

## ODDS AND ENDS

AN MANGAIRE SUGACH

## The Lough Gur Journal

IN the great prehistoric stone circle at Grange, at 3 p.m., on St. Patrick's Day, in the presence of a fine gathering - allowing for the inclement weather - Michael Quinlan, chairman of the Lough Gur and District Historical Society, launched the Society's eighth Journal. It is an excellent publication, the best, I'd say, so far produced by the Society.

The Journal starts off with an article by Liam Irwin, of the Department of History, Mary Immaculate College of Education, Limerick, who deals with a little known aspect of Irish emigration to the United States in the last century, that of people who had lost touch with one another, and who, through notices placed in *The Boston Pilot*, under the heading "Missing Friends", were trying to re-establish contact. In practically all cases the people seeking contact, and those being sought, were close relatives.

Dr. Irwin gives a number of examples of the notices. A Dennis and Thomas Ahern from Bruff, who were then apparently in New York, sought to find their brother William. He had arrived in the United States in 1836, and his last letter home had been sent from Albany, New York. The family had not heard from him for some years, but they had been told he was in Boston; hence the notice in the Boston newspaper.

An entire Joyce family from Ballysheen (?), Bruff, would appear to have emigrated. A daughter, Bridget Casey, tried in January 1853 to trace her father Dominick 'Joice', or any of her three brothers, Patrick, Edmond or Garrett. Ballysheen should, very likely, have read Ballydaheen, where, according to the Tithe Applotment Book, there was a Dominick Joyce in 1833. The family Bridget Casey was trying to trace, which included a Garrett Joyce, was probably related to that of historian and scholar, P. W. Joyce, and

poet and patriot R.D. Joyce of Glenosheen, whose father was also named Garrett. The forbears of P.W. and R.D. Joyce settled in Athlacca parish, which adjoins that of Bruff, in the mid 1700s. They claimed to have originally come from Galway. The name Dominic, borne by Bridget Casey's father, certainly hints at a Galway connection.

Dr. Irwin says: "The confusion, bewilderment and personal heartbreak, which was part and parcel of emigration for many Irish people, is often vividly brought to life in these despairing notices (in *The Boston Pilot*)."

Harry Greensmyth contributes three items to the Journal. First, he tells about the Drombanna dovecote or columbarium, which is situated some 400m east of the ruins of Drombanna castle. Dovecotes were used to house pigeons in, the pigeons being intended for table use. Apart from that at Drombanna, other examples are to be found near the Trinitarian abbey in Adare, and near the Augustinian priory at Ballybeg, just south of Buttevant. The Drombanna dovecote is octagonal in shape. Seven of the walls have niches or nest holes for eighty birds each; the eighth wall, which includes the entrance, has nest holes for forty. A very good accompanying photograph shows part of the interior of the building with its honeycomb pattern of nest holes. Harry also writes about a ringfort in Lickadoon, called Lisagoonausce, and wonders about the derivation of its name. Finally, he gives a very good account of a cist burial which was discovered in Baggotstown in 1987.

The "Unknown Fenian", killed in the attack on Kilmallock police barracks in March 1867, is one of the romantic figures of Irish history. His identity eventually became known, as Maureen Lynch tells in a very interesting article in the Journal. He was Patrick Hassett of Bulgaden. Maureen fills us in on much of his family history, and on

his tragic death, in the cause of Irish freedom, at the age of 19. Maureen had first heard the story of the Unknown Fenian from her grandmother, Mrs. Mary Hayes, Gormanstown, Bulgaden, whose mother-in-law, Kitty Hayes (nee Hassett) was a close relative of Patrick Hassett.

"A Limnological Assessment of Lough Gur, Co. Limerick", by Noreen Layden, B.Sc. (ED), Msc., is an article of great interest. One of the things the author of the article noticed in her study of the lake was that because of the absence of any significant surface inputs (i.e. rivers or streams), "There does not appear to be any water flushing through the lake in summer."

Lough Gur, she says, was classified as autrophic. "Eutrophication is the enrichment of an aquatic habitat with nutrients . . . Lough Gur is a very productive lake and this productivity leads to the characteristic green colour of the lake water in summer. In almost all cases of autrophication the rate of input of the nutrients exceeds the losses from the lake and there is a net nutrient increase. Consequently, the lake begins to silt up and the water depth decreases. Rooted vegetations start to encroach on the previously open water. In autrophic lakes the water quality is poor, with low dissolved oxygen concentrations and excessive biomass. Speaking geologically, the lake will eventually vanish."

But don't take fright at that! Its disappearance will take thousands and thousands of years. But before that happens perhaps some way will have been found to counteract the present tendencies.

Daithi O hOgain, Bruff-born scholar, now lecturer in the Dept. of Irish Folklore, UCD, writes about "The Geraldines and the Florentine Connection." It was for long claimed that the Geraldines were related to the famous Gherardini family of Florence, who

claimed to be descended from a warrior who had been with Aeneas at the Siege of Troy. Contacts between the Geraldines and the Gherardini were established in the early 16th century, and gifts were exchanged between them. Both sides were keen to find evidence that would prove their relationship, but no satisfactory proof was found.

Dr. O hOgain then goes on to speak of the disastrous defeat and overthrow of the Munster Geraldines by the English, in 1583, and tells how the story of Gearoid Iarla and Lough Gur grew up. Gearoid Iarla, the most famous of the Geraldine Earls of Desmond, had died almost 200 years before the defeat of 1583. In the lore of the people, however, he was said not to have died, but to be held by magic spells under the waters of Lough Gur. Eventually, he would break free from the bonds of magic and return to the world of mortals to restore the fortunes of the Geraldines.

I am afraid that is all I can write about the Lough Gur & District Historical Society Journal this week; but I shall have more to say about it next week, le cunamh De, as there are several other very interesting articles to be mentioned, including one on a remarkable priest, Fr. Michael Moloney, by Victor Senior. In the meantime, copies of the Journal, which cost £3, can be obtained from Pat Quilty, Draper, Main St., Bruff - postage, of course, is extra.



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