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Pat Grace (left), siscusses Rathbane plans with his wife Anne, club secretary/treasurer, and Fintan Lawlor, B team manager.

LIMERICK ON A WINNER WITH GRACE

SOCCER SUPREMO Pat Grace is Limerick's answer to Mgr. James Horan. He gets things done.

Not so long ago his dream of transforming a field at Rathbane into a superstadium seemed to have as much chance of realisation as had Barnacuig in 1980 of becoming Connacht Regional Airport.

Now, however, Mr. Grace's grand design, like Mgr. Horan's, is dramatically taking shape.

Within the last year or so £100,000 has been ploughed into the Limerick City ground in the form of fencing, earthworks, dressing rooms and club headquarters.

Only last Sunday a £30,000 stand was opened—every penny of it paid, thanks to the club lottery which started last spring. Next on the list is a £300,000 stand.

All of which is all the more remarkable considering that until the arrival of Mr. Grace, Limerick's senior soccer club never even owned a pitch: at one time almost their only asset was a lawnmower.

So what is the secret of his success? Hard work, enterprise and imagination come immediately to mind. Yet for all that, his ideas are hardly revolutionary.

It is the determination with which he follows them through that sets him apart.

The lottery is an excellent example. Anyone can organise a raffle, but his members draw is so well organised that it involves thousands of citizens week after week, yielding thousands of pounds for the club.

A measure of his success is the astonishing fact that while work progresses steadily at Rathbane, Limerick GAA — with far more followers than soccer — are still struggling to get the Mackey Stand off the ground.

Pairc na nGael, already overshadowed by Cusack Park, Semple Stadium and Pairc Ui Caoimh, looks like being by-passed by more and more big fixtures for many reasons to come.

Perhaps the County Board could take a leaf out of Mr. Grace's book. Although the city is virtually sewn up by the soccer lottery, the county, with a larger population, remains wide open. And the GAA already has the organisational structure firmly in place.

Why not a county-wide draw run by each club in its home parish, with proceeds being split between club and county?

If league soccer can be saved after decades on its apparent deathbed in Limerick, then the financial fortunes of the GAA can surely be revived. And rugby too could profit from the Rathbane experience.

Mr. Grace merits great credit for showing all codes the way to a better sporting future for the people of Limerick.

RUSSIAN MISSION

OUT IN THE OPEN

John B. K

Have ladi lost their allureme

PEOPLE, country people especially, were possessed of the most extraordinary powers until recent times. They used to say that if a country girl with hazel eyes put the come hither on a man he would follow her like a slave for the remainder of his days or that if a man met a dark-haired lady on a narrow bohareen in the month of May he would moon over her till the cows calved the following Spring.

Some readers may be sceptical, but it is well to remember that without the distractions of radio, television, lounge bars, Bingo and motor cars country people had remarkable powers of concentration. Their minds were free from all complexities, perplexities and perturbations not to mention distresses and distortions. They were able to put their minds to things outside the scope and comprehension of the people who populate the countryside to-day.

Singing

There was a man one time sitting by his open window eating a boiled egg for his breakfast when he heard the singing of a young woman coming from a distant knoll. He left his egg unfinished and went off after the sound. He was never seen again and remember that he had, at the time, a farm which carried seven cows and a horse.

Did he take leave of his senses and wander the country a distracted soul forgetting where he came from and ended up under a tree some night, the victim of unseasonal frost? Was the voice a fairy voice and was he lured to some cavern underneath the ground? I suggest that the voice he heard was the voice of a local girl who was without the requisite fortune to settle beneath his roof and who rallied all her resources to lure him away with her to some foreign land. It happened all the time in those halcyon days.

The question I would like to ask on this occasion is this. Have the rapturous powers and romantic charms disappeared altogether from the rural scene? Has the enchantment fled forever?

I remember a man to tell me one time that he was cycling to town during the Economic War with a view to borrowing a few pounds from some shopkeeper or banker when he encountered a red-haired damsel on the road. He had never seen her before in his life but he recalls that she was outstandingly beautiful.

Instantly

Instantly he lost control of his bicycle and wound up in a scairt of briars by the side of the road. He spent an hour picking thorns from his anatomy. When he came fully to his senses there was no sign of the red-haired woman but the thought of borrowing had also disappeared. He went home, mustered his resources, killed a hen and survived. He maintains that the red-haired woman was his fairy godmother and appeared to him when he needed her most. Who is to say otherwise?

A living relation of my own once told me that he happened to be in Ballybunion of a summer's day many moons ago. The year was either nineteen twenty eight or nineteen twenty nine. He is not one hundred percent sure but it was the same summer that Purtill's bull broke into Hanratty's heifers. As he walked along the strand when the sun was at its highest he happened to see a raven-haired woman of pale features passing by on her own. She was, in the words of the poet, a fine lump of a girl with great cutting to her.

She cast a glance his way and quick as that glance was he found himself immediately under her spell. He happened to be paddling by the shore with another lady at the time but immediately he departed her side, and a buxom side it was, to take off after the raven-haired woman as though there wasn't another creature in the world.

Followed

He followed her past the Black Rocks and along by the sandy shore underneath the golf links until to that lovely and spot where the Fe empties itself into This blessed area as the Cashen derived from the I "Casawn Ciarraidh means the pathwa ry. Sea birds me sand larks soared the creature dis from view. My could only conclu fellow, that she n crossed the river.

Foolishly he st the skin and with t difficulty manage across against a st which was flowi time.

Upon landing other shore he wa away chased by succeeded in e summer-crazed m before he had tim his breath he wa by a pack o greyhounds. He to fight them o unusual expedien ing sand and g their eyes, te blinding them. once he was several irate ma refused to count nudity on thei strand. He ma escape but was s several angry far ing pitchforks.

MY LIFE AND TIMES

Lonely the old

THEY WENT down the valley floor. They crossed the stream, stepping over the bleached stones that looked like the spinal cord of some great prehistoric beast. Above on the foothills were the remains of a house. The stunted trees bent their heads in a circle about it and they looked like a row of baldheaded men, old and crabit and forlorn. Way to the right of the bleached stones there was a new concrete bridge with a single arch and a roadway leading to and away from it. The road went up the slope a piece and then darted around a clump of whins and into another circle of stunted trees with their foliage at right angles to the ground. Queenie shook her head at the road again and again. It was a monstrous intrusion, it was if as she had landed on another planet. On the other side of the stream's bank there was a tiny harbour where the cattle still came down to drink. It was muddied and trampled and it had the signs of a habitation far more populated than Queenie had known. They walked up to the ruins of the house and stood in the shock of wonder and remembrance. The roof had fallen in. It lay like a rotting tram of hay except that here and there the sooted and black underside struggled through.

When the roof fell in the rest followed in decay. The window frames fell victim to the clime and the dampness, the glass shattered and fell away, the timbers came down and rotted into the soil. Across the floor of the ruin you could make out the proportions and shape of the house. This was the kitchen and here the room where my mother and father slept. And here where I slept and here where my youth was formed in the silence of my mind.

I heard the river roar at night and I would call out to my father simply that his voice would reassure me in the great darkness that cloaked the mountain. I heard the river roar when the floods came down. Come away Queenie. It's over, gone, rotted like the thatch with the dark underside, trampled into the seed bed of memory. Here was the kitchen and here where my parents slept. Farther up the slopes the seried ranks of trees stood out like a Celtic battalion of ancient warriors. They held their spears aloft and slowly, like the encroaching heather of long ago, the trees came further down the foothills. She remembered the excitement in the mountain when they first heard that the forestry people wanted to plant trees there. It was like the coming of civilisation, the event that would put the mountain people on par with the village and the plain below. Thei jobs and a differe somewhere else. never wanted to l he understood. P knew that the exc spelled the death mountain. Hara signs of fire in th trees. He could fi when he looked r he could make ou line of thatch an fences and the si amid the trees. room and at nigh the river roar an out to my father answer in the da people came int Some came dow higher places, d foothills where t now and some c other side, com ridge in the dar remembered on

Odds and Ends

Disunited Ki

IN HIS latest book, **Riocht Roinnte**, Nollaig Ó Gadhra analyses the results of the British General Election of 1983 in the Six Counties of North-Eastern Ireland which were cut off politically by Britain from the rest of Ireland more than sixty years ago. But the book does more than analyse the 1983 election results, for, by taking a look backward for a hundred years, it puts the current Six County political problems in their historical context.

Nollaig is a County Limerick man, born in Feenagh, but now married and living in the Cois Fhairrge Gaeltacht in Galway. Through innumerable articles — practically all of them in Irish — dealing with current political matters, which he has written over the years for a wide variety of newspapers and magazines, and through many interviews on radio and television, he is now the best known current affairs commentator in the country who uses Irish as his medium. He is also the author of seven books, six of them in Irish. Man of remarkable energy and enthusiasm, he is a lecturer in the Regional Technical Col-

The claim inherent in the description 'United Kingdom,' in so far as it relates to the Six Counties, is, Nollaig says in the Introduction to his book, in direct opposition to the Irish Constitution.

Nollaig sees the current pattern of voting in the Six Counties as having begun with the 1885 Westminster Elections, which saw the introduction of electorial reforms and an increased franchise. Home Rule was a very live question in Irish politics at that time, and the likelihood of its being granted brought the Ulster Unionists together in a solid 'No Surrender' block. From now on the politico-religious divide of Nationalist/Catholic versus Unionist/Protestant was to become a bedevilling influence in the politics of the area, making the elections bitter and sectarian.

The 1885 election result for Ulster (the historic nine county province) was 17 Nationalists and 16 Union-

as a whole — they decided to campaign for the exclusion of Ulster, later, however, modifying their demand to the present excluded Six Counties, as being the largest area they could hold while at the same time being sure of a majority for all time.

So, in defiance of the rules of democracy, an artificial statelet of Six Counties was set up, with the continuing result that the elections in that area have never settled anything. Nollag Ó Gadhra believes that perhaps more importance now attaches to the elections in Britain itself, especially in the large cities and new suburbs in which hundreds of thousands of Irish, or people of Irish descent, live. If their voting power could be tapped in the right way, and put to use, it might make its influence felt in the English political parties.

Though the Six Counties are frequently claimed to be an integral part of the United Kingdom, in practice they are not treated as such by

Counties, b land. And i for the Eu ment in 1979 the Six Cou under the while in the was fough straight vot One of the **Roinnte** bri reader is th can arise in camp, and ences of suc cannot help from a 300 *Is ann do campa Gae An dream chuir lena c*

Must it alw wonders? I Sinn Féin p against eac the three st ist areas or they have d of occasion ence will certainly lo ists. There has been, up an agre that has th