

KEANE



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nd I went into a
ion about small
bout how intri-
gating they
with the right

a great detail to
bohareen really
e listened with
nterest when I
that the word
as really an Irish
ing a little road

er like a bohareen.
he said. This set
y haunches for
before the night
h and the swans
bestirring them-
the river outside,
missioned me to
which would be
eat Bohareens of

course, traverse
reen personally,
ed by a discern-
raper.

re to pass before
magnitude of the
e clear to me. I
my Irish pub-
D, in turn, con-
English pub-
D, fair dues to
ic would stick to
of the bargain
e did not remem-
le word of our

conversation and did not
remember meeting me.

Trudge

Happy to be free from the
awful responsibility of hav-
ing to trudge the world, I
decided that it might be an
interesting diversion to do a
book entitled Great Boha-
reens of Ireland, but even
this would prove to be
beyond the reach of one
mortal, so I climbed down a
step and decided to settle
for Great Bohareens of
Munster.

Before long I realised that it
might well take the remain-
der of my natural life to
traverse the bohareens of
Munster, so I decided at the
end of it all to settle for
Great Bohareens of West
Limerick and North Kerry.
Please don't write to me and
tell me about your own
personal bohareen. Let me
do things in my own way
and in my own time and I'll
come around to you.

To traverse a bohareen one
needs to be fairly athletic. If
it is a mature bohareen
there will be extending
thorn branches to be gotten
under, cow plops to be
avoided, potholes and decli-
vities of a natural make to
be dodged and countless

other small hazards which
all put together would sug-
gest that the bohareen
traveller should be wary if
he is to survive without
damage. What is it that the
song says:

*I do like to wander down the
old bohareen,
When the hawthorn blos-
soms are in bloom,
And to sit by the gate on the
out' mossy sate,
A-whispering to Kate Mul-
doon.*

An important question arises
here and it is this. Is
wandering the same thing as
walking? I believe that it is.
It is one of the slower forms
of walking and would come
under the general head of
ambling as opposed to
dawdling or (I do hope
you'll forgive the word)
arseling. These do not come
under the head of walking
no more than window shop-
ping does.

Bohareen-walking is a
pleasurable pursuit as dis-
tinct from walking to main-
tain one's fitness or walking
purposefully to get from
one place to another.

However, while bohareen-
walking is solely for plea-
sure it has its undertones of
deadliness. Runaway dogs,
badly mistreated by their

human masters, are to be
found hiding or even declin-
ing there and who can
blame them if they presume
that all humans are like the
master who so black-
guarded them.

Content

Then there is that greatest of
all four-legged scoundrels,
your common or garden
bull, who, not content with
the cows and heifers of his
own pastures, decides that
he will visit with the cows
and heifers of other pas-
tures. It may well be that
bulls of this bent will pass
you by, but there is always
the likelihood that one will
assault you without reason
and you could end up as an
obituary notice.

In all my years of walking, and
I have walked many a
straight as well as a crooked
mile, I have found the bull
to be the one creature most
opposed to this innocent
pursuit. He will attack with-
out provocation and he will
attack without warning.
Dogs come next in my
reckoning. They too will
attack without warning and
lately humans must be
taken into account. I do not
refer to the pestering hu-
man who has always been
with us, but to the new
arrival on the walking scene
who will relieve you of your
money and maybe beat you
up as well.

This menace is, for the mo-
ment, confined to cities and
large towns but, I have no
doubt, that he will spread
eventually to the coun-
tryside.

Walking, therefore, whether
for pleasure or for business,
has become an increasingly
dangerous undertaking.

On second thoughts, I think
I'll forego writing that
book, so if you decide that
you'd like to embark on it
it's all yours. Remember the
title: Great Bohareens of
West Limerick and North
Kerry.

BY TOM NESTOR

e timepiece

ommation to arrive
e one.

st houses,
d you whether to
way. So between
himself, the Dalt,
g and Dinny and
visitor and
e clock was never
one of them

the time, they
ra and not the
ly Hara knew
add or take away.
ay night before
1, Hara made the
he moved the
correct time at the
Hara and knew
orning, he would
take away two to
s, depending on
anted to be dead
pproximate.

he clock served
ose, at least that
ra had in his mind
from his chair

to wind it.

That was the sign that the
others should be making
tracks. As far as Dinny and
Lovely Hurling were
concerned, it signified just
that: they would both wait
until the winding had been
completed and then make for
the door.

Of course, the Dalt was
different, as Lovely Hurling
had a habit of saying, he was a
total exception, different in all
things.

As far as he was concerned
the winding meant that he had
another ten or fifteen minutes,
depending on what mood Hara
was in and what mood he was in
himself and whether he had the
inclination or not to prolong
the time. Sometimes you
couldn't shift the Dalt, he
would drag on and drag on,
changing conversation like
lightening, whenever it seemed
that there was a natural pause
to whatever topic he was

holding forth on.

Hara had a peculiar way of
winding the clock.

In most cases, and Lovely
Hurling used watch the ritual
closely to figure out whether he
was seeing correctly, it was
done the opposite way to
normal. The normal was that
the winder turned the key until
it was fast. Hara turned the
clock and kept the key gripped
firmly in his hand. At least,
that was what Lovely Hurling
and Dinny thought he did, but
neither of them were
absolutely sure which fashion
he used. So that night after
night the pair watched the
ritual with extraordinary
concentration. And sometimes
they would check with each
other on the way home and
ponder over what exactly had
happened. Did Hara move the
clock around the key or did he
turn the key itself?

They would ponder and

ponder and never be sure but
would never ask the opinion of
the third person who might be
able to solve the mystery. If
they asked the Dalt, the whole
thing would take on
gargantuan proportions and
this theory and that theory
would be developed to explain
what would suddenly become a
major phenomenon. Hara
often wondered why it was that
there would develop a great
silence when he stood up to
wind the clock.

He asked Lovely Hurling
once and he, in that wise old
owl way of his, explained it
with a lie just in case that the
truth might in some way
offend. It reminds me, he said,
of times past and I have a
feeling that it means the same
for Dinny. Hara could accept
that reason with great
empathy. Every time he stood
up to take down the clock and
wind it he saw his mother do
just the same job twenty, even
thirty years ago. And he
would remember that his
father watched the procedure
with just the same kind of
intensity.

SPARTACUS

Woolworths: the end of a legend in Limerick – and an era in Ireland

□ THE ANNOUNCEMENT of the closure of Wool-
worths in town came as a shock to all, even if it surprised
not everybody. There had been portents, including staff
reduction by natural wastage.

It brought to an end an era spanning 63 years – a whole
lifetime for many. During that time, in the first
half-century of the State's existence – known in
retrospect as "the years of the great test" – Woolworths
in Limerick survived every adversity.

It began during the recession, caused in the early
1920's by the Civil War and the earlier break with
Britain. It rode out the storm of the Great Depression of
the late 1930's, which originated in the United States
where the founder of Woolworths had started the growth
of his world-wide Woolworth empire with a little "three
cent store" years earlier.

It managed through the Economic War with Britain,
which depressed customers' incomes so much throughout
the 1930's; the neutrality of the 1940's, when so many of
its customers went to Britain to get work, as Irish
industry ran down with the shortages of raw materials,
when even commodities for shop shelves were in scarce
supply; and finally the recession of the 1950's, so vividly
remembered.

It is a tragic irony that the entire Irish chain should be
closed, not for adversity so well endured in the past, but
because the marginal profit margins were not big
enough. Even more ironical because the profit margins
were not cut by the kind of outside influences mentioned
above, but because of entirely home-grown problems of
taxation and—though some will, of course, differ—higher
Irish salary rates.

But it is also indicative of something which is
happening within the Irish economy: a change in
customer preferences.

With the increasing sophistication of Irish society, and
a corresponding tendency for shoppers to go to specialist
shops, where they can get individual attention and a
product exactly as required (knowing themselves exactly
what they want and an end to the "ah sure, 'twill do"
attitude) it was clear that the large general knick-knack
store was itself passing with the times. The money is still
in circulation in town.

But nowhere is this more evident – and this affected the
"Mirror Mirror" chain – than in customer preferences
for clothing. People today are extremely price-conscious
or, to put it more accurately, more value-for-money
conscious. People are prepared to pay for clothes, if they
can get not only something very individual but something
which will last, both fashion-wise and wear-wise, than the
mass product found elsewhere, to use the term of one
television commentator.

Irish society, as befits a nationality with an outlook
entirely unique to it, is changing and, in many ways, for
the better. The spendthrift days are gone, the days when
money could be had for no work at all are on the way out;
hard work is in and, with it, a positive demand for value
for that money hard-earned, and for the kind of attention
that a person with hard-earned cash deserves in a shop.
The outlook is not altogether bleak, for it tends to favour
the "individualistic" product: many of these, unlike
those sold in chain stores, are Irish in origin.