

Caherguillamore: a legend which will live on

THE gentle spring weather will tempt Limerick citizens to make excursions to their favourite parts of our lovely countryside.

Since Lough Gur—the famous scenic and archaeological area—was provided with tourist ame-

medieval village and its houses, field boundaries and roads system.

Traces of some other field boundaries (dating from the 9th century AD onwards) can be seen on the hillside directly east of the Great Stone Circle (opposite Casey's farmhouse) at Grange—these belong to the Lough Gur system of antiquities.

By SEAMUS O CINNEIDE

nities like the Stone Age Heritage Museum, in recent years, the area has attracted growing numbers of trippers.

Near Lough Gur is the ruined 18th century Caherguillamore Mansion, the scene in 1920 of one of the most brutal events of the Anglo-Irish War of 1919-1921. Improbable as it may seem, Princess Diana, the wife of Prince Charles of Great Britain (the next Queen of England) has an ancestral link with this old mansion.

Fortress

Caherguillamore (in Gaelic Cathair Giolla Mor, the Fortress of the Great Servant), like neighbouring Lough Gur, had some Stone and Bronze Age settlements. The earliest of these pre-historic settlements would date from about 3,500 B.C.

The ruined Caherguillamore mansion is about a mile west of Lough Gur. During the 1930s, excavations by the late Professor Sean O Riordain (author of "Antiquities of the Irish Countryside") led to the discovery of the remains of a

The remains of a medieval village, its house sites, field boundaries and roads, at Caherguillamore, show that Caherguillamore was a highly developed medieval settlement. A small, possibly fortified town, in fact, which could have been the original Cathair Giolla Mor, the Fortress of the Great Servant.

Mansion

Caherguillamore mansion and its neighbouring Rockbarton mansion, were at one time residences of the O'Grady family. Standish O'Grady (1766-1841) was the first Viscount Caherguillamore to live at Rockbarton. This Standish O'Grady played a notable part in the tragic fate of "Bold Robert Emmet", known as "The Darling of Erin", leader of the ill-fated 1803 Rising against the British Government in Dublin.

Standish O'Grady was the prosecuting counsel at the trial at which Robert Emmet was condemned to death. During Emmet's Rising (a very disorganised affair), Lord Kilwarden, the Irish Chief Justice, was dragged from his carriage in Dublin's Thomas

Street and killed. Emmet, a chivalrous patriot, had no part in this murder.

There's an interesting Limerick link with that murder of Lord Kilwarden in Thomas Street, in Dublin in 1803. The Pike family of Limerick were arriving in Dublin, and as their carriage passed through Thomas Street that day, it bumped as its wheels passed over Lord Kilwarden's dead body on the roadway. Pike's Bow here is called after this family.

A Colonel O'Grady of Caherguillamore House served in the British Army (under Wellington) at Waterloo. At that decisive battle

against the French Army of Emperor Napoleon, Colonel O'Grady rode a magnificent white horse.

The white horse served Colonel O'Grady well. They both survived the Battle of Waterloo. The white horse is buried near the avenue of Caherguillamore House.

Castle

Interestingly, the O'Grady family motto is "Victorious though Wounded". The O'Grady Family Arms, with this motto, can be seen in St. Mary's medieval parish church on Inis Cealtra, in Scariff Bay,

a sometime residence of the Fourth Lord Fermoy (one of the Roche family), a great grandfather of Lady Diana Spencer, who is married to Princess Charles, heir-apparent to the Throne of Britain.

Caherguillamore was the scene of one of the most poignant and horrific events of the 1919-21 Anglo-Irish War, which was fought by the IRA against the conventional British Army and its terrorist Auxiliaries and Black and Tan forces and the Royal Irish Constabulary.

On Saint Stephen's Night, 1920, despite the peak intensity of that war, the Bruff and



Princess Diana—her great-grandfather once resided at Caherguillamore House, near Lough Gur.

Moloney (also shot dead) had come home from the USA to fight for Irish Independence. Bob Ryan—later a Fianna Fail T.D. for East Limerick—who resided at Bouchier's Castle, Lough Gur, was seriously wounded.

A Volunteer officer named J. G. O'Dwyer was wounded in the wrist while helping his comrades in the fighting. Later, he achieved world fame as a superb horseman. From 1936 until 1939, as Major J. G. O'Dwyer, as Chef d'Equipe of the Irish Army Jumping Team, on the famous horse, "Limerick Lace", helped our Army Team to win the Aga Khan Trophy three years in succession, at the Dublin Horse Show, and to win many other high awards in Britain, Europe and the U.S.A.

Major O'Dwyer—who first learned his horsemanship at the age of seven, hunting over the South East Limerick fields—was Chief Instructor at the Irish Army Equestrian School. He studied under the famous Russian equestrian expert, Colonel Rodzanko (an emigre White Russian prince) who described Major O'Dwyer as the best pupil he ever had. "Superb—he's an artist with a horse", declared Prince Colonel Rodzanko.

Inside the mansion, the British forces brutally beat people with their rifle butts and pillars from the banisters of the starway and legs of table. The women and girls were detained until 8 o'clock the following morning. The men were also detained and, at 11 o'clock the following morning, taken by military lorries to the New Barracks in Limerick city.

The captured East Limerick IRA Volunteers were tried by a courtmartial, presided over by Major-General Eastwood and sentenced to exceptionally long terms of imprisonment, from which they were not released until the Anglo-Irish Truce was declared in 1921.

So, when you visit the ruined mansion of Caherguillamore this lovely springtime, prayerfully remember the fearless men and true, who fought and died there that horrific St. Stephen's Night, 63 years ago. And the brave women and girls who helped them.

Recall also that, through an ancestral association, Caherguillamore House is romantically connected with Princess Diana, the next Queen of England.

SEAMUS O CINNEIDE.



The Lough Gur Interpretative Centre where hundreds of visitors enjoyed an exhibition of finds showing Lough Gur's archaeological heritage. The buildings are constructed in the style of some Lough Gur Stone Age (3,500 B.C.) houses and huts.

New collection by Poet Johnat

THE popular myth still prevails that poets live in ivory towers.

Many modern poets find their own ivory towers, like operating professionally in the academic sphere, or composing their verses in idyllic country retreats.

Limerick poet, Johnat Dillon, is an exception. He is known to hundreds of our citizens as a courteous employee of Messrs. Todds, the famous O'Connell Street business firm.

Latest

This week, Poet Johnat published his latest collection, "Paper Poems-1978-1983". As Limerick Chronicle (and Limerick Leader) readers have frequently sampled Johnat's creations in our pages, the title needs little explanation.

The collection contains a selection of Johnat's best poetic contributions to these two papers—and some others—from 1978 to 1983. Johnat, a native of Lord Edward Street, in the famous Boherbuoy district of our city, is one of the most prolific of Limerick's contemporary galaxy of poets.

Since the Limerick Poetry Circle started their Poetry and Music Sessions at historic King John's Castle 17 years ago, Johnat has featured every summer there as a guest poet. For many years, these castle poetry sessions were directed by Kitty Bredin, the well-known actress and producer, primarily as a seminar for talented young poets.

As a gesture of his sincere appreciation for Kitty Bredin's help to him as an emergent poet at King John's Castle, Johnat Dillon dedicates his "Paper

Poems" volume to Kitty Bredin.

Sensitive

Since his boyhood in the Boherbuoy area, Johnat was a sensitive observer of the folk life of that area—and the human scene generally through our city. He also got to know—and love—the idyllic countryside out beyond Boherbuoy, around Rosbrien, Dooradoyle and Roxboro.

These scenes and their people are reflected in many poems in his new volume. He now resides with his wife, Helen, and young son, Jason, at Clonlara Village, in East Clare. For a few years after his marriage in 1976, he resided in a charming cottage at Derryfadda, near scenic Plassey.

While at Derryfadda, Johnat got a great insight on the local rural people and their customs and life-style. A favourite experience for him was listening to local folktales at Matty Larkin's pub. There are reflections also of these East Clare people and scenes in his new volume.

While residing at Derryfadda, Johnat says, one of his best friends was the late Dr. Bill Loughnane, the homely Fianna Fail T.D., an outstanding traditional violinist and raconteur. Johnat was saddened by Dr. Bill's death, last November.

Kindly

"He was a most kindly and helpful doctor, TD and person, with a great sense of humour", Johnat recalls. He tells a lyrical story of Dr. Bill's sense of humour.

In 1982 (finding the Derryfadda cottage unsuitable),

Johnat met Dr. Bill Loughnane, at one of his Saturday constituent's clinics, at Browne's Pub, Parteen, to ask his help to get Johnat one of the new Clare Co. Council houses being built in Clonlara.

"Dr. Bill got me a pint of Guinness and a large whiskey. When I asked him to get me a house, he joked: 'I must apologise, I suppose you'll do with a house until we get you a castle—'tis castles we give poets in Clare'."

As good as his word, Dr. Bill got him a Clare Co. Council house in Clonlara Village—something that makes Johnat eternally grateful to the kindly East Clare TD and doctor.

Friend

This week, Cllr. Tony Bromell, Mayor of Limerick, congratulated poet Johnat on his latest collection. Mayor Bromell was interested to hear that Johnat's wife, Helen (nee Duffy) is a daughter of Paddy Duffy, High Road, Thomondgate, an old neighbour and friend of the mayor's.

Internationally-famous Limerick-born poet, Desmond O'Grady (now on holiday at his brother Tommy's farm at Ballinagarde, Ballyneety) contributes a very perceptive foreword to Johnat's new book. The cover design is by artist Samuel Walshe.

Johnat wishes to express his sincere thanks to his many generous local sponsors, whose financial generosity helped to achieve the book's publication. Available from all local bookshops.

—Seamus O Cinneide.

on Lough Derg.

The Tuamgraney area—near Scariff—was the O'Grady Clan heartland. Beside the ancient Tuamgraney Church, where Brian Boru, Emperor of the Irish, worshipped in the late 900's A.D., stands the ruined O'Grady's Castle.

Caherguillamore House was

Caherguillamore

O Rolsin Dhu, your sorrows grew
On a cold and stormy night,
When Cahir's woods and glens so bold
Shone in the pale moonlight.
Within your walls, where alien balls
Were held in days of yore,
Stood many an Irish lad and lass
At Caherguillamore.

Did you not hear with fallen tear
The tread of silent men,
As a shot rang out from a rifle bright.
To warn those within.
The sentry brave the alarm gave,
Though he lay in his gore;
His life he gave his friends to save
That night at Guillamore.

I need not tell what there befell
All in that crowded hall,
The Black and Tans worked quite well,
With rifle-butt and ball.
Unarmed men lay dying and dead,
Their life's blood did out-pour;
They sleep now in their hollow graves
Near Caherguillamore.

The commander of those legions
Would more suit a foreign field,
Where he would meet some savage foes—
His methods they would greet.
And not those laughing youths,
Who were taught to love and pray,
And who received the Blood of Christ
On that same Christmas Day.

surrounding areas IRA held a dance at Caherguillamore House—then, like many other Anglo-Irish family mansions, deserted by their owners.

Unknown to the Volunteers and their revelling supporters inside, the British Army and the more feared Black-and-Tans, surrounded the mansion. Even the outstandingly brave sentry, Daniel Sheehan (mentioned in the hauntingly sad but proud "Caherguillamore ballad", on this page) was almost taken by surprise and shot dead.

Killed

The other four IRA Volunteers killed on that fateful St. Stephen's Night were: Martin Conway, Eamon Moloney, John Quinlan and Henry Wade. Some other IRA Volunteers succeeded in heroically fighting an escape action. Some others were arrested by the British Forces.

There were hundreds of civilians and about 145 I.R.A. Volunteers at the dance. Many of the Volunteers were men "on the run", whom the British had previously tried in vain to capture.

The British Force that surrounded the house, and woodlands, was 700 strong—drawn from Limerick city, Bruff, Croom and other local British garrisons. Martin Conway, Vice-Comdt. of the East Limerick Battalion, IRA, was shot dead when the British picked him out with the headlights of a lorry. Eamonn

NEW STORE OPENING EARLY MAY

Vacancies for full-time and part-time

**SALES STAFF, CLEANERS,
CANTEN AND
GENERAL ASSISTANTS**

Apply for application form and interview on
Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday to:

DUNNES STORES, JETLAND, LIMERICK

(m18-65)