



The dam in the Hetch-Hetchy canyon, later named for its creator Michael Maurice O'Shaughnessy, pictured inset outlining his plan for the project

# Irish patriot comes in fo shades of gi

## John B. Kear

### OUT IN THE OPEN

AFTER the result of the Common Market referendum I sat in a bar in the fair village of Tarbert and ordered a pint of nourishing brown stout.

It used to be called an imperialistic pint of brown stout but in these days of vivid green patriotism one has to watch what one has to say, otherwise one might be labelled less green than one's neighbour.

In Ireland in respect of patriotism there are truly forty shades of green although this last referendum was a savage kick in the posterior to the greens of violence.

Anyway, as I say, I was sitting with my pint of stout when the talk on politics started. I was introduced to a man who was described to me as "black Fianna Fáil".

"I only hated three things in my life," he announced truculently, "and the first of those was the bloody Blueshirts."

"He wouldn't say that in public 30 years ago," said a voice in the background.

"God forgive me," said the man, who was black Fianna Fáil, "but I can't bear the Blueshirts."

"What are the other things you hate?" I asked.

"Creamery managers," he said. "I can't stand them."

"What's the final thing you hate?" another man asked.

"The final thing I hate, and I'll tell you no word of a lie, is white bull calves."

"Alright," I said, "we have established your dislikes. Now perhaps you would be good enough to tell us what you like."

"The dole," he said. "I like the dole and I like de Valera. I love de Valera. He is very deep. In fact, there is no part of the sea as deep as de Valera."

After this declaration of love and faith I heard the first of the Common Market jokes. There are bound to be thousands more. A man's wife informed him they were out of coal. He told her he'd ring the merchant right away. For devilment he decided to use the only bit of French he knew.

"A hundredweight of coal, silvooz play," he said.

"Sure," said the voice at the other end, "do you want it cul de sac or a la carte?"

#### Corncrake

HAS THE corncrake disappeared altogether from the Irish countryside? If not, it would appear that his numbers are greatly reduced and that he is in danger of extinction.

Of cuckoos there are plenty and since I first reported in these columns about a medley of cuckoo songs heard in Affoulia, Lisselton, I have been swamped with accounts of cuckoo ar-

rivals. With the corncrake however, things are different. Only one report I come to hand and that from a returned Yank of the sa Affoulia in Lisselton.

Again the thro corncrake's caroling v heard in the last resort wildlife known as the S lies. Here in the Sallies, h and fox abound. So does t owl, the pheasant and t grouse. It is a sanctuary wild creatures in every ser of the word.

But why the disappearance of the corncrake? I I the question to a few farr friends and all were agree that the answer was inse icide and artificial manur

I remember meeting Ja Wilberforce Faulkner in t streets of Listowel on t thirteenth of May, once t date of the town's bigg cattle fair but now no mc than another day in the lo calendar of the year. I spoke about cuckoos a corncrakes.

"If you ask me," said Jac "we're all a bit cuckoo, though there's some tha more cuckoo than othe There's cuckoos inside cuckoo houses that's as sa and sober as the best of and there's cuckoos out a around should be inside, b no names, no pack drill a anything that pass between you and me is gor like a pinch of sugar in h tay."

"Fine," said I, "but how c you account for the disap pearance of the corncrake?"

"Sure, that's well knowr said Jack, "the same thi that's doing away wit mushrooms and butterfli and the warble."

"Yes," I said, "but what?"

"Nit powder," said Jac "Twill do away wit ourselves yet."

#### Pishogues

SINCE I started writir about the recurrir phenomenon of pishogu making a few weeks back was told by a priest who he much experience of suc matters that pishoguer; traditionally associated wit May and is not confined t Ireland.

He assured me th anyone who believes i pishogues is in dire need c psychiatric treatment. Th damage is done by infectin the imagination of people.

Even to this day in mos parishes there are peopl suspected of pishoguer rightly or wrongly.

Contrary to what thi priest says there are edu cated people and profes sional men who ar convinced that pishogu workers have power.

In a North Kerry parish few weeks ago a toy do, owned by a very popular an well-known schoolteache died for no reason. Even th vet could find no reason fo

# San Francisco thrived on O'Shaughnessy's vision

■ Limerick engineer oversaw massive projects that made the famous city viable

THIS WEEK I would like to recall the life and times of Michael Maurice O'Shaughnessy, who was a city engineer in San Francisco, and whose name is associated with the Hetch-Hetchy water system and the Golden Gate Bridge.

This Saturday, May 28, is the 152nd anniversary of the birth of the Loughill man, whose nickname was "The Chief". Michael O'Shaughnessy was born in the townland of Kiltteery between Loughill and Glin, on May 28, 1864. His father, Patrick O'Shaughnessy, was a wealthy farmer from Jointer in Kiltteery, and his mother Margaret O'Donnell was a native of Pallaskerry.

As a young boy, Michael lived in the home of his mother's family and his first schooling was received in Pallaskerry. He returned to Loughill and enrolled in Mount Trenchard National School. He was very bright, keen to learn and a willing student. He studied at Queen's College in Cork and University College, Galway. He received a Bachelor of Engineering degree and he graduated with honours from the Royal University of Dublin in 1884.

Michael emigrated to the U.S. sailing from London then travelling to San Francisco overland by train, arriving on March 30, 1885.

He first worked as an assistant engineer, for the Sierra Valley and Mohawk Railroad. In 1886 he found employment with the Southern Pacific Railroad as a surveyor, and worked on layout for the towns of Mill Valley and Sausalito, California. In 1889 he opened his own engineering office in the city of San Francisco.

He was appointed chief engineer for the 'California Midwinter International Exposition of 1894' in Golden Gate Park in 1890.

In 1895, he was awarded a commission by the Mountain Copper Company to design a narrow-gauge railroad, and he began working for the Spring Valley Water Company, a private concern that controlled streams and springs on the San Francisco peninsula, later purchased by the city to become the San Francisco Water Department.

He also designed and supervised the construction of a water supply



## Then & Now

with Tom Aherne

system for the city of Port Costa.

A turning point in his career came in 1912 when the charismatic Mayor of San Francisco, Sunny Jim Rolph, offered him the position of city engineer.

O'Shaughnessy was uncertain that he wanted the job, because his earnings would be only half of what his private practise was making for him.

His wife, the former Mary Spottiswood, a native of San Francisco, changed his attitude, as many challenges faced her native city. They had got married in 1890, and had raised five children. She convinced him to accept, as she felt that her husband was the best man to meet these challenges.

His first major task was to introduce a municipal street car system that to this day forms the basis of the city's public transport network. He also supervised the rebuilding of many streets, bridges, tunnels and sewers that had been destroyed in the 1906 earthquake.

O'Shaughnessy supervised the construction of the Twin Peaks Reservoir, the Stockton Street Tunnel, the Twin Peaks Tunnel, and the Municipal Railway System, along with streets, a high-pressure fire system and new sewers.

He also provided a large reservoir, as San Francisco had long been a metropolis where water was sparse and expensive.

All of these accomplishments paled before the challenge of the city's water supply system. Before his appointment, the authorities had decided that a dam would be built at Hetch Hetchy Canyon in Yosemite National Park. It had been spoken about and put forward by previous city engineers, but the idea was met by opposition and the project was delayed.

When O'Shaughnessy took over the reins, the project began to move forward as he had earned the

reputation of a man of action.

Congress passed President Wilson's grant of the federal land to San Francisco, and O'Shaughnessy and his team began the gigantic task in 1914. The project envisioned a dam in the Sierra Nevada Mountains linked to the city by 250 kilometres of tunnels and pipelines.

It began with a dam in the Yosemite and was linked to more than 150 miles of tunnels, pumping stations and pipelines to San Francisco. The project involved building not just a dam, but also a 68-mile-long railroad, several smaller dams, an aqueduct 156 miles long that included 85 miles of tunnels — some through solid granite — hydroelectric generating plants and transmission lines.

They ran out of money several times, but he kept pleading for more, which led his critics to suggest that his initials M.M. stood for 'more money'.

His engineering team used dynamite, and modern machinery and yet it took thousands of workmen 20 years, to complete the dam. In 1932 he retired as city engineer, but he continued to work on the water supply project as consulting engineer.

On October 28, 1934 the work was completed and on that day the water burst out of the Yosemite through tunnels, pipelines and pumping stations, and gushed into O'Shaughnessy's reservoir.

Through a cruel twist of fate he was deprived of the pleasure of watching his dream come through. He had died of a heart attack just 16 days earlier. The San Francisco Examiner wrote the following: "He was never voluble, and his eulogy is best expressed by his works."

As a mark of gratitude and respect the city authorities awarded him a posthumous gold medal in recognition of his contribution to

their city. He was also honoured internationally for his engineering excellence, and his bust was placed in City Hall. A lengthy sea wall that meanders around Glen Canyon Park was renamed O'Shaughnessy Boulevard. After his death the Hetch-Hetchy Dam became known officially as the O'Shaughnessy Dam.

O'Shaughnessy was involved in another spectacular project - to see a bridge spanning the mouth of San Francisco Harbour.

It was one of his dreams and he kept calling it the Golden Gate Bridge, but other engineers scoffed at the idea.

They said it could not be done, and if it could, that the cost could run to over \$100 million. The story of how it was completed is most interesting, but space only allows a brief synopsis.

Joseph Strauss, an engineer from Chicago, supported his idea in 1917 and declared that it could be built at a cost of less than \$30 million. A firm bond was established between the pair, and O'Shaughnessy had faith in Strauss; this support was crucial as there were many objectors.

A provisional license was issued on December 20 1924 to build the bridge, but the final permit was not issued until August 11, 1930. Eleven of the leading bridge builders in the U.S. were requested to submit proposals for constructing the bridge.

The design submitted by Strauss was selected and a contract for almost \$24 million, was awarded in November 1932. The bridge commenced on January 5 1933 and was completed and open to pedestrian traffic on May 27 1937, and to vehicle traffic the following day, ahead of schedule and under budget.

The cost of the bridge was financed by construction bonds to the value of \$35 million. This principal sum, plus almost \$39 million in interest, was cleared in 1971.

At the official opening ceremony on May 28, (by coincidence 73 years after O'Shaughnessy's birth) Strauss took hold of the microphone and said by way of tribute to the late Limerickman, "Here is your bridge Mr O'Shaughnessy."