Pretty Strand village in West Limerick, close to Newcastle West, is steeped in history and can boast some fascinating characters from its folklore. This weekend it will stage its Harvest Festival, during which a Baron of Strand will be elected, bringing back memories of the legendary figure who was The Baron Hanly Picture: Brendan Crowe

When JJ Hanly was the Baron of all he surveyed

A legendary character from the village of Strand will be recalled this weekend

Then&Now

with Tom Aherne

STRAND is a small village with a welcoming heart, about four miles from Newcastle West. The people are very proud of its past history and achievements, and present successes in the Tidy Towns awards. It is a strange name for a village, land locked and far from the sea, with the only water seen from the picturesque Harnic stream, which flows through the village. It is set in a sheltered area, between Monagea, and Tournafulla, beneath a wooden glen, with a population of about 100.

The place is well known for the Mass Rock, hurling handball, and football, traditional music, wrenboys, and the impressive Rambling House "An Tigh Bothántaoichta." Famous people included Willie Hough, who won an All-Ireland hurling medal with Limerick in 1918. The colourful millionaire Baron Hanly made and gave away a fortune. Local people were also associated with the Rockites, and the Whiteboys, whose first branch, it was said was set up in Strand.

The Mass Rock in the townland of Glenmore, is known as Clash an Aifreann. It was used in penal times, by priests who were forbidden by law, to celebrate mass in their parish. The blessing of the cross, which dominates the hillside, near the mass rock, during Holy Year, in 1950 was a big event in the locality.

The refurbished Rambling House, is a focal point in the village, being around 300 years old. It is the real old style building with its thatched roof, and old style fireside. It was once a hedge school, and schoolmaster's residence, and now a gathering place, to link the past and present. In times past the village had all the usual trades, in place forge, shoemaker's carpenters, shops, pubs, and post office. Rural decline has claimed many businesses, but socially the development association, tidy towns, community alert, and sporting clubs, ensures the continuation of village life in Strand.

BARON J.J. HANLY, son of Catherine, and John Hanly was born in Glenquin, Strand in the late 19th century. He emigrated to America as a young man, and he made good in New York, and became the self-styled Baron of Broadway. In a colourful career he offered to buy the Six Counties from Britain for millions, and return them to the Free State. He donated two fine stained-glass windows of St Patrick and St Brigid, in memory of his parents to the Church of Visitation, Monagea.

The Baron Hanly used to come home from America each year, to visit his native place. He had a chauffeur-driven car, with the Irish flag flowing from it. He would visit the local school, and throw coins into the children playing in the schoolyard. He was well dressed complete with flamboyant hat, and it was said he used to light giant cigars with paper money. The following is a report of a visit home, from the Newcastle West Observer dated July 21, 1928.

"Last Sunday in the village of Strand, Baron J.J. Hanly, one of Broadway's foremost citizens, came to revisit his people, and recall the scenes of his boyhood. He received a civic welcome, reminiscent of the days, of the Caesers, as befitting one who had acquired fame for himself, as well as shedding lustre, on the little hamlet that bore him.

"He disembarked at Cobh last Sunday, bringing with him his magnificent automobile, which certainly is one of the finest cars, ever seen in Ireland. Immediately he started for Strand, and arrived in that village at 6pm. He was received along the route, with all the pomp and ceremony as befitting a man of his position. Dromcollogher, Broadford, and Ashford extended to him a hearty welcome, but to the citizens of Strand must be accorded the palm in the line of providing a real Irish reception, combined with an entertainment, which could have done credit to any Metropolis in the World.

"The village was tastefully decorated for the occasion, and banners were visible on all sides: 'A Cead Míle Fáilte to the Baron of Broadway', Strand welcomes her most illustrious son. The crowds waited patiently for hours, and when the Baron's car hove in sight, pandemonium broke loose. Hats were tossed in the air, women shrieked, babies cried and everyone was on tiptoe. Mr Conway, the chairman of the reception committee, then stepped on the gas.

"Songs were followed by Irish dance, in which the Baron's own villagers, acquitted themselves with distinction. Violin solos were followed by melodeon solos, and the climax was reached when the troupe attached to the Bazaar, produced and rendered wonderful music, on that instrument so dear to all Irishmen-the old Irish Harp. The entertainment was elaborate and varied, and showed that the reception committee had done its duty, and more than its duty.

"Then the Baron invited all to be his guests, for the evening. In the true hospitable Irish style he lavished lashings and leavings, of everything on the delighted populace.

"Everyone was merry and the company settled down to a delightful evening. A procession was then formed which paraded the village, and which was composed of the most influential men in the district. At the conclusion of this, more cheers were raised and the Baron, and party then departed with the intimation of an early return visit."

The local reporter has really entered into the spirit of this euphoric occasion. Baron Hanly epitomised the brash exterior of the returned 'Yank made good'. His visits to the old sod continued in the same vein for some decades. His declining years, however, seem to have been rather sad ones, and he died in New York in penury and obscurity about 1950.

WILLIE HOUGH was born in 1892, and he was a school teacher by profession. His performances with De La Salle College Waterford brought him to the attention of the Waterford county senior hurling selectors. He was captain of their team defeated by Tipperary in the Munster championship in 1913. The report of the match in the Waterford Star, gave him great praise: "Never was a team better captained and never did a commander infuse more hope and spirit by sheer example than Hough. He was here, there and everywhere, always on the ball, now playing tig with his opponents, and slapping shots into the forwards, with a frequency and accuracy that charmed those who could appreciate hurling at its best."

He qualified as a national teacher, and took up a post, in Baltimore in west Cork. He hurled with UCC and was offered a place on the Cork team but he refused, and lined out instead for his native Limerick. His career lasted from 1915 to 1926, and he made a comeback for a championship match against Waterford which they lost in 1929. The highlight was being captain of the Limerick team that won the 1918 All –Ireland hurling final, when they defeated Wexford by 9-5 to 1-3.

Carbery, the famous writer, wrote the following about Willie: He was a regular Hercules of a man. He carried great speed with his strength, and was one of the smoothest and most commanding hurlers, I have ever seen in action. At centre back, he was a master of every stroke, and every movement known to first-class hurling. He used his powerful wrists, and shoulders, with fine skill, and many of his strokes, whether on the turf or overhead were half a field's length. He was nature's gentleman.

Willie was also a referee of note, and he took charge of Munster championship and National League matches. He excelled in administration as well and he was treasurer of the Munster Council for 26 years. Strand will hold their Harvest Festival this coming weekend with an action-packed programme in place.

A feature event will be the election of the Baron of Strand, which will recall memories of the real Baron from those far off days. Be there, as there may be giveaways – as in days of yore.

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Annual out the farmer's and girl bit

JohnB.Kea

OUT IN THE OPEN

FAREWELL to the fifteenth of August, the great Pattern Day in Ballybunion. I wrote some years ago that it was in danger of dying out and this year, unfortunately, I was proved right.

When I was a boy we could stand in the door of any house in Church Street, Listowel, and watch the boys and girls cycling by from west Limerick and all over north Kerry to the seaside.

The fifteenth was the annual outing of the farmer's boy and the farmer's girl.

It was part of the bargain when they were hired. They were to have the fifteenth off, whatever else. Now it seems as if it's just another day in the long calendar of the year.

More's the pity, for up 'till a few years ago it was an event of considerable significance.

Dirty dogs

The dogs of Listowel ... The town which is famous for its writers, its races and its fishful river is now gradually acquiring a reputation for stray mongrels.

They soil the streets and square and follow passing cars and cyclists. They are not above attacking people. For years these vagrant canines have been the curse of the town. Apparently without owners, they roam the streets at will and serenade each other far out into the night. Recently a resident of The Square told me that sleep has become impossible of late.

The dogs never seem to cease barking. To determine their breeding would be impossible. All, however, have three things in common. They are ill-tempered and ugly and when they are not up to devilment they like to sleep in the roadway or in the streets.

Definitely they are a menace when they start to bark at night. Every street has its quota, with The Square having more than all the streets put together. Some years ago there was a dog menace in William Street and Charles Street. These too, were notorious barkers and street soilers. They would follow cycles and cars just like The Square dogs of today.

Then came the canine equivalent of the Valentine's Day massacre. One morning 11 of these dogs were found dead in various parts of the streets and back ways of the town. They were poisoned and the poisoner to this day remains unknown.

Poison is a drastic remedy and one of which I do not approve. In fact, if must be condemned as excessively cruel and unwarranted. As I say, it took place several years ago, and no doubt the assassin was some unfortunate who was demented for the want of sleep.

What of the barking dogs of The Square?

"It's turning into a town," another res told me. "You shoul something into the p to let outsiders know we are suffering."

"I'm afraid to go night," and elderly w informed me.

"Come to cur-land," local wit.

Seriously, howev town with too many dogs on its streets is b up the wrong tree.

Lovely Louis

Another triumph for Heaphy of Ballylongfor week a man came into and ordered a glass of for Louis Heaphy th time he would call. I ac the money but was curious as to why the was being paid for. I question to Tom Do man who bought it.

"I'll tell you the trut Tom. "For a long whi there's law been h over my head and stone weight lost w of it. My wife is wo weed from the tho the courthouse. this evening Louis arrived at the house for me. At first I wa to hide, but the h it, I said, and I ope door for him. With the wife went into th Louis Heaphy shool with me and said: something here f Tom.'

"'What would t Louis," I asked.

" 'A summons, To Louis.

The upshot of the is that Tom Doyle is man. Louis Heaphy him so much that me he wouldn't min a summons every w

"No wonder they Lovely Louis," sa Doyle's wife. So her another triumph f Heaphy. He has m out of the legend tha loves a process-serv

There was a tin those who were ir over debts or ass from the process They dreaded the of summonses m anything in the w now all that has ch

Louis Heaphy brought into the those he has to ser made much of. In f me that if those f he has summon exactly what time be coming they w something special way of drinks and

"I hate boasti Louis Heaphy, "bu a nice fellow pe to see me comin doors. They start soon as they see m

Would that o were like Louis What a peaceful world we would b Gone would be t and the snarls. harmony would p