

# THOMOND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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## PROCEEDINGS 2003

### LECTURES

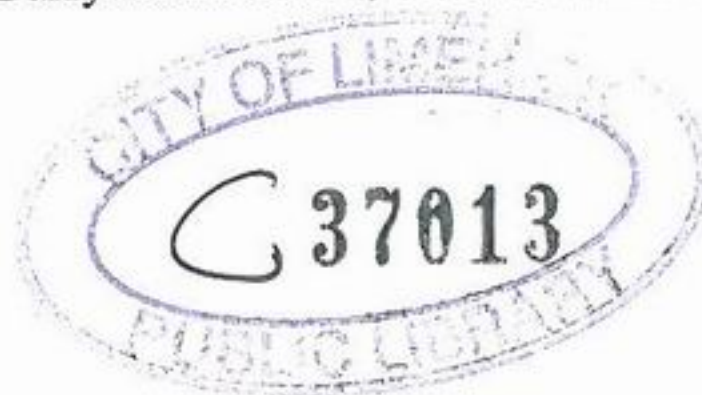
20 January	<i>Robert Emmett</i>	Dr Ruán O'Donnell (University of Limerick)
27 January	AGM: <i>New Acquisitions to Limerick Museum</i>	Mr Larry Walsh (Limerick Museum, <i>Member</i> )
2 February	Annual Luncheon: <i>Golf Club Hotel, Adare Manor</i>	Dr Thomas J. Morrissey, SJ ( <i>Member</i> )
17 February	<i>The Courts of Dáil Éireann</i>	Hon. Mary Kotsonouris
3 March	<i>Limerick in 1901</i>	Mr Liam Mulligan ( <i>Member</i> )
24 March	<i>Duelling in Eighteenth Century Ireland</i>	Dr James Kelly (St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra)
28 April	<i>The Tithe War in County Tipperary</i>	Ms Noreen Higgins
15 September	<i>St. Ita and Irish Women Saints</i>	Dr Elva Johnston (University College, Dublin)
20 October	<i>Limerick Corporation - 800 Years of History</i>	Dr Matthew Potter ( <i>Member</i> )
17 November	<i>The Use of Genetics in Irish Archaeology</i>	Dr Barra Ó Donnabháin (University College, Cork)
1 December	AGM, <i>A Kerry Family Correspondence 1908-18</i>	Dr Deirdre McMahon (Mary Immaculate College, Limerick)



## EXCURSIONS

2 - 10 May;	<b>Greece</b> Organisers Mrs Anne Yeoman & V. Rev. John D. Leonard Guide Dr Patrick Cronin Sites Visited Athens, City Tour, Acropolis, Agora, Benaki Museum; Delphi; Galaxidi; Patras; Olympia; Kalamata; Pylos, Nestor's Palace, Chora Museum; Sparta, Acropolis, Sanctuary of Artemis Orthia, Menelaion; Nauplia; Mycenae; Tirins; Epidauros; Corinth canal.
14 May [Evening]	<b>Limerick city</b> Organiser Tony Browne Guides Tony Tynne, Tony Wallace, Tony Browne. Places Visited Honan's Quay ['poor man's Kilkee'], Limerick Boat Club, Shannon Rowing Club
23-25 May [Weekend]	<b>Monaghan</b> Organiser Tony Browne Guides Gene Carroll & Rosaleen Kearney [Inniskeen], Johnny and Lucy Madden [Hilton Park], June Browne [Rockcorry], Seamus McCluskey [Monaghan town & Emyvale area], Hope Flynn [Castleblaney & Hope castle], Liam Irwin [Clones]. Sites Visited Inniskeen, Carrickmacross, Castleblaney, Hope Castle, Hilton Park, Annaghmakerrig, Castle Leslie, Glasslough, Rockcorry, Monaghan, town, cathedral, museum; Emyvale area, Clones, High Cross, Round Tower, sarcophagus.
8 June [Half Day]	<b>Killaloe</b> Organiser Justin Fitzgerald Guide Liam Irwin Sites Visited St Flannan's cathedral, oratory and Catholic church, St Lua's oratory, Béal Boru.
18 June [Evening]	<b>Limerick city</b> Organiser Tony Browne Guides Sister Margaret Greene, Hiram Wood, Tony Browne Places Visited Mount Convent, Society of Friends' graveyard.
29 June [Half Day]	<b>Carrick on Suir / Portlaw</b> Organiser Tony Browne Guides Rev. C. George, Cliffe, Liam Irwin Sites Visited Ormond Castle, Clonegam church, Portlaw village, Woodlock House.
16 July [Evening]	<b>Ardnacrusa</b> Organiser Elsie O'Connell.
20 July [Half Day]	<b>Clarecastle</b> Organiser Morgan McCloskey Guides Brian Hodkinson, Dermot Gleeson [Carnelly]

Sites Visited	Carnelly House, Clarecastle castle and military barracks, Clareabbey Augustinian abbey.
10 August [Half Day]	<b>Tipperary town</b> Organiser Randal Hodkinson Guides Ger Riordan, Randal Hodkinson
Sites Visited	'New Tipperary' and town historical trail.
20 August [Evening] Area Visited	<b>Limerick city</b> Organiser & Guide Frank Prendergast Irishtown.
29-31 August. [Weekend]	<b>Wexford</b> Organiser Tony Browne Guides Austin O'Sullivan [Johnstown Castle & museum], Maeve Davison [Bargy Castle], Dan Walsh, [Edermine House] Liam Irwin, Tony Browne.
Sites Visited	<i>Dunbrody</i> replica ship, Oulart Hill, Johnstown Castle & agricultural museum, Bargy Castle, Edermine House, Kilmore Quay, Our Lady's island, Tintern Abbey, Hook Head lighthouse, Duncannon fort, Dunbrody Park House, Dunbrody Cistercian abbey.
21 Sept. [Half Day]	<b>Cork</b> Organiser Mary Kenehan Guides Dooley family [Riverstown House], Michael Martin [Cobh].
Sites Visited	Riverstown House, Barryscourt Castle, Cobh town historical trail.





# Appreciations

## Michael Dwyer

I was privileged to have become a friend of Michael Dwyer (1912-2002), well-known local historian from Pallasgrea. That friendship was forged by our common interest in archaeology. Although I met Michael in the latter years of his life he still had retained a great love of the subject and a clear memory of his time at Lough Gur and Tara. Because of his enthusiasm for archaeology I feel compelled to share some of his thoughts and memories.

My first meeting with Michael was during a visit to the Hunt Museum by the Lough Gur Historical Society. On that occasion Michael informed me that he had worked with Professor Ó Riordáin at Lough Gur during the 1930s and 40s. This chance encounter led to a visit to his home in Pallasgrea where I recorded his archaeological experiences. As he recounted his time at Lough Gur it became evident that this was a significant phase in his life and one that he remembered in great detail.

He recalled this time as 'a busy scene all down on their knees', with no radio or phone communication and no electricity, 'we lived in isolation, happy to engage in stimulating debate', remembering with great warmth the many friends he had come to know there. Having previously worked in a drawing office in Limerick, his time at Lough Gur was spent on making site plans and surveys, also smaller detailed drawings for publication. He cycled the ten miles to Lough Gur every day full of enthusiasm for 'the pleasant days work that lay ahead'. His own introduction to the pre-historic period had been in the infant class in his local national school. He often contemplated on the lives of our ancestors and wondered how they might have felt at the 'technological advances we had made, from such humble beginnings'. He compared his frustration at having to use a blunt axe at times to chop wood to our ancestors' infinite patience at 'having to use stone tools to clear a patch of ground to create a landscape that present-day descendants could enjoy'.

On an outing to Lough Gur a few years ago, even though his walk had now become impaired, Michael's enthusiasm for the place was not curtailed as he pointed to the outline of stones which formed the foundation for the Neolithic long-house. He spoke warmly of Professors Ó Riordáin and O'Kelly; the latter had also worked at Lough Gur and Michael held both men in high regard. This was at a time as Michael himself was well aware 'when creature comforts were in short supply'. He said that Ó Riordáin 'could relate to the ordinary man and that it was no exaggeration to state that the humblest labourer under his guidance became an expert'. Michael greatly admired O'Kelly's publication of the antiquities in the Barony of Small County, Co. Limerick noting that 'this was a large area for one man to survey which he did with excellent results'. He well understood O'Kelly's isolation at this time; at least Michael had a home and a good dinner at the end of the day whereas O'Kelly had neither. He described how O'Kelly set out each day on his bicycle 'equipped with trench coat, heavy boots, ordnance survey maps, note book and measuring tape, crossing fields, climbing fences and contending with the severity of the elements, and arriving back at Lough Gur in the gathering darkness tired but not lacking enthusiasm'. The result of his labour was 'a sizeable volume of very valuable material unequalled for detail of its ancient sites by any other area survey'. This survey work did not start until late autumn, when the excavations were finished and, due to the backlog of work, Michael was kept on the site until October or early November.

In June 1952 Ó Riordáin asked Michael to take part in the forthcoming excavation at Tara. He still remembered vividly his arrival at Tara, all those years before. He slept in a hut on the site and kept a day-to-day diary of the excavations. He recalled the tremendous interest in this excavation and the large numbers of dignitaries who came to visit. On Sunday 29 June 1952 he wrote 'such were the



number of visitors that a record fifty large blocks of ice-cream were sold from Devine's shop'. Over the seven weeks he spent at Tara he wrote that 'he was in a favourable situation in having the opportunity to meet and communicate with the stream of visitors who flowed in here day after day, they came from Tyneside, Liverpool, Glasgow, London, New York and as far away as Australia'. He expressed his final thoughts on Tara in this composition:

Daylight dies and shadows deepen on the mounds,  
Signposts to our history, which here is written in the earth;  
A closed book which we are trying to decipher with the spade;  
The noisy rooks fluttering in the churchyard trees disturb my reverie,  
I gaze across the plain towards Dublin's hills and roofs half hidden in the haze;  
Dublin, the capital, seat of the Government, harbouring all light and life,  
Tara, the centre of the kingdom, seat of Government in another day  
Now dead to light and life beneath its mounds of clay.

I felt a deep sadness when Michael mentioned in a letter to me that he would never again see Tara as he felt unable to undertake such a long journey, 'the advancement of age is a barrier against an active life, in fact it makes one a prisoner to the immediate surroundings'. As he looked back on his time at Lough Gur and Tara he recalled, 'these were exciting times for Irish archaeology, two major excavations and a chance to be involved in history in the making'.

In 1958 he worked on the excavation of Shanballyedmond court tomb under Professor O'Kelly to whose attention he had brought this monument. This was an important site as it showed the existence of court tombs in the south of the country. He visited the excavation at Longstone on many occasions; he had also alerted the authorities to this site.

His abiding interest in archaeology was kept alive through the journal *Archaeology Ireland*, and the many letters we exchanged. These were full of items of archaeological interest, and he would often include small sketches of monuments. He marvelled at the skill of those who made the artefacts that are now on display in our museums, 'an axe must have taken infinite patience to make from the rough and hone-down to the beautiful smooth surface and perfect proportion exhibited in the specimens'. Also as to how we may be judged in the future he would often say 'ours may be dubbed as the age of plastics'.

Now sadly Michael has departed from this life but I am sure his memory lives on with all those who were fortunate to come in contact with him and as I proceed further with my pursuits I will always be inspired by his interest in archaeology, his ability to listen and encourage and his willingness to share his knowledge. As he once wrote:

The lonely lake of Lough Gur around which ghosts at mid-night play,  
I'd say Ó Riordáin and O'Kelly are there,  
Out on the hillside before the breaking day,  
Laughing and chatting with the Stone Age men,  
Now they understand, everything is solved'

Now Michael too can relish in that knowledge.

Clodagh Lynch



## Hope Flynn

The Society lost one of its long-serving and most gracious members when Hope Flynn died in October 2003. Her father was a bank manager and in line with the policy at that time, he was regularly re-assigned so the family moved frequently to different towns throughout Ireland. On the last weekend outing that she came on, to Monaghan in May 2003, the entire bus was treated to a wonderful series of reminiscences of her time in Castleblaney and the clarity of her memory and enviable ability to tell a good story impressed everyone. She could recall both the happy times and the difficulties that such a childhood entailed, not least the leaving of friends and the challenges of attending new schools and adapting to strange surroundings.

There was a element of pre-destination in her decision to pursue a similar career and she sometimes wistfully recalled that only one member of a bank official's family could follow this path, aware of how fortune had smiled on her in this regard, as in so many other aspects of her life. The old-world graciousness of banking in Limerick, as elsewhere, which suited her talents changed forever with mergers and a new emphasis on profits rather than service and she chose to retire early rather than adapt to this more crass world. Having worked in Limerick and found the love of her life there, it was natural that she should settle here. Her beloved George had died and she went to live in Castletroy with her sister, Connie. Her talents as a dressmaker provided a new outlet and a supplement to her modest pension and she filled her life with involvement in a wide variety of organisations.

Her move from Castletroy to Rose Terrace brought a new dimension to her life though the death soon afterwards of Connie was a severe blow as was the loss of her beloved brother Patrick some years later while she was on the Society's outing to France. She bore these losses, as with all the setbacks in her life, with a cheerful stoicism, remarking that she saw no point in going into 'purdah'. Her wide network of friends was loyal and supportive and in return they were the recipients of her gracious hospitality and appreciative of her highly developed culinary skills. Her love of gardening developed at Castletroy was continued in the more limited conditions in New St. Her cats were an important part of her life also, Rusty, Moses and Rocky being amongst the most distinctive over the years. Keenly interested in art, she acquired a modest collection of original paintings by some of her favourite Limerick artists, notably Tom Greaney. Her love of art, architecture and archaeology found expression in her involvement with, and support of, the Hunt museum, Limerick Art Society and the Irish Georgian Society. However it was Probus and the Thomond Archaeological Society which were closest to her heart. She had attended a meeting of the former group for retired business people, the day before her stroke. Her perfectly coiffured, flawlessly made-up and elegantly dressed presence at virtually every meeting and outing of our Society was always appreciated and she could be relied upon to ask sensible questions, never afraid to acknowledge any gaps in her understanding, and contribute informative, quirky and often highly amusing anecdotes. Despite her advancing years and failing eyesight, she remained active in the society to the end. She will be greatly missed.

Appropriately we can leave the last word to her: among her many, and in this respect largely hidden, talents was poetry writing.

**Evelyn Hurley**



## A Trout's Leap

A turn in the steam,  
A mossy pool,  
A fleeting gleam,  
In the water cool,

A hovering fly,  
In the summer glare,  
Not a call or a cry,  
On the balmy air,

A shimmering flash,  
A million ripples  
A sudden splash,  
Mid eddying circles,

A life is ended,  
That a life be kept,  
A moment splendid,  
A trout has leapt!



We also remember the following members who died in 2003

Mrs Marie Condon, *Vice-President*  
Dr Mary Connolly  
Mr Maurice Cowhey  
Professor John V. Kelleher, *Hon, Life*  
Mr Gerard A. Lee  
Mrs Ina Walsh