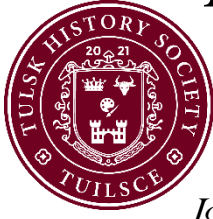


A large, leafy tree in the foreground, with a stone wall and a building in the background.

*TULSK HISTORY
SOCIETY*

Newsletter No. 2

October 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.



The warmest of welcomes to all our readers. It's been a busy few months since our first edition, with more members joining our society and with our long-term project of surveying the parish graveyards getting off to a flying start at Tulske village cemetery. We would like to thank all members and volunteers for coming out on Saturday mornings to take part in the project (some

of whom are pictured here), and with the fortune of good weather and wonderful hospitality of the Rathcroghan Visitor Centre the whole experience thus far has been both enjoyable and rewarding! We are an inclusive society and look forward to more members joining our ranks in the coming months. Contact details for those who wish to join, 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 Noel Sheerin considers the many titles, documents and photos that are already accumulating in our archives at the Cruachain Ai visitor centre, while Mike Lennon casts his eye over the history of Clashaganny National School. Darragh Kelly reports from the recent farm walk that took place in Rathcroghan, and Jody Moylan introduces us to the Droughts of Cargins House; the last of the Protestant Ascendancy to reside at the old estate behind Tulske village. Rounding off October's edition Cathal McCormack and John Higgins combined to work on our cover story of the Tulske cemetery project, and the story of some of the interesting mausoleums that can be found within. We hope you enjoy the read!

THS

TULSK HISTORY SOCIETY ARCHIVES PROJECT by Noel Sheerin

ONE OF the primary roles of our society is to research, gather and store any documents, records, photos, stories and books which help us understand the heritage, archaeology, tradition and past associated with Tusk Parish and its community.

This stored collection of resources is more commonly referred to as ‘archives’ and THS has already accumulated a substantial list of items which are available for inspection by members of the public, both local and otherwise, by pre-arrangement at Rathcroghan Visitor Centre. We are very fortunate to have such an easily accessible and suitable location in which to store the gathered information. To Daniel, Mike and the staff at the Centre we are indeed most thankful for their help and co-operation with this project.

Currently there are approximately 170 different items of reading material which include books, magazines, booklets and maps in addition to birth, marriage and death records going back to 1864. While most items relate to people or places within or adjoining the parish, others are associated with the county, its history and landmarks.

Archives are witnesses to the past and they give us a better understanding of the area in which we live and knowledge of how its people lived and survived in different times.

Some of the materials in the archive are copies of already published works while other items are unique in that they have been personal and testament to an event or experience in the life of the donor, or that of someone in a previous generation. Sometimes such items are hidden somewhere within a household and treasured for safekeeping by one or more family members. The risk though is that with the passage of time the treasure gets forgotten and lost for all time. To eliminate such risk, one should consider donating the item, or a copy, to a trusted archive collector such as Tusk History Society. You can be assured that the item

will be stored safely and made available, if permitted by its donor, for inspection by the public, as with all other items in the archive.

There are already numerous old photos, or copies thereof, which have been made available for inclusion in our collection. These provide visual evidence of the people and places involved in different activities and developments over the decades within the parish of Tusk.

One such artefact donated to the archive by a Steil resident is a collection of very old hand-written letters which luckily were found in the old thatch of a cottage in-ruin some years ago.



The Steil Letters (photo by THS)

Most of the letters are only partially legible but a few are in great condition, considering that they date back to the 1890s. One letter was written by a girl originally from Steil who had emigrated to the USA.

She was writing to ask if 'Bridget' back in Steil would consider coming out to the USA to take up a job as a cook for an American family where a wage of 14 dollars per week was on offer. If Bridget could not cook the letter-writer would train her up sufficiently well to cope when she would arrive. That letter gives us a sense of rural Ireland at the time when emigration was so common and house-keeping opportunities for Irish girls were in plentiful supply in America in particular.

This letter was one of many found in Kilgannon's house in Steil many years after the house was vacated and its thatched roof started to decay. The last occupant of this house was Mary Kilgannon who died in 1967. The stone wall remains of the house are still visible today. Some of the letters were sent in the name of

'Gannon' rather than Kilgannon. It was a regular trend at the time to simplify the original Irish name with a shorter version on arrival in the 'Promised Land'.

From the letters it is also evident that a number of men and women from Steil townland had already emigrated to New Jersey and New York. Some addresses of where these people lived are contained in the letters and it is interesting to see the exact locations and appearance on Google Maps today. There is clearly plenty of scope to carry out further research and investigation from this information. A common theme in all letters was a request to another family member to 'come out as soon as possible' on the Cunard Line.

Sending money home in these letters to help pay for 'the passage' was also strongly evident. 'Bourke' was another name mentioned in some of the letters. The 1901 census shows the names of families still living in Steil at that time. Unfortunately there are no census records available for previous years as they were all destroyed in the Customs House fire during the War of Independence. These records would have helped identify exactly who had emigrated between one census and the next.

Tulsk History Society will be delighted to talk to anyone who might have a story, a photo or document which gives us further knowledge or understanding of our past. THS will respect the wishes of each person in relation to how such items are to be viewed, copied or stored. It is important to stress that such items remain the property of the donor, unless the donor states otherwise. Another important point to note is that no item in the archive can be removed from the Rathcroghan Visitor Centre. At all times the archive contents remain in that building and are only available for pre-arranged viewing. For further information contact Daniel or Mike at 071-9639268. ♦

CLASHAGANNY SCHOOL 1858-1980 by Mike Lennon

CLASHAGANNY TOWNLAND contains just 24 hectares, is located south-east of the crossroads which bears its name, never had a church, police barracks, school or public house in it, yet its name is associated with all of these for reasons which have been lost in the mists of time.

When Clashaganny school was affiliated to the National Education Board in November 1858, the premises was a vacant house owned by Captain Thomas Goff



Modern-day Clashaganny school, now a residence (photo by THS)

on the tenanted land of Thomas Lane in the townland of Sheegeeragh.

It replaced a 'hedge' school on the opposite side of the crossroads in Manor and another one in Rathmore.

The application was initiated 'at the urgent request of his tenants' by Joseph A. Holmes who was

the land agent for Captain Goff. Holmes stated that there were 84 families living within one mile whom he described as farmers, herdsmen and labourers. The application was approved on the basis that Captain Goff would pay the expenses of the building while the parents made a contribution to pay the teachers. It was noted that the local parish priest, Rev. Michael Lennon, offered no objection to the new national school.

The first teacher, James McGovern who had previously taught in Drogheda, began with classes of 35 boys and 30 girls in the thatched one room building with an earthen floor. Patrick Reilly was appointed principal in 1863 and was replaced by Thomas Flanagan in 1892. They were assisted by works mistresses and monitors

who taught the younger children and instructed the girls in sewing and knitting. Joseph Holmes was the designated school manager from the beginning until 1883 when he resigned and Tusk parish priest, Fr. J. J. Kelly, replaced him, heralding the first church involvement in the school. Other teachers who served in Clashaganny included Thomas Flanagan's wife, Margaret, their son, Bertie Flanagan, Mrs Margaret Greenan, Jock Shannon, Mrs Mai Regan, Miss O'Donoghue and Mrs Cunningham.

The first school building was deemed too small and constantly in poor repair. Repairs were carried out from time to time, including in the early 1900s when it was slated, and an extension added as a teacher's residence. While this was happening, classes were held nearby in Egan's upstairs granary in Ballydaly. In 1925 it was decided that a new school was to be built on a site in front of the old one. Contractor, Tim Higgins of Carnalasson and later of Clooneybeirne completed the building in 1926. The retirement of Jock Shannon in 1980 coincided with the closure of the school due to falling attendance. The building was sold in 1981 and converted into a private residence. ♦

FARMING HERITAGE OF RATHCROGHAN THE FOCUS OF RECENT WALK by Darragh Kelly

THE RICH archaeology of the broader Rathcroghan Archaeological Landscape was showcased at a farm walk to coincide with the recent National Heritage Week. Two guided walks, in association with the Farming Rathcroghan EIP-Agri Project, took place at The Mucklaghs and Cloghannagorp areas, just off the N5 Dublin to Westport road. Those in attendance were informed about and shown around some of many national monuments within the Rathcroghan landscape.

The walk also considered ongoing works to preserve the local archaeology as part of the European Innovation Partnership (EIP) Scheme, a collaborative project between custodians of the heritage of the local landscape and local farmers.

Underpinning the initiative are three key areas, namely the preservation of the rich archaeological landscape, the preservation of local water quality and the continued management of farming practices that respect the local environment, while enabling farmers to farm in a viable, environmentally friendly fashion.

The EIP project is one of 23 such schemes nationally. Rathcroghan is the only project with a unique focus on archaeology. Those present were guided by Daniel Curley, Manager of the Rathcroghan Visitor Centre; Petra Kock-Appelgren of the



The walking group at Rathcroghan (Photo by Petra Kock-Appelgren, Project Manager, Farming Rathcroghan EIP)

Farming Rathcroghan EIP and Kate Robb (Field Monument Advisor).

The project started with the participation of eight pilot farmers, increasing to 30 farmers in year three. The Mucklaghs section of the Rathcroghan complex is the most farmed area of the complex and features over 240 national monuments. It is a landscape that is scarred by valleys and troughs and has been an area of multi-period settlement since prehistoric times. However, an exact date for when farming activity began here remains elusive.

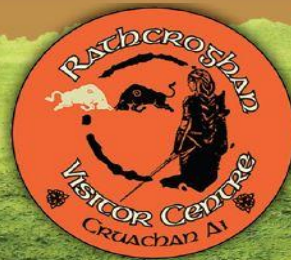
Those who gathered were informed of the presence of ‘a ring ditch’, believed to be a Bronze Age burial ground, while a large banked area approximately 285 metres long and five metres wide was, according to myth, created by the ‘ruttings’ of a wild giant boar!

However, the truth is a little less dramatic as the banks were considered to have formed part of a processional route for Queen Maeve's armies, linking The Mucklaghs with another Royal site: in Tara. A further feature of the walk was the incidence of a number of 'pit like' structures, used for 'wetting and rolling flax', which was one of the chief local economic activities of pre-history.

It is believed that these rare features may also have been used as stone foundations for animal drinking troughs that subsequently collapsed into the adjoining landscape over time.

One of the final features of the walk was possible evidence of a chamber or cairn, which also contained evidence of two courts, further illustrating the immense archaeological significance of Rathcroghan as a Celtic Royal site.

All told, the walks were an opportunity to increase awareness and recognition of the significance of Rathcroghan as a farmed archaeological landscape. Credit is



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



due to Daniel Curley, Kate Robb and Petra Kock-Appelgren for their guidance and instruction on what was a most informative and revealing event. ◇

THE DROUGHTS OF CARGINS HOUSE: AN INTRODUCTION by Jody Moylan

In the spring of 1852, in the immediate aftermath of the Great Famine, George Warburton Drought became the last of the Protestant Ascendancy to take ownership of Tusk village's most immediate landed estate; Cargins House and demesne.

The estate, which had been previously owned by Daniel Kelly, had been in the hands of John Darcy Esq., as tenant, and Reverend John French and John Richard French as trustees, since Kelly's passing in 1849. The old estate was sold in fourteen lots, of which George W. Drought bought one – of the demesne and house. Though the seat of a much-reduced holding, the demesne property was still considerable, with 392 statute acres of land, a porter's lodge and entrance gates, and a 'mansion' that had been renovated by Kelly not long before his death. The



The three-bay, two-storey house of George and Anna Sophia Drought is no longer extant

entire lot cost Drought £8,300. Though he was the new owner from May 1852, Drought would become an absentee landlord until he finally moved in in 1856, after he retired a captain from the British military. Known to be 'lenient in his dealings with locals when he sat on the bench in Tusk court-house [as Justice of the Peace]' Drought had been both a member of the police force and an army officer before he moved to Ireland.

In something of an illustrious military career, he joined the 51st Regiment of Foot (2nd Yorkshire West Riding) in 1844, before serving in New South Wales, Australia, transporting prisoners. Drought then moved on to India (to Madras) in 1846, having been promoted to lieutenant in July 1845. He travelled with his regiment to Burma in 1852 for the Second Anglo-Burmese War, and saw action at Pegu, after which he again climbed rank, to Captain, in 1854. After his move to Tusk in the mid-1850s it was by this title that 'Captain Drought' would popularly become known. While Drought became an established figure in gentrified circles as a landlord, a Justice of the Peace (J.P.) and a horseman of some note it was not for an altogether extended period, as he passed away aged just 56 in 1880. His wife, Anna Sophia Drought (nee Acton), would outlive him by 31 years, until her own death came in 1911 at the age of 81. They had married in 1861 in St Peter's Church of Ireland on Aungier Street in Dublin, then the largest Church of Ireland parish church in the capital (now demolished).

As they were married by George's brothers, Reverend John and Thomas Drought, with Anna Sophia's father (Rev. Thomas Acton) being another man of the cloth, the newlyweds' connection to their faith was distinct. It is notable that one of the couple's most obvious legacies in Tusk was St. George's Church of Ireland chapel in Clashaganny (Manor townland), the ruins of which can still be seen today. Endowed by George and built in 1869, the church acted as 'virtually a private chapel' in the Droughts' lifetimes. It had a congregation of just three when the last service was taken by Canon Wynn Slack in 1957.

On her death in 1911 Anna Sophia bequeathed £15 per annum to the upkeep of St George's, a sum to be forwarded to Glenealy Parish Church in Wicklow should St. George's 'permanently cease to be used for divine service'. It was the same Glenealy churchyard where Anna was finally interred, beside her husband. It was, perhaps, fitting that Anna should be the last of the Ascendancy at Cargins, for she was a direct descendant of a Cromwellian officer - Thomas Acton of Bog Hall, Ballyshannonbeg, County Wicklow. Thomas had arrived in Ireland in the mid-1600s as part of Oliver Cromwell's all-conquering army. Anna's paternal link to the Cromwellian conquest of Ireland gives a fresh perspective of Cargins as a historic place that sits squarely and directly within the larger story of the Anglo-Irish relationship and conflict.

A place with many stories to tell, to which the Drouhts were often central, we look forward to returning again in future newsletters to Cargins House. ♦

TULSK GRAVEYARD PROJECT AND MAUSOLEUMS by John Higgins and Cathal McCormack



The southern end of Tusk graveyard (photo by THS)

As the THS and the Tusk Graveyard Committee are currently undertaking a project to survey the Tusk graveyard we thought it would be appropriate to do an article on this historic Tusk landmark. The project includes recording details such as the location of each plot and headstone, along with documenting the inscription on each headstone. The end goal of this work is to produce both a detailed and informative database, as well as a display board within the graveyard itself, which will have all grave locations matching up with an accompanying map.

At the time of writing our survey of the western side of the graveyard is almost complete and, needless to say, it's been most interesting. The area we've started off with has the oldest graves and plots, with some dating as far back as the eighteenth century. For example, one old leaning headstone that our project has recorded is that of husband-and-wife Thomas and Bridget Kerin, who both died in 1775. Other inscriptions date from the Famine period of 1845-51, while some of the most visually striking features of the graveyard are the mausoleums, of which there are three. A mausoleum is an external free-standing building which acts as a burial chamber for a deceased person or people. Historically mausoleums were, and in some parts still are, built for a deceased leader or family of importance. This is indeed the case for the three mausoleums in the Tulska Graveyard, as they were all constructed for members of eminent local families:

The Grace Mausoleum

The Grace Mausoleum (below) is probably the most striking in Tulska cemetery, and was erected by the nineteenth-century politician and landlord Oliver Dowell John Grace in 1869. The Grace family were large landowners, were Roman



Catholic, and unusually for the time lived on their estate among their tenants. Oliver's father, John Grace, who is interred in Tulska along with O.D.J, served for many years in the 1700s as a captain in the Austrian army before moving back to Mantua House at the request of his own father, who

wished for him to manage the family estate. Oliver Dowell John was a politician who served as a magistrate and grand juror of Roscommon in the 1820s and 30s, and, notably, served as a member of Westminster Parliament for the county between 1847 and 1859.

The Dowell Mausoleum

The inscription on the Dowell mausoleum (pictured) reads as follows: 'Pray for the soul of Coll Luke Dowell and his family'. This would seem to refer to Lucas Dowell of Mantua House, who was recorded as being a colonel in the army of James II (reigned 1685-88) though another 'Luke' Dowell of Mantua was a later, well-educated army colonel who acquired Mantua around the year 1750. Two different plaques on the tomb, though difficult to read, have inscription styles that date from the early 1700s to the nineteenth century. Mantua House passed to the Grace family when Luke Dowell's daughter, Mary, married Oliver Grace. The close proximity of both the Grace and Dowell mausoleums in Tusk is testament to that historic family connection.



The Taaffe Mausoleum



Going by the rooftop inscription, this house-like mausoleum (left) was erected in 1872 and is the resting place of a number of the Taaffe family, who resided at Foxboro House from the 1700s through to the early 1900s. The Taaffes were well know landowners and were land agents for the French family for some time. Patrick Plunkett Taaffe (1811-1873) was a Justice of the Peace (J.P.) and was High Sheriff for County Roscommon in 1871. He was one of the founding members of the inaugural Strokestown show in 1867 and was credited as being the driving force and one of the main contributors to the building of Killina church and presbytery. His son, also Patrick Taaffe (1840-

1915), was the last of the Taaffe family to reside in Foxboro House. A recently uncovered second burial tomb of the Taaffes lies just south-west of the main mausoleum and marks the burial place of Annita Teresa Taaffe who died at the age of seven in 1877. It may be the case that this chamber was built to mark that tragedy, though this is merely speculation.

All in all, along with the many histories being rediscovered the first weeks of our project are proving to be very interesting, and we expect to have the western side of the graveyard survey completed within the next few weeks. The success of the project to date could not have been achieved without the volunteers who have very kindly given their time each Saturday morning to carry out the survey. We would also like to thank the Rathcroghan Visitor Centre who have kindly provided refreshments to the group each Saturday afternoon. ◇

TULSK HISTORY SOCIETY

Membership

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

