

ODDS AND ENDS

AN MANGAIRE SUGACH

O Riada remembered

SEAN O Riada, composer and musician, was commemorated in a very special way in Bruff last Saturday.

The occasion was the unveiling of a plaque to him on the building in which, in 1952, he gave his first public performance as a musician. The building in question was O Donovan's Hall, in the Main Street. At the time of the performance Sean's father was a sergeant in Bruff.

The plaque was unveiled by Louise Verling, a sister of Sean, who said that she remembered their years in Bruff as very happy ones; and she expressed her gratitude to the organisations that had erected the plaque. These, as Pdraig O Caoilte had told us a little earlier, were Bruff's Cumann Gaelach, its Glor na nGael committee and Bord na Gaeilge. The neat plaque, the work of local sculptor Jeremiah Butler, bears the following inscription:

Sa tigh seo a sheinn Sean O Riada

Os comhair an phobail don

gcead uair sa bhliain 1952.

Ger and Pakie O Donovan (of the O Donovan Hall family) were among the fine crowd gathered in the street, in most pleasant weather, to witness the unveiling of the plaque. Pakie O Donovan has for long been well known as an outstanding violinist; and many people will remember his playing of the lovely air that is Bruff's great anthem, 'Binnlisin aerach an Bhrogha' (pronounce "Bine-lisheen air-uck a' Vrow"). Present too was another Limerick traditional violinist, whose name is known all over Ireland - Cait Ni Chuis.

I have some happy memories of O Donovan's Hall. Fado, fado, many long years ago - I think the year was 1936 - there was an Irish teacher named Deaglan Suipeil conducting Irish classes in Bruff.

it was surely appropriate that he should be teaching an Irish class in Bruff, the ancient Bru na nDeise, bringing back to what was a Limerick Decies territory - An Deis Bheag - the very accents that would have been heard there when the area was Irish speaking - 35.8% of its population was still Irish-speaking in 1851.

As one could expect, Deaglan, himself a noted traditional singer, taught his class Bruff man, Brian O Flatharta's famous 18th century song, 'Binnlisin aerach an Bhrogha' - or, at least he revived their knowledge of it, for many of the class members would already have been taught the song by the still well-remembered Brother Carthage.

I suppose it was because he was staying in Bruree that Deaglan decided that we in the Bruree class should learn a bilingual play called "An Scoilaireacht". The play was learned, and was presented with great success as part of a concert programme in Bruree. Deaglan then decided that we'd take the play to Bruff. He made out some posters and gave them to a Bruff man he met in Bruree, with a request that he give them into some of the shops in Bruff - I think it was just approaching Easter when the Irish classes would be on holidays. The man who was given the posters apparently completely forgot about them after he had arrived back in Bruff.

On the Sunday night we were to go on stage we headed for Bruff by trap and bicycle. To our dismay however we found on arriving there that nobody, apart from some members of the Irish class, were aware that we were coming. At the suggestion of the latter the services of the local bellman were engaged, and he paraded up and down the street ringing his bell, and inviting all and sundry to O Donovan's Hall to enjoy a

went on, and despite the small numbers we relished the opportunity of performing in a strange place. But one man who was very upset about what had happened was local curate, Fr. Conn O Suilleabhain, a fluent Irish speaker, a fine player on the tin whistle, and a most lovable character. At the end of the play and concert he apologised for the poor attendance due to lack of publicity; and, having done that, he invited us to come back again in a fortnight's time, when, he guaranteed us, we'd have a full house. We came back, and the hall was packed to the door. Bhi oiche dar saol againn!

I am afraid I have digressed altogether from Saturday evening's events in Bruff. After the unveiling of the plaque we repaired to the community centre, which is just across the road from the celebrated Binnlisin aerach an Bhrogha of the song. In the centre we heard a splendid lecture from Tomas O Canainn on Sean O Riada, his life and achievements. Tomas, a Derry man, and a lecturer in Electrical Engineering in UCC, studied music under Sean in UCC, and lectured there for a while on Irish Traditional Music after Sean's death. A well known musician and composer himself, he is co-author with the late Gearoid Mac an Bhua (Gerard Victory) of Sean O Riada - A Shaol is a Shaothar.

In a beautifully illustrated lecture he spoke about Sean's life and his compositions, including those in the classical tradition such as Hercule Dux Ferrarie; his Masses, and his incidental film music, including the unforgettable Mise Eire music. He concluded by playing a recording of the stately and powerful Requiem for De Valera, with its "Gile my Chroi" theme. In this work, he said, O Riada had brought the classical and native Irish music traditions together. O Riada had been

have it in readiness for whenever the great man should pass away. It was ironic that O Riada should have been four years dead before the death of the subject of his Requiem.

The lecture was followed by the showing of the film Mise Eire, the film in which O Riada's great music first burst upon the Irish public. After the showing of the film we were treated to a delightful tea in Butler's pub, where a very enjoyable programme of Irish music had been laid on. Very much of the credit for a truly great day in Bruff must go to the Munster Glor na nGael organiser, Fionan O hOgain, son of Dr. Eamonn O hOgain, and nephew of Dr. daithi O hOgain, both of Bruff.

□ BISHOP NEWMAN. What more can be said of the late Bishop Jeremiah Newman that has not already been said in the course of the last week or more? A number of traits everybody - even those who at times might have crossed verbal swords with him - seemed to recognise was his great brilliance of intellect; his courage in stating, with no apologies, his unshakable convictions on matters of faith and morals; his humanity; his innate humility and simplicity. I am indebted to him for several kindnesses. He launched a book of mine in Kilmallock in 1987. And a few months before he went to America for treatment I had a very nice letter from him thanking me for the copy of another book which I had sent him. He had accumulated a wonderful collection of books and publications relating to Limerick. He asked me on one occasion to request the editors of any parish journals I might know to send him copies of their publications. Another time he asked me for the loan of some copies of Templeglantine's Glor Inse Ban, so that he might have them photocopied. All these publications he had beautifully bound, and they form