

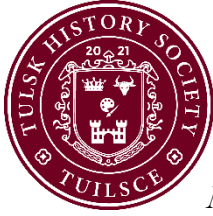
*Cluain Uí Choinn*  
- *Áit Bhreith Percy French*

**CLOONEYQUINN**  
- BIRTHPLACE OF PERCY FRENCH

*TULSK HISTORY*  
*SOCIETY*

*NEWSLETTER No. 1*

*July 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.*

### **WELCOME**

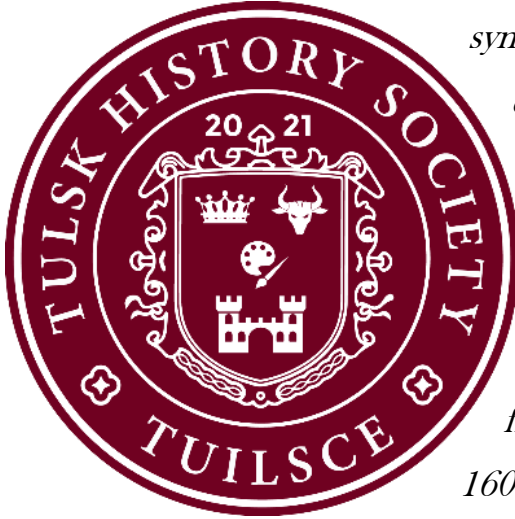
*IT IS WITH great enthusiasm that we welcome our readers to Tulsk History Society's very first newsletter. We hope this will be the first of many, in the Society's aim of celebrating the rich history of the parish. From our initial steps only a few short months ago we have built up an enthusiastic membership and committee. We hope to push on to even better things as the year progresses. As we have mentioned elsewhere (in our constitution and on social media) the aim of the society is to pursue and promote all aspects of local history, be it social, cultural, political or economic, as well as our archaeological heritage, traditions, folklore, arts, crafts and games. The newsletter is our first venture into having our own publication, which will cover the broad range of history that is on our doorsteps. A collection of archival material is already gathering pace with contributions, and we hope our newsletters will form a central part of that archive going forward. We hope you enjoy reading, and please feel free to drop us a line through our email above. Membership details are included at the end.*

*In this month's edition our cover story, by Cathal McCormack, looks at the Cloonyquinn origins of the famous French family, while Mary Kelly takes a deep dive into the Dúchas Folklore Collection, of 1935, and its many contributions from the schools of the parish. Deirdre Jones spoke to former Tulsk Garda Martin Hogan about his 1960s experience of working in the village, and Mike Lennon takes a detailed look at early education with his article on the hedge schools of the parish. The final article, by Jody Moylan, is on the four-paned stained-glass window of AE Child at the Church of St Eithne and Fidelma. First things first however, and we begin with a description of our logo!*

THIS

## OUR LOGO

*THE LOGO and crest of Tusk History Society takes the form of the classic coin design with our society name and that of the Gaelic form of Tusk: 'Tuilsce'. The*



*symbols of crown, bull, artist's easel and castle depicted in the emblazoned crest represent some of the most celebrated aspects of our history. The crown of kings and queens relates to royal ritual and inauguration that took place at both Rathcroghan and Carnfree from prehistory (BC) to late medieval times (c. 1600s AD). The bull depicts the Brown Bull of*

*Cooley, the animal hero of An Táin Bó Cuailnge mythology that was captured by Queen Maeve and brought to Rathcroghan to defeat her husband Ailill's majestic white-horned 'Finnbhennach'.*

*Tusk Castle, built in 1406 and fought over by warring factions of the O'Conor kings in the fifteenth century, also gets its due recognition on our badge. At the centre of the crest the artist's easel represents the cultural history of Tusk parish, from the song-writing and artistic talent of Percy French, to the paintings of Roderic O'Conor, and to lesser-known but significant writers like Tomona's Mary Flanagan and Mary Gorges (nee Kelly) of Cargins House. Our logo represents just a small portion of Tusk parish history, all of which we hope to cover in due course, along with so much more. ♦*

## ARCHIVES

*Tusk History Society is actively looking for material to add to our archives, which are housed at the Rathcroghan Visitor Centre. If you wish to donate old photos, documents, publications and/or written memorabilia associated with Tusk parish history, please contact our archivist on [historytulsk@gmail.com](mailto:historytulsk@gmail.com) ♦*

**THE FRENCH FAMILY ORIGINS AT CLOONEYQUINN by Cathal**

**McCormack**



*CLOONEYQUINN HOUSE, though demolished in the 1960s, has become famous locally due to it having been the childhood home of the world-renowned Percy French. What is less well known about the French family is how they came to arrive at Clooneyquinn, and where they originally lived.*

*Arthur French of Tyrone House Kilcolgan, Co. Galway – who was Mayor of Galway in the 1690s – moved from Galway to Clooneyquinn in the late*

*seventeenth century, when he married his second wife, Sarah Burke Farrell.*

*Sarah had previously been married to Iriel Farrell of Clooneyquinn, whose land had been repossessed after the Williamite Wars (1688-91).*

*It is believed that Sarah already had 12 sons from her first marriage and went on to have 12 more with Arthur French. Arthur purchased the former Farrell lands of Clooneyquinn from the Right Honorable William Connolly of Celbridge House, Co Kildare, who had bought it from the Trustees of Irish Forfeitures. The land was acquired by Arthur French on a 999-year-lease at 8 schillings per acre. Clooneyquinn was originally owned by the O'Quinn family, hence the name Clooneyquinn (Quinn's meadow), with the lands being confiscated from the O'Quinns during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I (reigned from 1558-1603).*

*It is thought that Clooneyquinn House, the well-known ancestral home of the French family, is not where the Frenchs resided when they originally arrived in the area. Local information suggests that when Arthur French arrived from Galway the first French family home was located at the back of where the Conry family now reside in the townland of Clooneyquinn. It is said that a fire destroyed the original house and that afterwards the French family moved into what became known as*



*Clooneyquinn House. One gable end (pictured here) is what remains today from the original French house of the 1600s – located at Conry's.*

*It is clear that the house was a very substantial dwelling, with another attached photo (below) showing the detailed cornerstones. For a seventeenth-century rural dwelling, both the size and architectural detail of the house would suggest that someone very important lived here.*

*There is further evidence that the French family resided here, as there is an old laneway linking the original house directly to Clooneyquinn House. The photo below shows the old lane with trees either side of it (which is marked on the earliest Ordnance Survey maps). While the laneway has not been in use for generations, it follows a direct line from the likely original French house to Clooneyquinn House.*

*Unknown to many, Clooneyquinn House is and was in the townland of Boyanagh, and not Clooneyquinn. The famous residence of Percy was originally supposed to be a shooting lodge for the French family, and was probably built by the Frenchs shortly after their arrival in Clooneyquinn for that use. Information in terms of the architecture and design of Clooneyquinn House remains difficult to*

*obtain, though (as mentioned) it is thought that the house originally started out as a shooting lodge and was extended on several occasions, being more of an ad-hoc build than a pre-planned design.*



### ***Acknowledgements***

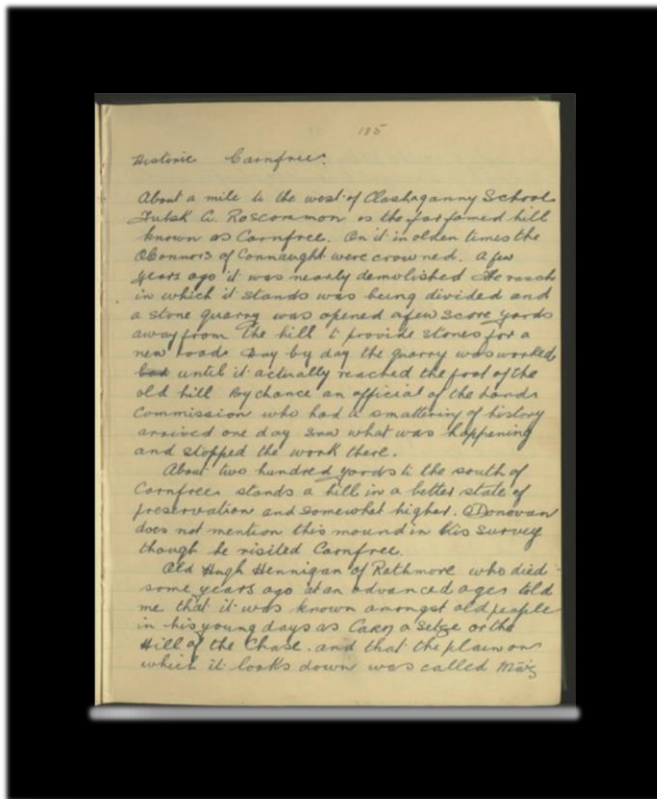
*I would like to thank Michael John Croghan, the Conry family and Mike Lennon for providing me with information for this article. ◇*

### **LOCAL STORIES IN DÚCHAS FOLKLORE COLLECTION by Mary Kelly**

*ONE OF THE great online resources for looking into the history of Tulsk parish is the Dúchas Folklore Collection. It makes available interviews carried out primarily by school children with the elders of the parish between 1935 and 1937. Forming part of a nationwide collection, the Government initiative was set up to gather local history stories, folklore and traditions from right around the country. Primary teachers all over the twenty-six counties were enlisted to help with the enormous project, with the national schools of Caddlebrook (closed 1967), Castleplunkett, Kilmurray (cl. 2018), Clashaganny (cl. 1980), Clooneyquinn and Rathnagly (cl. 1965) all participating. Collections from Rathcroghan (cl. 2016), Cloonfree (cl. 1971) and Coraslira (cl. 1966) \* were also part of the collection, and*

had many tales relating to Tulsk parish. Tulsk N.S. was a notable omission from the gathered material (participation was not compulsory).

Each week from September to June children were given a topic, and sent home to talk to parents, grandparents and neighbours. The topics covered everything from local history, folktales and legends, to crafts, houses, food and farming, games and pastimes, prayers and poems, local customs and cures, riddles and proverbs, as well as field and village names. These stories were written into copybooks and then transcribed into manuscript copies supplied by the Department of Education. They were then collected and stored in the vaults of



the Folklore Department in UCD where they remained for eighty years. In 2013 digitalization commenced and they are all now available to read online.

The children in Caddlebrook school told stories of Lord Caddle and the hunt, fairy and ghost stories from the locality, lots of riddles, and weather lore. St. Patrick and Baslick featured in quite a few of

Kilmurray school-children's stories. They also told interesting tales about their village names. Carnakit, for example, is the burial place of Ceth, a warrior in Queen Maeve's army, who was killed in a battle with the Ulstermen. The principal in Castleplunkett N.S., Seamus O'Donnell, was a noted local historian and the collection reflects this. The Plunketts, The O'Conors of Milltown House, and a cruel 'Mr Knox' all come alive in the stories. We learn about Lady

*Plunkett, who disliked the October fair in the village so much that she had it moved to Ballinasloe, where it is still thriving today. The children talk about vengeful swans on the turlough, and hidden gold in Castleruby. Something to note in the Castleplunkett and Kilmurray collections are stories from Galway and west Roscommon, places the childrens' families had migrated from.*

*The Rathnagly collection seems to have been solely the work of the teacher, Liam McHale. He talked to the old people in the area and recorded their memories. There is a heart-breaking famine story from the village of Drimnagh ('Drimna'); the clachan settlement that was famously decimated during the 'great hunger'. In Clashaganny N.S. it is clear the children entered into the project with great enthusiasm. They told stories of Queen Maeve, enchanted trees at Cloonfree fort, gambler Charlie Hawkes of Briarfield House, kindly Mrs Drought (of Cargins), graverobbers, and weasels with magical powers. There are also lots of stories of everyday life, churning, thatching and flax growing in Ballydaly, for example. Clooneyquinn N.S. also contains lots of information about the local area. There are lists of families, villages, field names, cures and herbal remedies, children's games, wake games, local pisrogues and superstitions; all of which seem to foretell death or misfortune.*

*Rathcroghan children wrote in English and Irish, mostly simple childish stories about lost treasure, trips to fairs, and stories about the travellers who were welcomed by children in all the schools. The tale of the murderous landlord Paul Davis is a real horror story. Like Caddlebrook, riddles and weather lore make up a lot of the Rathcroghan collection. Master Hunt in Cloonfree N.S. begins with a detailed history of his school area from earliest times right up to the 1930s. He includes a lot of his own family story. Here the children concentrated on tales of local traditions, Christmas, Halloween and May-Day celebrations, lots of farming lore, as well as an account of a match made and the subsequent wedding, which make modern weddings seem very dull! Coraslira N.S. has similar stories and information to that of Cloonfree.*



*This is just a brief summary of the work done by the children of parish in the 1930s. It is all available to read on the Dúchas website at [duchas.ie](http://duchas.ie). From the Dúchas webpage click on 'The Schools Collection'. Scroll down to Co. Roscommon and a list of schools will come up. Pick out the school you are interested in. When you are reading admire the beautiful copperplate handwriting of the children. Reading this remarkable collection makes one appreciate that the area we live has a rich and varied history and traditions. Thanks to the schoolchildren and their teachers in the 1930s a lot of our history has been preserved.*

*\*Coraslira was part of Ogulla parish until 1909. ◇*

**INTERVIEW WITH FORMER TULSK GARDA MARTIN HOGAN by**

***Deirdre Jones***

*I WASN'T speaking with Martin Hogan for long before he had figured out that I was from Tulsk. Here he was stationed as a Garda Sergeant from 1967-69, and had known my father's family. Martin is an articulate and philosophical kind of a man with a great sense of fun and real warmth. I asked him to tell me something about his life, and his time in Tulsk. He was born into a big republican family in Hollymount in Co. Mayo in 1934. His father was a commandant in the old IRA, and his great grandfather was a member of the Young Ireland Movement. He grew up in a thatched cottage on a farm surrounded by bogland for 10 miles in all directions, where his family had lived for 300 years.*

*He had always wanted to be a teacher, but he could neither sing nor play a musical instrument, so after spending some time in England he returned to train*

*as a guard in the Phoenix Park. He was first stationed in Cork, and was a sergeant in Roscarberry, living in a brand-new barracks with his wife and young family, when he saw an ad in the Garda magazine offering to swap with a Cork man*



*Outside Tusk barracks in 1968 - Martin with wife Marian holding baby Joseph, and children John and Georgina also pictured. The lady in the centre is a visitor from America*

*working in Tusk. Martin wanted to move closer to home, and took this opportunity. He swapped heat, running water, and a telephone for a barracks that was rundown and basic, but settled in quickly and integrated easily. He gave his predecessor £40 for a television aerial – which he later learned had been acquired for free!*

*I wanted tales of murder and mayhem, but he warned me that ‘the greatest enemy of the Gardai in Tusk was monotony!’ There had been ‘absolutely no crime whatsoever.’ He recalled a few incidents that stuck out in his mind- a forced auction of lands and cattle in*

*Fourmilehouse that had become a flashpoint. The National Farmers’ Association and a large number of protesters had gathered when the auctioneers and solicitors arrived out from Roscommon to conduct the sale. Martin and his deputy drove out from Tusk to assess the scene and concluded this constituted a provocation that was ‘calculated to lead to a breach of the peace.’ They instructed the party to return to Roscommon to conduct their business, because two Gardai couldn’t guarantee their safety.*

*He remembered the tragic death of a postman who fell off his bike hitting his head at the bridge in Tusk. He’d been a ‘temporary postman’ for 42 years, and to add insult to injury, his loyal assistant was not appointed to replace him. As he recalls, it caused anger and protest locally, with people informing the new*

*postman that they'd prefer to pick up their post from the post office than to receive it from him. The controversy lasted for a few weeks.*

*On New Year's morning 1969, his youngest son Joseph, a toddler of 18 months, was found listless in his cot. A doctor came from Strokestown, but nothing could be done and Joseph tragically passed away. The awful heartbreak remains with Martin and his wife to this day. They left Tulsk soon after, moving to Ballaghaderreen. Their family of eleven is their greatest source of joy, and their son Stephen, who has Down's Syndrome and lives in Boyle, is 'the apple of their eye'.*

*Martin served over 28 years, not quite making the 30 years' service of tradition. When Republican hunger-striker Frank Stagg died in 1976, his funeral had developed into an unedifying stand-off between the forces of the state and republican activists in a tense time in Irish politics. Martin, who had shared a desk in primary school with Stagg's younger sister Maureen, attended his family home to sympathise. He was suspended for two-and-a-half years but fought his case in the highest courts and was reinstated and of course, relocated. There were 'no winners' as he says.*

*He retired, bought some land, and established the first mushroom growing business west of the Shannon, which flourished for some time. He also ran for election on a pro-life ticket. He faced many challenges and hardships with courage and resilience, never losing his warmth, and sense of humour, or his sense of himself as a 'western Irish man.' It was a privilege to get to know him. ◇*

### **THE HEDGE SCHOOLS OF TULSK PARISH by Mike Lennon**

*HEDGE SCHOOLS were so-called because many of them were conducted outdoors in hidden places during the 1700s when the Penal Laws were strictly enforced. After 1782 when Catholics were allowed to attend and teach in schools, classes moved indoors to cabins, mud huts, barns or chapels. Reading, writing*

and arithmetic were taught while, depending on the ability of the teacher, classical languages, history and geography were also included. The children were usually taught their prayers and had catechism lessons in addition to the religious instruction which was given by priests on Sundays in the chapels.

There was no state support for Catholic schools, so the parents had to pay fees to the teachers. The quarterly fees varied depending on the subjects taught: reading typically cost two shillings while writing was half a crown. However, fees were often difficult to collect and payment-in-kind with turf, eggs and butter was quite common.

The standard of education was mixed depending on the ability of the teachers and the availability of textbooks which cost far more than most parents could afford. Learning by rote was common. Isaac Weld in his 1830 tour of Roscommon schools reported that “as far as reading, writing and arithmetic went, they were in general very fairly taught; but in a great many schools there was an absolute want of really useful and instructive books adapted to the capacities of those of tender years.”



*A hedge school master and pupils*

A countrywide survey of schools was conducted by clergy of all faiths in 1824 for the Commissioners of Irish Education Inquiry. The published results included the location of the schools, number of pupils, the names and religious denomination of the teachers and a brief description of the schoolhouses. There were 309 schools listed for County Roscommon of which 272 were designated as Catholic. The number and religious denomination of the pupils for the county were 13,262 Catholics, 1,041 Protestant and others while 343 did not specify their religion.

In the area which constitutes the present-day parish of Tulsk, there were 10 schools recorded with 465 pupils on the rolls, 351 males and 114 females. The breakdown of the individual schools is listed in the following table:

<i>Townland</i>	<i>Teacher</i>	<i>Income</i>	<i>Pupils</i>	<i>School House</i>
<i>Legolsey in Baslick parish</i>	<i>James McCarthy</i>	<i>£16</i>	<i>30 males 6 females</i>	<i>A cow house</i>
<i>Castleplunkett</i>	<i>Thomas Dwyer</i>	<i>£17</i>	<i>36 males 9 females</i>	<i>Thatched mud cabin</i>
<i>Castleplunkett</i>	<i>James Satchel</i>	<i>£21</i>	<i>30 males 10 females</i>	<i>Thatched solid mason work cabin</i>
<i>Corliss</i>	<i>James McCarthy</i>	<i>£8</i>	<i>30 males 6 females</i>	<i>A small cabin</i>
<i>Corracreigh</i>	<i>Michael Hanly</i>	<i>£22</i>	<i>45 males 15 females</i>	<i>Country out-cabin</i>
<i>Clooncullane</i>	<i>Roger Cryan</i>	<i>£16</i>	<i>40 males 20 females</i>	<i>Parish chapel 3 COI pupils attending</i>
<i>Rathmore This was the COI parish school where pupils did not pay fees</i>	<i>Michael Flynn</i>	<i>£8</i>	<i>25 males 4 females  All Catholics</i>	<i>A common mud cabin, new house about to be built. Master was paid £5 by the incumbent, £1 by the curate &amp; £2 by Charles Hawkes</i>
<i>Manor</i>	<i>Andrew McGlynn</i>	<i>1/3 to 2/6 per pupil per quarter</i>	<i>42 males 18 females</i>	<i>A common small cabin</i>
<i>Flaska</i>	<i>Patrick Kedian</i>	<i>£25</i>	<i>37 Males 17 females</i>	<i>Chapel which is a mere hovel</i>
<i>Tulsk</i>	<i>Edward Neary</i>	<i>£20</i>	<i>36 males 9 females</i>	<i>A waste house lent by one of the inhabitants</i>

*The townland of Legolsey in Baslick parish is no longer known. The school in Clooncullane was held in the old parish chapel, opposite the former Simpson's shop, which was destroyed during the night of the Big Wind in January 1839. It is interesting to note that three Protestant children were attending there while only Catholics were in Rathmore school which was the official Church of Ireland school in the area. The old Killina chapel at Flaska was also being used as a school up to the mid-1850s.*

*It is estimated that less than 40% of school age children actually attended, while boys greatly outnumbered girls, as is evident from the Tulsk returns. However, numbers attending varied greatly according to the seasons with boys in particular being kept at home in spring to help with sowing crops and in autumn for the harvesting.*

*These and other schools around the parish came and went up to the late 1850s when Tusk belatedly began to adopt the National System of Education which was introduced in 1831. The Catholic hierarchy and clergy had been split on the system. Archbishop John McHale of Tuam led the opposition and had the support of the Tusk pastor, Fr. Michael Lennon. Others such as Fr. John Boyd of Cloonfinlough & Lissonuffly actively affiliated National Schools as early as 1841 while in Tusk parish it was the local landlords who finally filed applications to join the system almost twenty years later. The stories of these applications will feature in future editions of this e-newsletter. ◇*



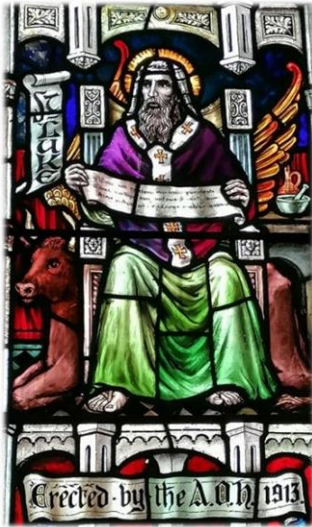
**THE FOUR-PANED STAINED-GLASS WINDOW OF AE CHILD** by Jody Moylan

*ONE OF THE* great artistic objects of Tusk parish is the four-paned stained-glass window of AE Child at the Tusk Church of St Eithne and Fidelma. Installed in Easter 1914, and placed in the widow frame behind the alter, the four-light widow was created by Child at the studio of Sarah Purser in Pembroke Street, Dublin. It was acquired by the church as a gift from four donors.

*Each of the four – Annie Tighe, in memory of her parents Martin and Margaret; Matthew Flanagan of Tomona; the Tusk branch of the Ancient Order of Hibernians (AOH); Rev. P. Shanagher, Parish Priest of Ahascragh, in memory of his parents Michael and Bridget – have an individually dedicated pane, each with their details inscribed. The Dublin studio that the work was carried out in was known as the ‘Tower of Glass’ for its prolific output, and was used to display*

*the window for public viewing some months before it was transported to Tulsk for its unveiling on Sunday 14 April (Easter Sunday in 1914).*

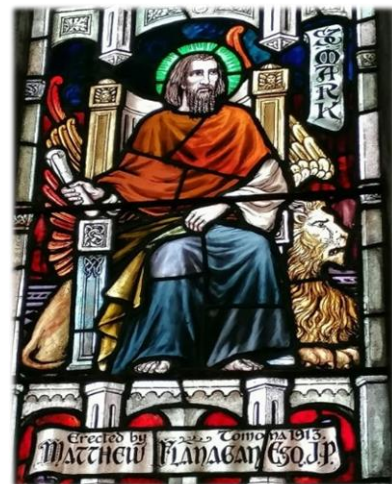
*Acknowledging the other windows that had been created at Purser's studio*



*the national newspaper The Freeman's Journal reported that 'few pieces of stained-glass work can compare to the latest achievement by [Child]'. The window, at 12 foot wide by 15 foot high, depicts different scenes from the life of Christ. Viewing the window from left to right, the Baptism is depicted on the first, with the 'Ecce Homo' second (or Pontius Pilate presenting the about-to-be crucified Jesus to an irate crowd). The Easter Resurrection lights up the third pane, with a sunlit background*

*contrasting with a grey foreground; the earthly and eternal dimensions being part of a well-thought-out piece. The fourth window depicts the Ascension of Christ, with the upstretched arms of the Apostles a contrast with the venom of the crowd in 'Ecce Homo'. All windows are balanced with one of the four evangelists at the bottom of each. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, together with their respective symbols of winged man, winged lion, winged ox, and eagle, and accompanying angels, finish the piece.*

*Alfred Ernest Child was one of the very greatest stained-glass practitioners in the country by 1914. Born in London in 1875 he studied his craft under Christopher Whall, who has become known as a key figure in the modern history of stained glass. After moving to Dublin in 1901, Child taught at the Dublin Metropolitan School of Art, where he tutored some of the greats of Irish stained-glass design, including Harry Clarke and Evie Hone. Besides Tulsk, Child created windows for Loughrea Cathedral, the Unitarian Church Dublin, the Honan*



*Chapel at University College Cork, and also at Brophy College Chapel in Phoenix, Arizona. Though it is a work of great religious significance, the four-glass window at Tusk church is also a historic part of Irish glass design, and one of the finest pieces of art in the parish.*

*\*Thanks to Fr John Gannon for his great help on this article ◇*

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## *TULSK HISTORY SOCIETY*

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### *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](mailto:historytulsk@gmail.com). Annual fees are €30 for adults and €10 for students. We hope you are all having a wonderful summer!*

