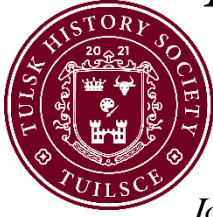


CHRISTMAS EDITION

Newsletter No. 3

December 2021



Tulsk History Society historytulsk@gmail.com

Members: Cathal McCormack (Chair), Mary Kelly, Deirdre Jones, John Higgins, Mike Lennon (Secretary), Pauline Jones, Catherine McGuire, Eileen Beirne, Noel Sheerin (Archivist), Maeve Hanley, Jim Dockery, Jody Moylan (PRO), Darragh Kelly, Therese Hanley (Treasurer), Fergus Moffitt, Michael Jones. Joe Donoghue, Melissa Keigher, Eithne Jones, Mary Cregg, Lorna Keaveney.



A very happy Christmas to all our readers. We hope our seasonal newsletter finds you well, at the end of what has been a very busy and fruitful year for Tulsk History Society. From our initial steps last March we have gone on to acquire new members throughout the year, all of whom have contributed to the society. Our Zoom meetings have been well attended (and enjoyable!), while the main phase of our first big project, surveying Tulsk cemetery, has reached a successful conclusion. Our archives at the Rathcroghan Visitor Centre continues to grow, and our newsletter series has benefited from a range of contributors and a mailing list that is only getting bigger. Unfortunately, due to Covid, our quiz night last month at O'Connor's Bar was postponed until the new year. We hope to see you all then, in the not too distant future! Contact details for those who wish to join THS, contribute to our archives, write a newsletter article, or just wish to drop us a line, can be found at the end.



In this month's edition THIS treasurer Therese Hanley sat down with her mother, Maeve, for a special festive interview. Maeve recalls her childhood Christmases in Tulsk parish from the 1930s, in a beautifully detailed account. Joe Donoghue Jnr looks back on the life of his great granduncle Ned Keegan, whose fine carpentry work can still be found in the locality. Melissa Keigher's story on the Doyle family of Tulsk village is a fascinating account of local family history at the turn of the twentieth century, while Jody Moylan remembers the life of a forgotten native, Mary Gorges. Born into Cargins House in 1835 Mary went on to become a published writer of some note. Mike McCarthy's take on a local fable rounds off our Christmas edition, and contributes to the long history of mythology associated with Rathcroghan and Tulsk. We hope you enjoy the read!

THS

CHILDHOOD MEMORIES OF CHRISTMAS 1936 by *Therese Hanley*



Maeve has many fond memories of Christmas

MAEVE HANLEY'S earliest memories of Christmas in Tulsk parish date to 1936 when she lived in Cloonmurray, aged nine in a family of four (two parents and two girls). "There wasn't the same fuss about Christmas as there is now. We lived in our own small world - no outside influences from television or social media because we didn't even have electricity then. We had the paraffin lamps and before Christmas we'd make sure the globes were crystal clear. We were very content and grateful with our lot. There was no feeling of being deprived, but only gratitude for what we had. As children we collected holly and ivy to decorate the

house and you could buy crepe paper and make paper decorations; there was no such thing as tinsel and I can't recall us having a Christmas tree until much later. Christmas presents consisted of a doll or maybe a tea set. We were fascinated by Santa and what he might look like. As there were no photos of him, and certainly no places to go to see Santa, we were very keen to get a look at the Roscommon Herald around Christmas in case there might be a picture of him - just to see what he looked like. We wrote letters to him, the same as now, but you would only ask for one item. Toys were purchased from Sharkey sisters in Strokestown, who sold all kinds of nick-nacks, jewellery and toys; It was a beautiful shop.

Another place for toys was M.J Farrells in Roscommon, which was run by Maura Farrell at that time. I liked Sharkey sisters better because they had a gramophone

and they used to play records on it - my father used to buy the 78rpm records and they'd play the record for him before he bought it.

Christmas cards were sent to those living away in England/America. The cards bore nativity and religious scenes - no penguins, polar bears or reindeers, and were usually landscape-shaped with simple Christmas messages. A visit to the grave of loved ones was customary on Christmas Day, to say a few prayers - no wreaths, just prayers. At school, the talk was all about Santa, in between practising the tin whistle for the school concert, which was held in the hall beside the church (now gone). There was usually a one-act or three-act play performed as well as a few youngsters dancing or saying a recitation. In later years the Macra hall was used as an alternative venue.

The spiritual preparation for Christmas consisted of going to confession. As this was a ritual that was performed each month anyway it wasn't much of an ask. On Christmas Day there were two masses in Tulsk church. There was no such thing as midnight mass in Tulsk at that time. There was a choir led by May Lane on the harmonium. From what I can remember it was an all-female choir. Most people either walked, cycled, or went to mass by horse/ass/cart/trap. My father brought us to mass by horse and trap. Before mass the horse and trap were secured in O'Connor's yard, which was located between the present-day service station in Tulsk and the church. The yard had stables and you could fit both horse and trap into a secure dry building. Fr Lavin was the priest during this time. He lived in Prospect House in Tulsk and when not serving his flock he was serving his stock, being a keen part-time farmer. He used to visit the schools prior to Christmas and sit in front of the fire, sniffing. He had a fondness for snuff - which may have contributed to the dabbing of his nose with a red handkerchief, a habit associated with him. Fr Lavin sat at the door to the church on mass day, to personally gather the collection. In the mass that followed on Christmas Day, a list of the contributors and the amount that each one contributed were announced from the

pulpit. Red faces, shivers and coughing were not always down to the lack of heating in the church!

Most of the preparation for the festive season centred around food; saving a turkey for the Christmas was common for those who reared turkeys. The turkey or goose was killed the week before and had to be left to hang. If you had extra turkeys you could sell them on the 8th of December at the market in Strokestown: bronze turkeys were the order of the day - white turkeys weren't to be had in this area in 1936. There was a general market every Friday in Strokestown but the Christmas market had a few extras like the bronze turkeys as well as some delph for the housekeepers, sold by Campbells from Castlereagh. On a good day, a man could come home with a suit in one hand - from Gorman's lorry that sold



second hand clothes - and a suck calf in the other.”

Maeve remembers her father going to Simpson's shop to get all the Christmas essentials. She recalls that in the early days, sugar, tea and drink were not delivered to the shop;

Patrick Simpson, the shop owner, had to collect the delivery from Roscommon train station. Tea came in large chests - no such thing as tea bags then and sugar was bought by the stone or pound. The extra items at Christmas that Maeve remembers as a child were the tins of Marietta biscuits which came in very large tins with the biscuits in rows. Cakes were in abundance at Christmas; homemade and usually un-iced. If you wanted an iced Christmas cake it was generally something that was bought in. The homemade cakes were served up in neighbours houses, preceded by feeds of cold meats - beef and/or turkey - when neighbours came to ramble.

“Rambling was a custom all year round but especially at Christmas,” says Maeve. “People didn’t travel far due to the lack of transport and winter weather conditions, but fun and entertainment were never lacking. Card games were held frequently, two or three times a week and increasing in frequency around Christmas. Small money was involved in games such as ‘Twenty-five’, except near the end of the night when they played for ‘the rubber’. The rubber was an accumulated pot – a best of three. Maeve recalls some of the people who came to her father’s house (Paddy Gormley) to play: Mick Lennon, Tom Shaughnessy, Tom Clabbey, Johnny and Jimmy Beirne and John Rush. It was mainly the men who played. And it was mainly the men who frequented the pubs too, even at Christmas. Though women were admitted to the snug, few actually frequented the pub at all. A few drinks were had in the houses during the festive season – bottles of stout, whiskey and a bottle of port wine.

A typical Christmas day menu was turkey or goose with perhaps a bit of bacon which would have been wrapped around the bird to give it extra flavour; homemade stuffing of breadcrumbs, fried onions and herbs, served with potatoes, carrots/parsnips – i.e. your own produce from the garden. Desert was usually trifle or jelly and custard, followed by generous chunks of sweet cake and a few sweets for the children. Large thick red or green candles were lit and often-times a turnip was scooped out to act as a holder. On St. Stephens day, the wren boys visited houses. A net curtain was the popular choice of mask or face covering with two holes cut out for the eyes and another hole for the mouth. Sometimes they painted those veils too. A cocoa tin with a slit on the top was rattled after the person playing the tin whistle, or singing a song, had finished their performance.

In 1936 people had very little, didn’t travel far and knew very little of the outside world. But they were happy. “That’s the one thing I remember, the happy childhood we had, it was so simple but we had great fun.” ♦

A TRADESMAN OF THE PAST - MY GREAT-GRANDUNCLE NED

KEEGAN 1866 - 1937 by Joe Donoghue Jnr

BORN IN CURCREIGH to John and Bridget Keegan (nee Flynn), my great-granduncle Ned was a fine carpenter who learned his trade from his father, who



A chair and mantelpiece crafted by Ned Keegan

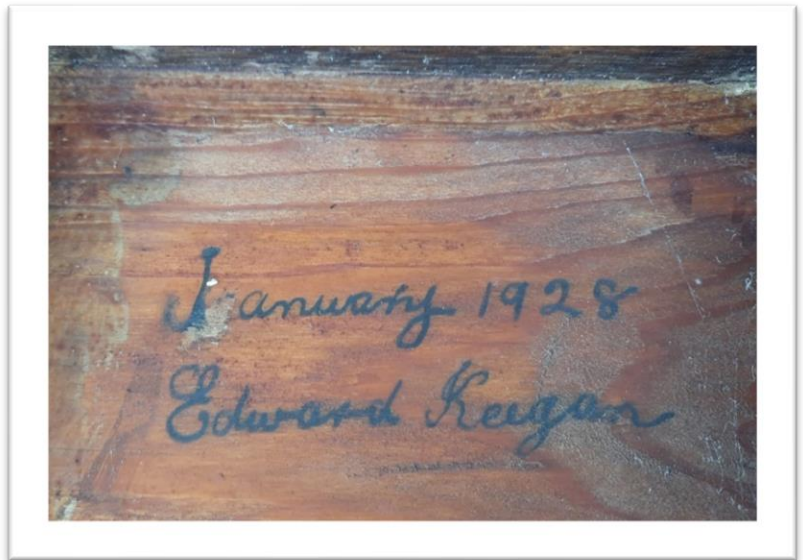
was described as a farmer and cooper in the 1901 census. Ned's carpentry work has stood the test of time. Fine examples of his handmade window casings, mantelpieces, tables and chairs can be seen in many local houses today.

In a remarkable twist of fate, one of Ned's descendants, his great-grandniece – my sister Patricia – ended up marrying into a house that Ned had done the woodwork on all those years ago. I can clearly remember my aunt Ellen Rattigan (nee Flynn), fondly known to me as 'Auntie

Nell', recalling Ned and his father John cycling to Ballymoe to do carpentry work for the Payne family. Some of Ned's hand tools are still in our possession today, but they're in need of some repair!

One of Clooneyquinn's longest living residents in recent years, Bridie O'Connor RIP, recalled seeing Ned complete the carpentry work on her parents' new house when she was a child in the early 1920's. She also had a clear memory of seeing Ned's father John: 'an old man with a long white beard, sitting by the fire in Curcreigh'. Remarkably, John lived to the ripe old age of 93. Ned remained a

bachelor all his life and passed away himself in July 1937, suffering from heart failure at the age of 71. While the Keegan surname no longer graces the homes of Curcreigh, Ned's carpentry skills ensure that his legacy lives on.



Dated to 1928 Ned (Edward) Keegan's carpentry has stood the test of time. The above picture is from one of his handmade chairs. The census return from 1901 (below) shows Ned and his father to have both been tradesmen, while his sister Annie (spelt incorrectly in the census) was the housekeeper. Ned's memorial card preserves his memory. ♦

CENSUS OF IRELAND, 1901.
(Two Examples of the mode of filling up this Table are given on the other side.)

FORM A.

No. on Form B. /

RETURN of the MEMBERS of this FAMILY and their VISITORS, BOARDERS, SERVANTS, &c., who slept or abode in this House on the night of SUNDAY, the 31st of MARCH, 1901.

No.	NAME and SURNAME	RELATION to Head of Family	RELIGIOUS PROFESSION	EDUCATION	AGE	SEX	RANK, PROFESSION, OR OCCUPATION	MARRIAGE	WIDOWS BORN	IRISH LANGUAGE	If Dead and Death's Date (If unknown, state whether of War or Peace)
1	John Keegan	Head of Family	R. C.	Read and Write	64	M	Former S. Carpenter	Widow	Widow		
2	Ned Keegan	Son	R. C.	do	33	M	Carpenter	Widow	Widow		
3	Annie Keegan	Daughter	R. C.	do	22	F	Housekeeper	Widow	Widow		
4											
5											
6											
7											
8											
9											
10											
11											
12											
13											
14											
15											

I solemnly certify, as required by the Act 62 Vic., cap. 6, & 6 (1), that the foregoing Return is correct, according to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Edward Keegan (Signature of Enumerator)

I believe the foregoing to be a true Return.

John Keegan (Signature of Head of Family)

MARTIN CHARLES DOYLE - A TULSK MAN RETURNS FROM AUSTRALIA - by Melissa L. Keigher

A LOOK through the Tusk parish entries of the Census for 1901 and 1911 will find some interesting names, with their own stories to tell. This month we take a look at one Martin John Doyle, who is listed as residing in Tusk village in 1901.

Just before the 1901 Census, Martin had been living abroad in Australia, having married an Australian woman by the name of Annie Maria Lawrence in 1883.

Together they had six children: Frederick Owen, Bartle, Mary Ann, Martin John, Patrick Joseph, and James. Sometime after the birth of their youngest child James in 1896, Martin brought his family back to his hometown of Tusk where he would take over the tenancy of his brother-in-law John Lavin's shop.

At the time of the 1901 census Martin, aged 50, was working as a shopkeeper, and the Doyle family were tenants in a house owned by Mary Kelly. And what a house

CENSUS OF IRELAND, 1901.												
(Two Examples of the mode of filling up this Table are given on the other side.)												
FORM A.											No. on Form B. 7	
RETURN of the MEMBERS of this FAMILY and their VISITORS, BOARDERS, SERVANTS, &c., who slept or abode in this House on the night of SUNDAY, the 31st of MARCH, 1901.												
Number	NAME and SURNAME.		RELATION to Head of Family.	RELIGIOUS PROFESSION.	EDUCATION.	AGE.	SEX.	RANK, PROFESSION, OR OCCUPATION.	MARRIAGE.	WHERE BORN.	IRISH LANGUAGE.	If Deaf and Dumb; Blind; Imbecile or Idiot; or Lunatic.
	Christian Name.	Surname.	State whether Head of Family, or "Boarder," or "Visitor," or "Servant," or "In-Store," or "Boarder," or "Other."	State here the particular Religion, or Religious denomination, to which such person belongs. Indicate of Protestant Dissenters, and also mention the name of the particular Church, denomination, or sect, to which they belong.	State here whether he or she can "read" only, or "read & write," or "cannot read."	Years to which last birthday was due.	Male or Female.	State the Particular Rank, Profession, Trade, or other Employment of such person. Children, or young persons, attending a school, or receiving special instruction at home, should be returned as scholars.	Whether "Married," "Unmarried," or "Not stated."	If in Ireland, state in what County or City it was; when made the name of the County.	Write the word "Irish" in those cases where the name of such person who speaks Irish is given, and the opposite the name of those who are given with English. In other cases no entry should be made in this column.	Write the respective letters in the space of the column.
1	Martin	Doyle	head of family	R. Catholic	Read & write	50	M	Shop Keeper	Married	Prosemm		
2	Annie	Doyle	wife	R. Catholic	Read & write	49	F	House Keeper	Married	Australia		
3	Frederick	Doyle	son	R. Catholic	Read & write	16	M	Scholar	Unmarried	Australia		
4	Bartle	Doyle	son	R. Catholic	Read & write	14	M	Scholar	"	Australia		
5	Mary	Doyle	daughter	R. Catholic	Read & write	12	F	Scholar	"	Australia		
6	John	Doyle	son	R. Catholic	Read & write	10	M	Scholar	"	Australia		
7	Patrick	Doyle	son	R. Catholic	Read & write	7	M	Scholar	"	Australia		
8	James	Doyle	son	R. Catholic	Can't Read	5	M		"	Australia		
9	Maria	Flannery	servant	R. Catholic	Read & write	16	F	Servants Domestic	not married	Prosemm		

1901 Irish Census: Doyle family in Grange, Tusk (National Archives)

it was! Considered grand in any timeframe - with 8 windows out front and between 10-12 rooms - it was likely a testament to Martin's success. Along with the large house, Martin employed a servant by the name of Mary Flannery, further confirming their wealth at the time.

Though well situated with their family house at Grange and Martin's booming shop, he ended up moving his family again in 1902 when Mary Kelly sold the shop. Martin returned to his home town of Elphin where he joined the family bakery. For all their wealth, tragedy was only a few years away. Martin's young wife, Annie Maria, succumbed to the ravages of tuberculosis, dying in mid-summer 1908, aged just 48.

A 157843
 AUSTRALIAN MILITARY FORCES
AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCE.
 Attestation Paper of Persons Enlisted for Service Abroad.
 Name DOYLE James Ausustine
 Unit 38th
 Joined on SEP 2 1916

Questions to be put to the Person Enlisting before Attestation.

1. What is your Name? James Ausustine Doyle
2. In the Parish of St. Mary's is or near the Town of Grange in the County of Down
3. Are you a natural born British Subject or a Naturalised British Subject? (N.B.—If the latter, papers to be shown.) Yes
4. What is your age? 56
5. What is your Trade or Calling? Labourer
6. Are you, or have you been an Apprentice? If so, where, to whom, and for what period? No
7. Are you married? No
8. Who is your next of kin? (Address to be stated.) James Doyle, 18 Leonard's Hosp., London, E.C.
9. Have you ever been convicted by the Civil Power? No
10. Have you ever been discharged from any part of His Majesty's Forces with Ignominy, or as Inefficient and Worthless, or on account of Conviction of Felony, or of a Sentence of Penal Servitude, or have you been dismissed with Disgrace from the Navy? No
11. Do you now belong to, or have you ever served in, His Majesty's Army, the Marines, the Militia, the Militia Reserves, the Territorial Force, Royal Navy, or Colonial Forces? If so, state which, and if not now serving, state cause of discharge. 18 Leonard's Hosp., London, E.C.
12. Have you stated the whole, if any, of your previous Service? No
13. Have you ever been rejected as unfit for His Majesty's Service? If so, on what grounds? No
14. (For married men and widowers with children and widows who are the sole support of widowed mother)—Do you understand that no Separation Allowance will be issued in respect of your service beyond an amount which, together with pay, would reach eight shillings per day? Yes
15. Are you prepared to undergo inoculation against smallpox and enteric fever? Yes

I, James Ausustine Doyle, do solemnly declare that the above answers made by me to the above questions are true, and I am willing and freely voluntarily agree to serve in the Military Forces of the Commonwealth of Australia within or beyond the limits of the Commonwealth.
 And I further agree to allow not less than two-fifths of the pay payable to me from time to time during my service for the support of my wife* and children.
 Date: 18/9/16
 Signature of Person Enlisted: J. A. Doyle

* This clause should be struck out in the case of unmarried men or widowers without children under 25 years of age.
 † Two-fifths need be allotted to the wife, and if there are children three-fifths need be allotted.

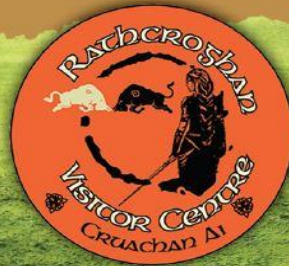
1916 Attestation papers: Australian Imperial Forces – James Ausustine Doyle (Ancestry.com)

By February 1911, Martin took on the task of Executor of the will for his late brother John Doyle. As Executor, he sought and took possession of a house occupied by Kate Keigher in Elphin. Just a few months later, in April, at the time of the 1911 Irish Census, Martin was recorded as 60 years old, still a single widower, and recorded as living in Elphin town with four of his six children: Bartle, Mary Ann (Mary), Patrick, and James. His other two sons, Frederick Owen and Martin John Doyle were not recorded with the family in that year, but it is known that Martin John, known as “John”, emigrated back to Australia around this time, later enlisting

with the Australian Imperial Forces in 1915. Just a year later, in 1916, Martin's youngest son James followed suit. In fact, it appears all of Martin's children had left Ireland – not to return – before his own death. Daughter Mary became a nurse at St. Leonard's Hospital in Shoreditch, Middlesex, England, while youngest son James remained in Australia after fighting for the Australian Imperial Forces. Son Patrick emigrated back to Australia as well but does not appear to have fought in

the army. Middle son, John, died in 1919 at the First Australian General Hospital. From research done so far, it is not yet known what became of Martin's eldest son Frederick, nor of son Bartle who had signed their mother Annie Maria's death certificate.

With his known children remaining abroad, Martin died on his own, at home on Main Street in Elphin. He had been dealing with cancer of the bones (sarcoma) for several months. A Thomas Colgan was the informant. This is just one of many interesting family histories THIS will be highlighting. ♦



BRINGING IRELAND'S PAST AND LEGENDS TO LIFE



Rathcroghan, Cruachan Aí, is known as the Ancient Capital of Connacht, where the festival of Samhain (Halloween) is said to originate. This majestic landscape is the oldest and largest unexcavated Royal Site in Europe, and home of the Iron Age Warrior Queen Medb. Experience Rathcroghan's rich archaeology, mythology and history through our interpretive rooms and expertly guided tours. The Rathcroghan Visitor Centre, the home of our museum, is located in the medieval village of Tulsk, Co. Roscommon.

Rathcroghan Visitor Centre is open all year round, so why not book a place on one of our tours by visiting our website.

www.rathcroghan.ie

Cruachan Aí, Tulsk, Castlerea, Co. Roscommon, Ireland
Phone: 00353 (0)71 9639268



@Rathcroghan



MARY GORGES: THE POET OF CARGINS by Jody Moylan

MARY GORGES is one of Tusk's great unknowns. Born into Cargins House in 1835, the daughter of the former landlord Daniel Kelly



Mary Gorges, 1905

went on to become a writer and poet of some note.



While there is not an over-abundance of biographical information on her life – she never wrote a diary or a memoir – she was published widely in Irish, British and American magazines and newspapers. Mary's husband was John Gorges of Kilbrew, Co. Mayo, who was an adjutant in the Roscommon Militia.

Mary was known primarily for her poetry, which appeared in the esteemed Chambers Edinburgh Journal from around the year 1890. Her poems,

which were idyllic and descriptive, were then picked up by the papers and were 'carried into almost every corner of the world,' according to the Cheltenham Examiner of April 1912. As well as Ireland and England, where her work appeared regularly in papers like the Dublin Evening Post and the Yorkshire Post, a search through the archives finds her poetry being printed in newspapers right across the USA, from Rhode Island and Pennsylvania on the east coast, to states in the American West, like Oregon, Idaho, and Iowa. Books she wrote included 'On Life's Journey; Poems and Ballads' and 'Killarney' – a travel book about a journey around County Kerry in her later years.

Mary was known to be tied to her 'Celtic lineage' and was described by one newspaper as a writer of 'exquisite memorial verse, of pure poetic strain'. She died in Kingstown (Dun Laoghaire) Dublin in December 1911, and was buried in St. Mobhi's Churchyard, Glasnevin. A complete catalogue of her work has yet to be

compiled, and we hope to revisit her story in the not-too-distant future. Mary's poem 'Christmas Memories', which appeared in the Chamber's Journal in December 1898, is here reproduced. ♦



CHRISTMAS MEMORIES

THE DAYS OF LONG AGO.

BESIDE the Christmas fire
There passeth, as in dream,
All sight and sound that touched us,
All shadows on Life's stream
That rusheth now so swiftly
To the tideless ocean's flow.
Oh! the music of its ripple
In the days of long ago!


Beside the Christmas fire
Again we see the light
Of the old dear home, so distant,
And yet so near to-night.
And we were once those children
Who shouted in the snow,
And fed the robin-redbreasts
In the days of long ago.

Beside the Christmas fire
The shadows still pass on,
And childhood's happy valley
And careless heart are gone.
But oh! the hopes that beckon,
The beacon-lights that glow—
Swift foot and heart undaunted
In the days of long ago.

Beside the Christmas fire
We see the path divide;
One step—and no returning
For swelling of the tide.
One tryst—the great Hereafter—
That meeting-place must know,
All lightly as we missed it
In the days of long ago.

Beside the Christmas fire
If sometimes Life may seem
The shadow of a shadow
And a dream within a dream;
Hark to the Christmas anthem
Which comes across the snow!
It links fair life and endless
With the days of long ago.

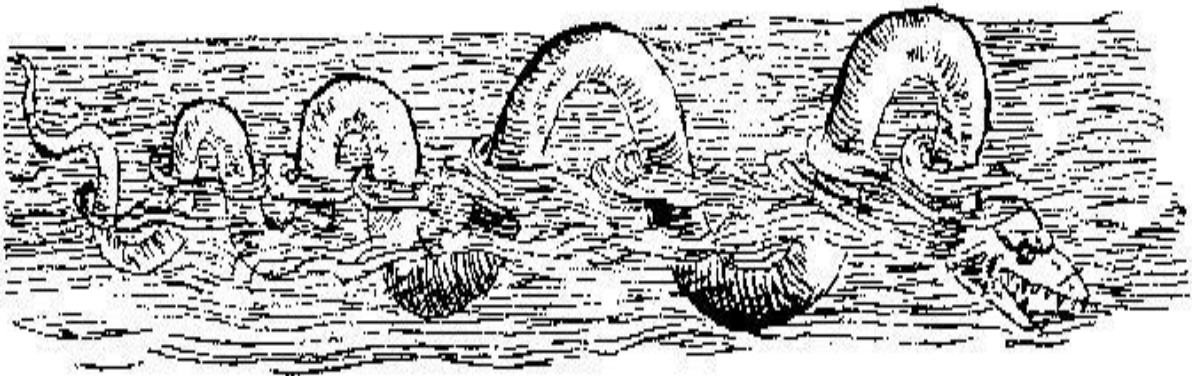
MARY GORGES.



A MODERN TAKE OF A LOCAL MYTH by Mike McCarthy

This story that follows is a brief modern-day synopsis of the Ulster Cycle tale of Táin Bó Fráoch (Cattle Raid of Fráoch), which is set in Rathcroghan (Crúachan) way back in Iron Age Ireland. Although the tale itself is likely several hundred years older, the earliest complete version is contained in the 12th century Lebor Laignech (Book of Leinster), which today is housed in the library of Trinity College Dublin.

Fráoch and the Water Serpent



Fráoch Mac Idaith, of the Connachta was the handsomest warrior in Ériu (Ireland) and Albu (Scotland), acht níba shuthain - but he was not long-lived. The whole land was full of his story and renown, so much so that Findabair, the daughter of Queen Medb fell in love with him simply from hearing these tales. When he learned this, Fráoch went to his mother who was Béfind of the Síd, herself a sister of the goddess Bóand from whom the river Boyne takes its name. His mother gifted him twelve red eared fairy cattle and bedecked him in finery for his journey to Medb's palace at Crúachan Aí in Roscommon.

The appearance of Fráoch and his host at Crúachan was said to be the most splendid in all the reign of Queen Medb and King Ailill, and the inhabitants all

clamoured to gain a glimpse of his glorious arrival. They were made welcome and remained at Crúachan for a full fortnight, with great hunting and sport daily.

One night as he washed in a stream, Fráoch encountered Findabair alone and asked her to elope with him. Despite her infatuation, she refused and told him that he must gain her honestly but as a token of her love she gave him her most prized ring which had been a gift to her from Medb and Ailill.

Fráoch then asked for Findabair's hand, but Ailill demanded an extortionate dowry, plus Fráoch's promise to accompany them on the great Táin Bó Cuailnge (Cattle Raid of Cooley). Fráoch furiously stated that he would not pay such a dowry

'even for Medb herself'

and so in fear of the couple's elopement, Medb and Ailill began to plot Fráoch's downfall.

To commence their ruse, Ailill flattered Fráoch about his prowess in the water, so to please him Fráoch stripped and dived into a nearby pool. Ailill then called for a branch of beautiful rowan berries which overhung the far shore. Fráoch broke a branch off and threw it to Ailill, who thanked him and called for more. At this point their plot came to fruition as the ferocious water serpent that guarded the berries attacked Fráoch.

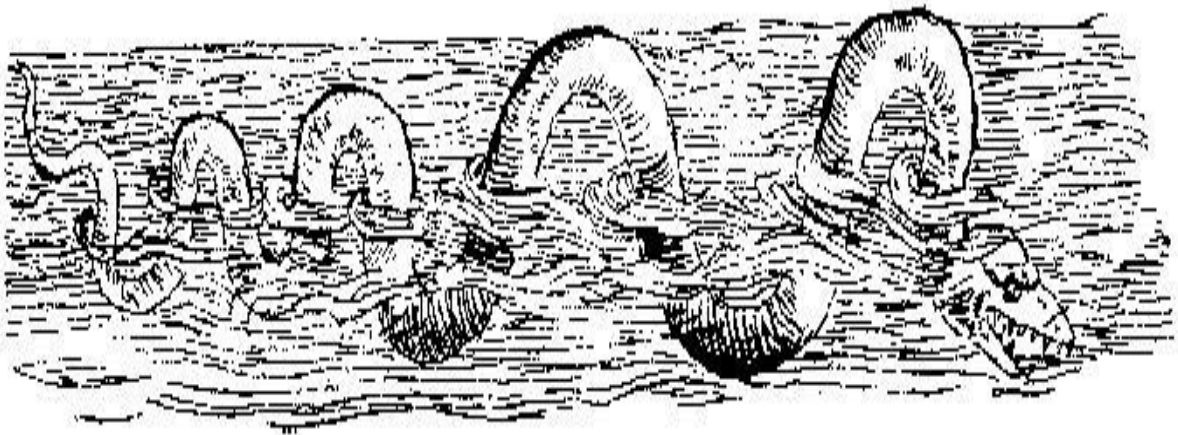
In desperation Fráoch called for a sword, but no one would throw him one, so to save her beloved, Findabair stripped her clothes, grabbed a sword and leapt into the water. Enraged, Ailill cast his five pronged spear at her. This passed through the tresses of her hair, but Fráoch caught it and launched it back at Ailill, tearing

his cloak. In the confusion Fráoch took the sword from Findabair and beheaded the serpent, but he was sorely wounded from the encounter.

To atone for their actions, Medb and Ailill ordered a healing bath to be prepared and while in this bath a host of his mother's people came and bore Fráoch away to the Otherworld via the Cave of Crúachan. He was returned on the next day 'completely healed, without fault or blemish.'

Findabair then declared her love for Fráoch and he was promised her hand in marriage on his return from Cooley, but it was not to be. A prophecy had foretold that Fráoch would die in the water, and this came true, as he was drowned in a ford by Cúchulainn on the Táin, after which the fairy women came once again and claimed his body.

The pool of the serpent is called Dubhlinn Fráoch - Fráoch's Blackpool, the ford where he was drowned is called Áth Fráoch - Fráoch's Ford, and the Fairy Mound of his burial is called Carnfree - Fráoch's Cairn in Co. Roscommon. ♦



TULSK HISTORY SOCIETY

Membership

We hope you have enjoyed the Christmas edition of our newsletter. New members are most welcome to join the Society. If you wish to do so please email us on historytulsk@gmail.com. Annual fees are €30 for adults and €10 for students. We hope you all have a wonderful Christmas and a great 2022!

