

# Tulsk History Society



*Newsletter No. 8*

*March 2023*

**Tulsk History Society**      [historytulsk@gmail.com](mailto:historytulsk@gmail.com)



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*Lowry, Marty Brady, Mary Conry, Thomas A. Burke, Michael Jones.*

Welcome to the latest edition of our e-newsletter. The most immediate news at the time of writing has been our table quiz, which was a great success on the night of Saturday 4 March last. There was a good turnout, with lots of prizes and spot prizes given out, and it was a most enjoyable night. It has become a nice event on our calendar, and we hope to continue it on an annual basis. A short report follows in these pages. Another event we hope to get off the ground is our first day-trip, which is due to take place this June with an excursion to the great north Roscommon heritage sites of Arigna Mining Experience and King House in Boyle. The field trip is open to anyone who wishes to join us. All you need to do us contact us on 086 323 2321 for further details. Our Ogulla Shrine refurbishment has now almost reached its Phase One conclusion, with much work already carried out at the site. Our picture diary this month focuses on the project to date.

*In this month's edition we again cover a number of topics. Mike Lennon looks at the rich history of Flaska National School, while Jody Moylan writes about the now forgotten Rathcroghan Steeplechase - an event that was once one of the most important racing fixtures in the region. Our series on the wells of the parish continues with a piece on Cloonmurray well. Marese Feeney has a fascinating report on birthplaces of parish residents from the 1901 and 1911 censuses, while Manus Tiernan takes us on a guided tour through the layered and fascinating history of Dillonsgrove. Melissa Keigher concludes our feature articles this issue with an insightful look at the life of a great former native - Peter Shanagher. Included at the end is the last two issues of our paper bulletin - The Tulsk Morning Howl; digitally reproduced for anyone who missed them as well as our overseas subscribers. Details on how to join the society follow at the end. Happy reading!*

THS

**Flaska National School 1853-1905 by Mike Lennon**

ACCORDING to an 1824 survey of education in Ireland, a hedge school was operating in the old Killina chapel located on the border of Flaska and Lisnagard townlands. The teacher was Patrick Kedian and the chapel was described as being *'in very poor state of repair.'* This and other Killina area hedge schools were supported by the landlord, Christopher French (father of Percy). When the Board of Education sponsored National School system was introduced in 1831, French was initially opposed to it. Reluctantly, by 1849, he agreed to seek a grant from the Board to buy books and pay teachers for Killina National School and decided to do the same for Flaska School in 1853. However, state funding was not permitted if schools were located on church grounds. To overcome this obstacle, French decided to move the Flaska school to a building in Camogue townland. The name stone was removed from Flaska chapel and embedded in the wall of the Camogue building, which explains why it continued to be known as Flaska National School.

The thatched school at Camogue was located on Timothy Rorke's 93 acre holding, which he held as a tenant of Christopher French. In applying for the grant



*Former Flaska School in Camogue as it is today*

support, French put himself forward as the patron while the parish priest of Elphin was listed as the manager. This level of cooperation between the Catholic clerical manager and the Protestant landlord patron was a feature of the school system in Killina. The school officially opened in

September 1853 with Catherine Toolan as principal but she left a year later and was replaced by Annie McGauran.

In October 1856 Christopher French applied to the Board of Education for a salary for Patrick Kelly who he had been appointed to teach in Flaska evening school. It was also held in Camogue but in a separate house, and catered for about 40 adult pupils whose average age was 19. As well as providing the education the young people had missed out on, another purpose stated by French was to keep young people *'from immoral amusements, bad company and illegal associations.'*

Anne Conlon was sanctioned as a monitor in 1857. In December 1862, an application was submitted to appoint John McGauran - the 51 year old father of

the principal Annie McGauran – as an assistant teacher. He had previously taught in Cootehall and was recommended on the basis of being ‘*very useful in especially teaching arithmetic to the boys.*’ The inspector added that the entrance to the teacher’s apartment through the school should be closed.

When Christopher French applied in March 1874 to have Mary Greene appointed as an assistant teacher, the principal, Annie McGauran had married Thomas Feeney and Rev. Thomas Ryan was the manager following the transfer of the Killina townlands from Elphin to Tulsk parish. Mary Greene married John Hand of Clooneyquinn in 1883 and continued teaching until September 1886, when she resigned due to ill health. Her application for a gratuity was refused because the inspector would not confirm that she was permanently incapacitated, even though her doctor stated she was suffering from ‘*chronic dry pleurisy and tubular pneumonia.*’ Mary Hand died at the age of 38 in December 1894.

By 1878, Fr. Ryan had left Tulsk and Fr. John J Kelly was nominated to succeed him as school manager by Christopher French. The next managerial change took place in 1888 when Fr. Kelly was transferred to Athlone and Fr. John O’Brien became parish priest of Tulsk.

The Flaska principal, Mrs Annie Feeney, reached the compulsory retirement age in May 1892. She and her family were living in the teacher’s residence and would be required to leave the house when she finished teaching. The patron and manager both asked for and were granted two extensions for Mrs Feeney to continue teaching until July 1894 when a new house was built on her husband’s land in Camogue. She was succeeded by Mrs Mary Fallon who left in June 1897 when Kate Waldron was appointed to replace her.

Christopher French applied for a £50 loan in August 1894 to build a porch, raise and slate the roof and board the floor. The request was turned down after the inspector reported that the school was unfit for improvement as the walls were barely perpendicular and would not support a slated roof. Following Christopher’s death in May 1897, his son, Major Arthur J French was recognised as the patron.

In December 1904, the Education Board decided that funding for Flaska School would only be continued for as long as Kate Waldron remained teaching there. Fr. O’Brien tried unsuccessfully to get the Board to reconsider on the basis of increased attendance by the children of new settlers following the division of the 600 acre French estate by the Congested Districts Board. With just 23 children on the rolls, Flaska School was struck off the National School register and closed on

25 September 1905 when Kate Waldron left for a teaching post in Claremorris and was not replaced. A campaign to reopen the school was started in January 1906 by 24 named local parents who sent a petition, signed by Thomas Collins of Camogue, to Dublin stating that *'if you fail to redress the great grievance from which we suffer, we shall be obliged to have recourse to Parliament.'* Following a negative report from the local inspector, the Board of Education informed Collins that Flaska School *'is not required in view of the proximity of other National Schools in the locality.'*

The closure of the school set off a dispute as to the legal ownership of the land on which the school and teacher's residence stood, which led to litigation between Major French and his former tenant, Timothy Rorke. The residence, built by Christopher French in 1877, was situated on land on which Timothy Rorke was the tenant. The building was funded by a loan of £220 from the Board of Works to French on the basis that he was the owner of the land. He made periodic repayments from the Board of Education funding for the school. The balance outstanding on the loan in 1905 was £69-15-0. French had reduced Rorke's annual rent by £3 as an allowance for the three roods on which the school and residence were situated not being used by him. In 1900, Timothy Rorke purchased the freehold of his holding with a loan provided under the Ashbourne Land Act. When the school closed in 1905, Major French sought possession of the school plot, claiming it was not included in Rorke's purchase. At Boyle Quarter Sessions in January 1906, the judge ruled the disputed plot was included in Rorke's 1900 purchase. Major French subsequently repaid the balance of the loan. The teacher's residence is currently the home of John and Patricia Brady. ◇


Footnote - I wish to acknowledge Michael Stroker's 'History of Education in Killina' in the 2004 Killina National School publication and Mary Gormley's Tusk Parish in Historic Maigh Ai among the sources for the information in this article. Killina National School will feature in the next edition of the E-Newsletter.

## THE GREAT RATHCROGHAN STEEPLECHASE by Jody Moylan

*'It will be seen, by reference to our advertising columns, that the celebrated Rathcroghan Steeple Chase will come off on the 18<sup>th</sup> of April next. Need we add that the lovers of the Turf will be highly delighted. These races have scarcely been equalled, but certainly never surpassed in Ireland'* from the *Roscommon Journal and Western Impartial Reporter*, March 1844.

THOUGH Rathcroghan is a place of much deserved fame for its great prehistoric and medieval significance, it has a pedigree in the history of horseracing in the region that has all but been forgotten. In the nineteenth century, for example, 'the plains of Rathcroghan' as they were oft referred in local newspapers, played an important part in the history of horse racing in County Roscommon. Indeed (after *not* a great deal of research) it is possible to ascertain that some twenty years before the modern Roscommon racecourse was opened, a famous county steeplechase took place at Rathcroghan on St Patrick's Day in 1813, when a six-mile chase was held. This has been noted on the website [greyhoundderby.com](http://greyhoundderby.com), which is an impressive record of the history of British and Irish racecourses.

While it is difficult to pin down exact records when relying on sporadic newspaper reports from the early 1800s, the amount of times 'Rathcroghan steeplechase' appears in archive search results is significant. Though the above quoted (celebratory) newspaper passage from 1844, is almost certainly for a one-off comeback event to be held in the month of April, what is noticeable (by earlier articles) is that St Patrick's Day - or the immediate period around it - was the time of year reserved for Rathcroghan's big equine event. For instance, advertised as early as November of 1827, the Rathcroghan meet notification for 18th March the following year was carried in the *Dublin Evening Post* (20/11/1827). The meet was to be a sweepstakes of '10 sovereigns' and open to mares and geldings of three to six years old, and of a weight of nine to twelve stones. A short window of registration was left open until early



**RATHCROGHAN**  
**STEEPLE CHASE**  
Monday, April 17th 1837,

**RATHCROGHAN STAKES** of £5 each P. P., to which the Gentlemen of the County Roscommon who are anxious to encourage the breeding of First Rate Hunters will add £50 for all Hunters, Race Horses that never started for a King's Plate admitted. Weight for age.

3 Years Old	10st.	0lb.
4 Years Old	11	2
5 Years Old	11	10
6 Years Old and Aged,	12	0

To run 3 miles across the Country over a course to be laid out by the Stewards or those they may appoint; no wall to exceed four-and-a-half feet high.

The winner of one Leap Race of any kind previous to the 1st of March 1837, to carry 41ls extra; Horses that never previous to the 1st of March started for a Race of any kind exceeding £10 in value to be allowed 7lb.

December 1827, with details and funds being taken by Mr James McGann, clerk of the course, in Tusk.

A few months later, after the race was held, a descriptive report was given in the *Dublin Morning Register* newspaper (which we published in the most recent *Tusk Morning Howl*). Notable is the importance it gives to the race meeting, with the reporter stating the steeplechase ‘excited so much interest, not only among the sporting circles in this country, but [also] at the other side of the water’.

The steeplechase was a five-miler run with the obstacles of several five-foot walls and ditches. Not surprisingly, this was an elite sport in its day, and the winner on that Tuesday, 18 March 1828, was none other than Captain Charles French of Frenchpark House, whose grey horse, Tiger, finished in first place. Mr Ferguson ‘a north country gentleman’ put up a good challenge until he was thrown from his mare, with the final stages being contested by Tiger and Highflyer (the latter mounted by another French – likely Jeffrey – of Tomona House).

The following year, in November 1829, *The Dublin Evening Post* carried an advertisement for the steeplechase for the following St Patrick’s Day – that of Wednesday 17 March 1830. On that occasion the ‘stewarts’ listed were Jeffrey French, FitzStephen French and Oliver Dowell John Grace of Mantua House. Grace, as we know, is interred in the impressive Grace mausoleum in Tusk cemetery.

The steeplechase is again recorded as taking place at Rathcroghan in the years 1837 (advertisement on previous page), 1844 and 1845 (while the possibility remains that it took place on other years). It seems to be the case, judging by the records, that after the Famine years (1845-51) the race no longer took place at Rathcroghan, with Boyle, Elphin and Roscommon town holding steeplechases after 1850.

The importance of the Rathcroghan steeplechase is, ultimately, a fitting addition to a rich history of horseracing, jumping and breeding in Tusk parish, where local landlords French, Taffe, Balfe, Drought, Crofton, Flynn and Grace (amongst others) were eminent. It is a topic that has much more information to give up.

However, we know that the rural landscape, on the eve of the Famine, was very much a contested space, and a who’s who from the 1844 report of the Rathcroghan races is worth reflecting on:

*‘Amongst the sporting characters on the course we observed Lord Clonbrock and Crofton; Messrs Magan, Balfe, Hawkes, Harkan, French, O’Connor, Nolans, Hudsons, Kelly, Irwin, Barlow, George, Fetherston; Officers of the 4<sup>th</sup> Dragoon Guards; Rifle Brigade; 11<sup>th</sup> and 65<sup>th</sup> Regiments.’* ♦

## WELLS OF THE PARISH #3: CLOONEYBEIRNE

Co-ordinates: 53°44'20"N 8°11'27"W

Townland: Cloonmurray

Condition 2023: Good. Spring working



Not far off the N61 Roscommon to Tusk road lies this beautifully constructed, centuries-old holy well. Known as both St Patrick's and (more commonly) St Bridget's Well it is connected to a nice old myth that Mary Gormley has previously written about in *Tusk Parish in Historic Maigh Ai*.

The tale goes something like this: After a woman had washed her clothes in the well it overflowed just as she was about to go home. She could not escape the rising water and was drowned. People afterwards claimed that the unfortunate lady appeared as a ghost in the locality, continuing to wash her clothes as a phantom at Clooneybeirne Lake.

Ordinary fish were never to be seen again in the lake, and it was reported that a giant 'monstrous' fish, about twenty foot long, was seen splashing in the water. On moonlit nights, a fairy horse was said to have been seen leaving the lakeside, and trotting towards the nearby fairy fort.

Adjacent to the well is a grass-covered penitential cairn, though as Michael Moore noted in his 2010 survey of the site – there is no evidence of veneration. Somewhat unknown, this well is a fine example of early craftsmanship when it comes to stonework. ◇



**An insight into the birthplaces of residents in Ogulla & Tulsk based on the 1901 & 1911 Censuses by Marese Feeney**

ACCORDING TO the 1901 census, most of the population in Tulsk District Electoral Division (DED) were born in Co. Roscommon (96%). Less than 2% were born in neighbouring counties such as Galway (12 people), Mayo (1 person) and Sligo (1 person). One percent of the population were born in other parts of Ireland with one person recorded as having been born in each of the following counties: Kings Co (Offaly), Waterford, Cavan, Meath, Monaghan, Tipperary, Wexford and Dublin.

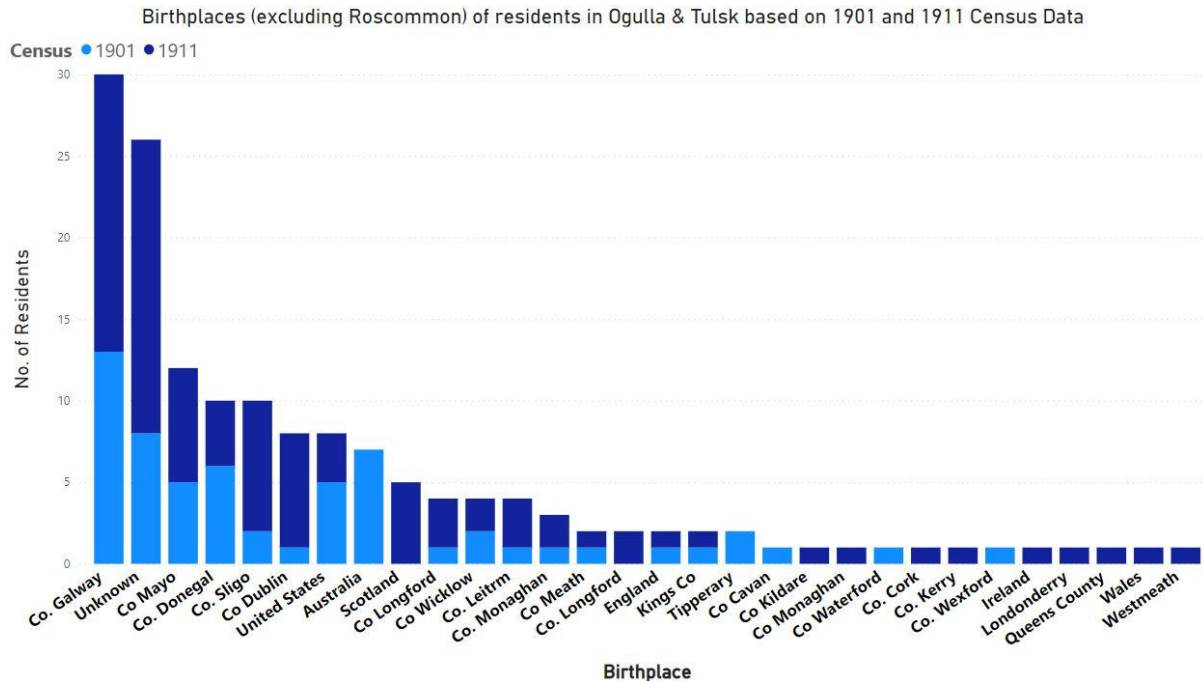
There was a record of six individuals from the Finan household in Grange having been born in Co. Donegal. Looking at the census, there's an indication of movement by the family over the years. For example, Michael Finan, 'Head of the Family', was born in Roscommon, his wife, Kate E was born in Meath whilst six of their seven children were born in Co. Donegal - John Thos (15), William Jas (13), Christina M (10), Patrick Joseph (seven), Michael Francis (five), Martin Henry (three). Their youngest, Kate Elizabeth, who was one at the time of the census, was born in Co. Roscommon.

The remaining 1% was made up of nine individuals - seven of whom were born in Australia and two in America. The Doyle siblings, also from Grange, were born to an Irish father, Martin Doyle (a shopkeeper) and an Australian mother, Anne. As outlined by Melissa L. Keigher in her article on Martin Doyle (Newsletter No. 3), he had been living in Australia just before the 1901 census was taken. Martin brought his family back to his hometown of Tulsk where he would take over the tenancy of his brother-in-law John Lavin's shop.

May Dufficy (3) of Corragarve, was born in New York City. May is recorded on the 1901 census as being the niece of John Brennan (50) and is noted as being a farmer's daughter. May White (4) of Nadnaveagh, the granddaughter of Daniel Nugent (70), was born in America but had returned to Ireland. However, no other Whites appear on the 1901 census in the Nugent household.

By 1911, there had been changes in the birthplaces of people in Tulsk DED. The percentage of people born in Co. Roscommon had decreased slightly to 91%, while the percentage of people born in Co. Mayo & Co. Galway had risen to 3%. The percentage of people born within other parts of Ireland rose to 4%. There are four records of individuals born in America and Scotland. William McGinley (17) from Steill ('Steil' today) was noted as having been born in Scotland, and was a 'Farm Servant' in the Greene household. Catherine Delaney (9) and Anne Roan (18), both from Lisnaneane, were recorded in 1911 as having been born in

America. May White (13) who appeared in the 1901 census appears again in the townland of Nadnaveagh, although her name has been recorded as Mary.



## OGULLA

According to the 1901 census, there were 331 people living in Ogulla. Of these, 94% were born in Co. Roscommon, with 4% recorded as having a birthplace in counties Mayo, Wicklow, Longford, Galway Tipperary, Leitrim and Sligo. Susan Smyth (39), a housekeeper at Cargins Demesne, was recorded in 1901 as having been born in England, though by the 1911 her birthplace had been amended to Wales. There are three records of America as a birthplace for Ogulla DED in 1901 – Lizze(17), Mary (16) and Michael McGarry(20). However, their siblings Ann (11), Matt (9) and Patrick (7) were all born in Roscommon. One possibility is that their parents, Matthew (48) and Mary Ann (46), had emigrated to America sometime before 1881 and returned by 1890, when Ann was born.

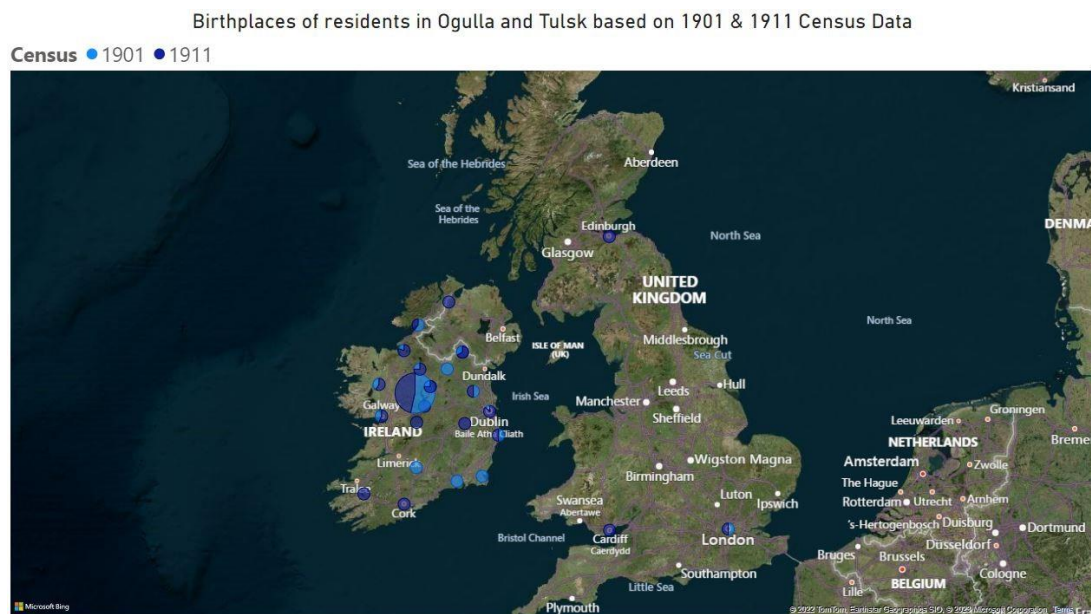
There are four individuals in 1901 with no birthplace recorded – Anne Greene (40) from Ogulla, Mary Cuttle (9) from Ballybeg, Hugh Croghan (90) from Carrowgarve, and Anne Feeney (60) from Drimnagh. However, by 1911 the latter was recorded as ‘Annie Feeney’ and was listed as a retired National School teacher born in Co. Roscommon. According to the 1901 census, the aforementioned Hugh Croghan lived with his son Thomas and his daughter-in-law Sarah(29) and children Hugh (5) and Sarah(1). However, by 1911 Hugh and his son had sadly passed away with Sarah Croghan then recorded as a widow.

By 1911 the population of Ogulla had decreased slightly, to 316 people. Of these, 290 were born in Roscommon, 12 in other parts of Ireland and four in

Scotland. Michael Feeney (15) was born in Scotland and was one of two servants in the household of John O'Connor (46) of Rathkeva (Rathcave). Bridget Goulding (19), the other servant, was born in Westmeath.

Three other individuals born in Scotland were recorded in the Rathnaglye area - William Rennie (17), George Maden (20) and John Doherty (18). Rennie worked on the farm of John Cunningham(40), Mr. Maden worked on the farm of Patrick Rogers (54) and Mr. Doherty worked on the farm of Michael Healy (45) and his wife Bridget (60).

In 1911, nine individuals were recorded with no birthplace. Eight of these were from the Filan family, Kilree. John Filan (48), 'Head of the Family', is recorded with a birthplace of Roscommon. No birthplace is recorded for his wife Sarah (39) or their six children. John's brother Patrick (58) remained likewise unrecorded. Stephen Dockery (53) of Rathnaglye, a National School teacher and 'Head of the Family' had likewise no birthplace recorded, yet all other entries for his household do. It is possible that this was just an incorrect recording on the census.



The census data provides a fascinating glimpse into the birthplaces of the people who lived in Tusk and Ogulla during the early 20th century. While most residents were Irish born, there were a number of people born in other countries such as Scotland, Wales, England, America and Australia. This diversity of birthplaces reflects the history and migration patterns of the time, and provides a fascinating insight into the lives of those who called Ogulla and Tusk their home over a century ago. ◇

**DILLONSGROVE** by Manus Tiernan

AS AN old saying goes, 'Research is formalized curiosity'. This certainly was the case for me on a late summer's evening in 1976 when my neighbour, the late Dermot Flanagan of Rusheen, had finished raking hay with his Massey Ferguson 50 and we were leaning against the warm bonnet front of the tractor looking down across the village of Castleplunkett and into the turlough basin below. I commented on how still and quiet everything looked. Dermot replied in his drole manner 'Listen young man soak up the experience, time waits for no man just like Dillonsgrove.' This was the first time I had heard the word Dillonsgrove been associated with the locality. I was curious to find out more. Where was Dillonsgrove? Who lived there? What time period did it exist? Through research the following was uncovered.

**Dillon Family:**

The story begins with Henry Dillon who came to Ireland in 1185 with Prince John, later to become King John of England. For his services to King Henry, he was granted lands in Westmeath and Longford. As the centuries passed the Dillons became Barons of Drumraney in County Westmeath and became a powerful landed and political family, with branches in the midlands and west of Ireland. From this family a number of branches were established including Viscounts Dillon of Costello-Gallen in County Mayo, Lords of Clonbrock in Galway, Earls of County Roscommon in Loughglynn, and Baronets of Lismullen in County Meath.

James Dillon, Lord of Drumraney, represented Roscommon in the Parliament of King Charles I, was Captain of an independent troop and was killed in 1649 fighting in the Confederate Wars for the Royalists in his 34<sup>th</sup> year. When Cromwell arrived in Ireland in 1649, he set about submitting the country to his rule with severe consequences. All the lands of Drumraney were confiscated. The widow of James Dillon was the grand daughter to Sir John Davis, Cromwell's receiver-general in Connaught, and through him in 1652 obtained for her - and her male heirs in lieu of her dowry - 3572 acres of land in Roscommon.

James Dillon's widow had four sons. The two eldest died soldiering on the continent and left no issue. The third son, William, through laziness and neglect lost the majority of lands in Roscommon. The only portion of the estates that were saved was assigned to Richard - the fourth son by his widowed mother. The lands were located in the parish of Baslick, namely the townlands of Carrowgarry (later called Milltown), Ardeevin, Ballaghabaw, Slevin, Mullygollan, and portions of Toberelva, and totalled approximately 1,800 acres. Interestingly, Richard - the

fourth and last son of James Dillon – was the last Lord of Drumraney as the title became extinct after his death as Cromwell had confiscated the Drumraney lands.

Gerard Dillon, the eldest son of Richard Dillon by his second marriage, inherited Dillonsgrove. Gerard married firstly Catherine – a daughter of James Nugent of Dysart in County Westmeath – with whom he had no surviving issue. He married secondly Honora, daughter of Pierce Alyward of Ballinagar. Honora died in 1743 after giving birth to her fourth child and left issue, Richard, Aylward, Mary, and Margaret.

James (Augustus) O’Kelly of the O’Kelly clan in Galway, writing under the pseudonym of Skeffington Gibbons in his memoirs entitled *The Recollections of Skeffington Gibbon from 1796 to 1829* had this to say about Gerard Dillon:

*‘He was a most singular character in many respects, and by no means deficient in the great pride of his illustrious ancestors. Mr. Dillon intended to build a great castle at Dillonsgrove, and after he had raised it to the first story, he took a second thought that he could not finish it without incumbering his property. The work was there-fore suspended, and never afterwards finished.’*

Gibbons continues by commenting on his marriage:

*‘And in drawing up the marriage-settlement he told the lawyer that he was determined to settle a handsome dowry on Mrs. Dillon, and that he had a large tract of ground separate from his other estates in Ireland, called Inchegore, the whole of which, and the stock thereon, should be made over to his dear and beloved wife, should she survive him.*

*The deed was drawn up accordingly, and his servant was called up ... to sign it.*

*‘Patt,’ said Mr. Dillon.*

*‘I have settled the Cape, the Rock, and the whole of the estate of Inchegore on that lovely woman [pointing to the lady].’*

*‘O Lord, Master,’ said the good-natured Patrick O’Muldom, ‘by my soul you have beggared the son and heir.’ This caused a great laugh in the drawing-room. Inchegore was nothing but about half an acre of a barren rock, in the middle of a Avide callow, that was in general inundated in the winter months, and formed into a beautiful lake in the vicinity of Dillonsgrove, which covered upwards of 200 acres, and which, in the spring of the year vanished into some deep gulfs and quarry-holes. The stock to which Mr. Gerald Dillon referred was a large clutch of croaking gulls that took possession of this rock during those months that man or beast could not approach them. Tho’ this was to be the dowry of Mrs. Dillon, she did not live*

*to enjoy it, as she died a few days after giving birth to her second daughter. A more amiable woman could not live, nor a more affectionate husband than Gerald Dillon. Although he was a young man when his wife died, he never married afterwards and it was more out of raillery he got this deed drawn up (as the lady's parents seemed so particular), than any intention of depriving his wife of that maintenance her rank and fortune entitled her to, as he idolized her – and his love met a return, in the many virtues of the best of wives.'*

Gerard Dillon himself died in 1751 and was buried in Toberelva cemetery next to the Dillonsgrove estate. Gerard's grave is within the walls of the church ruin of Toberelva. The headstone bears an image of the crucifixion. The mother of Jesus is standing to his right and another woman to his left. Rays of light can be observed above his head. Underneath the crucifixion is an image of the Dillon family crest. The flat slab underneath the head stone covering the grave bears the inscription:



*Grave of Gerard Dillon at Toberelva*

*Pray for ye soul of Gerard Dillon of Dillonsgrove, who departed this life on Sixth day of November 1751, aged [remainder illegible]-*

### **Gerard Dillon's Children:**

Richard and Aylward Dillon, the two sons of Gerard Dillon, both died without issue and Dillonsgrove fell to the moiety of their two sisters Mary and Margaret Dillon. Mary married Thomas O'Connor, son of Owen O'Connor of Corristoona near Ballintubber (County Roscommon). Margaret married an O'Brien.

Skeffington Gibbons in his memoirs relates the following: '*Gerard Dillon had two daughters, the eldest married Thomas O'Connor of Corristoona, the second a Mr. O'Brien. On their father's death the estate was divided between the brothers in laws. The moiety of Dillonsgrove (Slevin, Toberelva, Mollygollan,) came to O'Brien and the part called Carrowgarry (Carrowgarry, Ardeevin, Ballaghabaw) near Castleplunkett to O'Connor on which the said gentleman built the handsome mansion known as Milton House.'*

The following extract from ‘The O’Connors of Ballintubber’ records, ‘as *Milltown* then belonged to Aylward John Dillon, but which on his death reverted to Thomas O’Connor and Terence O’Brien jointly as being married to his sisters. Mary and Margaret Dillon, and it was by division of his property by deed of partition dated 13<sup>th</sup> July 1759 that Thomas O’Connor then got 18A,1R,10P of East Carrowgarry and West Carrowgarry, otherwise Milltown containing 280A,2R,2P with a house and improvements.’

Hart, in his book *Irish Pedigree* relates that ‘Mary married Thomas O’Connor in 1749 and Margaret married her first cousin Thomas Dillon of Kilbane, in Queens County [who was] the nephew of Gerard Dillon of Dillonsgrove’ This contradicts Gibbons and the O’Connors of Ballintubber version, which states Margaret married a certain Terence O’Brien.

Thomas O’Connor and his wife Mary had converted to the Protestantism in 1753 and this allowed him to become High Sheriff of the county and also to obtain the rest of the Dillonsgrove estate as Margaret, the younger sister, and her husband remained Catholics. Thus Dillonsgrove in its entirety was consumed into the O’Connor Estate of Milltown.

**Location:**

It is not certain exactly where the Dillonsgrove House was located as all trace was gone by 1800. But some clues remain that can lead us to the possible location of the country mansion. Taylor & Skinner road maps of Ireland - published in 1778



- shows a ruin (marked in red) below that of the castle of the Plunkett family. Could this be the castle Gerard Dillon never finished according to Skeffington Gibbons? Possibly. Gibbons also relates in his memoirs, the death of Thomas O’Connor’s wife Mary Dillon: ‘Mrs O’Connor after giving birth to two sons and two daughters paid the debt we must all do sooner or later and was interred

*in the vault of her noble ancestors in the beautiful ruin of Tobereloe a short distance from the mansion of her birth.*’ This Tobereloe had to be Toberelva which would suggest the mansion must have been in Slevin - a townland adjacent to Toberelva. A final piece of evidence is the fact that in the 1960s Milo Flanagan, ploughing family lands in Slevin (straddling the main road from Tulsk to Castleplunkett), came upon the foundations of a large house which suggested it was

more than two stories in height. It can be assumed that this was the possible location of Dillonsgrove House. The name Dillonsgrove has been long lost to antiquity but it reigned for over one hundred years from 1652 to 1753 as the home of the Dillons of Dillonsgrove. ◇

### SUCCESSFUL QUIZ NIGHT

The History Society enjoyed a most successful Quiz Night at O'Connor's Bar in Tusk on 4 March last, when 12 tables took part on the night. Eight rounds of ten questions, including

dingbats, was the format. There was a three-way tie for first between three tables at the end of it.

Michelle Moylan, Bernie Higgins, and Kieran Moylan represented each team in a playoff final



*Patrons out in force!*

question. Bernie took the honours for his team, coming closest to the correct number with the question – how many keys does a standard piano have in total? Lots of prizes were given out, the majority of which were raffle prizes donated very generously by members of the public, and members of THS alike. THS wishes to thank everyone for turning out and donating generously to raffle tickets, as well as O'Connor's for providing ample amount of finger food. All the history society members who worked so hard to make the night a success deserve much praise, and hopefully we can do it all again next year! ◇



## **THE LIFE OF PROMINENT NATIVE PETER SHANAGHER (1864-1940)**

*by Melissa L. Keigher*

IN HIS own words, Peter Shanagher described himself as ‘an old and tried Nationalist since my very early boyhood.’ He was heavily active in land rights and County Councils with the goal of securing a better future for his community.

One time president of the Tulske branch of the Ancient Order of Hibernian’s (AOH), United Irish League (UIL), Co-councillor of the Farmer’s Union, and elected to both the Strokestown and Castleplunket District Councils, Peter Shanagher led a full and active life.

Born in the spring of 1864, he was the eldest known son of Patrick Shanagher Snr and Margaret Murray of Ardakeena. He was the descendant of an established Tulske family, many who are buried at Tulske cemetery, and many who were involved in religious life.

In fact, three of Peter’s own sisters were nuns – Sr Rose of the Convent of Perpetual Adoration, Sr Evangelist of the Franciscan Convent, and Sr Blandina of the Mercy Convent. Peter was also a cousin of the esteemed Rev. Patrick J. Shanagher, parish priest of Ballyforan, Four Roads, Dysart and lastly Ahascragh, Galway (the Reverend’s brother was John Shanagher of nearby Ardakillen).

Peter grew up living with his widowed mother Margaret in Ardkeena, as per the 1901 Irish Census. They resided in what was known as a second class house: consisting of walls made of stone, brick or concrete and a thatched roof. Neighbours at that time were the Durkin and Mally families.

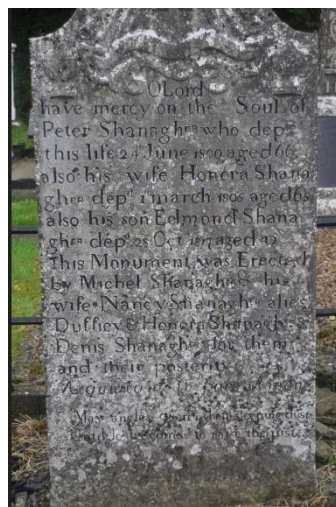
When Peter was the well-established age of 43, he married Catherine ‘Kate’ Doyle at St. Peter’s Church Athlone in the autumn of 1907. He would go on to win a seat on the Castleplunket council and have his first child, daughter Margaret Mary, just a year later.

By the time of the 1911 census, Peter was still living with his mother Margaret as well as his new wife Kate and their two daughters – Mary Margaret and Patricia Mary. Sadly, by the time of his mother’s death in 1919, Peter and his wife had lost two children to influenza, younger son Peter Brendan in 1917 aged just 9 months,

to bronchitis, and eldest child Mary Margaret, aged 10, to influenza. The Saturday, 30 November 1918 edition of the *Roscommon Messenger* published the sympathies of the Tusk UIL branch members towards their then ‘respected president’ on the loss of his little daughter.

While no obituary has been located for Peter’s passing in 1940 to heart troubles, a decade later his prominent involvement in agrarian activism was remembered when his sister, Sr Mary F. Rose Shanagher’s 1953 obituary stated he had ‘played a prominent part.’

This is just one of many interesting family histories THS will be highlighting. ◇



**Pictures from Tusk Cemetery**  
*Left - Family of Peter Shanagher & wife Catherine Doyle*  
*Right - Ancient Shanagher family, ancestors of Peter Shanagher. Photos ©Michael Kearney.*

## TULSK HISTORY SOCIETY ARCHIVES



Winners of the 2022 Digital  
Repository of Ireland Community  
Archive Scheme

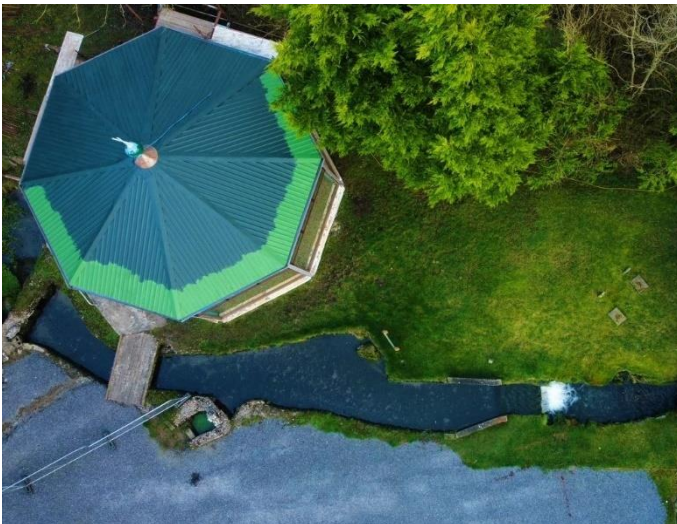
Qualified in document  
preservation

THS are seeking to preserve our  
parish history with your help

All historic documents and  
photographs are sought to add to  
our collection

CONTACT: [historytulsk@gmail.com](mailto:historytulsk@gmail.com)

**PICTURE DIARY:** The Ogulla Project so far



As of March 2023, phase one of our Ogulla project is making great headway, thanks to all the hands that have been on deck over the winter months. New chippings have been added to the forecourt, the chapel has been re-guttered and painting is well underway. The back wall of the chapel has also been rebuilt. As initial finances – thanks to the Roscommon County Council and Boyle Municipal District Scheme 2022 – are now close to being exhausted we hope that this year will see more fundraising success so we can move on to phase two. Our aim is to bring back the shrine to its former glory. So far so good!

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# *TULSK HISTORY SOCIETY*

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## *Membership*

*We hope you have enjoyed the March 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](mailto:historytulsk@gmail.com). Annual fees are €30 for adults and €10 for students. We hope you all have a wonderful spring!*





# THE TULSK MORNING HOWL

November 2022

Bulletin No. 2

TULSK in the early 1900s was a place still struggling since the Great Famine of the 1840s. As well as poverty and emigration, land ownership issues were one of the biggest problems locally. Our first article this edition is a report of the large outdoor rally that took place in the village in October 1903, when the leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party, John Redmond, came to address the people on this very topic. Redmond had been one of the leaders that had just pushed through the Wyndham Land Act of 1903, where a government subsidy would aid the transfer of estate land to the local tenantry. Joining Redmond in Tulska were two highly esteemed local politicians—John P. Hayden of Roscommon town, and Castle-rea's John Fitzgibbon. Also in the edition this month is a Kilmurry school inclusion in the Duchas Folklore Collection from the 1930s, on Toberelva cemetery. We also remember Mary Flanagan, of Tomona House, whose journey into Russia at the outbreak of World War One is the stuff of epic adventure. THS news is covered overleaf.

## SOME TRIVIA

**February 1882** – Two hundred herds gathered at Tulska to form The Shepherds Association.

**September 1921** – A syndicate was floated to restart the old woolen mills at Ogulla, Tulska.

**May 1933** – J. J. Conway arrived by aeroplane from South Africa at the residence of his father at Shrove, Tulska. He owned Mavis gold mines near Buluwayo, Rhodesia.

**Mr John Redmond at Tulska**—from *The Drogheda Independent*, Oct. 24, 1903.

On Saturday week Mr John Redmond, M P, who was accompanied by Mr John P Hayden, M P, arrived at Roscommon, in order to attend the public meeting which took place at Tulska on Sunday.

Mr Redmond, Mr Hayden, and a large party drove over from Roscommon to Tulska where a platform had been erected in the public street, around which a crowd numbering over three thousand people representing all the surrounding districts had assembled. Mr Redmond was met by Mr John Fitzgibbon, of Castle-rea, who was amongst those presenting addresses. The addresses all congratulated Mr Redmond and the Parliamentary Party on their services, particularly in connection with the Land Act. Mr John Fitzgibbon, who presided, welcomed Mr Redmond.

Resolutions were then adopted declaring that nothing short of the National Parliament in College Green would satisfy the aspirations of the Irish people, expressing confidence in the Irish Party, urging the Government to consider the Catholic University question, expressing the hope that plots of land would be given to the labourers under the coming bill, &c.

Mr Redmond, who was received with cheers, expressed gratitude for the addresses and for the cordial welcome he had received from the people of Roscommon. The prospects of Ireland were today brighter than they had been for many a long day—(cheers) - and their Parliamentary representatives had come back to them, not only with the reputation of having defeated coercion, but carrying in their hand the greatest measure of land reform ever passed for Ireland in the English Parliament (cheers). He hoped he did not exaggerate the value of the great Land Bill that had been passed. He was sanguine of the future of Ireland and the working of this Land Bill, and his belief was that with common prudence on the part of the people, and with common sense and with common honesty on the part of the landlords, a few short years would see the end of the land question. Now, think for a moment what that meant.

*The Land Problem in Connaught.*  
The place where he was speaking

that day reminded him that there were two land questions in Ireland entirely distinct and different. There was a land question in Connaught and the land question in the rest of Ireland, and they were in their essence entirely different. As he drove through the plains of Roscommon to that meeting, he could not help thinking what a desolate scene it was. It seemed as if the whole country had been devastated by a hostile army, or subjected to one of those convulsions of nature which in other lands had come and destroyed the land, or driven away the people themselves. He was there in the centre of a district where there were 30 or 40 thousand acres of the best land practically without habitation. He believed that in the richest part of this land there were only about eight human habitations to the square mile, and as the land decreased in value the habitations increased, until the edge of the bogs or mountains the people were huddled together in conditions which destroyed the possibility of living in the greater part of Ireland. The ownership of land was essential for national progress and prosperity, the ownership by the people who tilled it. The ownership of the land was essential for the development of industry and agriculture, and for the well-being and comfort and happiness of the people (hear, hear). [continued]

Mr John P Hayden, M P, spoke of the unity of the Parliamentary Party, condemned the reopening of an eviction campaign in Roscommon, and urged the strengthening of the National Organisation.

Other speakers followed, and the meeting concluded.

## The new mart

A £26,000 mart with covered accommodation for 700 cattle will be blessed at Tulska (Co. Roscommon) to-day by Very Rev. J. Kilmartin, C.P. The opening sale will be on Tuesday.

(above from *The Sunday Independent*, 22 November 1959)

**A Kilmurry School story from the Schools' Folklore Collection 1937-39**

**Toberailbe**

*Toberailbe (Tubberelva) is the name of a graveyard about four miles from Kilmurry school. A saint by the name of Ailbe lived there at one time. One day as the saint was praying, she became very thirsty and could not get water to drink. She started to pray for water and before she had finished, a fountain sprang up beside her. The well is there yet. It is from the well and Ailbe the graveyard got its name. (Told by Martin Healy, Rathfudagh on 11 May 1938)*



(above: the well at Tubberelva today)

The 95 stories submitted by Kilmurry School are available at [www.duchas.ie/en/cbes/4798695](http://www.duchas.ie/en/cbes/4798695)

**REMEMBERING: MARY CARMELO FLANAGAN (1890-1960)**

**Mary Flanagan** of Tomona House, was the daughter of landlord and sheep-breeder Matthew Flanagan and his wife Esmey. Mary's life became notable in her twenties when she travelled to eastern Europe in 1914, on an epic voyage of discovery that she later documented in the magazine *The Irish World* (in December 1921). She began her travels, as bad luck would have it, when World War One was just about to break out. Teaching English as a foreign language in the private homes of the wealthy in Poland, Mary had to move on quickly as German troops advanced eastwards. She found lodgings in the Russian

'oblast' of Smolensk, living and teaching there for some time before spending time in the Ukrainian city of Kharkiv. She witnessed the harvest in that 'great corn country' before she returned to Russia in 1916, living with the Spinoff family in the regional city of Orenburg. Mary's travels were most notable for their timing: she



***A Russian uprising poster from 1917***

not only experienced the 'Great War' first-hand, but was present in Russia for the Russian Revolution, when the age-old tsarist rule was overthrown by a peasant and socialist uprising. While it may have been an exciting moment in her life, and she witnessed much violence in Moscow, Mary began to struggle financially as work died up. The struggles mentioned in her written account suggests the Flanagans were of modest means in comparison with some of the 'rich' fellow-travellers who she came in contact with (and who helped her out greatly). After the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, which ended Russia's participation in WWI, arrangements were made which allowed foreigners to leave the Russian capital. Mary took her chance and boarded a Trans-Siberian railway train which took her all the way to the eastern city of Vladivostok. Mary's eventful three-week journey took her through the cities of Omsk, Irkutsk and Chita, as well as being held up in a Siberian forest by rev-

olutionaries. She was threatened on several occasions, but made it to the eastern city in one piece. Her voyage from the port of Vladivostok aboard a British cruiser took her first to the Philippines—a journey of some two weeks—before boarding an American liner bound for San Francisco. Mary would eventually move back to Ireland in 1921, when she began work as a stenographer. After Tomona House was sold in 1940 following the death of her mother, Mary moved to Harold's Cross in Dublin. She passed away in February 1960, aged 70, and was buried in Glasnevin Cemetery. Watch out for her original *Irish World* diary, which we will serialise in our future e-newsletters. Her adventures in eastern Europe at a turning point in history mark her out, undoubtedly, as one of Tulsks's most notable former residents.

**TULSK HISTORY SOCIETY NEWS**

This coming Christmas THS will reproduce, in printed format, all six of our e-newsletters to date, bound together in a single publication. This venture comes thanks to the many generous sponsors who are contributing to the printing costs, all of whom will be listed and/or advertised. The magazine will undoubtedly make for a nice stocking filler for the festive season, will be available locally, and will be released approximately the 1st December.

Work on Ogulla Shrine has commenced—a THS led project that has been granted funding through the Roscommon County Council and Boyle Municipal District Scheme 2022. While in the early stages, the ground work so far has made a marked improvement on the site.

Keep your eyes out for the Roscommon Herald Christmas Special magazine. THS have contributed a lengthy article on local World War Two hero, Michael Rogers, who fought on the beaches of Normandy on D-Day 1944.

[historytulsks@gmail.com](mailto:historytulsks@gmail.com)



# THE TULSK MORNING HOWL

February 2023

Bulletin No. 3

TULSK has been the birthplace of many celebrated people. Known famously as 'the birthplace of Percy French' (our bulletin title is from his early writing life) the parish has also been home to others who may not be as well remembered, but who made a significant mark in their own lifetime. One such person was Fr Thomas Lavin, who was the Tulske Parish Priest from 1920 until his death in 1939. His interesting obituary from the *Sligo Champion* is reprinted here, word-for-word (which includes the title).

Also in this edition is an old report of the Rathcroghan Steeplechase from 1828. The annual race, though completely forgotten today, was one of the earliest formal race meets in the county, and was an important chapter in the history of racing in the province. Some old advertisements, trivia, and Tulske History Society news make up the rest of the current edition.

**Machinery Auction**

ON SATURDAY, 4th JUNE, 1977

Clearance Sale of over  
25 Tractors

10 Balers, 17 Mowers (some Rotary)  
13 Hayturners (all makes)  
Buck-rakes, Loaders, Fork Lifts, Etc.

AT CLASHAGANNY CROSS, TULSK  
(On Main Boyle-Roscommon Rd)

M. J. CROGHAN, Auctioneer & Valuer  
Tulsk, Co. Roscommon

**Obituary—The Late Very Rev. Fr. Lavin. THE BELOVED PASTOR OF TULSK—from *The Sligo Champion*, 18 November 1939.**

The unexpected death of the beloved pastor of Tulske Father Tom Lavin, universally known as 'Father Tom,' occurred at the Co. Hospital, Roscommon on November 4th. The sad news of his death caused widespread sorrow. He was a member of a well known Co. Roscommon family that gave many members to the service of God. He was nephew of the late Rev. Pat Lavin., Drumcliffe, Sligo; uncle of the late Fr. 'Mick' Lavin, C.C., Frenchpark, and Fr. M.J. Kilbride, C.C., Sooeey, and Fr. T. J. Lavin, St. Joseph's, Derby. He was born in Cloonfour (parish of Castle-rea) in June 1865, began his classical studies in the famous 'Latin' School at Castle-rea, which he afterwards continued in Summerhill College, Sligo, and Maynooth. He was one of the leading classical scholars of his generation. An able theologian, ordained in Maynooth College in 1892, he was appointed curate in St. Mary's, Sligo, and afterwards served in the Mission in Strokestown, Ballyleague, Ballinaheglis and Rooskey, from whence he was appointed P.P. of Tulske in June, 1920.

He was a gifted orator, an outstanding preacher and a man of indomitable courage, profound humility and charity. He took a prominent part in every national movement, was a keen supporter of the Gaelic League and G.A.A., and was responsible for the building and reconstruction

of schools and churches in the various parishes in which he worked.

He was always anxious about the welfare of the people, untiring in his assistance to relieve the poor and needy. Devoted to the sick and dying, he was a most zealous priest in his duties.

We now pray that God will give him his eternal reward.

The funeral left the Sacred Heart Church, Roscommon, on Sunday, followed by over two hundred cars for Tulske, where the remains were received by Dean Cummins, Roscommon; Very Rev. Canon Currid, P.P., V.F. Strokestown; Very Rev M. O'Beirne, P.P., Four-Mile House. Rev. Fr. Gilmartin, C.C., Killina; Rev. T. Mahon, C.C., Kiltewan; Rev. Fr. Rhatigan, C.C., Kilmurry; Rev. J.P. Prendergast, C.C., Aghamore, Ballyhaunis; Rev. M J. Kilbride, C.C., Sooeey.

The thousands of Catholics as well as other denominations who attended both funerals testify to the esteem in which he was held.

Most Rev. Dr. Doorly, Bishop of Elphin, presided at the Office of Requiem Mass on Monday. The celebrant of the Mass was Rev. Fr. Kilbride, C.C., Sooeey (nephew); deacon, Rev. Fr. Gilmartin, C.C., Killina; sub-deacon, Rev. Fr. Lavin, C.C., Derby (nephew); master of ceremonies, Rev. Fr. Rhatigan, C.C., Kilmurry.

[continues with list of priests present, chief mourners including family, and messages of sympathy, from whom included the then Fine Gael leader W.T. Cosgrave, Dublin Broadcasting Authorities, (Dr McCarthy of St. Patrick's College Maynooth, and the Redemptorist Fathers, Athenry].

**SPORTING INTELLIGENCE**—from *The Dublin Morning Register*, 28 March, 1828.

The great steeple chase over the Rathcroghan course, Co. Roscommon, which excited so much interest, not only among the sporting circles in this country but at the other side of the water, was gallantly won, on Tuesday, the 18<sup>th</sup> instant, by Captain Charles French's (of French Park) gray horse, Tiger. Seven and twenty horses were entered for this race, at ten sovereigns each, to which Mr. French, the respected M.P. for Roscommon, added thirty; of those, however, thirteen only started. The distance was five miles, and several five feet walls and large ditches were jumped in the running. At the first wall all the horses baulked except Mr. French's (of Tuomona) mare, who thereby got a considerable lead; she, however, was speedily run into by Mr. Hearne's Cigar, and two of the French Park horses. The fifth last wall was taken in gallant style by Mr. French the member's horse Highflyer, who was closely followed by Mr. Ferguson's (a north country gentleman) horse, and Captain French's horse, Tiger. The fourth last wall was taken by Tiger and Highflyer abreast - Mr. Ferguson, who followed them, was thrown. The remainder of the race was beautifully contested by Tiger and Highflyer, running almost neck and neck together, and Tiger won by four lengths only. The next horses placed were Mr. French's Sportsman, Cigar, and Cliffe, Mr. Fitzstephen French's horse. The remaining eight horses came in (if at all) "longo intervallo". Although the weather was unfavorable, the concourse of persons was immense. Several sporting

characters from Melton Mewbray attended, as well as many officers and others from Dublin and other parts of the kingdom. All were highly pleased with the sport. The hospitible mansion of French Park was filled with company, as well as all the other gentlemen's houses for miles around. Great sport was expected on Ewednesday, when the lovers of fox-hunting were to receive a treat from the justly-celebrated French Park hounds.

**SOME TRIVIA**

**November 1835**—Tulsk Junction—The Grand Atlantic Railway Company published plans for a railway from Dublin to Blacksod Bay via Mullingar, Longford, Tulsk, Foxford, Ballina and Crossmolina, with a separate branch from Tulsk to Galway via Tuam. This plan was heavily advertised in both local and national newspapers.

**January 1852**—The birthday of Percy French has just passed. Born on 24 January 1852, this year marked the 169th year since his birth at Cloonyquin House.

**April 1908**—Patrick Flynn sought information about his uncle, George Flynn, who left Tulsk in 1873 and was last heard of living in Brooklyn, New York in 1902.

**TULSK HISTORY SOCIETY NEWS**

Though selling fast our newsletter collection—which came out at Christmas—is still available to buy off the society, or at local outlets; Tulsk Laundry & Drycleaners and Seamus Conway Butchers. We extend our thanks for their support.

The THS-led renovation project at Ogulla Shrine has seen much progress recently. After being granted funding through the Roscommon County Council and Boyle Municipal District Scheme 2022 we are happy to announce that it has already been put to good use. Work will continue in the coming months.

Upcoming for the Society will be our second AGM, due to take place in April. Our first e-newsletter of 2023 which will be circulated in mid-March. If you'd like to be added to the mailing list, or would like to join the society, you can do by sending us an email at [historytulsk@gmail.com](mailto:historytulsk@gmail.com)

**TULSK CO-OPERATIVE  
LIVESTOCK MART LTD.**

**TULSK, CO. ROSCOMMON**

**CATTLE SALES**

Every Saturday for Bullocks, Heifers, Cows and Weanlings  
Special Charollet and Simmental Sales on Sat, 15th Sept.  
This sale will be run in conjunction with the usual  
Saturday sales. Charollet and Simmental Cattle sold first.  
Large number of stock on offer on Saturday. All cattle  
30 days tested. Transport available if required.  
Phone Tulsk 12.

Above from *The Drogheda Independent*, 7th September 1979