest in peat development and is credited by Hodgson as being "the person who first attempted to expel the water from peat by pressure". Hodgson adds (1862) that Williams carried on extensive experiments at his works in Cappogue, Co. Kildare, "many years ago", and succeeded in reducing wet peat to one half its original weight and one third of its original volume using hydraulic pressure<sup>6</sup>. In other words, Williams would appear to have been the first to attempt the manufacture of peat briquettes in Ireland. Unfortunately, the compressed peat slowly expanded and after a period became only slightly more dense than ordinary or common turf<sup>7</sup>. Williams also promoted the use of peat charcoal for the manufacture of iron, and took out patents in 1837 and 1838 concerning improved peat briquetting for the production of charcoal<sup>8</sup>.

Williams bought out John Grantham<sup>9</sup> and his steamer service on the lower Shannon and formed the Inland Steam Navigation Company. It is quite possible that out of this company sprang the 'new' Limerick Navigation Company that took over the Limerick-Killaloe canal in 1830. From an early stage Williams experimented with using turf to power his company steamers on the Shannon. His work at Cappogue and the Shannon experiments are very favourably commented on by Kane who states that the Shannon steamers were exclusively



worked with turf<sup>10</sup>. This optimistic view of peat potential in the early nineteenth century should be contrasted with an altogether more pessimistic view expressed by Mallet, who stated that the statements of Kane and Williams on this subject were "calculated to lead to much disappointment and loss"<sup>11</sup>. However, the fact still remained that using peat, even mixed with coal, rendered the cost of steam production cheaper and also contributed to the onward progress in harnessing one of Ireland's great assets, the peat bogs. We should be thankful to Lenihan for shedding a little light, however indirectly, on this totally neglected facet of Irish history.

PAUL DUFFY

<sup>1</sup>M. Lenihan, *History of Limerick*, Limerick 1866.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 455.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 364 and fn. 3.

<sup>4</sup>*Second Report of the Commissioners for the Improvement of the River Shannon*, Dublin 1837, Appendix B, pp. 38–40.

<sup>5</sup>H. P. Smyth, *The B. & I. Line*, Dublin, 1984, v. pp. 14–30.

<sup>6</sup>C. Hodgson, "On Improvements in the Manufacture of Peat Fuel", *Trans. Inst. Civil Engineers Ireland*, 7(1862), 77–90, at p. 87.

<sup>7</sup>R. Mallet, "On the Artificial Preparation of Turf, independently of season or weather", *Trans. Inst. of Civil Engineers of Ireland*, 1(1845), 1–48 at pp. 4 and 46.

<sup>8</sup>C. Murphy, "The Limerick Navigation Company, 1697–1828: m Btg, Nybster /abtug, H,m 22(1980), 43–61, at p. 59.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 60.

<sup>10</sup>R. Kane, *The Industrial Resources of Ireland*, 2nd ed., Dublin 1845, p. 41.

<sup>11</sup>Mallet, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

## THE BURREN AND BURGUNDY PTICH

Cattle, especially young heifers and bullocks, were formerly grazed extensively on the Burren uplands in winter, as there is sweet pickings between the warm limestone pavements there. The custom still exists though much less often undertaken now than formerly. It is in a sense the opposite to the well-known "booleying" or transhumance of cattle on the uplands and mountains during the summer, a practice which rarely outlived the last century in Ireland.

Though cattle are remarkably sure-footed, it is inevitable that accidents, especially broken legs, will occur from time to time. In the past, when such mishaps happened, the locals adapted a rather unusual method of treating an animal unfortunate enough to break its leg.

Having securely bound a number of wooden splints around the broken leg, Burgundy pitch, a yellowish substance similar to hardened putty, was liquidised by heating in a bucket or some other utensil, and was then poured between the splints and the leg of the animal where it solidified quickly. [Burgundy pitch was obtained near Neufchatel, once Burgundian territory. It was extracted from the resinous bark of the Spruce fir (*Abies excelsis*).] A stone wall, two or three feet in height, was then built about the animal to restrict its movements, immobilizing it so that it could scarcely move. There was little space left near its head where hay and water were placed daily. After about five weeks the rock-solid Burgundy pitch was sawn off, and locals have assured me that the animal usually walked away cured, none the worse for its confinement. A few of these small enclosures can still be seen on the Burren uplands.

P.B. LYSAGHT

## SCYTHES AND MOWING IN NORTH KERRY

The late Professor E. Esyn Evans, a recognised authority on Irish Folklife studies, in his most useful book, *Irish Folk Ways* (London 1957), gives a less than adequate description (or is it a Northern Ireland slant?) to a few of the artifacts which he describes. For instance on page 156 his description of the scythe and its use would need some correction and a few addenda to equate it to what might be called the North Kerry scythe. In North Kerry the scythe handle is called the "scythe tree", never the "sned". The Irish word *dúirníní*, in its anglicised form "durneens", still survives, even in this English-speaking district, as the name for the two hand-grips on the "scythe tree". The rather elaborate fitting and hanging of the scythe, as described by Evans, was not practised in North Kerry. There the upper "durneen" was always above the centre of the tree; the lower one adjusted to suit the mower — it was as simple as that. A nail, usually a horse-shoe nail, rather than an iron spike, was driven into the end of the tree so that the scythe would not slip when rested on the ground and placed over the shoulder for sharpening in the usual manner.

Before the day's mowing the blade was sharpened at the headland of the meadow by a rather heavy edging-stone. During the day it was often re-sharpened by what is called a "sideboard", emery cloth glued to both sides of a wooden handle about twice the width of a foot rule. This was attached to the scythe tree, something similar to the way a pump is attached to a bicycle. Since sharpening was often required during the day, the device of having the light sideboard on hand meant that the sharpening could be done on the spot, eliminating the necessity of going to the headland to use the heavier edging-stone. Neither in his illustrations nor in the text is there any evidence that Professor Evans knew of this useful device.

P.B. LYSAGHT

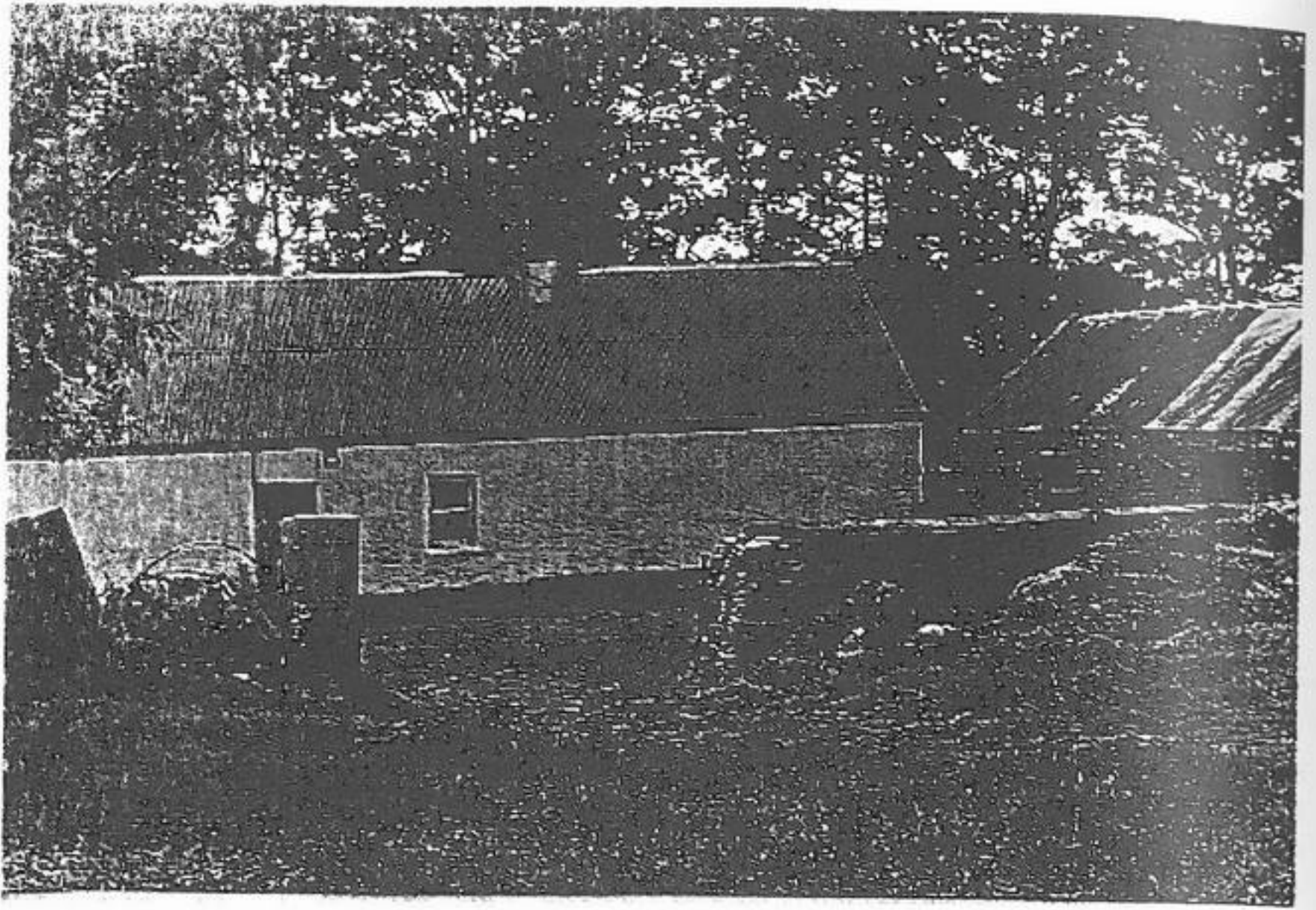
## OLD COUNTRY HOUSES: TWO COMMENTS

The fast-vanishing Irish country farmhouse (although thatched, it is not a 'cottage') is part of our heritage which has largely disappeared during the last decade or two. Not only are competent thatchers hard to find nowadays, but the comfortable, traditional, "mud-walled cabins" are now considered unsuitable for most, not always possessing adequate modern amenities (running water, toilets, electricity, television, etc.). The loss to our scenery and tourist potential is considerable, and so is the loss to an adequate appreciation of the social life of our not-so-long dead ancestors. Two comments are offered here, one suggesting the preservation of a selection of examples as sort of "interpretative houses", the other suggesting their photographic recording for posterity.

### 1: Interpretative Vernacular Houses

In the photograph is shown a typical, small, North Kerry farmer's house which was built about 1880 (Illus. 4). It was then thatched, and the portion at the right side of the door, now a room, was added some time before 1091 as can be gathered from the census of that year. Galvanised iron replaced the thatch in the forties, when the now partly fallen wall separating the house from the field was also built. The outhouses at the left of the dwelling had three doors (two evident in the photo), two for cattle and the other leading into a horse's stable. At the right side of the dwelling, and parallel to the outhouses, there was a turf rick, and beside that a piggery, long since demolished.





Illus. 4 Old country house in North Kerry, formerly thatched; now abandoned. (Photo: P. Lysaght)

There were ten people living in the house in 1901 as we learn from the census: a farmer and his wife, their three sons and three daughters, the farmer's father aged ninety, and a female visitor, most likely the mother of the farmer's wife. From the Baptismal Register of the parish we know that two other sons were added to the family some time after 1901.

What happened to all these, all long long since gone to the great beyond?

Just one son and one daughter married, subsequent to emigrating to the U.S.A. The son died without heir. The daughter had one son, who eventually inherited his grandfather's North Kerry farm. Since this young American had no interest in the farm, the house is uninhabited since 1993 and the land let to a local farmer. It will shortly be sold. *Sic transit gloria mundi.*

Prehistoric remains, ruins of castles and medieval churches, town and country houses of note, we preserve and occasionally restore. The humble homes of our more recent forefathers we bulldoze or allow to decay. Is it too fanciful to suggest that a house like the one illustrated, and other like it, might be turned into, for want of a better term, an 'interpretative house'? Why not leave it where it is, without refurbishment, for visitors to explore, and tell the story of the century or more of its existence by an audio-tape inserted in some appropriate place?

P.B. LYSAGHT.

## 2. Recording Vernacular Houses

A few years ago our Editorial for 1988 made mention of the rapid and sad passing of the traditional thatched Irish house, exemplified by the accompanying 'before-and-after' photographs of one of the finest in Co. Clare, that at Dulick, immediately north of Ennis. Mentioned was made *en passant* of newly erected thatched houses in places like Bunratty Folk Park and ersatz Rent-an-Irish-Cottage enclaves. Such reconstructions in Folk Parks as Bunratty provide one solution to the problem of preserving our heritage for posterity, though perhaps not the best for serious scholars and researchers.

The situation is already alarming. Thatched houses are vanishing everywhere and, in consequence, our countryside is fast losing much of its attractiveness and appeal for tourists — and for ourselves. A few years ago Bairbre Ó Floinn, archivist-collector with the Department of Irish Folklore, at University College Dublin, made a survey of the situation in the general Co. Dublin area and found, for instance, that in 1964 Skerries, in North Co. Dublin, had about 80 thatched houses, but that by 1980 there were only 15 and that ten years later there remained but seven. The same story is true throughout Ireland — Paul Henry's paintings are no longer inviting views but are now best regarded as records of what the Irish countryside used to look like.

Some years ago the Office of Public Works began a survey of thatched houses in Ireland, but this was soon enough halted because of a lack of funding. A proper record needs to be made before it is too late, and there seems to be no good reason why anyone and everyone should not make one in their own area.

A photographic record is not difficult, though even his would be much improved if augmented by rough measurements and a written record indicating whether the traditional, vernacular, house in question is at the time in ruins, neglected, in good condition but unoccupied, or, hopefully, well maintained and occupied; one should also mention the roof-type (hipped, gabled, held down by ropes, etc.), the number and placing of chimneys, windows, doors, etc., and whether it has any recent additions such as a porch, dormer windows, or lean-to. Such a record, however local, would be invaluable, particularly for all those researching the social history of Ireland now and for centuries to come. Such records are important and would be relevant to the aims of our Society and, furthermore, should provide material worthy of publication in our Journal.

ETIENNE RYNNE



