

## THE GHOST OF CURRAGH CHASE

CURRAGHCHASE, to the left of the road as one travels from Kildimo to Askeaton, is a State forest and park, with nature trails, forest walks, lake, arboretum, and a Grade A caravan and camping park. Curraghchase house, accidentally destroyed by fire in 1941, was the home of the poet Aubrey de Vere, author of such well-known poems as "A Ballad of Athlone" and "The March to Kinsale".

Curraghchase house, built in the 18th century, had its ghost, or ghosts. Joan Wynne Jones (nee de Vere), in her book *The Abiding Enchantment of Curragh Chase* (Cló Duanaire, 1983), tells of strange knockings that she, as a child, heard on her bedroom door. And there were the times, at night, when the house would be filled with a frightful noise, as if all the coal scuttles and fire irons in the house were being thrown downstairs.

Joan Wynne Jones was sitting on a "little hillocky spot" near the house on one occasion when, she says: "Suddenly before me there appeared a man and woman of short stature and, to my youthful eyes, fairly old. The man was dressed in what I now realise must have been livery of a dark green material with brass buttons. I cannot remember what the woman

wore. I took to my heels and ran, but was told by the housekeeper's daughter 'If you had seen what I saw there you would never have gone near the place', but she did not elucidate."

Mrs. Wynne Jones also tells us that: "On one occasion I also heard most desolate moans and sobbings coming apparently from a blocked up doorway." And she tells the story of a young boy and his mother who came to stay at Curraghchase house. The boy slept in a room by himself. Next morning he said to his mother, "A strange little boy came to play with me last night," and he described the old-fashioned way in which this child had been dressed. "We played together," he said, "but he left in the morning." The mother said to her son: "If he comes again tell him that I do not care for you to play with strange children." The following morning her son said to her: "I told the other little boy what you said and he looked very sad, but went away."

Many years later, Mrs. Wynne Jones says, when alterations were being made to the house, the coffin of a child with skeleton inside was found underneath the floorboards of this particular room.

—MAINCHIN SEOIGHE