



Tom Donovan, Clarina, addressing the gathering at the launch of the Old Limerick Journal in the Limerick City Library recently. Mr Donovan and his team have done a superb job keeping up the proud tradition of the journal which was founded in 1979 PICTURE: DAVE GAYNOR

Centenary of Glenquin gathering is celebrated

Volunteers massed at Glenquin Castle in 1916 but failed mission undermined purpose

GLENQUIN CASTLE is situated in the quiet countryside and woodland, eight miles south of Newcastle West in the parish of Killeedy in west Limerick.

Glenquin takes its name from Gleann-a-Chuim, the Glen of the Cúm meaning Hollow or Shelter. There is very little written about the history of the castle but it is thought to have been built in 1462 by the O'Hallinan clan on the site of an earlier building dating back to 983 AD, also belonging to them.

The castle was taken in battle many times. One of the major families to take it being the O'Briens. They were said to have killed all but one of the O'Hallinans during the battle. The survivor was a boy who later on avenged the deaths of his family. In turn it was taken from the O'Briens, during the Desmond wars by the Geraldines also known as the FitzGeralds. They were recorded there until 1571 when the English confiscated their lands and the lands of over 100 of their supporters.

It is recorded that parts of the castle were demolished by Sir Walter Raleigh, and that in 1587 it was in the hands of the Hungerfords. In 1591 the castle was handed over to Sir William Courtenay and in 1595 to Captain Collum.

The castles records then stop until its restoration by The Earl of Devon's agent, Furlong, who restored the castle before 1840 and lived there for a while. It was restored again in the 1980s. The following is a 1980s, report about the features of the castle.

The castle contains two barrel-vaulted rooms, and is six-storeys high with a seventh storey section located above the top of the spiral staircase. The cat-walk around the battlements is in excellent condition, and part of it which has four narrow windows, is still roofed over.

There are double-lighted windows, on each side of the top floor chamber, and a fireplace in the North West wall. The castle possesses two garderobes, and the outline of basket-weave plasterwork are still visible on the vaulted ceilings.

The murder hole is intact and



Then & Now

with Tom Aherne

the access to the spiral staircase is to the left of the entrance door which faces north-eastwards.

The ground floor is peculiar in so far as it contains five windows, at ground level and one above that level. The northern corner contains an unusual feature, which looks rather like a well or the entrance to a small chamber.

The building is in an excellent state of preservation and was recently restored and is undoubtedly the finest of Limerick's unoccupied tower houses.

Glenquin Castle is now under the care of the Office of Public Works as a national monument. The castle's name has been given to a racehorse from Croom owned and trained by A J McNamara.

The Castle of Glenquin has been remembered in verse form, (author not known) as follows:

Below your rugged bosom the plains of Limerick lie,

And stretch to where the Galtees are pencilled on the sky,

The Feale is not too distant and the Shannon is down by Glin,

But you're the host to strangers O Castle of Glenquin.

During the uprising in 1916 Glenquin castle was used as West Limerick's rallying point for the troops. Men from Ardagh, Ashford, Broadford, Dromcollogher, Killoughteen, Milford, Monagea, Newcastle West, Raheenagh, Templeglantine and Tournafulla, and other districts, assembled there on Easter Sunday morning.

The 150 volunteers, had with them their equipment, blankets, and three days' rations, and Charlie Wall from Dromcollogher was their commandant.

Fitzgerald's Bakery van from Newcastle West, was parked in front of the Castle, and 12 R.I.C. men with carbines kept a watch close by.

The immediate task of the Volunteers was to control the railway line, from Abbeyfeale to Limerick along which the arms train was expected to pass. They were to march to Barnagh Station, and take control of the train that had the arms, which were due into Banna Strand the previous night. They were then to march into Limerick to join up with the other volunteers.

The men waited with their chaplains Fr Michael Hayes, Newcastle West curate, and Fr Thomas Wall, C.C. Dromcollogher, and later to become parish priest of Ballingarry. The failure of the mission to land arms in Kerry made them redundant and confusion reigned as they awaited orders.

Michael Colivet, commandant of the Limerick Volunteers, led his own unit to Killonan that morning before sending Major McInerney to Glenquin Castle to notify the assembly of Eoin Mac Neill's countermanding order. The volunteers carried out some drills and exercises at Glenquin, before they disbanded and returned to their homes.

A re-enactment of the March of the West Limerick volunteers to Glenquin Castle in 1916 will take place this coming Sunday, April 24. Plans have been put in place to get groups walking from the parishes of 100 years ago.

People who do not wish to walk can assemble at Glenquin Castle, at 2pm for a moment of reflection and an afternoon of remembrance and traditional Irish values.

A limited edition of commemorative pins to mark the day are currently available also and all details about the walk from Ger Greaney on 086-8278155

THE OLD LIMERICK JOURNAL Committee published a special edition of their popular journal to

mark the 1916 Easter Rising. It is a very interesting 172-page publication that tells the story of Limerick people involved. It contains 45 articles from a number of very well-known writers and historians. For people who like the history of this particular time in our country's struggle for independence, it is a must-read, and copies may be still available.

The committee are to be complimented for the work they do to preserve our history which is now contained in 50 issues of the journal. It was first published in December 1979, by an editorial committee which included editor Jim Kemmy, consultant editor Kevin Hannan, associate editor Joe McMahon, circulation manager John Keane, Michael McInerney, Patsy Harrold, Pat Feeley, W.W. Gleeson, Kevin O'Connor, Dolly Stewart, Ernest Kelly, and Joe Hartnett.

In the introduction article in 1979 it states that the Old Limerick Society was founded in November 1943 with high hopes and ambitions. The aims of the society were as follows: To promote the study of the history and antiquities of Limerick. To acquire and conserve local documents, books, plans, etc. To create and foster an interest in everything pertaining to Old Limerick, and thereby help to cultivate a better civic spirit.

The society also worked to preserve local monuments, buildings, documents, legends, ballads, etc which were in danger of being lost and to record and maintain sites of historic interest.

In December 1946 the society produced its first and only journal which made a valuable contribution to the study of Limerick's history. The society continued in existence but eventually petered out in 1953.

This new Old Limerick Journal and the reformed Old Limerick Society wished to take up continue and expand on the work of the 1940s group.

The vision and aims of The Old Limerick Society has certainly been fulfilled in full over the past 36 years, by the talented group of contributors, spread over 50 issues of the Old Limerick Journal.

"YOUR piece recently on the Castlemahon wild ass intrigued me," writes Retired of Castlemahon.

"My father and grandfather were born here in Castlemahon and I never heard either of them make any reference to wild asses in this part of the world.

"If you were to travel from one end of Castlemahon to the other you would not meet a single person who has heard of your imaginary wild asses. Who are you trying to cod?"

I am trying to cod nobody, my friend. The Castlemahon wild ass existed until 1900 and possibly later.

I assure you that there are many people in Castlemahon who can tell you that this unencumbered beast roamed across Carraigkerry, Ardagh, Castlemahon, Turraree and Clounleharde.

The herds numbered hundreds but now there is only the bleating of the jacksnipe and the crying of the curlew where the passionate braying of proud stallion and comely mare echoed across the heather-covered up lands of West Limerick.

Big herd

IN THE Kerry Sentinel of 1864 there is a reference to the Castlemahon wild ass which will make you and your father and grandfather look like tame asses.

Just because your father and grandfather have not heard of the Sahara Hamerkop or the Satin Bowerbird do not mean that they do not exist. It merely means that your grandfather and his son are not aware of their existence. Neither were they aware of the existence of the wild ass.

Let us, however, to the Kerry Sentinel. In the early winter of 1864 Thomas Boland the well-known North Kerry wit and ballad maker was on his way home from Dublin by coach when the vehicle was suddenly and unexpectedly stopped about a mile outside Loughill on the Glin side.

Boland thrust his head out the window to find out the cause of the stoppage. The following are his own words:

"I could scarce conceal my surprise when I beheld on the road before me a large herd of asses. In size they were similar than the ass used by the cottiers and labourers of the district.

"Their braying was infernally loud and despite repeated exhortations from the driver of the coach these forward fellows refused to quit the road. It looked as if we must be there for the day for the asses milled about the road in front of us numbering surely 150 or at most 200.

"They were led by a black stallion who pranced and snorted as if he were a race-

horse. An hour passed and a number of urchins appeared behind us. They kept themselves at a safe distance and wisely stayed behind the hedge which skirted roadway.

"One of the occupants of the coach, a Captain Taylor called out to them and asked them to explain the presence of the asses. The you looked at him foolishly with their mouths open. No one replied to his question.

"Presently an R.I.C. sergeant and a constable came the way.

"The sergeant was armed with a carbine which he immediately fired over the heads of the asses. They whirled and, as if they were one, sped off in the direction of Foynes.

"The sergeant explained to Captain Taylor that the asses were wild and known locally as Castlemahon wild asses. Feeding was scarce on the hillsides and they made occasional forays to roadside where they took of weeds and coarse grasses which grew there in abundance."

I hope this satisfies

It was imperative, she was informed, that I wear a pair of my own socks round my neck. The socks were to be unwashed

sceptic. I am sure there other accounts of these extinct donkeys and I would be grateful to readers may have matter relating them in their possession they were to send it or publication in the columns.

Cures

IN PASSING let me say I have only just recovered from a bout of the flu aggravated by a dose of tonsillitis. While I was in bed I was told of many cures for my ailment, particularly the tonsillitis.

It was imperative, she informed, that I wear a pair of my own socks round my neck. The socks were to be unwashed.

Another cure given Glin man during the 19th fair was the broth of boiled góislíní. Another-or-die remedy was a visit to the seaside where the t should be exposed to the breezes.

More please

I WAS in Athy recently at a public house when I asked if I knew Phil Enright the Abbeyfeale publican