

TULSK HISTORY SOCIETY

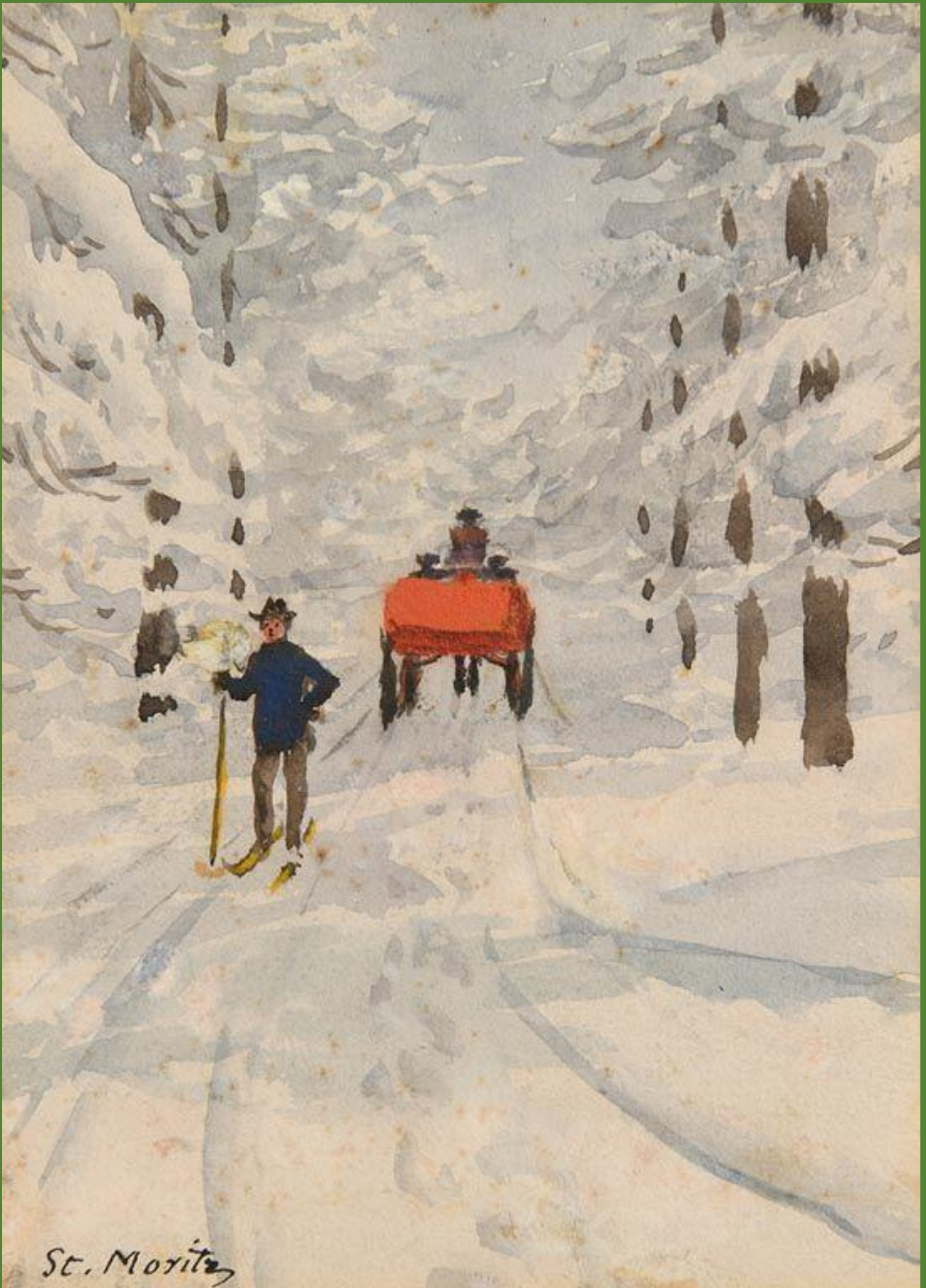


Christmas Edition

Newsletter No. 11

December 2023

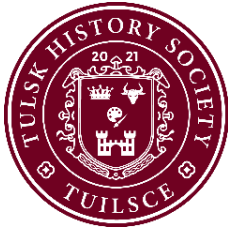




Snow scene at St Moritz

by Percy French

Tulsk History Society historytulsk@gmail.com



Members: John Higgins (Chair), Marese Feeney (Secretary) Mike Lennon (Assistant Secretary/Fundraising Officer), Catherine McGuire, Eileen Beirne (Archivist), Noel Sheerin (Treasurer), Jim Dockery, Jody Moylan (PRO), Therese Hanley, Joe Donoghue, Manus Tiernan, Edward Flanagan, Milo Lowry, Marty Brady, Mary Conry, Michael Jones.

A very happy Christmas to all our readers. It's been another quick year and this, believe it or not, is our third Christmas newsletter. They show no signs of stopping and it's all thanks to our wonderful contributors who have again done a great job on some great articles this month. Otherwise 'in the field' we've been keeping ourselves busy – our main outdoor project(s) of 2023 has been the continuation of the cemetery surveys (more of which anon). We also got Phase One of our Ogulla Shrine restoration project completed and it was rounded off with a nice Mass last June. We hope to continue in the same vein in 2024 and have a few jobs in mind that we'd like to see done! Last March we had our second annual table quiz and we'll be having another next March, so stay tuned for that. In the meantime, enjoy our December newsletter, perhaps with a cup of tea (or Christmas punch) and a mince pie!

In this issue Mike Lennon continues his very interesting series on the history of the parish schools by looking at Rathcroghan NS. Melissa L. Keigher follows with another fine piece on family histories, and presents part-two of her enquiry into the life of Peter McDermott. Noel Sheerin reports on our cemetery survey work to date, while Marese Feeney investigates the rich pickings from the Castleplunket returns of the 1901 and 1911 Census. Our series on the parish wells continues (Cloonmahaan), we reprint some Shegeerah stories from the Duchas Folklore collection, while Isaac Weld and one-time Cargins native Mary Gorges also make appearances. For those wishing to read our latest Tulsk Morning Howl; you can do so by visiting our website tulskhs.com. We hope you enjoy this Christmas Special!

THS

Rathcroghan National School 1937-2015 by Mike Lennon



The need for a school arose following the arrival of several new families from Galway and Mayo to the Rathcroghan area in the 1920s following the division of the former large estates by the Irish Land Commission. In the early 1930s, the families sought to have a local school as their children had to walk several miles to Tulsk, Ballinagare, Caddlebrook and Rathnagly schools. A site for the new school was offered free by Michael Dowd of Moneylea townland which lies on the outward edge of Elphin parish. At first, neither the Elphin parish priest, Canon Toby Butler nor Bishop Edward Doorly was willing to sanction the application to the Department of Education. Canon Butler said two-thirds of the pupils attending would be from Tulsk and Frenchpark parishes. Following further agitation by the families, the canon relented but not before imposing a levy of £7 per house on his Rathcroghan parishioners. The foundation stone having been laid in 1935, Rathcroghan National School opened its doors to its first intake



Seamus Duke

of 40 pupils on 6th April 1937. Canon Butler's prediction was quickly realised when dozens of children switched to Rathcroghan from the surrounding schools. The overcrowding in the early years was such that two children had to occupy a one-pupil desk.

The first principal of the new school was Kilmacumscy native Seamus Duke who transferred from New Inn, Ballinasloe to

take up the position. He was assisted by Mary B. Martin (née Beirne). Seamus left Rathcroghan in 1947 and continued teaching at the CBS, North Brunswick Street, Dublin until his death in November 1954. He was the grandfather of the well-known journalist and broadcaster, Seamus Duke. Sean Keane was the next principal who held the post until 1952 when he was replaced by Elphin native Josie Kelly who transferred from Cloonfree N.S. Josie moved to Clooneyquinn School in 1955 when another Elphin man, Micheál Mulleady who had been teaching in Drumshambo, became principal. His appointment was the start of a long career in Rathcroghan. In 1956, the assistant teacher, Mary B. Martin moved to Ballinagare N.S. She retired a few years later and died in 1976. Short-stay assistants, including Patricia Kilcommins, replaced her until 1959 when Eithne Manley's appointment saw her begin a six-year tenure in the school. Ballyfarnon native Kitty O'Brien (later Kitty Harrington) was appointed in 1965 to begin a three-year term as assistant teacher. Miss Hussey and Letterkenny native Thomasina McManus filled the assistant roles between 1968 and 1970.



Micheal Mulleady

The arrival of Kathleen Tunney (née Heraty) in 1970 began a long period of relative stability in the assistant teacher role at Rathcroghan. The departure of the Marist Brothers from Strokestown Boys School in 1974 created the opportunity for Kathleen to teach closer to her home and she continued to do so until she retired in 2004. The next Rathcroghan assistant was Ryefield, Elphin native Emily Fox (later Emily Leonard) who taught the junior classes until September 1987 when a steep decline in the enrolment caused the school to lose its assistant teacher. Emily transferred to Tulsk N.S. as principal on the retirement of Mary Gormley. Principal Micheál Mulleady continued teaching on his own until he retired in 1993, having served 38 years in Rathcroghan. He died in February 2021.



Myra Duffy

Mary Kelly served as principal from September 1993 until the end of 1994 when she left for a position in Rahara N.S. which was closer to her home. January 1995 saw the arrival of the last principal in Rathcroghan in the person of Myra Duffy. Later in 1995, a reunion of former pupils took place to mark 60 years since the building of the school commenced. By 1997, the number of pupils attending had increased to 24, which allowed Rathcroghan to become a two-teacher school again after a ten-year gap. Mary O'Connell transferred from Castlerea and continued to teach the junior pupils until 2014 when, once again, the numbers attending dropped

and having a second teacher could not be justified. Sadly, after twenty years of service to Rathcroghan, Myra Duffy closed the doors of the school for the last time in June 2015 with just two pupils remaining. Myra continued teaching in Croghan N.S. until retiring in 2021. A contributing factor to Rathcroghan's closure was its location in the centre of an archaeological important area and the resulting ban on new housing, which meant no new families and no young children. The closing was marked by a gathering of former pupils, including the late Bishop Christy Jones who celebrated Mass. They reminisced about their school days over the decades and bid a last farewell to the building that now lies empty and silent.

Footnote –Grateful appreciation to Myra Duffy (former principal), John Higgins (photography) and Dylan Loftus (compiler of the Rathcroghan N.S. Final Roll Call DVD) for assistance in preparing this article. Castleplunkett National School will feature in the next edition of the E-Newsletter. ♦

Merry Christmas

& Happy New Year

to all our readers

from all at Tulsk History Society



Died in Exile Part II – Peter McDermott of Corrabeg in America

By Melissa L. Keigher

THS' earlier article, *Died in Exile*, chronicled the life of Peter McDermott of Corrabeg and his family before his emigration to America. In Part II, we explore Peter's life in America, prior to his passing in New York in January of 1922.

Readers may recall that Peter (1860-1922), son of Thomas McDermott and Mary Ann Flynn, emigrated to America some time around 1882. We know from the birth records of his children that Peter had married Irish-born Mary McGegh (different records have her name as McGegh, McGagh and McGah). However, finding a marriage record has, thus far, proved elusive. Peter supported his new family as a day labourer, progressively becoming more skilled in the building trades, later working as a carpenter.

1 PLACE OF DEATH
BOROUGH OF *Manhattan* STATE OF NEW YORK
Department of Health of The City of New York
BUREAU OF RECORDS
STANDARD CERTIFICATE OF DEATH

No. *547 E. 87th*

Character of profession, business, occupation, trade, hospital or other place, etc. *Treatment*

*FULL NAME *Peter McDermott* Registered No. *1580*

1 SEX *Male* 4 COLOR OR RACE *White* 5 SINGLE, MARRIED, WIDOWED, OR DIVORCED *Married* 10 DATE OF DEATH *January 15, 1922*

2 AGE *65* 11 LESS THAN 1 year 12 MORE THAN 1 year

3 OCCUPATION *Contractor* (1) Trade, profession, or particular kind of work (2) General nature of industry, business or establishment to which employed or assigned

4 BIRTHPLACE *Ireland* (1) In the City or County of New York (2) Elsewhere

6 NAME OF FATHER *Thomas McDermott* 7 BIRTHPLACE OF FATHER *Ireland*

8 MARRIAGE NAME OF MOTHER *Mary Flynn* 9 BIRTHPLACE OF MOTHER *Ireland*

13 CAUSE OF DEATH *General Atherosclerosis
Chronic Myocarditis
Chronic Hypertension*

14 I hereby certify that the foregoing particulars (Nos. 1 to 14 inclusive) are correct as near as the same can be ascertained, and I further certify that I attended the deceased from *January 11th to 15th* day of *January* 1922, that I last saw him alive on the *15th* day of *January* 1922, that death occurred on the date stated above at *9:45 AM*, and that the cause of death was as follows:

Contributory *Arteriosclerosis*

Witness my hand this *16th* day of *Jan* 1922

Signature *Joseph A. Kelly* M. D.
Address *333 E. 87th St.*

17 PLACE OF BURIAL *St. Mary's Cemetery Jan 18*

18 UNUSUAL FINDINGS *None*

FILED *16*

By *Lang Edward* Secy of City and Corp

1922 Death Certificate - Peter McDermott (NYC Municipal Archives)

We were able to uncover the history of Peter and Mary's children thanks to birth records as well as the first US census of 1900. The couple had seven known children, six of whom were known to live to adulthood: sons John Joseph (b. 1887) who followed in his father's footsteps as a carpenter, William (b. 1889), Walter (b. 1891, d. abt. 1893), Peter Jr., (b. 1891), daughter Mary A. Catherine (b. 1893), and sons Walter (b. 1897), Thomas (b. 1899) and James (b. 1901, d. before 1905).

Peter and his family had rented a flat in New York, moving a couple times but consistently staying on East 46th Street (building numbers 310 and 317) before Peter and Mary's apparent separation sometime between 1915 and 1920. In that latter year, wife Mary was still living with their children on East 46th Street, but had moved once again, to building number 313. By that time, their daughter Mary had married John Christopher Lynott, a man who had been born in Dublin and had also emigrated over to New York.

That same 1920 census year, we find Peter living close to his estranged wife and children at a lodging house just down the street at 163 East 46th Street in Midtown. What caused Peter and Mary to separate is not yet known, but both had declared themselves ‘widow’ and ‘widower’ in the census.

STATE OF NEW YORK		No. of Certificate 17740
CERTIFICATE AND RECORD OF MARRIAGE		
Groom: John C. Lynott and Bride: Mary Catherine M ^c Dermott		
Residence: 1034 1/2 46th Ave. N.Y.	Bride's Residence: 313 E 46th St. N.Y.	
Age: 26	Age: 24	
Color: White	Color: White	
Single, Widowed or Divorced: Single	Single, Widowed or Divorced: Single	
Occupation: Plumber	Maiden Name, if a Widow:	
Birthplace: Dublin, Ireland	Birthplace: New York City	
Father's Name: John Francis	Father's Name: Peter	
Mother's Maiden Name: Florence M ^c Dermott	Mother's Maiden Name: Mary M ^c Leah	
Number of Groom's Marriages: First	Number of Bride's Marriages: First	
I hereby certify that the above-named groom and bride, were joined in Marriage by me, in accordance with the Laws of the State of New York, at St. Boniface (Church), in the Borough of Manhattan, City of New York, this 15 th of June, 1918.		
Witnesses to the Marriage: Walter M ^c Dermott, Nellie Lynott	Signature of Person performing the Ceremony: Rev. Daniel C. Stone Official Station: R. C. Priest Residence: 306 E. 47	

1918 New York Marriage Certificate - Mary C. McDermott & John C. Lynott (Mary daughter of Peter and Mary McDermott - line of descent for living family member found (NYC Municipal Archives)

This separation is likely the reason Mary was not buried at the same site at Calvary Cemetery as Peter. Instead, a man by the name of James J. Barnes was buried in the plot beside Peter and was memorialized on the same stone. A deep dive into James Barnes' life and family revealed no known connection to the McDermott family, leaving us to wonder if Mary sold her part of the grave plot.

Although a burial site for Mary (McGegh) McDermott has yet to be

located, we can be certain that she died sometime between 1931-1935: Mary was found still living at 313 East 46th Street with her son Thomas in the 1930 Census, but by 1935 her still single son Thomas was residing at the home of his older sister, Mary Catherine (McDermott) Lynott's family home, with no sign of their mother.

While this story may appear to have ended on a sad note: the estrangement of a father from his family - leave it to THS to find a silver-lining – we have found a living descendant!

We present the second great-granddaughter of Peter McDermott of Corrabeg who “Died in Exile” and his wife Mary McGegh, and great-granddaughter of Mary Catherine (McDermott) Lynott and John Christopher Lynott. She informs us that while she has been researching her family for many years she had yet been unable to find her Irish family origins. She extends her gratitude for helping uncover her family's history.

From a simple 1922 Roscommon Messenger obituary, to finding a living descendant, this is just one of many interesting family histories that THS have been researching and highlighting, with hopefully many more to come!◇

Tulsk History Society Parish Cemeteries Project by Noel Sheerin

Previous surveys of the Tulsk parish cemeteries were carried out in 1984, 2011 and 2016. The work was done as part of Social Employment Schemes which were state funded. In some cases, third-level students were also eligible to work under these schemes during their summer holidays. Additionally, some people volunteered to contribute their time to assist with the task which they saw as an enjoyable and fulfilling hobby.

One of the first projects undertaken by Tulsk History Society (THS) after its foundation in early 2021 was to examine the great work already undertaken and to update the burial records associated with the seven local cemeteries of the parish over time. This is a mammoth task and can only occur by taking one cemetery at a time. The work is totally on a voluntary basis and is very weather dependant also.

The first cemetery selected was Tulsk and the work commenced in Autumn 2021. About 14 volunteers were involved in total over the duration of this work which was carried out on Saturday mornings for 2-3 hours each day over a six-week period. The weather on each occasion was ideal over the consecutive Saturdays and this, together with the great turnout of volunteers, ensured a smooth run of the first assignment in



An old headstone at Kilcooley

the cemeteries project. Initial training and guidance were given on how to carry out a cemetery survey. Existing maps were updated to include plots added since the previous survey. A numbering system for each plot and a recording template for each headstone were also designed in advance. This preparatory work was essential for the smooth running of the project. Once people got in on the routine on day one, then the task on hand became very simple thereafter. The recording itself was finished by end 2021. Some older headstones had to be cleaned to make the inscriptions somewhat more legible. In all, this most recent survey has recorded 350 headstones showing a total 904 individual burial records. A database showing these records is available in the office of THS at the Macra Hall in Tulsk. It is hoped to make the information available online also. The new map and index signage was unveiled inside the entrance to Tulsk Cemetery on August 18th, 2022. The erection of this sign had been the goal of THS from the

outset of this project. Those laid to rest deserve to be honoured and remembered, not only now, but for generations who follow them and want to learn about them for whatever reason they might have. THS wishes to thank Tulsk Cemetery Committee and Roscommon County Council for their co-operation and financial assistance.

The next cemetery chosen as part of the project was Kilcooley Cemetery which was partially surveyed by a Historic Graves project in 2016 after which these records were put online. Existing maps were updated, and existing records of burials were noted

before this latest survey commenced in December 2022 and finished by end of Summer 2023. There were lots of old headstones to be cleaned to make the inscriptions legible on the eastern side of the cemetery. Another feature with Kilcooley was the number of graves only noted by the sight of small stones on the ground. In all, this survey shows 171 marked headstones accounting for 475 burial records, some of which relate to an earlier time than those found in Tusk. THS also plans to create a database of the Kilcooley records which will be available in its office at the Macra Hall upon completion. The erection of signage with the updated map and index of burials at the entrance to Kilcooley Cemetery is a matter for the local cemetery committee. THS will co-operate with that committee in whatever way it can to achieve the ultimate goal of bringing this project to fruition for the benefit of all concerned, particularly in respect to those laid to rest there and the families they leave behind now and into the future.



Volunteers at work in Ogulla

Ogulla Cemetery is the third location chosen for the continuation of this project. Work began here in November 2023 and is ongoing. Most of the recording is done. There are 88 marked headstones in total with 171 burial records to date completed. Another session or two should complete the on-site recording in Ogulla. After that, as with the previous locations, a database will be created and will be available for inspection at the THS office in the Macra Hall when completed. Finally, THS will co-operate with the local cemetery committee to help

with the erection of signage on-site showing a map and index of burial plots for the benefit of visitors and as a mark of respect to those laid to rest there.



A headstone from the year 1746 at Ogulla

The remaining burial grounds at Killina (surveyed by a Historic Graves project in 2016), Rathmoyle, Baslick and Toberelva, in no particular order as yet, will be surveyed and updated in similar fashion, if that is acceptable to the respective local cemetery committees. While THS will assist in whatever way it can, the success of the project in each case depends on the co-operation of the local community in the respective areas, in terms of volunteering with the recording on the ground of the information available. THS has by now acquired a fairly good understanding of the work involved. Planning and research in advance play a key role in helping to simplify this work for local volunteers as each days recording progresses.

THS has been very fortunate with the support it has received in ensuring that the project can run smoothly. Maps have been produced, databases created, graphic design carried out, all professionally and free-of-charge as part of the work that goes on behind the scenes in a project of this scale and size. In addition, many volunteers have turned out to work on the ground. In their own way, each one plays an important role and is a key link in the chain of the operation. Sincere thanks

to everyone involved to date for their time and commitment. That also includes everyone associated with the previous surveys in 1984, 2011 and 2016 . THS looks forward to initiating the work with the remaining cemeteries in 2024 and beyond.

Finally, it is worth pointing out the very important role that a local cemetery committee has in terms of site layout, grave allocation, upkeep and maintenance, fund-raising and periodic meetings. Policies need to be developed in these areas in order to have certainty and consistency in approach. But the support of the local community in dealing with these issues is critical for a successful outcome. A discussion on this whole area involving the various stakeholders would be of great benefit going forward. THS is happy to be involved if requested to do so.◊



Aerial photo of Kilcooley cemetery captured by Tulska History Society during our survey work.



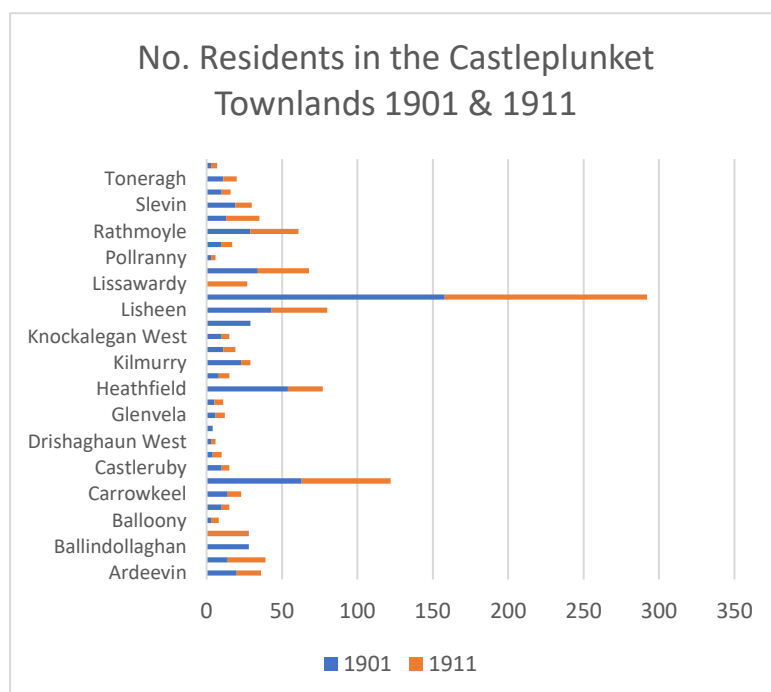
Aerial photo of Ogulla cemetery by THS. The site features many very old graves with their own story to tell.

Castleplunket: A Glimpse into a Rural Tapestry (1901-1911)

by Marese Feeney

As we continue to explore the data available in the National Archives census records, in this newsletter our focus is on the District Electoral Division (DED) of Castleplunket. Previously, it was noted that the Tulsk Parish area was made up of the following five DEDs: Baslick, Ogulla, Clooneyquin, Killukin and Kilcooley. However, having reviewed the 122 townlands captured on the ‘Townland map of Tulsk’ (available on www.leitrim-roscommon.com), it has been confirmed that there are parts of additional DEDs – Castleplunket, Annaghmore, Bellanagare, Castleplunket, Castleteehan and Elphin.

Within the Castleplunket DED, a total of 32 townlands have been identified with 652 people registered in the area in 1901 which reduced to 548 by 1911. A breakdown of the townlands with populations can be found in the graph titled “*No. Residents in the Castleplunket Townlands 1901 & 1911*” The records indicated that in 1901, 97% of the population in the area had been born in Co. Roscommon with 2% of the population having a birthplace elsewhere: Irish counties represented were Sligo, Westmeath, Wexford, Dublin, Mayo, Longford and Limerick, while Stafford and Sheffield in England were also listed. There was a similar trend in 1911. A



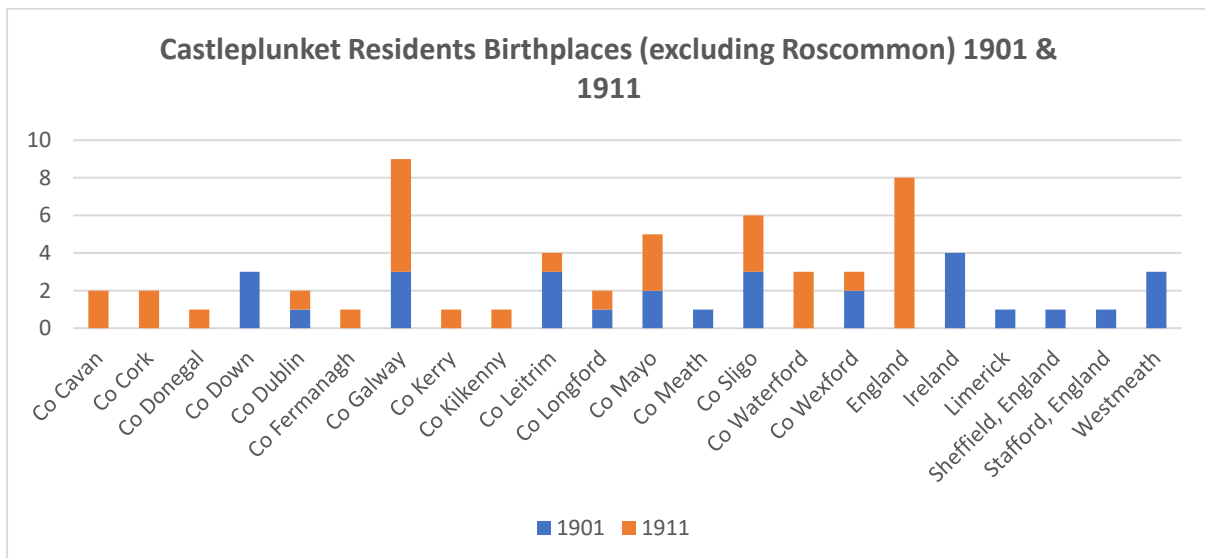
breakdown of the birthplaces, excluding Roscommon can be found in the graph titled “*Castleplunket Residents Birthplaces (excluding Roscommon) 1901 & 1911*”.

The Dalton family appear in the 1911 census having a birthplace of Waterford recorded. Having not appeared on the 1901 census, it would seem they moved to the

area between 1901 and 1911. Nicholas Dalton (40 years old) was noted as the head of the household with two scholar children. Michael (aged nine) and Matthew (aged eight) are noted as having been born in Waterford.

Nicholas and his family were residents of the census titled *house 4* in the Rusheen townland of Castleplunket. Other family members noted at this address were Kate Dalton (aged 38) - Nicholas's wife – who was born in Co. Cork, and their other three sons, Anthony (five) , Nicholas (three) and Joseph (two) all of whom were born in Co. Roscommon. Based on the timeline of the children's births, the Dalton's moved to Roscommon after the 1901 census, probably around 1905/1906. Nicholas's occupation was as a "Contractor for Timber Selling".

The residents of house 4 in Heathfield townland show an increase in the number of household members from 3 in 1901 to 5 in 1911. Peter Daly (60 years old) was a farmer and lived at the property along with his wife Jane (also 60) and son Peter (age 24). In 1911, there were two additional residents recorded at the property – Mary Ellen Daly (aged 34), Peter Snr's daughter, and his niece Kate Daly aged nine who was born in England.



There are additional entries on the 1911 census that had not appeared in 1901. For example, the seven residents of house 23 in Lisalway – the Dobby residents. Within this residence, Ms Norah Dobby was the only parent listed (the 'Head the Family') as were her three sons Bernard (19), John (11) and Martin (7), and her three daughters; Agnes (18), Lizzie (17) and Josephine (15). All of the children other than Martin were born in England. Based on Martin's age, it would suggest the family moved back to the area sometime between 1902 and 1904.

The residents of house 22 in Lisalway appear in the 1911 census but not in the 1901 census record. Mr Bernard Mulrennan (43) is noted as the Head of the Family and lived with his wife Mary (31) and their children –

John Joseph aged five and Mary Clare, aged two. In addition, there were two other residents noted – a Thomas Murphy, who was a 24-year-old servant, and a young female visitor M Kate Murphy who was aged 16. Mr Mulrennan was a “*commercial traveller*” according to the records, and was born in Co. Roscommon, while his wife and daughter were born in Co. Down. His son John Joseph was the person previously noted as being born in Stafford.

It is worth noting that some anomalies continue to be identified whilst going through the census data, for example – a Bridget Carr has two entries in the 1901 census. It appears that she was visiting her daughter on the evening of the census and has been recorded at that residence but also at her own.

Other examples of anomalies include the spelling of surnames, an example of which can be found in the townland of Gortnasillagh in Castleplunket where all the residents captured in the 1911 census are Dockerys but recorded in 1901 as ‘Dockary’.

The incorrect spelling of townlands has also been noted – for example, the townland of Tonroe is incorrectly captured as ‘Tonree’. Where any such anomalies are found THS will endeavour to engage with the National Archives.

The census data continues to provide a fascinating glimpse into the people who lived in the Tulsk area during the early 20th century. We will continue to review the National Archives census records and bring to life more of these stories from Tulsk parish families of 1901 and 1911, like the Dalton family's timber-selling endeavours, Peter Daly's expanding household, and the commercial travels of Bernard Mulrennan all of which contribute to our local history.◊

**For back issues of our newsletters and bulletins
take a browse through our website**

tulskhs.com

Make sure to drop us a line!



Tales from Sheegerah in the Duchas Folklore Collection 1937-39

CONTINUING our occasional feature on Tusk parish entries in the Schools Folklore Collection from 1937-39, we here reprint the testimony of contributions from Clashaganny National School featuring the townland of Sheegerah (where the school was). The folklore collection was an initiative between the Department of Education and the Irish National Teachers' Organisation.



An old Sheegerah house ruin

Senior Primary School children recorded in excess of 750,000 pages of local history and oral tradition from across the 26 counties of the Irish Free State. This includes some 18,000 of the children's original school exercise books. The archive gives much insight into local life that would otherwise have been lost.

Sheegerah, The Fairy Sheep Told by James Higgins,
Cloonmurray –

Tradition has it that the village of Sheegerah in which this school is situated got its name in the following way:- An old woman who lived here in the olden days had a number of sheep. The mearings of her little farm were bad and the animals were a source of much annoyance to a rich landowner who lived near and on whose lands they were constantly trespassing.

One day the farmer set his two hounds after the sheep and gave them such a chasing that nearly half the number died. The old woman in great fury went down on her

knees cursed her neighbour and told him that her sheep would come between him and his dearest wish.

Years went by, the old woman died and the rich farmer was about to pass over. The night he was dying the priest was sent for. There were no cars in those days and the priest had to walk. The night was dark but in spite of this he was making good head way till he came to within a few fields of the sick man's home. Just round the corner he walked into the midst of a flock of sheep. Try as he could the good man could not get through them. All night long he laboured but to no use. There seemed to be thousands of them in his way. About an hour before the dawn they suddenly vanished and the priest was not long crossing the two fields that separated him from the sick man's home.

Reaching there he was told that the farmer had died five minutes before his arrival and that up to the time he was calling, calling for the priest, but the old woman's curse and the fairy sheep had prevented his last wish being granted.

No title – Told by Pat Lane, Sheegerah

In the townland of Sheegerah about half a mile from the school to the north there is a circular cave covering about fifteen perches of land. Portions of this cave have fallen in and so have prevented exploration by the curious.

The cave appears to enclose a solid core. Tradition asserts after King Dathi's burial in the ramparts of Rathcroghan, his faithful bodyguard raised the body and the treasure buried with it and had it conveyed three miles to the eastward where it was buried once more. The

idea was to save it from desecration at the hands of those who knew of the treasure buried with the body. He is supposed to be interred in the centre of the ring formed by the cave, the latter acting as a kind of drainage system.

This old tradition has never been put to the test. ♦

WELLS OF THE PARISH #4: CLOONMAHAAN



Co-ordinates: 53.800386, -8.235149

Townland: Cloonmahaan

Condition 2023: Dilapidated. Spring working

CONTINUING our series on the wells of the parish for this edition it's the block built well on the main N61 road in the Killina townland of Cloonmahaan. The site was used as a well as early as the late 1800s and is marked on the 25inch Ordnance Survey (est.1880s) as simply a 'well', indicating it has not been officially associated with any saint. The block construction that is currently visible was likely done in the 1950s before the water schemes took off. Today it has gone into a state of disrepair though it is not dormant. Four live fish were in the water on our visit and seemed quite content. The well is on the west end of the long narrow townland, with the other end taking up about a quarter of one of Tulsks finest lakes – Lough Patrick.

ISAAC WELD'S TULSK REPORT FROM 1831-2

Isaac Weld's survey of County Roscommon, published in 1832, was an in-depth study of all aspects of the county including population, economy, geography, topography and society. We have here compiled his observations on Tusk, where he largely commented on the good land, and is written with, obviously enough, the landlord class in mind



Isaac Weld (1774-1856)

The best ground in the county, producing those fine natural pastures, for which Roscommon has been so long celebrated, lies within the limestone districts; such, for example, are the rich fattening pastures in the vicinity of Tusk and Kilcorkey, and the plains of Boyle to the south-east of the town ... The only towns in the barony of Roscommon are Strokestown and Elphin: Tusk, a place of note in former times, and returning two members to the Irish Parliament, at present is no more than a small village, or rather hamlet. The country in the vicinity of Tusk is reputed to afford some of the richest pastures in this fertile part of Ireland; not limited, however, to the barony of Roscommon, but extending into the adjoining. The farms, as already observed, are considerable; from three hundred acres, Irish, a quantity of land very commonly held by a single individual, up to one thousand acres and more. The best feeding lands lie high and dry, and both sheep and bullocks are fed by principally the latter. These large grazing farms are commonly bounded by high walls of stone, in some instances built dry and loosely; in others wholly cemented with mortar, or partially strengthened therewith. Sometimes the traces of ancient hawthorn hedges, marked by insulated bushes in even lines, but at very remote intervals, afford proof that in former times the subdivisions of the land were most numerous; but according to the modern system, the cattle are allowed to take an extensive range; it is believed that they thrive in proportion to this liberty, and vast herds may be observed together, spread over the hills, where scarcely a bush or even a tree is to be seen. Habitations are few; their paucity affording a remarkable contrast to the numbers which are invariably found in the districts which are devoted principally to tillage. Yet after mounting upon some of the bleak and dreary hills, where an extensive prospect is opened for miles around, many a spacious and solid mansion may be observed in the distance, sheltered and surrounded with its woods and plantations. The style and aspect of some of these houses convey an idea of wealth, from without; and within, there are some which are said to display to a very remarkable extent, the modern refinements in furniture and decoration. The vein of rich fattening land which distinguishes the district about Tusk, extends into the adjacent barony. It consists entirely of the limestone and limestone gravel formation; but both to the east and to the west of it the sandstone appears, as I have already mentioned, though only at a considerable distance, as beyond Strokestown in the former direction, and in the latter towards Belanagare.◊

Mary Gorges' Christmas corner

THE OLD YEAR AND THE NEW.

THE Old Year goes away : her eyes are sad—
The eyes of one who hopes or fears no more.
Snow is upon her hair ; gray mists have clad
A form the vesture of the spring which wore.
The new buds quicken now beneath the clay ;
But not for her—the Old Year goes away.

The New Year enters in : a happy child,
Who looks for flowers to fill her outstretched hand,
And knows not fear although the winds be wild.
Soon shall the birds be singing in the land,
On the young leaves the patter of soft rain,
And violets ope'—the New Year comes again.

So with this mortal life : now young, now old,
A spring which never dreams of frost and snow,
Summer and autumn—then the tale is told ;
With tired step, in wintry days we go.
God grant a waking on some happier shore,
Where the lost youth and joy come back once more !

MARY GORGES.



Mary Gorges (1834-1911) appeared in our first Christmas special two years ago with the festive poem *Christmas Memories* and here we reprint her 1899 composition *The Old Year and the New*, which appeared in the old magazine *The Chamber's Edinburgh Journal*. Mary was a native of Cargins House and was the daughter of Cargins landlord Daniel Kelly (died 1849). She became a prolific writer and her work appeared in many publications and newspapers. She became 'Gorges' after marrying John Gorges of Kilbrew, Co. Mayo. She is buried in Glasnevin cemetery.



TULSK HISTORY SOCIETY

Membership

We hope you have enjoyed the Christmas 2023 edition of our newsletter. New members are most welcome to join the Society. If you wish to do so, please email us on historytulsk@gmail.com. Annual fees are €30 for adults and €10 for students. We wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

