

LEADER II

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“I’ve been to over 30 countries over the years, including Russia, Morocco, The Holy Land and all of Europe. These travels have provided me with extensive copy over the years...”



Mainchin with his lovely wife, Prionséas outside their home in Bruree

Memories and folklore inspire writer, Mainchín

AT HOME...

with Mainchin
Seoighe of
Tankardstown, Bruree,
Co. Limerick

ONE Bruree man who is certainly in tune with his locality is historian and Irish scholar, Mainchin Seoighe. Mainchin or Manix Joyce has lived in the picturesque South East Limerick village all his life, having been born next door to the bungalow he now lives in.

His parents, John Joyce and Nora Deady had three children who attended the nearby Bruree NS.

It was here that a love of history was installed in Mainchin.

“The teacher I had in school had a great knowledge of local history and passed this onto the pupils. It was because of this that my interest in local history started.”

He then went on to attend the Vocational School in Kilmallock and the CBS in Charleville. In 1944 Mainchin put pen to paper and wrote and submit a piece of writing to the Limerick Leader. He submitted the piece under the name of Mangaire Sógach, a pseudonym used by a famous Gaelic poet.

“I was bashful about having my name published in the paper,” explained Mainchin, “so I started sending them in under this name.”

Soon afterwards Mainchin identified him-

self to the then editor of the paper, Conn Cregan who loved the pieces, which resulted in the column ‘Odds and Ends’, still going strong today.

Mainchin found that in this column history often crept in.

“In doing the column I found I was writing about pieces of local historical interest,” he commented.

He also wrote an Irish column in the paper for six or seven years.

Mainchin had started working for Limerick County Council in 1941 where he acquired a good knowledge of Limerick County.

“I really got to know it through the rate books and looking at the townlands. I worked in the general office with the rates, accounts, motor tax.”

Indeed, Mainchin was appointed the county council’s first ever information officer and was very much involved in preparing the annual report.

And in his spare time, the historian busied himself with researching and writing books. He now has over 30 written, many on

local history and lore, including *The Story of Kilmallock, De Valera and Bruree* and *Portrait of Limerick*.

His pen is still flowing today as he is co-authoring a book on Limerick City and the surrounding part of County Limerick with Frank Prendergast.

One thing that has helped to open up Mainchin’s mind for his writings is the extensive amount of travel he has done, having organised continental group tours for many years.

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Mainchin is very much involved with the Irish language movement and is chairman of Carragaholt Irish College and a member of the organising committee of Daonascail na Mumhan in Ring Irish College, Co. Waterford.

In acknowledgement of his contribution to Irish culture he was conferred with an honorary Doctor-

ate by the National University of Ireland at NUI Galway in 1990.

He was also awarded Gradam an Phiarsaigh in 2001.

Bruree, of course, is famous for having been home to one of Irish history’s great political figures, De Valera and Mainchin was a personal friend of his having grown up in the locality with him.

“My mother was a neighbour and contemporary of his in the Bruree area. He used to call and see her when he was in the district.”

“He was very charming and unassuming when seen at close quarters, especially with the neighbours in the locality.”

Mainchin has fond memories of the last time De Valera visited his mother.

“She was in bed and they would both have been approaching their 90s at that stage. His parting words to her were ‘God was very good to us, Nora. He gave us a long life and I hope we meet in heaven’.”

Mainchin is one of the founder members of the De Valera Museum in the old school in Bruree and is honorary curator of it.

De Valera lived in Bruree from the age of two and a half to 16 when he won a scholarship to Rockwell College.

“He always kept the link up with Bruree and made a point of calling into old neighbours,” said Mainchin.



In the old schoolhouse, now the De Valera Museum



At the old Mill in Bruree

“The teacher I had in school had a great knowledge of local history and passed this onto the pupils. It was because of this that my interest in local history started...”



Sitting in his favourite spot in the garden



A picturesque setting

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