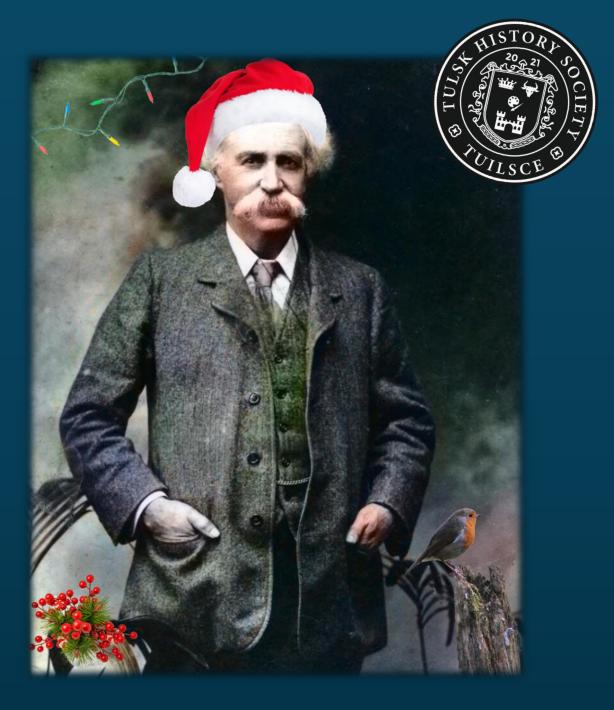
# TULSK HISTORY SOCIETY



# NEWSLETTER NO. 15 DECEMBER 2024



# SEASON'S GREETINGS TO ALLI

#### Tulsk History Society <u>historytulsk@gmail.com</u>



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

Keigher, Mike Higgins, Cathal McCormack, Tina Galvin Beirne, Pat Fox, James Rogers, Sinead Moylan, Tom Rogers, Breege Hyland, Marty Nolan.

Seasons greetings to all our readers! It's hard to believe this is our fourth Christmas newsletter. It's a testament to our members who have worked so hard since 2021, and to the local public who have supported our endeavours. We've had an eventful year: this is newsletter number 4 of 2024, and we've also had four hardcopy bulletins of *The Tulsk Morning Howl*. Our team on the ground have been busy with our big ongoing project of the Tulsk parish cemetery surveys, and three are now complete and available to view on our website (the 'Materials for Download' section). We were proud to celebrate some of our historic natives at our Heritage Week Plaque Unveiling in August – probably one of the highlights of THS's existence so far. We enjoyed a trip to Sligo in August also; a county (as we found out) that has some fascinating local history of its own. Our membership is well up (see above), we look forward to 2025, and we hope to see you all at our annual Pub Quiz in March!

Kicking off our Christmas edition is Mike Lennon's very interesting story about the horse business in Tulsk from the mid-1800s – a big part of our parish history that is much overlooked. We follow with a pictorial look at 'The Year in Brief' while Manus Tiernan then brings us an insightful article on the inauguration stone of the Connaught Kings – a stone that is surprisingly well travelled! While we may or may not get a white Christmas (!) our photo feature on Tulsk Abbey and Cemetery under snow last month is a welcome and striking addition to our seasonal issue. Big shout out to the man behind the camera! One of our newest members, Breege Hyland, then brings us the intriguing story of the McDermotts of Rahardagh House. Let's hope it's her first article of many for THS. We round off the newsletter with two snow scenes from Percy French and Roderic O'Conor – two local legends that we like to check in on from time to time! Information on how to become a member follows at the end. We hope you enjoy the read!



### **HORSEY BUSINESS AROUND TULSK** by Mike Lennon

Horses were big business in the central part of Roscommon from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century and into the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Irish Draught horse did several jobs – worked on the land during the week, took the family to church on Sunday and jumped walls and drains during the stag, fox and hare hunting season. However, such a horse was, for the most part, only found in the stable yards of the landed gentry and 'middleman' farmers. Most of their tenants could only afford to have a cow, goat or pig. Horses were status symbols indicating the owners' wealth and a means of attaining social status.

Located in the heart of Roscommon and surrounded by large swathes of untenanted open plains, Tulsk became the centre of hunting and horse breeding in the county in the 1800s and early 1900s. A newspaper report in 1834 describes a chase from Castleplunkett to Cargins to Rathcroghan to Mantua and ending at Cherryfield where the stag was captured without any injury. The Frenchpark fox hounds regularly started their chases at Cargins and Rathcroghan. After Major Drought came to Cargins in 1852, he kept a kennel of hounds, known as the Helter-Skelter Harriers, to accompany the local horse riders on the hunt.

WE have been informed that Capt. Drought, of Cargins, Tulsk, has undertaken the mastership of the County Rescommon Fox Hounds, which was declined by Capt. R. Goff, of Carrarowe. Cargins will be a very central place to keep the Hounds, and we believe Captain Drought (although not a Connaught man) is a very good sportsman.

Roscommon Herald 3 May 1862





Roscommon Journal 10 September 1864

An 1865 report stated a lady from Limerick "was foremost during the Helter-Skelter hunt and rode over double banks and 4½ feet walls in steeple-chase style." Other hunts such as the Roscommon Harriers and Roscommon Staghounds used Tulsk Village, Rathmoyle Cross-roads, Rathcroghan, Castleplunkett and Tomona as starting points for their events. The sport of gentlemen and ladies was alive and well in Tulsk parish and gave valuable employment to kennel keepers, grooms and blacksmiths.

Regulars on the hunt included John and Richard Flynn, Tulsk; Lewis and Peter Hawkes, Briarfield; Thomas and Patrick Conry, Raheen; Patrick & Mrs Taaffe and Plunket Taaffe, Foxborough; John & Miss Irwin, Rathmoyle; James Lynam, Tomona; Captain Patrick Balfe,

.

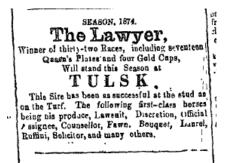
Southpark, Castlerea; Captain & Mrs Drought, Cargins; Joseph Banahan, Renny; Miss Toler, Bloomfield and Arthur Browne, Falsk.

The owners and grooms of the past judged the quality of a stallion by reference to its pedigree - its sires and the dams going back two or three generations as well as its progeny. Prizes awarded at important shows were also an important factor when selecting a suitable sire for a mare. Until the requirement to register stallions and mares was introduced in the early 20th century, there was no easy way to check the alleged pedigree of a horse. Undoubtedly, the advertised heritage of some stallions was exaggerated before registration was introduced.

To improve the quality of horse breeding in the late 1800s, a system of mare nominations was introduced. This involved each county issuing a limited number of nominations. The judging for which mares got the nominations were held throughout County Roscommon, including Tulsk.

	Roscommon Co and	ounty Tech	Con Con Lical	omi Ir	ttee of Istructio	Agi n.	riculture
	NOMINA	TION	I OF		IARES,	191	15.
\$년 주	The County Committe the Begister of the Departure		Agrionites		nd Toshniasi	Tankan	otion, under
~		a <b>Darim</b> an	IS RODE				
ī	buditions set forth in the Diverse of Horses (pages 7 to rish Draught, or in the case lotcommen.	a 101 <b>W</b> h	sther in	a Site	Mone ha The	man a hh	
Ĩ	rish Draught, or iq the case lotcommen. PLACE OF SHOW	a 101 <b>W</b> h	ether th esdales ti	a 1314 he oz	Mone ha The	man a hh	
I	rish Draught, or in the case lotcommen.	a 101 <b>W</b> h	esdales ti	22 h	lilous be The is already Ra	man a hh	red, Half-Br I for the Cou

The remainder of this article will consist of a representative sample of adverts illustrating the standing of sires owned by parish residents. Due to limited space, some of adverts have been cropped.



May 1874

Season 1877.							
THE THOROUGH-BRED SIRE							
GOLDFINCH,							
The property of J. PLUNKETT FAAPER, Hag							
At Roscommon from Thursday to Sunday,							
AND AT TULSK FROM SUNDAY TO THURSDAY.							
GOLDFINOH was bred by Dr. Harrison of Roscommon, now so aslebrated for his bleod stock in Irela. d. Heis one of the most fashion-							

stock in Irela. d. Hels one of the most fashionably bred horces now in Ireland. He is by Audubon son of Birdcatcher, out of Lucy Dashwood by Sheet Anchor; her dam Patty by Whisker (winner of the Derby), out of Miss Patrick, sister to St. Patrick (winner of the Great St Leger).

June 1877

#### TAMERLANE.

This Thoro'-bred orse will stand this S: asop at Mr. HILL's stables,

TULSK, COUNTY ROSCOMMON, From 2nd MARCH to 15th JULY, when the Season will end.

THOMAS DOOLY, Groom, To whom all communications may be; addressed

June 1878

STUD HORSE. THE THORO'-BRED STALLION, OLIVER, BY A1 out of Rachel, by Faug a-Ballagh; out of Putey, by Harkaway, one of the highest and most fashionably bred borses a in Ireland, will stand at TULSK AND STROKESTOWN. All Mares, £1 10s. Groom's Fees, 5s tor further particulars see hand-bulls

June 1878 Oliver was owned by Michael Flynn

WILL SCARLET, FOXBOROUGH, TULSK.									
TERMS:									
NO FOAL, Thoroughbred Mares	NO	FE	E.						
Thoroughbred Mares	•••	£5	5	0/					
Half-bred		8	10	0					
A few approved Mares of tenant									
farmers, valuation au	ler £30	2	ð	0					
GROOM'S FRES INCLUDED.									

June 1883

SEASON 1887. That Thorough-bred Sire, GOLDFINCH, The Property of JAMES ROEKS, will stand this Season at OWNER'S STABLES, TULSK.

June 1887. Shows change of owner from J Plunkett Taaffe to James Rorke

SEASON 1888.

THE ERAFT STALLION, KING DATHI, The property of JAMME ROBME, will serve marces this season at his stables, A.T. T.U.L.S.K.

All Marcs ... £1 Groom's Fee, 2s 6d. to be paid a first service.

KING DATHI, S years old, by Lord Shannon, dam by Tom Steel, is a bay horse standing nearly 16 hands high, on short legs, good feet, great substance and muscular power, grand freedom of action and fine temper, thoroughly sound in every respect.

March 1888

#### SEASON, 1898.

THE THOROUGHBRED SIRE

NINEPIN,

By GALOPIN, out of NYDIA, by OREST, out of ADELIADE, by MEU-BOURNE, will serve a limited number of Mares, near

#### TULSK, CO. ROSCOMMON.

NINEPIN is a six year's old, dark bay, short-legged, hunter-made horse, 16 hands high, with extraordinary bone and substance, and able to carry 15st. to hounds. He is perfectly sound, and free from hereditary disease. Owing to au accident he was not trained. For Terms, full Pedigree, and Particulars,

Apply to the owner,

J. BANAHAN. Renny, Tulsk. GOOD GRASS FOR MARES. 50

April 1898

#### THOROUGHBRED STALLION.

#### THE MOUSE.

Registered and approved of by the Department of Agriculture.

THE MOUSE, By Symlagton, by Ayrshire, by Hampton, out of Cresn, by Gleavannon, out of Bada, by Balfe, will stand at

RENNY, TULSK Co Rricommon.

THE MOUSE (1907) is a dark bay horse, standing nearly 16 bands, with plenty of substance, quality and bone. He is most fashionably bred, being by Symington (now standing at 98 :s), out of the filmous mare Crean (iam of Creangate and Bellynanty). He was bred by the Messrs Hartigan, of Limetick, well known as being the breaders of some of the best record and standic chargers of modern times. racers and steeple chusers of modern times.

THE MOUSE is perfectly 's und and free from blemish.

This is his second season at the stud.

Every care will be taken, but no responsibility for accidents. Season ends 1st July.

Fee-All mares, £2 2 6d. Nominated mares f.co. Groom's fce, 2, 6!. Apply to

1 BANAHAN, Renny, Tolsk.

March 1913



BY HAYMAKER, OUT OF CARRIE, will Stand during the Season From 11 o'clock to 4 o'clock, on Mondays.

AT THE COTTAGE, THISK.

And the remainder of the week at LISROYAN, STROKESTOWN.

Fee for all Mares, Two Guineas, payable 1st of October next. No Groom's Fee. 501

April 1898. Lapcock's owner was Michael Flynn



A typical 19th century stud horse as here shown in The Illustarted Sporting and Dramatic News, December 1876





### Inauguration Stone of the Connaught Kings by Manus Tiernan

#### Introduction:

Carnfree, located in the townland of Carns in the parish of Tulsk is believed to have been the inauguration place of the Kings of Briúin Aí from time immemorial. (Briúin Aí was an area covering all of North Roscommon) The Briúin Aí were later to be known as the Siol Murry, and every King of Connaught from the time of Dua the Valorous down to the time of Cathal Crove Dearg or Cáhal Mór of the Wine Red Hand belonged to the Siol Murry. Kilmurry, a townland in the parish of Tulsk, occupies the centre of the territory of which the Siol Murry ruled. Carnfree was used as a place of inauguration and assembly also by the Kings of Connaught. In the Annals of Lough Cé under the year 1224 it is recorded that Turlough, son of Ruairi O'Conor was proclaimed at Carnfree.

The last King inaugurated at Carnfree was Charles O'Conor Don of Ballintubber in the year 1641. This is proved by the following deposition preserved in the library of Trinity College Dublin.

'Deposition of Elizabeth Holywell of Roscommon taken on the 11<sup>th</sup> August 1643. Deponent sayeth that it was ordinary rumor among the rebels of County Roscommon that Charles O'Conor Dunne of Ballintubber was made King of Connaught and one Christopher de le Hyde of Durham, near Roscommon a justice of the peace and a papist told the deponent that she might go safely to Ballinafad for he assured her that all the rebel soldiers were gone to Carnfree near Tulsk to make the said Charles O'Conor King of Connaught'.

#### **Inauguration Stone:**

The hill of Carns, otherwise known as Carn-Fraoidh lies approximately one and a half miles south-west of the village of Tulsk. Daniel Kelly Esq, landlord of Cargins



House in about the year 1840 removed the inauguration stone from the mound of Carnfree, where it had stood for 1,500 years or more, to the avenue of Cargins House. A quarry was opened near the mound and already much damage had been done to the old stone, so Mr. Kelly removed it to preserve the historic stone. The depth of the block of stone is

eighteen inches, length thirty four inches, greatest breadth one foot, narrowest breadth seventeen inches. A portion approximately twenty one inches by fourteen

inches was broken off before it was removed to Cargins avenue. There are tracks of two human feet in the stone, one near where the piece is missing, eleven inches by three and half inches. The other foot mark is eleven and half inches by four inches.

Saint Patrick himself, in the fifth century AD, assisted by eleven bishops and 12 dynast's or sub-chiefs crowned Duach Galach, the first King of Connaught and proclaimed him King while standing with his feet resting in the footmarks on the stone. Saint Patrick then took the King to the conical mound south-east of Carnfree, called Dumha Selca and blessed him. It was the privilege of the O'Mulcrony, said the ancient chronicles, 'to stand alone with the new King upon the sacred mound of Carnfree and there to deliver into his hands the white wand or sceptre, the emblem of sovereignty, to administer the usual oath of admonition to preserve the customs of the country and finally to record the proceedings in writing.'

The stone was transferred from Cargins House to the House of O'Conor at Clonalis outside Castlerea where it is to the present day.

#### Sources:

Writings James J O'Donnell,

Feis Cruachan, 1924.

Galway Archaeological & Historical Journal 1920-25.



The inauguration mound and 19<sup>th</sup> century quarry at Carns today

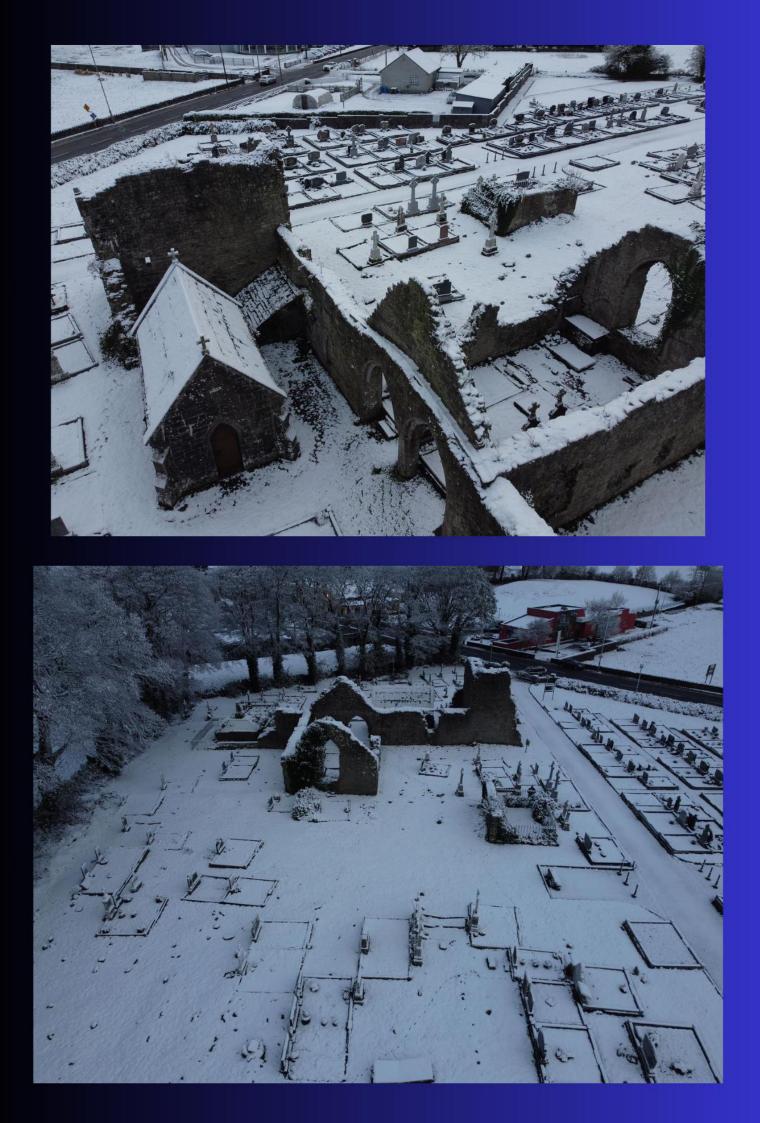
# Photo Feature: Aerial Photos of Tulsk Abbey

Last month THS were on hand to capture some lovely aerial photos over Tulsk Abbey in the snow, on the morning of November 21st.

The Dominican Priory was founded almost 600 years ago, in the mid-1400s. Originally occupied by just six monks, the place of worship also served as the location where the Order provided charity and medical aid to the poor. After the monasteries were dissolved in the 1500s and taken under the English Protestant rule of Henry VIII the site served as a British garrison (when the tower house beside the cemetery avenue was built). Mausoleums added in the last two centuries by the Taaffe, Grace and Dowell families have ensured that today's cemetery has a rich and layered history.













Note the above is the artistic installation of The Morrigan as a Raven on Tulsk Fort (formerly the site of Tulsk Castle) created by Roscommon artist Orla Clogher in collaboration with Rathcroghan Visitor Centre

### The McDermotts of Rahardagh House by Breege Hyland

The townland of Rahardagh, the onetime home of the McDermotts of Rahardagh House, is located in the most southerly corner of Tulsk Parish. The location was

inhabited long before the McDermotts arrived though, as evidenced by the fort on the hill that dominates the townland and gives the place its name, *ráth ard achadh* John O'Donovan, 1837).

The Book of Survey and Distribution 1641 names the owner of 81 acres of land at Rahardagh as Hugh Mergagh (possibly Murtagh) O'Conor Dunn. The Census of Ireland 1659 records 7 people living in the townland. In there were 1841. 86, constituting 17 families



Rahardagh House pictured in the 1960s

occupying 17 houses. The earliest records of McDermotts at Rahardagh appear in the Griffith Valuation of 1855, when Edward McDermott was leasing 198 acres, valued at £110, from James Murphy. Murphy was one of the principal lessors in the parish of Baslick (Catholic Parish of Tulsk). Seemingly, the Murphys were Dublin cattle dealers who never resided in the locality. By 1916, large portions of the Murphy estate in County Roscommon had been purchased by the Congested Districts Board.

In 1861, the McDermott property at Rahardagh – a minor gentry residence – was occupied by Henry McDermott (on lease from John Murphy). Henry McDermott had married Anne Dillon in 1860 and had been living in Castlerea. Henry died in 1879 and by 1881 occupancy had transferred to his son Edward who continued to lease the property from the Murphy family. Following the death of Edward in 1925, his son Henry G. McDermott (b. 1892) became owner occupier of the property in 1926, now holding it *in fee,* having purchased it under the Land Act Purchase (LAP) with assistance from the Land Commission (successor to the Congested Districts Board). Henry G. died in 1964 and in 1966 ownership of the

house and some of the land that once formed part of the McDermott estate passed into the ownership of the O'Brien family.

As a young woman, Henry G.'s wife Henrietta (Hetty) would often be seen locally, travelling from Rahardagh House in her pony and trap to visit her relations in Heathfield House. She is remembered as a very fine lady who had a reputation as a good horsewoman. She was of the Butler family from Heathfield, who were known for their love of horses and their successes in breeding horses and in horse racing. Hetty was an only child and was taught at home by a governess. Having inherited Heathfield House and land she sold it to the Cribbin family about 1940, by which time she had married into Rahardagh.

Henry G. McDermott had a sister called Ann and a brother called Michael. At the time of the 1901 Census Ann, aged 6, was living at Rahardagh with her parents and two older brothers. She married Greg Doherty and died in Dublin in 1962. Henry's brother Michael was still resident at Rahardagh in 1911. He later moved to Carrowduff (Upper). Edward's wife Anne was a McDermott from Carrowduff. They had married in 1887. In 1901 and 1911, an Andrew McDermott, described as a "brother-in-law" to Edward in 1901, was at Rahardagh. We can take this to be a brother of Anne from Carrowduff.

The early OSI 6" map (surveyed between 1829 and 1841) shows a house and a number of buildings at Rahardagh. The main building at the site at that time was a two-storey building to the left of the current yard, facing east, more than likely the original house or at least an early house. During the 1980s, cobbled stones uncovered in the area to the front of this building suggest that it was at some time the main house at the mid-nineteenth-century site, the cobbled-stoned area being part of its front street. This old building retains good craftsmanship in the stonework, including internal upright-standing brickwork in red and yellow described as "soldiers" over some of the doors and windows. It was a substantial building in its time, with Blue Bangor slates and deep walls and lintels. The timbers under the roof were thick and heavy and when they eventually came off the building - in the early years of this century in a series of storms - the quality materials and quality workmanship in those aspects of the building were obvious.

At some time in the second half of the nineteenth century, the current house became the main house at the site. In 1911, it was described in the census returns as a "1<sup>st</sup> class" category stone, Blue Bangor-slated house, its nine rooms being occupied by the family in residence and some servants. The returns record that the site had five stables, one coach house, a harness room, two cow houses, two barns, a calf house, a dairy, a piggery and a fowl house, and that there was "honey grown". These house returns do not include the east wing of the current house. In

1915 Henry McDermott extended the house, adding on the section that contains the front and back sitting rooms and the bedrooms above them.

The farm at Rahardagh must have been quite an enterprise in the heyday of the McDermotts. It was a big outlay with large sheds and a big yard, probably employing a lot of people in a time when all farm work was labour-intensive. One memory tells how Mrs. McDermott ("a nice woman") used to walk across from the house to the fields with food for the working men, bringing them thick-cut slices of bread and butter. In more recent years, a land improvement project in some of the fields uncovered nineteenth-century stone drains, by then long closed over by feet of soil and grass. Neighbours who once worked for the McDermotts describe how the keshes in the fields known as "the Bottoms" were made of layers of tree branches held together with grass and soil.

The McDermotts had a name in the locality for being big landlords. One memory of the house suggests otherwise. A local who did agricultural work on hire for Henry McDermott in the 1950s recalls being taken into the kitchen for his dinner. It was a cold, dark room. A wall separated it from the front of the house. He described how meat hooks hung from the ceiling and commented that even though the McDermotts had a name for being big landlords they were "poor as church mice". Henry and Hetty McDermott had no children. Following the death of Henry in 1964, his widow moved away to Dublin, the property came under the authority of the Land Commission, and the original estate was subdivided. The O'Brien family acquired the house and 75 acres in 1966 when, under the Land Commission Scheme, the family exchanged parcels of land elsewhere for the Rahardagh lands. In recent years, descendents of the McDermott family branch that emigrated to the USA in the late 1800s have made contact with the current residents and renewed family links with the McDermott homeplace.



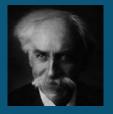
## Snow Scenes by Roderic O'Conor and Percy French



'Snow Landscape'



Roderic O'Conor (1860-1940) has become known for the very colourful oil-paintings he made in France around the beginning of the 1900s, but this is a rare snow scene that uses just a few tones and shades. The Milltown native has, in death, become one of the most highly sought after Irish painters by art collectors. He remains something of an enigma who was dedicated to his craft. The high prices his paintings fetch are proof of that.



Percy French (1852-1920) has become an established name in the art and painting world, even though we know him primarily for his songwriting. He painted mainly landscapes and in watercolour. This one was likely painted in Switzerland in the 1910s (a place he performed on tour). He has been exhibited on numerous occasions and his paintings regularly come up for sale at the likes of Whyte's auction house. The Percy French Museum in north Co. Down houses about 80 of his pictures



'Alpine Firs'

# TULSK HISTORY SOCIETY

## Membership

We hope you have enjoyed this festive edition of our newsletter. New members are always welcome to join the Society. If you wish to do so, please email us on historytulsk@gmail.com. Annual fees are  $\epsilon_{30}$  for adults and  $\epsilon_{10}$  for students. For those wishing to read back-issues, the latest Tulsk Morning Howl, or browse our cemetery surveys to date; please visit our website at **www.tulskhs.com**. Until next time; have a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!



