

# TULSK HISTORY SOCIETY

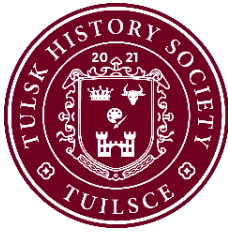


Newsletter No. 18

*September 2025*

**Tulsk History Society**

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



**Members: Eileen Beirne (Chair) Mike Lennon (Secretary) John Higgins (Assist. Chair) Mary Kelly, Marese Feeney, Catherine McGuire, Noel Sheerin (Treasurer), James Dockery, Jody Moylan (PRO/Archivist), Therese Hanley, Joe Donoghue, Manus Tiernan, Milo Lowry, Marty Brady, John De Nash, Melissa Keigher, Tina Galvin Beirne, Tom Rogers, Breege Hyland, Marty Nolan.**

**Welcome to the September 2025 edition of our newsletter. Since the last one, in June, we've been keeping quite busy, and put a good amount of organisation and effort into our Heritage Week event. There were a lot of moving parts in that and thankfully it all worked out very well and came off successfully on 24<sup>th</sup> August. More on that follows in this edition. We also enjoyed our annual outing this year at the end of July (also featured below) when we set off for Portumna in Galway and took in tours of the local workhouse and also the wonderful Portumna Castle and Gardens – a good place for a day trip and close by too! After a welcome break we'll be getting back to our usual schedule next month and a new season of activities. In the meantime, it's time to enjoy Newsletter number 18!**

*In this month's edition Mike Lennon looks at the interesting story of the eviction of Widow Cooke in 1888, which led to the incarceration of 13 Tulsk men during the era of the land wars. We look back at our Heritage Week event with a photo feature before we take a deep dive into John Redmond's visit to Tulsk in 1903. That was also related to the land question and in a similar vein we've uncovered a Tulsk-related poem on the same theme, reprinted in this edition, from the Duchas Folklore Collection. Manus Tiernan writes this month on the history of Baslick Diocese in an article that nicely coincides with our Famine memorial unveiling at Baslick Cemetery in August. We conclude the issue with a report on our outing to Portumna Workhouse and Castle – featured on our cover this month. We hope you enjoy the read!*

THS

## **WIDOW COOKE'S 1888 EVICTION LED TO JAIL FOR 13 TULSK MEN**

**by Mike Lennon**

### **Background**

The 'land war' of the late 1800s saw Tulska at the centre of dramatic events in the aftermath of Bridget Cooke's eviction from her small holding in the townland of Corbally. Apart from Widow Cooke, a priest, his agent and the constabulary were among the characters involved in the actions that sparked off protests, court cases and imprisonment.

Before delving into the eviction story, some background on the Widow Cooke. Bridget Kilbride married Thomas Cooke in Ballintubber Church in January 1850. Along with their large family, they first lived at Tomona where Thomas was a herd up to 1872. There is no record of his death, but the widow and her family moved soon afterwards to Corbally where she rented 12 acres and a house from Timothy Rorke who was acting as agent for the middleman landlord, Fr. Joseph Egan, a native of Elphin Street, Strokestown and the parish priest of Elphin.

Prior to 1888, Widow Cooke had a few brushes with the law. Pat Lally got a decree against her at Tulska Petty Sessions in January 1874 for £1-9-0 that she refused to pay for work done. Bridget Cooke appeared at Strokestown Quarter Sessions in January 1875 accused of stealing a rug from a barn where the owner's horse and car was stabled while he attended an auction in Tomona. An eagle-eyed Constable Downs spotted the widow wearing a rug like it three months later and arrested her. He said the rug fitted the description given by the owner. The jury failed to agree on a verdict, and she was acquitted, but the rug was forfeited. The following November, Mrs Cooke had been three weeks on remand in Strokestown Bridewell when she appeared before the Tulska magistrates charged with stealing two geese belonging to Paddy Higgins. Seven geese had strayed in the direction of Mrs Cooke's house but only five returned. She was sentenced to fourteen days at hard labour in Roscommon Jail.

In July 1888, Widow Cooke summoned two youths, Francis Dooly and Peter Lowry, for throwing stones and breaking six panes of glass in her window and some delph on her dresser. She said Dooly threw the stones and Lowry was just in his company. Evidence was given that she had been imprisoned previously for theft and should not be believed. Dooly was ordered to pay 2 shillings compensation and given a caution.

### **Eviction**

The Widow Cooke's eviction saga began at Tulska Petty Sessions in November 1888 when Fr. Joseph Egan sued her for possession of his Corbally property. It was claimed she owed £82 in rent arrears and had been served with an 'eviction-made-easy' order in April. The Land Law (Ireland) Act 1887 or 'Balfour Act' had streamlined the eviction process and reduced the time in which tenants could appeal. Fr. Egan's agent, Timothy Rorke (who was chairman of Strokestown Poor Law Union) said the land had been left idle for the previous five years and that Mrs Cooke had rejected his suggestions on how to resolve the matter. The widow claimed to have paid the agent £79 over the previous five years. However, the bench gave a decree for possession to Fr. Egan.

On the morning of November 27<sup>th</sup>, the sheriff's bailiff, John Cooney from Roscommon Town accompanied by Tusk based Sergeant Fitzsimons and two constables carried out the eviction of Widow Cooke and her effects. She constructed a makeshift shelter with her broken furniture against a nearby stone wall. The Tusk branch of the National League met the following Sunday and offered to erect a house away from her land but she refused to leave her shelter. Newspaper columnists suggested that were it not for her eccentricities, Mrs Cooke would have been offered more assistance.

## **Protests**

Representatives of seven local branches of the National League meet in Strokestown on December 21<sup>st</sup> and agreed to support a Tusk branch protest demonstration on the following Sunday. As feared by the organisers, the demonstration was 'proclaimed' (banned by the authorities). People on their way to Mass were met by the sight of two District Inspectors and fifty police in the village. However, there was no attempt to hold the meeting as word had come from Fr. Egan that a settlement was possible. Meanwhile Widow Cooke spent Christmas on the roadside.

When the promised settlement did not materialise, the Tusk protest meeting was re-arranged for Sunday, January 13<sup>th</sup>, 1889. However, on January 8<sup>th</sup> about fifty youths and some members of the Tusk branch took matters into their own hands by proceeding to Corbally, accompanied by a band, to erect a hut for Widow Cooke on a site given by Joseph Phibbs. While the hut was being built, the Roscommon head-constable arrived with about twenty policemen and ordered them to fix bayonets. They then advanced, thrusting the bayonets towards the crowd. After driving the people away, the constabulary proceeded to undo part of the hut before leaving.

Predictably, the Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> meeting was banned, but instead of one large demonstration in Tusk, the organisers arranged for meetings to take place at different locations to baffle the police and spread their resources thinly. Word was passed round quietly on Sunday morning on where to assemble. With the police guarding the approach roads into Tusk, scouts directed the people across fields to Cloonrane, Foxborough and the Hill of Carns where National League leaders made speeches condemning the eviction. At Foxborough, the local justice of the peace, Robert French was strongly condemned for having imposed a fine of 22 shillings on Pat Brennan for bringing straw for the roof of Mrs Cooke's hut.

## **Prosecutions**

The *Roscommon Messenger* carried an account of the Coercion Crimes Act Court sitting at Tusk on Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> of February 1889 before Resident Magistrates John T. Dillon (a native of Mount Dillon, Curraghroe) and William F. Purcell when fifteen men were charged in connection with Widow Cooke's eviction. Peter McDermott (Cloonartmore), John Flannery (Ogulla), Andrew Egan (Corrigeen), Patrick Clabby (Derryphatten), Matthew Donovan (Killukin), James Rogers, Connor Keigher (Lissacurkia), John Tiernan (Derryquirk), Thomas Flanagan (Clooncor), Thomas Croghan (Carrowgarve), James Tiernan (Derryquirk), Thomas Dockery (Ardikillan), John Tully (Cloonakilla), Daniel Shannon (Camogue) and Peter Shanagher (Ardkeenagh) were charged that "*each of them, on divers dates in the month of December 1888 and January 1889 did at Tusk, a proclaimed district, with other persons, unlawfully take part in a criminal conspiracy.*" The law they were charged under was the Criminal Law and Procedure (Ireland) Act 1887. The aim of the Act was to stop boycotts and



the intimidation of so-called ‘land-grabbers’ and prevent unlawful assemblies. Juries were not allowed to hear cases brought under the Act.

Among those who crammed into “*the very narrow limits of the place dignified by the name of a court*” were the landlord, Fr. Joseph Egan with his agent, Timothy Rorke, Fr. John O’Brien, Tusk, Luke Hayden, MP and several Land League branch officers from Tusk and the surrounding area. The whole day was taken up with evidence from Sergeant Joseph Fitzsimons who gave details of who attended the meetings of the Tusk Land League branch and his efforts to stop the building of Mrs Cooke’s hut. Cross-examination by solicitor Farrell McDonnell on behalf of the defendants had not concluded when the court adjourned until Monday, February 25<sup>th</sup>. There was a large police presence, but the day passed off without any disturbance.

When the trial resumed, the cross-examination of Sergeant Fitzsimons continued. The questioning by the Crown Solicitor, Joseph Burke was to prove the defendants had formed a conspiracy by using the sergeant’s notebook observations while the defence tried to cast doubt on the accuracy of his evidence. When cross examined, inaccuracies and inconsistencies were also found in the notes of two Tusk constables. Joseph Phibbs gave evidence that he gave permission to Peter McDermott to erect a hut on his land for Mrs Cooke. Prior to the eviction, Phibbs said he had a discussion with Timothy Rorke and wrote to Fr. Egan with an offer to take the farm provided Mrs Cooke was allowed to remain in her house with a small garden, which would become his after her death, but nothing came of it. It also emerged from his evidence that the widow’s hut had been re-erected after the fracas of January 8<sup>th</sup> and she was living in it. The magistrates adjourned the hearing until the next day while they considered their verdict.

When the court resumed, the magistrates convicted fourteen of the defendants and imposed the following jail sentences: Peter McDermott, John Flannery, Patrick Clabby and Matthew Donovan – two months each; James Rogers, Conor Keigher, Thomas Flanagan, Thomas Dockery, Daniel Shannon and Peter Shanagher – five week each; John Tiernan, Thomas Croghan, James Tiernan, John Tully – three weeks each, increased to a month and a day to enable them to appeal to Boyle Quarter Sessions in April. Andrew Egan was found not guilty. He offered to take the place of Thomas Dockery, who was in bad health, and go to jail.

The Tusk men appealed their sentences to Boyle Quarter Sessions on April 6<sup>th</sup> but were unsuccessful except for Thomas Croghan who was acquitted. Judge William O’Connor Morris confirmed the original sentences imposed on the remaining thirteen. They were taken into custody and brought to Sligo Jail by train that night, escorted by a large police force. Several supporters from Tusk were present to cheer and wish them God-speed on their way.

### **Aftermath**

At the end of March 1889, Timothy Rorke was voted out as chairman of Strokestown Union. Among the guardians who opposed him was Joseph Phibbs. Rorke’s involvement in the Widow Cooke’s eviction was mentioned many times before the vote was taken.

April 14<sup>th</sup> – At a meeting of the Tusk National League branch, members were unanimous that the tillage of the prisoners should be done in their absence. The meeting was then adjourned due to the unexpected death of Joseph McDermott, son of Peter McDermott, one of prisoners in Sligo Jail, who was unable to attend his son’s funeral.

April 25<sup>th</sup> – James Tiernan, John Tiernan and John Tully were released. As they approached Tusk, they were met with torchlights, cheers and singing of national airs.

May 3<sup>rd</sup> - Patrick Clabby, Matthew Donovan, James Rogers, Conor Keigher, Thomas Flanagan, Thomas Dockery, Daniel Shannon and Peter Shanagher were welcomed at Boyle train station by a large contingent from Tusk and proceeded home with a green banner flying on the first car. Mr & Mrs Dominick Morris, Rathallen Cross, treated them to a meal on their way to Tusk where they were greeted by numerous illuminations despite the severity of the night.

May 18<sup>th</sup> – the *Roscommon Herald* reported that Mrs Cooke had moved back into her former home and had tilled the garden.

May 23<sup>rd</sup> – In the House of Commons, Luke Hayden M.P. asked Arthur Balfour, Chief Secretary for Ireland, by whose directions Widow Cooke's hut was demolished by the constabulary. In his replay, Balfour said a disorderly crowd of 150 persons assembled to intimidate a tenant who had taken an evicted farm. During the disturbance, a small portion of the hut was thrown down by the police.

June 4<sup>th</sup> – Peter McDermott and John Flannery were released and arrived in Boyle to a rapturous reception. Tusk Fife & Drum band travelled on a brake followed by seven cars with friends of the prisoners. They were welcomed and entertained by *Roscommon Herald* editor Jasper Tully who was their prison comrade up to a few days previously. At Rathallen Cross, Dominick Morris again

served refreshments to the whole party. The procession of cars, headed by three horse riders dressed in Gaelic costumes, arrived in Elphin where they were met by the Killina Fife & Drum band along with the Tusk Lord Edwards football team. Torchlights and bonfires were ablaze all the way from Clooneyquinn into Tusk and ended with a rousing performance by the combined bands in the village.

February 12<sup>th</sup>, 1910 – Bridget Cooke, widow, from Tusk died in Strokestown Workhouse. Her reported age was 70 years. It is not known how long or what her conditions were like at Corbally before entering the Workhouse at Cloonslanor. Neither do we know when exactly she became an inmate there other than she is recorded as having made a complaint against a Workhouse nurse in September 1902. Her death certificate stated she had extensive burns to the scalp and face and suffered from heart disease for some years. These injuries sum up the very difficult and sad life that fate had laid out for Bridget Cooke.◊

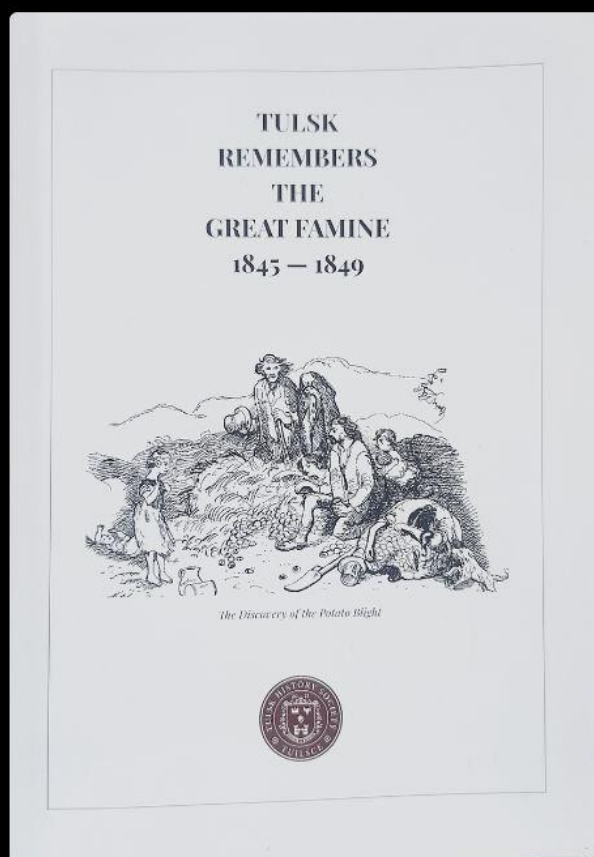


*Arthur Balfour, Chief Secretary of Ireland  
from 1887-1891*

## Tulsk Remembers the Great Famine 1845-1849

Our Heritage Week event took place on Sunday, 24 August, with a three-part programme commemorating the Great Famine in the parish.

At 12.30pm in Tulsk Cemetery THS unveiled a memorial to parishioners who suffered, died, or were forced to emigrate during *An Gorta Mór*. At 1pm, in the Macra Hall, our Famine publication was launched by Cathaoirleach Liam Callaghan. Later, at 2.30pm, a second memorial was unveiled in Baslick Cemetery to honour those of that district who also fell victim to those harsh times. We were delighted to welcome Councillors Sean Moylan, Nigel Dineen, and Ruth Conboy, who joined the Cathaoirleach in marking the occasion at both unveilings. We also extend thanks to Piers O'Connor Nash for his thoughtful words at Baslick, to Michael Carney of Carney Memorials (Portahard, Tibohine) who kindly sponsored the event, to Roscommon County Council for their support, to both cemetery committees, Ollie Flattery, Fr Liam Devine (who blessed the memorials), and Tulsk Macra Hall and committee. Above all, we acknowledge the dedication of our own members, whose work in preparation and on the day made the entire event possible. Copies of our Famine book are available in local outlets (see advert below), a read of which will only add to the moment of reflection you take when visiting the monuments. At 180 years remove, the Famine still stands as one of the defining experiences in our parish history.◊



## OUR NEW BOOK IS OUT NOW

*TULSK REMEMBERS  
THE GREAT FAMINE  
1845-1849*

### AVAILABLE AT:

Tulsk: Rathcroghan Visitor Centre,  
Conway's Butchers, O'Connor's Shop, Tulsk  
Laundry  
Strokestown: Strokestown National Famine  
Museum, Dawn till Dusk  
Elphin: Glancy's  
Frenchpark: Mitchell's  
Castlerea: Mulvihill's

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**PRICE €10**



Cathaoirleach Liam Callaghan launches book



Baslick



Tusk

# Heritage Week 2025



Piers O'Connor Nash at Baslick



Cllr Dineen unveils plaque at Baslick



THS Secretary Mike Lennon



Chairperson Eileen Beirne

## THS Photo Feature



**TULSK REMEMBERS THE GREAT FAMINE**  
NATIONAL HERITAGE WEEK 2025

JOIN **TULSK HISTORY SOCIETY** AS WE REMEMBER THE GREAT IRISH FAMINE IN TULSK PARISH

**SUNDAY 24<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST**

- Memorial Unveiling - Tusk Cemetery 12.30p
- Publication Launch - Tusk Macra Hall 1.00p
- Memorial Unveiling - Baslick Cemetery 2.30

@HISTORYTULSK@GMAIL.CO



Cllr Moylan unveils Tusk plaque



Fr Liam Devine blessed both plaques

## Tusk remembers the Great Famine 1845-1849



Four local councillors incl. Cllr Ruth Conboy



## **JOHN REDMOND'S SPEECH IN TULSK IN 1903** compiled by Jody Moylan

**The outdoor meeting in Tusk in October 1903 by the leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party brought thousands into the village. In this feature article about the event we begin with a modern summary, followed by the full original *Evening Irish Times* report, re-set for clarity. We conclude with a glossary of key terms and protagonists (in attendance and mentioned).**

In October 1903, just months after the passing of the Wyndham Land Act, John Redmond, M.P., leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party, came to Tusk to address a vast outdoor meeting. As the report printed below makes clear, thousands of people gathered from across the district to hear him speak from a platform erected in the village street, alongside fellow M.P. John P. Hayden and other national figures.



*Redmond at one of his many public rallies*

Redmond began by praising the new Land Act as “the greatest measure of land reform ever passed” in Westminster, but he told his Tusk audience that the real test of the Act’s success would be in Connaught. In Leinster and Ulster, prosperous tenants could purchase their farms and prosper, but in the west the land system was wholly different. Rich grazing plains lay in the hands of a few graziers, while the poor were confined to marginal bog and mountain plots. Giving such families ownership of their tiny holdings, he said, would not solve the problem; the only answer was to break up the great ranches, enlarge small farms, and redistribute the land.

Redmond placed particular emphasis on the role of the Congested Districts Board, the body tasked with improving conditions in the west. The Board, he argued, should be granted compulsory purchase powers to acquire estates and reorganise them, and its membership should be strengthened by adding men directly representative of the people. He welcomed the appointment of Sir Antony MacDonnell, an Irish Catholic reformer newly installed as Under-Secretary for Ireland, but warned this alone would not suffice without real government commitment.

Redmond also turned his attention to the ongoing evictions on the De Freyne estate in Frenchpark. He condemned those actions as cruel and backward-looking at a time when Ireland was embracing conciliation and compromise. Such actions, he warned, threatened to destroy the fragile peace that land reform had created.

Finally, Redmond widened his focus to the state of politics in Westminster. With the Liberal and Conservative parties divided and weakened, he argued that the Irish Parliamentary Party, strong and united, would soon hold the balance of power. With discipline and unity, he told his Tusk audience, the time was approaching to raise the banner of Home Rule once again and secure an Irish Parliament in Dublin, welcomed by all creeds and classes.

# The Evening Irish Times.

VOL. XLV.—NO. 14,439.

DUBLIN, MONDAY, OCTOBER 12, 1903.

PRICE ONE PENNY.

## MR JOHN REDMOND AT TULSK

### LAND PURCHASE IN CONNAUGHT.

#### STATE OF POLITICAL PARTIES (FROM OUR REPORTER)

On Saturday evening, 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 Tusk yesterday.

Mr. Redmond, Mr. Hayden, and a large party drove over from Roscommon to Tusk, where a platform had been erected in the public street, around which a crowd numbering between two and three thousand people representing all the surrounding districts had assembled. Mr. Redmond was met by Mr. John Fitzgibbon, of Castlerea, 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 his 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 hands 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 sense and 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 distinct and different. There was the 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 these great convulsions of nature which in other hands 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 in Ireland practically without human habitation. He believed that in the richest part of this land there was only about eight human habitations to the square mile, and as the land decreased in value the habitats increased, until on the edge of the bogs or the 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 of the people who tilled it. The ownership of the land was essential for the development of industry and agriculture, and for the wellbeing and the comfort and the happiness of the people. (Hear, hear.) But in Connaught it was not a question of wellbeing or comfort; it was a question of life or death. The success or failure of this Land Act in settling the Irish land question would depend absolutely upon its success or its failure in Connaught. (Hear, hear, and cheers) And when he saw great bodies of well-to-do tenants in some of the richest parts of Ireland buy their land in the province of Leinster he was glad of it, and if they chose to pay what most people would consider an extravagant price, well he supposed they knew their own business and must be allowed to lie on the beds they made; but what he said was that no number of sales of that character throughout Ireland could settle the land question. If all the estates of that kind in Ulster and Leinster were sold tomorrow the land question would remain and the land war would go on so long as the condition of Connaught remained unchanged. The facts of the situation in Connaught were simple in the extreme. There was sufficient land to support in comfort and decency

the whole population of Connaught, but this land was aggregated in the hands of a small ring of graziers. (Voices – ‘Down with them’). While the people were huddled together on the bog and mountain in squalor and misery. The problem elsewhere was to give the people the ownership of the land they tilled; but in a large part of Connaught if you gave the people their present holdings for nothing they still would be little better off and could not live out of the land. (Cheers.) The problem, therefore, in Connaught was the breaking up of those grass ranches, the enlargement of the holdings, and the redistribution of the land and population. (Hear, hear.) Now, he asked himself would the new Land Act accomplish this. If it did not accomplish this then whatever it did elsewhere in Ireland, it failed in its main object of settling the land problem and ending the war.

#### **COMPULSORY POWERS FOR THE CONGESTED DISTRICTS BOARD**

It would be perfectly easy in the next session of Parliament or in the following session, whatever party was in power, to obtain compulsory purchase within the province of Connaught. Remember that in 1895 the Congested Districts Board unanimously demanded

compulsory power, and it was not given last session only because Mr. Wyndham declared the inducements put into the bill would make every landlord sell; but if the congested districts could not be settled without compulsory purchase there would not be the slightest difficulty in obtaining those powers. The success of the Act in the province of Connaught would depend of course almost altogether on its administration by the Congested Districts Board, and that led him to consider the question whether the constitution of the Board at present was sufficiently strong to enable it to carry this weight on its shoulders. Well now his belief was that it was not. He would make no attack on the Board because he knew it had done good work and had the best intentions, and that they had men on it like the Bishop of Raphoe and Father O'Hara and some others who were exceedingly anxious for the settlement of this question, but the first essential was to strengthen the *personnel* of the Board. (Hear, hear, and cheers.) He welcomed most heartily the appointment of Sir Antony MacDonnell as a member of the Congested Districts Board, but they had been given clearly to understand when he was



appointed that he was appointed as an *ex-officio* member, and that the vacancy created by the disappearance of Mr. Wrench would be filled up by the appointment of an additional man. He himself urged both publicly and privately that this vacancy should be filled by the appointment of some man who could be held to be representative of the people. After pointing out that Sir Anthony MacDonnell had been appointed to succeed Mr. Wrench and that they had been told there was now no vacancy upon the board, he urged that some member of it who did not attend regularly should be induced to retire and some man elected directly as a representative of the people. In his judgement on this congested districts question Mr. Wyndham was thoroughly in earnest, and he must say the same of Sir Anthony MacDonnell.

#### **DE FREYNE ESTATE**

Passing from this point to the evictions on the De Freyne estate, he said with all their hopes of the settlement of the land question, and in the midst of the magnificent spirit of conciliation shown all over Ireland, it was a little heartbreaking to come down to County Roscommon and find an eviction campaign in full swing. (Groans.) At this moment, if it were not so cruel and heartrending, it

would seem almost ludicrous that such a campaign should be set on foot. When the spirit of conciliation and forbearance were on foot, it was a shame and a scandal. They might be told that the general body of the landlords were not responsible. Let him say this to them, however – they were held responsible in part, and never let them forget it, and they were made to suffer in the past for the sins of a comparatively small number of their own class; and he would address a warning to the Irish landlords and to the Irish Government, and would urge them between them to take such steps as might be necessary to prevent a few landlords breaking the blessed peace that prevailed at this moment and breaking up the prospects that were opening before Ireland. (Cheers.)

#### **STATE OF POLITICAL PARTIES**

On the general question they had good grounds for hope and confidence. Retribution and confusion had overtaken both the English parties, who had been wont in the past to sneer at Irish difficulties. The Liberal party had been overtaken by confusion, and the Tory, with its majority of 150 in the House of Commons, was now so utterly shattered and broken that he believed they would

not last in power a week after Parliament assembled unless they were kept there by the Irish votes. Now, when these parties were divided and weak and hopeless the Irish party was solid. (Hear, hear.) The latest attempt to create disunity in Ireland was yesterday covered with disaster and disgrace. Amid the wreck of English parties, the position of the Irish party alone was impregnable. In all probability the Irish party in a very short time would hold the balance of power in the English Parliament, and the time was therefore at hand for the raising once more the banner of Home Rule with firmness, moderation, and strong good sense, and above all with unity, they would in a comparatively short time see an Irish Parliament once sitting in Dublin, an Irish Parliament sitting in this country with the consent of all English parties, and welcomed here with enthusiasm by all classes and creeds of Irishmen. (Cheers.) Mr. John P. Hayden, M.P., spoke of the unity of the Parliamentary Party, condemned the re-opening of an eviction campaign in Roscommon and urged the strengthening of the national organization. Other speakers followed, and the meeting concluded.

## GLOSSARY – REDMOND IN TULSK

### Main Speakers & National Leaders

- **John Redmond, M.P.** – Leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP) from 1900–1918. Advocated conciliation with Britain, land reform, and ultimately Home Rule.
- **John P. Hayden, M.P.** – Roscommon-born nationalist politician, ally of Redmond, and M.P. for South Roscommon. Also a newspaper proprietor (the *Westmeath Examiner*).
- **John Fitzgibbon (Castlerea)** – Local nationalist leader who presided at the Tusk meeting. Not an M.P., but a prominent figure in Roscommon politics and the land question in Connaught.

### Administration & Land Reform

- **Sir Antony (Anthony) MacDonnell** – Irish Catholic civil servant, formerly of the Indian Civil Service; became Under-Secretary for Ireland in 1902. Reform-minded, sympathetic to Home Rule, and key architect of the 1903 Wyndham Land Act.
- **George Wyndham** – Conservative Chief Secretary for Ireland (1900–1905). Brought in the 1903 Land Act with Redmond's cooperation. Not at Tusk but mentioned frequently in connection with the legislation.

### Land & Estates

- **Lord De Freyne (Charles French, 4th Baron De Freyne)** – Major Roscommon landlord whose Frenchpark estate was the site of notorious evictions at this time, even as land reform was being celebrated. His actions became symbolic of landlord inflexibility.
- **The Graziers** – Wealthy leaseholders who monopolised large tracts of rich grazing land in Connaught, while poorer tenants were forced onto marginal (usually poor) land.

### Congested Districts Board

- Founded 1891, the CDB was tasked with alleviating poverty in the west, buying up estates, and resettling tenants. Members mentioned include the Bishop of Raphoe and Father O'Hara, who were respected nationalist clerics pushing for reform.

### Political Parties

- The **Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP)** – United under Redmond since 1900 (after the 'Parnell split' of 1890), the new IPP sought land reform and Home Rule.
- The **Liberals** and **Conservatives (Tories)** – The two main British parties were weakened by division at the time, which gave the IPP leverage at Westminster.◇

## Lines Written on a Cattle Drive in the Days of the Land Agitation

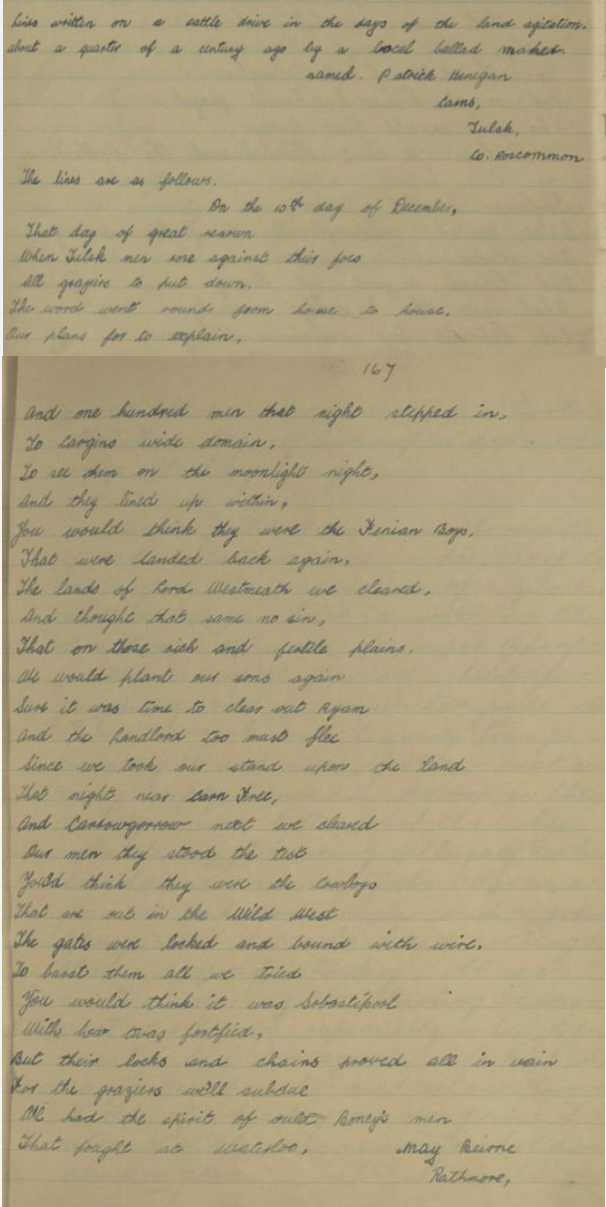
**From the Duchas Folklore Collection** The Schools' Collection, Volume 0252, Page 166

Clashaganny School      Collector: May Beirne      Informant: Patrick Henigan      (circa 1937)

Lines written on a cattle drive in the days of the land agitation, about a quarter of a century ago by a local ballad maker named Patrick Henigan Carns, Tusk, Co. Roscommon.

The lines are as follows.

On the 10th day of December,  
That day of great renown  
When Tusk men rose against their foes  
All graziers to put down.  
The word went round from house to house  
Our plans for to explain,  
And one hundred men that night stepped in,  
To Cargins wide domain,  
To see them on the moonlight night,  
And they lined up within,  
You would think they were the Fenian Boys,  
That were landed back again,  
The lands of Lord Westmeath we cleared,  
And thought that same no sin,  
That on those rich and fertile plains,  
We would plant our sons again  
Sure it was time to clear out Ryam  
And the Landlord too must flee  
Since we took our stand upon the land  
That night near Carn Free,  
And Carrowgorrow next we cleared  
Our men they stood the test  
You'd think they were the cowboys  
That are out in the Wild West  
The gates were locked and bound with wire,  
To burst them all we tried  
You would think it was Sebastopol  
With how twas fortified,  
But their locks and chains proved all in vain  
For the graziers we'll subdue  
We had the spirit of ould Boney's men  
That fought at Waterloo. ♦



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That fought at Waterloo, May Beirne  
Rathmore,

This poem refers to events about the year 1910 and attempts to get large cattle farmers off the land (grazers) in an attempt to divide the estates amongst local small-holders

Sebastopol was a famed fortress during the Crimean War (1853-56)

‘ould Boney’ refers to Napoleon Bonaparte, who famously fought the British Army at Waterloo in 1815



## Ancient Diocese of Baslick by Manus Tiernan

The parish of Baslick was amalgamated with the parish of Ogulla to become the Catholic Parish of Tusk in the year 1868. Tusk Parish would be central in the ancient territory of Maigh Ai where the great St. Patrick preached between 433- 434AD. During this period he set up a church at Baslick, possibly founded by the Franks, (name given to people that came to Ireland with Patrick) and later uplifted it to become a diocese that included most of west Roscommon as we know it today.

O'Donovan, in his letters written from Castlereagh in 1838 says the following: "The parish of Baslick was anciently under the patronage of St. Sacel, bishop, but he is recognised no longer, though his memory seems to have been annually commemorated in the time of Colgan (died 1658). As we learn from the following notice of this church in 'Iraidis Thaumaturgae' published in 1647, Page 177. 'Baslic Mor is a parish church in the diocese of Ailifinn, in the county and deanery of Siol Murry as the catalogue of the churches of that diocese shows, which was sent us by the most venerable bishop of the place Brother Boetius Aegan and there the birthday (date of death) of St. Sacel is celebrated on August 1<sup>st</sup> according to Marian O'Gorman, Cathal Maguire and the Martyrology of Donegal.' "



The following entry in the Tripartite records the foundation of the church of Baslick. "Patrick went into Dag Airtig and blessed a place namely, Telach na Cloch (The hill of the stones) and then he went into Drummat Ciarraige. There he found two brothers namely, Bibar and Lochru; two sons of the Ciarraige, fighting with swords about who would rule after their father's death. Patrick stayed their hands and their hands grew stiff about their swords so they were unable to stretch them forth or to lower them. Patrick said to them "sit ye" and he blessed them and made peace between them and they gave the land to Patrick for the sake of their father's soul and there Patrick founded a church wherein there is Conu, the wright, brother of bishop Sacellus, namely of Baslick."

The foundation of the parish of Baslick is recorded in the Book of Armagh in almost the same words as the Tripartite. Having recorded how Patrick's Franks left him at Oran fifteen brethren (or perhaps five) and one sister - and how

only the names of two of the brethren were known to him viz: Bernicius and Henricus and of the sister, Nitria.

Tirechán, a bishop in the 7<sup>th</sup> century Ireland A.D. writing in his 'Collectanea' on the life of St. Patrick continues: "Bernicius and Henricus and Nitria the sister of the bishop(?)-- and many places are given of which I know the name on none, save one wherein Baslick of the Saints, because St. Patrick indicated the place so that they could know it, and with his finger pointed out Mount Garadh. They had asked him to select a site for them (for a church) from the sites they had found and Cethicus founded the church of Brergaradh (Oran)". In this passage it is stated that while it was Cethicus who founded the church of Oran, it was the Franks who founded the church of Baslick. By founding churches just a few miles apart, ordaining and appointing local people, Patrick was ensuring that Christianity was taking root. This philosophy was new in the early Christian Church.

When the parish of Baslick had been founded for some time, St. Patrick raised it to the dignity of a diocese and appointed St. Sacellus; its first bishop who he had brought to Rome to be ordained as a priest. Sacellus was brother of St. Cona who was the first parish priest of the church of Kilroddan in the townland of Drummod, in the parish of Loughglynn. These two facts appear from the following passage in the Book of Armagh:

"And the brothers sat down as Patrick said, and they gave up the field (of contention) and the goods of their father to Patrick and to the God of Heaven, and he, Patrick founded a church there (in the townland of Drummod which was afterwards called Kilroddan) and in that place is Cona (as first P.P.) the wright who is brother of the bishop Sacellus of Baslick".

When back in Ireland and Maigh Ai, Sacellus who was still a priest at the time ordained priests in the absence of a bishop which was strictly forbidden by Canon Law and when Patrick heard of this after he had become bishop he said, 'I have appointed you Bishop of Baslick but your diocese will not be great.' Hence, through the course of time Baslick was consumed into the diocese of Elphin.

In appointing St. Sacellus as first bishop of the new diocese of Baslick, we do not to suppose that St. Patrick superseded the Franks. It is not likely that he would have placed St. Sacellus over those who had borne the heat of the burden of the day, having accompanied Patrick far from their native land for the sake of the cross of Christ. It is probable that it was only after the Franks.

Bernicius, and Henricius had passed to their reward or had been transferred elsewhere, that the diocese of Baslick was founded and St. Sacellus appointed first bishop.

In his book *St. Patrick and the Parish of Kilkeevan*, Cannon Timothy Hurley writes: "St. Patrick found the little diocese of Baslick appointing St. Sacellus the first bishop thereof. This diocese included the parish of Kilkeevan, and its cathedral was the church of Cloonkeen, (outside Castlerea) around the year 450 AD." The Cannon also states that the parish and church of Baslick were founded in 435 AD and that the Saint placed the Franks, Bernicus and Henricius in charge. The book also outlines that the Abbot St. Cormack died at Baslick in the year 800 AD. In the year 816 AD Abbot Sedulius, Bishop of Roscommon died at Baslick. Gille-na Naomh McArthur O'Bruin, Archdeacon of Roscommon, died here in 1234 (*Annals of Boyle*).

It would appear that Baslick maintained its religious importance right up to the end of the Middle Ages - a period covering centuries.◇



*The picturesque Baslick Cemetery today*





# THIS DAY TRIP 2025

On Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> July we went away on our now annual day trip, this time heading to the Co. Galway town of Portumna and visiting the old restored workhouse, as well as the wonderful Portumna Castle and Gardens. We began the day by setting off from our office at Tusk Macra Hall at 9.30am by mini-bus – thankfully it was one of the nicest days of the month weather-wise, so it promised to be a good day ahead. Once we arrived at Portumna, about an hour and a half away, we enjoyed some breakfast at the Cafe Rose, and very nice it was too!

## A town of great local history

Portumna's picturesque location at the top of Lough Derg makes it one of the nicest towns in Galway but, like many Irish towns, it has a tragic past. We learned this at the brilliantly restored Famine-era workhouse. Now called 'The Irish Workhouse Centre,' it opened in 1852 to house 600 destitute souls, whose treatment was nothing short of inhumane by today's standards. After decades of use it fell into dereliction after Independence. Restoration began in 1999 and in 2011 it opened to the public. THS enjoyed a very informative and moving tour.

A town of great local history, Portumna Castle and Gardens was just a short hop away. After sandwiches at the castle café we took another excellent tour. Built in the early 1600s by the fourth earl of Clanricarde, the big fortification served as the de Burgo family power base for centuries. A fire in 1826 left it a roofless shell until the state began restoring it in the 1960s. Our tour guide really brought the story of the castle and the de Burgo family to life.

Our day of sightseeing was capped off by a walk through the beautiful walled gardens and with the weather holding up it all made for Portumna being a great choice for this year's day out.

Left – some pictures from the day



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## *TULSK HISTORY SOCIETY*

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### *Membership*

*We hope you have enjoyed the September 2025 issue 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. For those wishing to read our latest Tusk Morning Howl; you can do so by visiting our website at ***tulskhs.com***. Until next time; enjoy the Autumn season as we all look forward to our next, Christmas edition!*

