

íRísh herítage Oídhreacht Ghaelach

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The Independent Magazine of Manchester Irish Education Group and The Irish World Heritage Centre

Irish Studies scene in Britain

Special Children's Competition

The Celts

Is Your Name Gallagher ?

**Mionna Na Bliana: The Months
of the Year**

Views of Old Ireland

**Some Common First Names
and their Irish Forms**

The Great Famine Project

On Ogham Stones

The Great Dog Fair of Limerick

**Irish Dimensions in History in
the New National Curriculum**

The Tailtean Games



Chief Hollis Roberts. Irish and Choctaw Indian. Photo by Danny Claffey

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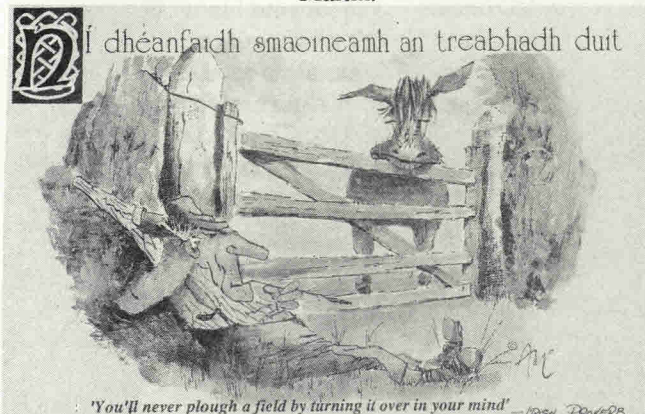
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The cartoon is gentle encouragement to all our readers that we want to publish your stories, poems, articles on history, social interest etc. We would particularly welcome contributions in Irish.

This magazine is aimed at promoting the positive aspects of the Irish and Irish Culture and to be a voice for the Irish away from "Home" and there are untold millions of us.

The group of people that produce *Irish Heritage* do so in their own time on a voluntary basis. Profits, (if any, for this is not our aim) will go to promoting Irish culture particularly with Irish Youth abroad, and giving others an insight into our Culture. This work will be channelled through the Manchester Irish Education Group which is now a Registered charity (Reg. No. 1000876)

If you would like to help the Charity or the Magazine you would be most welcome. The group can be contacted at the above address where we meet on the second Monday of every month.

Athbhliain faoi mhaise dhaoibh go léir.

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Pat O'Shea and a Book for All Ages

By Anna Martin

A good book is still one of life's keenest pleasures and "The Hounds of The Morrigan" by Pat O'Shea is such a one. As this article is mainly about the author, I'll let you discover the book for yourselves but I guarantee you, if you like reading or being read to, it doesn't matter whether you are a tot or a Senior Citizen, you'll enjoy it.

It is a wonderful story, set in the rural Ireland of the 30's and 40's and relating the adventures of brother and sister, Pidge and Brigit, as they take on the might of the Morrigan (the mythological Irish three-in-one goddess of evil) in order to save the world from ruin. The tale is a magical weave of old and new, innocence and cunning, humour and pathos, and filled with enthralling characters, human, animal and legendary, some working to help the children succeed in their formidable task and others doing their evil best to prevent them.

The modern manifestations of the evil Morrigan, three rather glamorous females, live in a greenhouse, ride around on a Harley Davidson and are actually quite amusing. The children, Pidge and Brigit, have a built-in-safeguard (I won't tell you what!) against the horrible hounds who pursue them. The gruesome monster, Glomach, at one stage starts crying for his mammy!

When Pidge and Brigit are in most danger, they are saved by seemingly chance happenings such as the Morrigan's treading on a hound's toe or the precious pebble landing on the head of a friendly frog with the delightful name of Pudeneen Whelan and an inner Dublin city accent! What kind of person could create such wonderful creatures?

The author turned out to be entirely in keeping with her creations. She has the air and appearance of a benevolent fairy with a halo of white hair surrounding a rosy childlike countenance and she is full of



amusing yarns and shrewd observations. The Ireland Pat grew up in was a magical place where children could run free between town and countryside and meet the most extraordinary characters. When I asked Pat what she felt equipped her to write a children's book, she replied, "We've all been children. I've never left my childhood behind". She had a very happy childhood, she says. She was born in Galway in 1931, the youngest of five children and thoroughly spoilt. Galway and its environs have always been places of wonder and magic for her.

When she's away, they are always in her mind and she goes back there frequently for inspiration.

She was allowed to roam freely. Her companions came from all walks of life and she remembers one in particular, a boy called Vincent, her companion at Cregmore where she passed her summer holidays. She often spent time alone in the woods, singing to the fairies, as she thought. One day, when passing through the woods with Vincent, she said, "Listen to the fairies, Vincent!" and he answered deflatingly, "They're not

fairies, they're wood pigeons!" The same Vincent is probably the prototype for the prosaic Pidge in the novel.

As a child she devoured anything in print and remembers passing the time during long slow funeral processions reading books like "Treasure Island", "Little Women", "The Six-Fingered Glove" and her school reader, "Nature's Ploughman", smuggled into the car for the occasion. Other childhood favourites were the Bluebeard stories and the Beano and Dandy comics. She recalls haunting Kenny's Bookshop in Galway, a paradise where a child could browse, buy and swap books and the inspiration for the bookshop where Pidge finds the manuscript. She was a member of the town library which allowed members to take out two books at a time. She vividly recalls one occasion when, torn between three books, she succumbed to temptation and smuggled the extra one out in her knickers! Her mother found out and made her take it back again. I asked Pat about her favourite writers. Her favourite children's writer is the poet, John Masefield, with whom she feels an almost mystical bond. Pat told me that she had no idea what Masefield looked like and one night, as she was conversing with him in her head, she asked him to let her see what he really looked like. So convinced was she that he would grant her request that she felt extremely let down when there wasn't a picture of him in the next day's Sunday supplement. Shortly afterwards, however, a friend brought her a book of Jack Yeats's paintings which contained a portrait of Masefield!

Another writer she continually turns to for inspiration is the Russian writer, Mikhail Bulgakov. In particular, she enjoys "The Master and Margarita", a fantasy/comedy about the corruption of the populace of Moscow by the devil. As for Irish writers, Pat prefers those like James Stephens and Lady Gregory who write about ancient Irish legends and sagas but she also admires James Joyce, Mary Lavin and Flann O'Brien. Of modern Irish writers, she likes William Trevor and Molly Keane.

Pat herself is a member of the ancient O'Shiels clan, famous in legend and literature as the clan of Druids and Healers. Her father, however, was a master carpenter with an electrical bent. He invented what was arguably the first electric mousetrap and was probably the first person in Galway to own one of the new-fangled Marconi radios. Pat's relationship with her father

was warm and close though he was not overly demonstrative. The most influential person in her life was her mother, a gentle, college educated person who had once been a novice in a religious order in Boston and had had to leave because of ill-health. She always impressed on the children the importance of believing the best of others. "Never deny anyone's goodness", she would tell them. She died when Pat was only eleven.

Pat speaks with great affection of her childhood experiences and environment around Galway, so what led her to leave her homeland and settle in England? It seems Pat, at age sixteen, had notions of becoming a nun - too much Ingrid Bergman and the "Bells of St Mary's", she ruefully recalls. A Franciscan priest, Fr. Bertram, told her that, at sixteen, she was too young to know her own mind properly and advised her to go to her sister in England on holiday. She took his advice. In Kent, a fresh young lass like Pat "with plenty of lip" was regarded as something of an exotic. She fell in love at least once a month, was enjoying a new kind of life and trying out various types of jobs, including a stint in a bookshop, and decided to stay on for a bit.

Eventually, she gravitated towards the theatre which, she says, was her first real love. In 1967, she was awarded a bursary by the Arts Council, an achievement for a female in those days, and began writing plays. She wrote four one-act plays, two of which were performed at the Library Theatre in Manchester but never submitted for publication. Both plays are set in Manchester and show a rather cynical view of life you would not suspect in the author of the "Hounds". Pat does not agree with this diagnosis and says she regarded writing plays as a purely professional task.

Pat was deeply affected by the death at the age of thirty-two of her theatre director, Tony Colgate, and did not continue long in the theatre. She has written one short story, "The Wedding" which has been read on B.B.C. radio. A better known venture, perhaps, is her re-telling of one of the Finn cycle, "Finn Mac Cool and The Small Men of Deeds", a very amusing and beautifully illustrated tale which should be on everyone's bookshelf. It has been described by one well known reviewer, M. Gouch, as "a small masterpiece". Pat is reluctant for the present to comply with pleas from her publishers and devotees to do more of these wonderful tales. "I don't want just to re-

write other people's stories, I want to get out what is in my own head", she avers. But she hasn't closed the door.

My next question to Pat was, "Why Manchester?"

"Why not? It's an ideal setting for someone like me - not too big, not too small. It's a civilised size for a city. I'm not a great traveller. I'm happy here. I hate flying but have travelled to Northern Ireland. Lovely children there. Lovely old-fashioned manners." Pat and her partner, Geoff, live in Chorlton, in an old Victorian semi. Pat's son, Jimmy, her daughter-in-law, Sheena, and little granddaughter, Rose, live just round the corner and there are frequent family get-togethers with them and other young relatives.

So what next? It took Pat thirteen years to write "The Hounds of the Morrigan" and she will not be pressured into writing another novel in a hurry. Like Mark Twain, she believes in letting the story develop at its own pace. She is not interested in money as such although she is delighted to hear sales of the Italian translation of the book have topped a hundred thousand. The book has been translated into Danish and is currently being translated into Spanish. Several film companies have shown interest in acquiring the film rights and there is no doubt the story would make an excellent film.

Before I departed, having gone through several pots of tea in the interval, I asked Pat about her views on evil in the world. She says she has no particular philosophy about good and evil. She believes people are in general good though a lot of evil is done with the tongue. I'll end with the quotation she gave me from a book of old Irish proverbs:-

"Although the tongue has no bone in it, it often broke a person's head."

In the meantime, have a good read!

"The Hounds of The Morrigan" and "Finn Mac Cool and The Small Men of Deeds" are both published in hardback by O.U.P. and in paperback by Penquin Books they are available in all leading bookstores.

* Anna Martin is a tutor on the Manchester Irish Studies Course

The Irish Studies Scene in Britain: Perceptions and Progress

by Mary Hickman, Director of the Irish Studies Centre, Polytechnic of North London.

The Irish Studies scene is changing rapidly. Ten years ago in colleges such as my own, the Polytechnic of North London (PNL), there were hardly any courses with 'Irish' in the title; no lecturers with major responsibility in the area; nor was there any visible research programme with a perspective on Irish issues. Study of Ireland was taking place, but it was invisible, submerged in courses such as 'British and American Literature' which would have been incomplete without it. And of course many of the students and staff were first or second generation Irish born.

But great progress has been made. Apart from the Irish Studies Centre at PNL there is the Institute of Irish Studies (IIS) at the University of Liverpool and the British Association for Irish Studies (BAIS) has been formed, aimed at encouraging developments in all sectors of education. There are well established Adult Education classes in many cities. Manchester, notably, has given a lead in officially recognising the Irish as an ethnic minority and by the existence of the Manchester Irish Education Group. In London the ILEA Irish Working Party report has eventually been published, with significant recommendations for the development of Irish studies in schools and the youth service.

Where Irish Studies has been introduced it has involved the development of new, often highly innovatory curricula. At PNL for example, as well as traditional courses on Irish history, literature and politics, there are courses on the Irish in Britain, Women and Irish Society and Representations of Irishness.

Attempts to move Irish Studies higher up the agenda of curriculum change in the last decade have come from two main directions. On the one hand there are many Irish people who are either concerned about the absence of teaching about Ireland in the schools their children attend or who wish to reflect on their own experience of migration. The demands of these groups, essentially the migrants of the 40's and 50's and their children, have been through loose liaisons between the adult education sector and Irish community organisations. Both the journal 'Irish Studies in Britain' and the annual conference 'Irish Dimensions in British Education' at Soar Valley College, Leicester, have grown out of these developments.



Mary Hickman, Director of Irish Studies Centre, PNL

From this impulse sprang demands for educational change which entailed the demand that the Irish be recognised as an ethnic minority, subject to racism. Given the complexion of the race-relations debate and the particular nature of anti-Irishness in this country, these claims of Irish people are often resisted. What was also missing was any relevant and accessible route into Higher Education for those who took Irish Studies courses in the Adult Education Institutes. The development of the Irish Studies Centre at PNL can claim to represent this impulse for Irish Studies and is a unique example of Adult Education informing the development of Higher Education curricula.

On the other hand there have been various recent attempts to raise the profile of Irish Studies in Higher Education by academics, lent coherence and organisational muscle by the formation of BAIS. For this group the paramount need is for education to contribute to a better understanding between the 'two islands', by comparative study of history, politics and culture. The founding of the IIS at Liverpool University represents the first notable realisation of this aim.

These two strands of development then, rest on different perceptions of the need for and nature of Irish Studies in Britain. A couple of years ago there was some danger that the differences between the two groups of activists might jeopardise the whole enterprise. Happily there now seems to be a different, less embattled atmosphere, a greater sense of co-operation, a realisation that the strengths of each strand must be fused if progress is to be sustained.

What of the future? At PNL a curriculum relevant to the London Irish Community, traditionally Catholic and working class, is the first priority. This is much more than a process of cultural reinforcement. Education is an enabling process and we are proud that PNL has proportionally the highest number of women graduates of any higher education institute in the country and amongst the highest for ethnic minority and mature student access to higher education. Irish Studies has often formed the catalyst and confidence giver to bring Irish people into Higher Education. Once embarked on a degree course, all sorts of questions can emerge and different horizons are brought into view for the individual student.

However it is also obvious for the long term future of Irish Studies that it should attract a diverse student body. We approach this at PNL by offering Irish Studies units as part of other degrees.

As to whether Irish Studies can reach a more specifically British audience, these are still early days. We are beset by many prejudices, by no means all of them within the power of education to overcome. That is why it is necessary to begin where the interest already exists, for example among professional groups whose work gives rise to an interest in matters Irish. Teachers, housing workers and journalists are some of the people who have joined Irish Studies courses at PNL. Then there are young people who want to know about Northern Ireland. It is a fallacy to think that some carefully controlled, sanitised version of Irish Studies is what would attract a British audience. On the contrary, a curriculum that does not deal with the contradictions in the relationship between Britain and Ireland will have no chance of improving relations between these two countries.

Irish Studies can only be secured for the future if it can be established in all sectors of the education system. Crucial to this is the Joint Education Programme run by BAIS and the IIS. We at PNL are seeking this expansion by linking with local Further Education and Adult Education colleges to run courses and developing teaching materials for Irish Studies. The future of Irish Studies is some way from being 'unassailable' and is not one of unbroken success, but there is cause for optimism as Irish Studies is increasingly recognised as a legitimate subject area in Britain.

Special children's competition

by Linda Sever

We are running a special children's competition, for which the twelve prizes are brand new books from one of the major Irish publishers, Poolbeg Press.

Included in the set is "A Likely Story" by Mary Lavin, one of Ireland's foremost writers, which tells of the meeting between a young boy and the 'Little People'. There is also "The Long March" by Mayo author Michael Mullen, recounting the story of the march by O' Sullivan Beare and a thousand of his followers from Cork to O'Rourke's castle in Leitrim after the battle of Kinsale, through the eyes of two of the children. There is also a beautiful book of "Irish Myths and Tales for Young People" by Carolyn Swift containing fourteen of the most well-known legends, such as the "Children of Lir" and "Aengus and the Swan Princess". Brendan Ellis's Christmas book "Santa and the Starless Nights" is also included in this treasury of Irish books for children.

All you have to do to enter the competition is to answer the five questions below and complete the crossword. You **must** also be under thirteen years of age.

Questions taken from "The Poolbeg Children's Quiz Book" by Robert Duffy.

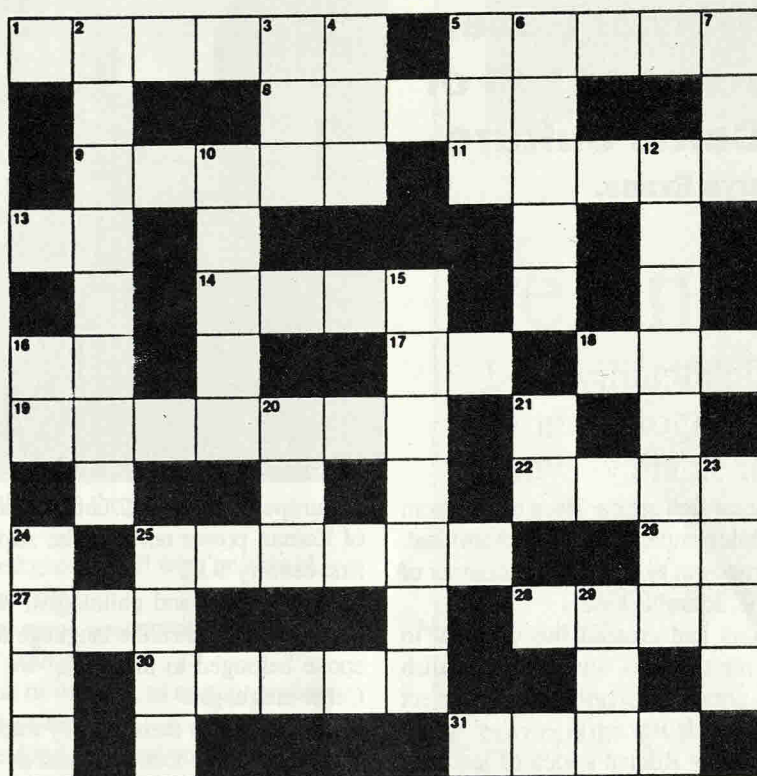
Please address all entries, for this free competition, to

Irish Heritage Magazine
Irish World Heritage Centre,
10 Queens Road,
Manchester M8 8UQ.

The closing date for the competition is
31 st. March 1991

Questions

1. Name the four provinces of Ireland.
2. In which county can you kiss the Blarney Stone?
3. Is Shannon the name of a river, lake, or county?
4. Name any two of the three Ulster counties that are not part of Northern Ireland.



ACROSS

1. North African desert (6)
5. People from Turkey(5)
8. Questioned(5)
9. Smallest county in Ireland(5)
- 11.Snake that counts (5)
- 13.Note that follows so (2)
- 14.Before tens and hundreds(4)
- 16.He, she or __ (2)
- 17.Male animal of cow family(2)
- 18.Gorilla, Chimp,Monkey (3)
- 19.Helsinki is its capital(7)
- 22.Food from animals(4)
- 25.Dog's swimming style(6)
- 26.Not yes(2)
- 27.As well(3)
- 28.Garden door(4)
- 30.Liffey,Amazon,Thames(5)
- 31.Walk with sore foot(4)

DOWN

2. Ocean (8)
3. Large rodent(3)
4. Tree(3)
5. Morning drink(3)
6. A cow has one(5)
7. The title of a knight(3)
- 10.Normal/customary(5)
- 12.Large animal with tusks and trunk (8)
- 15.Two year old.(7)
- 16.Whether (2)
- 20.Help(3)
- 21.I __,you are, she is (2)
- 23.Ten on your feet(4)
- 24.Remain(4)

Answers

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Your name

Address



The Warrior Race: The rise and fall of the Celtic Culture.

By Emrys Evans.



Julius Caesar first encountered troops from Britain while campaigning in Northern Gaul. And it turned out to be a close encounter of the most undesirable kind.

The Britons had crossed the Channel to fight as mercenaries with their Gaulish kinsmen, presenting Caesar with a perfect excuse to invade Britain.

But the mighty Roman's idea of teaching these impertinent islanders not to interfere with the might of Rome came woefully unstuck. His strategy of enhancing his political reputation by conquering this island on the north-western limits of the then-known world rebounded on him.

His invasion, in 55 B.C., badly underestimated the military strength and technology of the Britons. The terrifying war-chariots that greeted the Roman legions delivered a great blow to their Roman pride.

Realising that the campaign was turning out a more costly venture than he had originally imagined, Caesar returned to Gaul to nurse his wounded pride. To salvage what he could of his reputation from the blunder he proceeded to give the islanders and their island a bad name in his reports. Historians - but not archaeologists - have followed his example ever since.

These Britons, in reality, were far removed from the popular image of animal skin-clad, woad-painted savages who celebrated their hellish rites of human sacrifice at Stonehenge.

They were a highly sophisticated people with a remarkable standard of material and intellectual culture.

The archaeologist thinks of them in terms of material culture. He identifies them as an Iron-Age people who dominated vast areas

of Europe from 750 B.C. until the expansion of Roman power north of the Alps in the first century B.C.

To the linguist and philologist, however, they are Celts since the language that they spoke belonged to that group we call the Celtic languages.

The Celts began their journey into history from the middle Danube basin as early as the 8th century B.C. By the 5th century B.C. they were considered by the Greeks as one of the great foreign people of the ancient world. At the height of their power they controlled vast areas of Europe, from Ireland in the west, through Britain, France, North-eastern Spain, Southern Germany, Northern Italy, Czechoslovakia, and Northern Greece, to Turkey in the East.

In the 4th century B.C. several nations of the Celts crossed the Alps and invaded Northern Italy, where they settled. Later they pushed southward and in their progress sacked the city of Rome itself - and the proud Romans never forgave them.

By the 3rd century B.C. the Celtic-speaking nations were the most powerful in Europe outside the Mediterranean world. In military terms they were formidable, later commanding great respect from the Roman legions. As craftsmen in metal - bronze and gold as well as iron- and glass they were unequalled.

As builders they constructed impressive stone and timber fortresses that could be taken only by full-scale siege. Many of the towns were to become some of the greatest cities of modern Europe, such as Paris, Rheims, and Lyon.

Their skill in constructing all types of wheeled vehicles was renowned and with

these they established trade routes throughout Europe. They also had a great reputation as agriculturalists and pastoralists. It was the Celts, in fact, who laid the foundations of modern society north of the Alps.

The eclipse of the Celts began with the imperialist policies of the rising city of Rome combined with the free-booting incursions of the marauding Germanic tribes. Above all things, the Celts loved liberty and independence. Despite their great genius they had never succeeded in welding their independent nations into one empire. Faced with the Roman capacity for central administration and government (and political guile), the separate Celtic nations were picked off one by one and incorporated into the ever expanding Roman Empire. It was not without a great deal of bitter warfare and rebellion.

However, by the end of the 2nd century A.D. the Celtic world was under the rule of the Roman emperors. Only Ireland escaped the yoke, and only here was the cultural greatness of the Celts to survive into the Middle Ages, free of the cultural domination of Rome.

At the beginning of the Christian era Celtic languages were spoken throughout large areas of the Continent, and in the British Isles.

Breton, Welsh, Irish and Scottish Gaelic remain living virile languages. A surprisingly large number still speak their native language - considering the cultural and political attentions of two of the most successful empires that the Western World has ever known!

The Celts

by Thomas D'Arcy
McGee

Long, long ago, beyond the misty space
Of twice a thousand years
In Erin old there dwelt a mighty race,
Taller than Roman spears;
Like oaks and towers they had a giant
grace,
Were fleet as deers,
With wind and waves they made their
'biding place,
These western shepherd seers.

Their Ocean-God was Mannanan Mac Lir,
Whose angry lips,
In their white foam, full often would inter
Whole fleets of ships,
Cromagh their Day-God, and their
Thunderer
Made morning and eclipse;
Bride was their Queen of song, and unto
her
They prayed with fire-touched lips.

Great were their deeds, their passions and
their sports;
With clay and stone
They piled on strath and shore those
mystic forts
Not yet o'erthrown;
On cairn crowned hills they held their
council courts;
While youths alone,
With giant dogs, explored the elk resorts
And brought them down.

Of these was Finn, whose ancient song
Over the clamour of all change is heard
Sweet voiced and strong.
Finn once o'ertook Grania, the golden-
haired,
The fleet and the young;
From her the lovely, and from him the
feared,
The primal poet sprang.

Ossian! Two thousand years of mist and
change
Surround thy name-
The Fenian heroes now no longer range
The hills of fame.
The very names of Finn and Gaul sound
strange-
Yet thine the same-
By miscalled lake and desecrated grange-
Remains and shall remain!

The druid's altar and the druid's creed
We scarce can trace,
There is not left an undisputed deed
Of all your race,
Save your majestic song, which hath their
speed,
And strength and grace;
In that sole song, they live and love, and
bleed-
It bears them on through space.

O inspired giant! Shall we e'er behold,
In our own time,
One fit to speak your spirit on the wold
Or seize your rhyme?
One pupil of the past, as mighty souled
As in the prime,
Were the fond, fair, and beautiful, and
bold
They of your song sublime.

Thomas D'Arcy McGee (1825-1868) - writer
and nationalist. Born at Carlingford,
Co. Louth on 13th April 1825. Emigrated to
Boston in 1842 and became editor of the
'Boston Pilot' in 1846. He became politically
involved with the Young Irelanders, and he
was appointed correspondent of the 'Nation'.
After the abortive rising of 1848 he went
back to Boston and founded the 'American
Celt'. He moved to Montreal, became an
MP and held government office, renouncing
his Irish nationalist views in favour of
constitutional methods. He denounced a
threatened Fenian invasion of Canada and
was shot dead outside his home in Ottawa
on 7th April 1868.

Lindow Man

Manchester Museum, Oxford Road, Manchester 26th March - 21st September 1991

The body of Lindow Man (who was, of course, an Iron-Age Celt) will be returning to Manchester, on loan from the British Museum, in 1991. Here he will form the centre-piece of a major exhibition on the Celts. Examination of the body has revealed that he died violently - most probably as a sacrifice to the Celtic Gods. The exhibition will therefore concentrate on the religious aspects of the find, with a reconstruction of a Celtic shrine and featuring carved stone heads.

Further information on this, and other forthcoming Celtic Exhibitions, in Cardiff, Lincolnshire, and Venice will be given in a special feature in the magazine next year.

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World Books will be holding an
exhibition at the Irish World Heritage
Centre, Queens Rd. M/c.
March 8th-15th 1991

Valparaiso

Tháinig long ó Valparaiso
Scaoileadh téad a seol sa chuan;
Chuir a hainm dom i gcuimhne
Ríocht na gréine, tír na mbua.

'Gluais', ar sí, 'ar turas fada
Liom ó scamall is ó cheo;
Tá fé shleasaibh gorm-Andes
Cathair scáfar, gle mar sheod'.

Ach bhíos óg is ní imeoinnse,
Am an dóchais, tús mo shaoill,
Chreideas fós go raibh i ndán dom
Iontaisi na ndán 's na scéal.

Ghluais an long thar lintibh mara
Fad ó shin is a crann mar ór;
Scríobh a scéal ar phár na hoiche
Ard i rian na réaltan mór.

Fillfidh sí arís chugham, áfach;
Chífhead cathair bhán fén sléibh
Le hais Mara na Síochána;
Creidim fós, beagnach, a Dhé.

We know that this beautiful and evocative poem has long been on the Irish Schools' Curriculum and a firm favourite. What we don't know is who the poet is, or was, and a prize is offered of the next four issues of Irish Heritage free, to the person who supplies the necessary information first. In writing please.

Following is a 'free' translation by Walter Cassin, with apologies to the unknown poet!

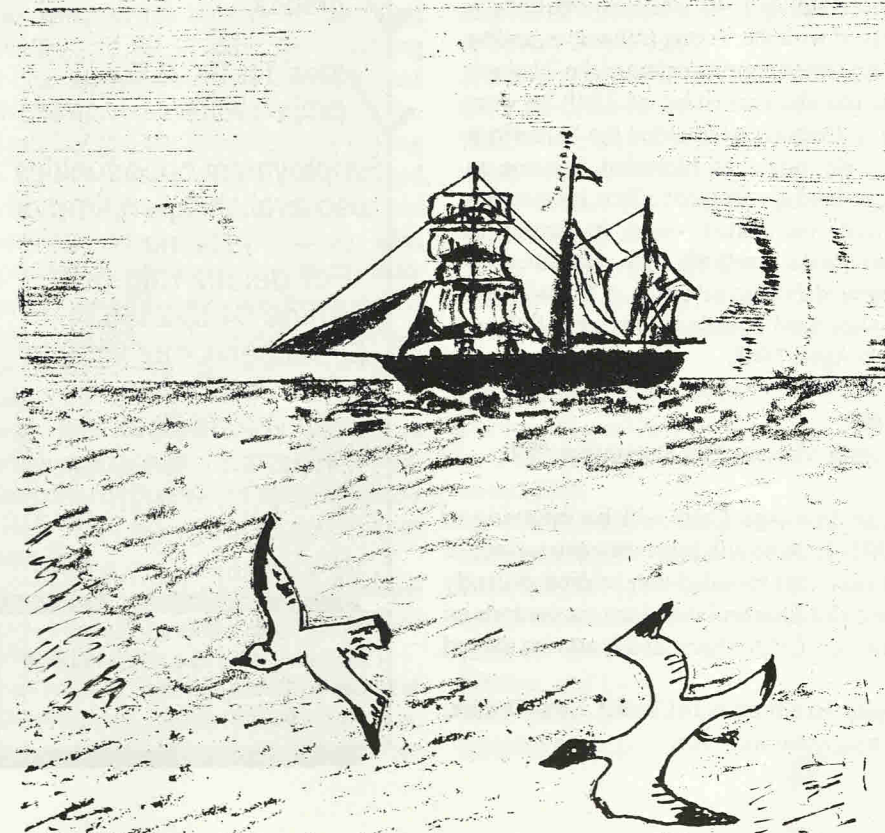
There came a ship from Valparaiso
Into harbour, quietly, sails gently resting;
And I was reminded
Of the land of heartsease
Land of golden promise.

'Come' she said with me
On a long voyage
Far from mist and raincloud,
To where, nestling on blue Andes' side
There a city of awesome beauty
Bejewelled, shining bright- a heart's
desire'.

But I was young- and wouldn't venture,
It was my time of hope, my life's
beginning
And believed that the world's wonders
Were still in store for me- and bade her
farewell.

She journeyed far away, over summer
seas
Her mast gilded in bright sun's light,
Tracked by glistening canopy of tropic
stars
Across the parchment of the night.

However she will return
Of that I'm sure, And I will see the city fair
By blue Pacific's side;
In God still hope- and believe.



Is your name.....?

By Walter Cassin

O Gallobhair
O'Gallagher, Gallagher, Gallaher,
Gallogher, Gollagher.....

'descendant of Gallchobhair' (foreign - help) a distinguished and ancient family of the Cenél Conaill- the race name of the O'Gallaghers, the O'Boyles and other families, who claim descent from Milesius, King of Spain, through the line of his son, Heremon, the first Milesian King of Erin. Another distinguished ancestor, Niall Naoigiallach (Niall of the Nine Hostages) was of the northern Uí Neill dynasty, and became king of Ireland in 379AD. He was the son of Eochaid Mugmedón and of Cairenn, known as Cairenn Chasdub (Cairenn of the curly black hair) a Saxon princess taken hostage by his father. Niall was famous for his foreign conquests, perhaps the most noteworthy being when he mounted a large invasion of Britain towards the end of the 4th Century, but after carrying off plunder was forced into retreat by the Roman general, Stilicho. The scale of this raid was indicated by the Roman poet Claudian when he said "the Scot (Niall) moved all Ireland against (us) and the ocean foamed with hostile oars." On another raid, on Gaul, Niall was assassinated on the banks of the River Loire by one of his own chiefs, Eochaid mac Enna Cinnsealaigh. It was in 405 AD, the twenty seventh year of Niall's kingship of Ireland. His body was taken back to Ireland and buried at Mocha (Faughan Hill) ten miles north west of Tara.

A favourite Christian name among the O'Gallaghers was Maolcava, named after Maolchabha, Ard Rí (High King) 612-615 A.D.. One such was Maolcava O'Galachor, Comarba (guardian or heir) of Scrín Adamnain- or St. Adamnan's shrine- and who died in 1022 A.D. In later centuries they became one of the most powerful clans in Tír Conaill, holding considerable land, according to O'Donovan the noted Irish scholar, between Kilbarrow and Assaroe and along the coast to Loch Erne and elsewhere. They became marshalls to their kinsmen, the O'Donnells, and took a prominent part in all the military movements of Cinél Conaill during the 14th and subsequent centuries. Many of them were distinguished as Bishops of Raphoe and Derry.

On Two Expressions for Right Hand and Left Hand

By Walter Cassin

The Celts, like the rest of the Indo Europeans, determined their origin by looking at the rising sun. Hence the East was regarded as "before", the West as "behind" (siar) the South as "right", and the North as "left". Thus the ordinary Old-Irish expression for "right hand" and "left hand" are, respectively, "lám des" and "lám chlé" (now written "lám dheis" and "lám chlí".)

But in Early-Middle-Irish, that is in the Christian period, we find also, for the right hand, "lám bennacht", literally "hand of blessing" and for the left hand "lám soscéili", literally "hand of gospel". There is an example of this in a poem about Oengus the Culdee, preserved in the Lebar Brecc (the so-called 'Speckled Book', a collection of religious writings in Irish and Latin).

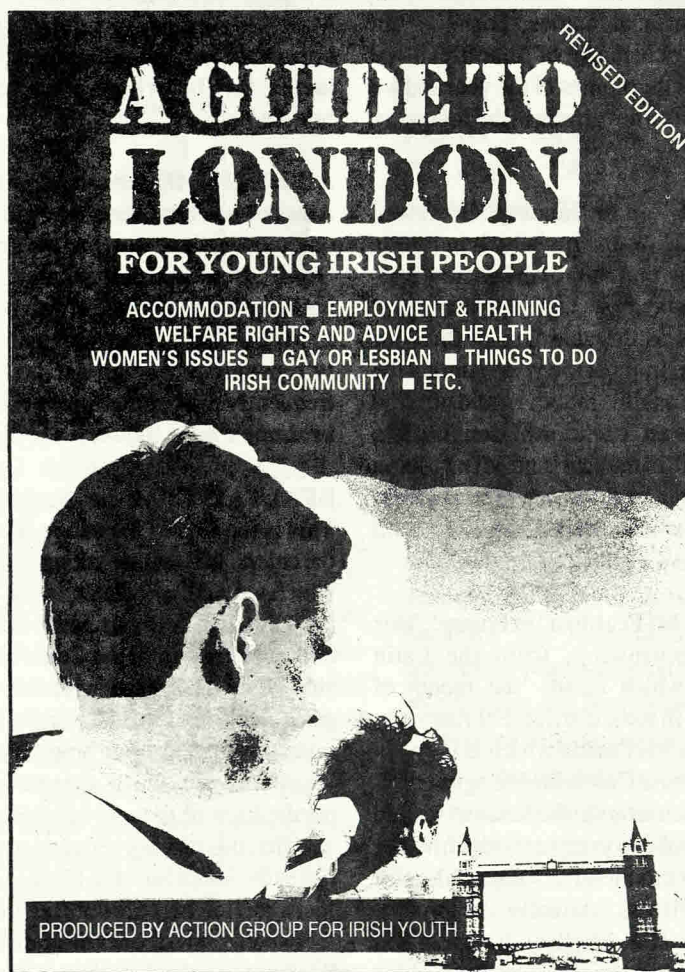
"He went one day to cut wood, Oengus the flame over Bregia. While lopping it, he struck off his gospel hand". Another example is from a charter (i.e. a grant from a ruler of rights and privileges) in the Book of Kells, which states: "Gillachrist, son of Manchán, purchased from the sons of Beollan the land on thy gospel-hand going down towards Ath Cátain, or on thy blessing-hand up from the ford (áth)". The writer was making sure here that there was no confusion as to which hand was which, wasn't he?

Why the right hand is called the "blessing hand" is because, from Patriarchal times, that hand has been used in benediction. And what is interesting is that the Christians in Ireland took over the habits and beliefs of the Celts and turned them to their own advantage, in this and in many other instances. Why the left hand is called the "gospel-hand" is at once explained by the rule of the ceremonial of the Mass (but not now practised) that, after the Epistle has been read or chanted on the South (i.e. right) side of the altar, the celebrant proceeded to the North (i.e., left) end, and there read, towards the North, the Gospel from a missal. For the North, the quarter whence comes storms and cold and where no sun shines on bleak, steep, north-facing hillsides, and one wonders if the term 'The Black North' has

this origin also. Perhaps this is best typified in a song in Gaelic, one of many on this theme, where the exile longs to join his love in a place of peace and rest, for there is "Níl gaoith adtuaidh ann, níl sneachta cruaidh ann" - (No harsh North wind or cruel snow there) - and this direction has always been regarded as the side of evil. Hence, in Christian times, it was always looked upon as the Devil's point of the compass, and as representing the outer-darkness of heathenism. Therefore, when saying the Gospel, the priest or deacon faces North, because he is proclaiming the message

primarily to the World of unbelief. But it should be said, lest the wrath of the 'Men of the North' should descend on the writer, that there is no reflection whatsoever on Ulster folk!

This antipathy towards the left hand wasn't of course confined in the Celtic and ancient Irish way of life. To the Semites, among others, this hand was considered unclean and in modern times one wouldn't shake hands with any other but the right one. Again, in recent times, who has not heard the expressions 'going East' or 'westh the road', of 'going behind' - meaning westwards? So there are thousands of years of history and heritage behind these simple phrases. Long may they survive!



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Mionna Na Bliana: The Months of the Year

By Emrys Evans

The English names for the months of the year derive, without exception, ultimately from Latin, as for instance January (Januarius), April (Aprilis), August (Augustus) and so on. This is not the case with the Irish (nor for that matter, the Welsh) names for the months. In Irish we find that only six of the 'official' names are from Latin: these are **Eanáir**, **Feabhra**, **Márta**, **Aibreán**, **Iúl**, and **Nollaig**. The other six are of native Irish origin: **Bealtaine**, **Meitheamh**, **Lúnasa**, **Meán Fómhair**, **Deireadh Fómhair** and **Samhain**. Moreover, three of these, as we shall find later on, are the names of three of the great pre-Christian festivals of Ireland. But apart from these official names, Irish has an exceedingly rich range of 'unofficial' or folk names for the months of the year and we shall deal with some of these in the following notes.

EANAIR: **Mí Eanáir** 'January'. Borrowed from the Latin **Januarius** which in turn is based on **Janus**, the name of the ancient two-headed god who looks both ways and was thus regarded as the guardian of the door and of the beginning of the year. Among the older generations this month would often be referred to as **an chéad mhí den bhliain** 'the first month of the year' and **Mí na bliana úire** 'the month of the new year'. Dinneen also records the forms **Geanar** and **Gionbhar**.

FEABHRA: **Mí Feabhra** 'February'. This again is a borrowing, from the Latin **Februarius** which meant 'the month of purification'. In some districts February was also known as **Mí Faoide** which is found in the strange phrase **Coicís faoide agus coicís fáide** and which refers to the first and second fortnights of February respectively. Another local name for this month is **Mí na bhFaoillí** in which **faoillí** was originally the term for February 1st (**Lá Fhéil(e) Brighde** 'St Brigit's Day') but which was later used for the entire month. It is found in the old country proverb **Faoillí a mharaíonn na caoirigh** 'It is February that kills the sheep'.

MARTA: **An Mhárta**, **Mí na Márta** 'March'. Basically from the same source as **Dé Máirt** 'Tuesday', namely the Latin name of the Roman god of war **Mars**, although

from the phrase **mensis Martius** 'the month of Mars'. Because of its traditional reputation for cold and unpleasant weather the older generations would often refer to it as **Mí na nGág** 'the month of chaps or chilblains' and of course the phrase **gaoth Mhárta** 'a March gale' is common enough, and dreaded, among farmers and fishermen alike. It was also known as **Mí Earraigh** 'the month of Spring', and also as **Mí na Bó Riabhaí** 'the month of the brindled cow'. The story goes that at the beginning of April the brindled cow complained about the bitterness of March, so March borrowed a few days from April, but these were so wet and stormy that the poor cow was drowned. As a result March has one day more than April and the borrowed days are traditionally known as **laetha na (bó) riabhaí** 'the days of the brindled cow'.

AIBREAN: **Mí Aibreáin** 'April'. The form **Aibreol** has also been recorded, which is obviously a little closer to the Latin **Aprilis** 'April', from which it has come. In Omeath, in County Louth, it would also be referred to as **Mí Fó Chaisc** 'the month about Easter'. Its reputation for being wet has earned it the frequently used description **Aibreán bog braonach** 'mild showery April'.

BEALTAINÉ: **Mí na Bealtaine** 'May'. This is the first of the native Irish names in the calendar. **Bealtine**, along with **Samhain** which we shall meet later, is one of the great pre-Christian festivals and marked the end of the winter half of the Celtic or early Irish year. It is associated with the lighting of great bonfires - Middle Irish **Bel-tene** is interpreted as meaning 'bright fire' - between which cattle were driven either for purification or to ward off evil spirits. It is said that this driving between two fires gave rise to the idiom **idir dhá thine lae Bealtaine** 'between the two fires of Bealtaine', that is 'between two stools, in a dilemma'. **Lá Bealtaine** is the first day of May or May-Day which of course used to be celebrated with a **crann Bealtaine** 'May-pole'. The older generations would also refer to **Sean-Bhealtaine** 'Old May' (according to the Julian calendar) which is now 11th May.

MEITHEAMH: **Mí Meithimh**, **Mí an Mheithimh** 'June'. Another native Irish

month-name. Other names for this month among the older generations of native speakers were **Mí Samhraidh** 'the month of summer', **Mí Mheán** 'the middle month', **Mí Mheán an tSamhraidh** 'the middle month of summer', **Mí na Féile Eoin** 'the month of St John's Feast'. Although **Meitheamh** is nowadays normally used for the month of June specifically, and for Midsummer itself, in earlier days it could also be used more generally for the middle month of any of the four seasons as in **Meitheamh (an) Earraigh** 'March', **Meitheamh Samhraidh (an tSamhraidh)** 'June', **Meitheamh Fómhair (an Fhómhair)** 'September', **Meitheamh Geimhridh (an Gheimridh)** 'December'.

IUL: **Mí Iúil** 'July'. Another borrowing from the Latin, this time from the personal name **Julius**. This month has quite a range of native Irish names, however. Among them we find **Mí Bhuí** 'the yellow month', **Mí na Súil Buí** 'the month of the daisies', and **Mí Meagán** 'the month of the greenfly', and **Iúl an Ghabáiste** 'July of the cabbage'. The name **Mí croite na mealbhóg** 'the month of shaking out the wallets' (which held the corn) refers to that period of hunger that traditionally occurred in earlier times between the end of the stored crops and the new harvest, although this is much more explicit in **Iúl an Ocráis** 'July of the Hunger'. But what is the origin of the name **Mí an Albanaigh** 'the month of the Scotsman'? Finally it is also known fairly prosaically as **Deireadh an tSamhraidh** 'the end of Summer'.

LUNASA: **Mí (na) Lúnasa** 'August'. Named after the Celtic god **Lugos** (in Irish **Lugh**) whose name is also found in the place-names **Lyons**, **Laon** and **Leyden**, each of which derives from Gaulish **Lugo-dunon** 'the fort of Lugos'. In some districts it was known as **Mí na Lúnasna**, **Mí faoi Lúnasa**, and **Mí na Lúna**. Other names that have been recorded are, in literature **Mí Bhuí Troghain** 'the month of parturition or birth' and in speech **an chéad mhí d'Fhómhair** 'the first month of Autumn'. **Lá Lúnasa** '1st August' is of course the famous **Lammas** (Loaf-mass) Day.

MEAN FOMHAIR: **Mí Mheán an**

Fhómhair 'September'. It is also known as **Meán Fómhair**, **Meitheamh an Fhómhair** 'the middle of Autumn', as an **tarna mhí d'Fhómhar** 'the second month of Autumn', and as **Mí na Féil(e) Michíl** 'the month of St Michael's Feast'.

DEIREADH FOMHAIR: **Mí Dheireadh Fómhair** 'October'. Again this has a number of forms such as **Mí Dheireadh an Fhómhair**, **an mhí dhéanach** (**dheireanach**) **d'Fhómhar** 'the last month of Autumn', or even **Mí an Fhómhair** 'the month of Autumn'.

SAMHAIN: **Mí(na) Samhna** 'November'. This month is named after the great feast of Samhain that is believed to have marked the beginning of the ancient Celtic year. In the Old Irish tale of the birth of Cú Chulainn it is stated that the Ulstermen celebrated Samhain by feasting for three days before and three days after **Lá Samhna** which corresponds to what is known as **Féile na Marbh** 'All Hallows' or **Féile na Naomh Uile** 'All Saints'. **Oíche Shamhna** is of course our Hallowe'en.

MI (NA) NOLLAG 'December'. Here we are back again to the Latin names since **Nollaig** (earlier **Nodlaig**) 'Christmas' comes from **Natalica**. Native Irish names for the month are **Meán Geimhridh** or **Meitheamh an Gheimhridh** 'the middle of winter'. Christmas Day is usually known as **Lá Nollag** or **Lá Nollag Mór** 'Great Christmas Day' (or **Lá Chinn Bliana** 'the day of the end of the year' in Cois Fharraige) by the older generations, some of whom would refer to New Year's Day as **Lá Nollag Beag** 'Little Christmas Day' - although this should in fact be Epiphany (6 January) or Twelfth Night - and to the period between them as **na laetha idir an dá Nollaig** 'the days between the two Christmases' and to Epiphany or Twelfth Night itself as **Lá chinn an dá dhéag** 'the day at the end of the twelve days'. Just before Christmas the greeting would usually be **go gcaithe tú an Nollaig!** 'May you spend Christmas!' or **go dtuga Dia Nollaig mhaith dhuit!** 'May God give you a good Christmas!' and the reply **go mba hé dhuit!** 'And to you too!'

This article first appeared on last year's Irish Heritage Calendar. It proved so popular that we thought it deserved a place in the Magazine itself, so it can be kept for reference. - Editor

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THE PEOPLE OF THE SEA, David Thomson, Granada Publishing.

Warning! *The People of the Sea* is a book recommended only for romantics! It is a most haunting record of a journey in the search of the man-seal legends of the Celt. The origins of many of these legends are now lost in time's mists, but they often have their modern counterparts, when they tell of humans rescued by seals in stormy seas, of babies suckled by seal-mothers, of men who took seal-women for their wives. This is a record of David Thomson's journey in the Gaelic world of the Hebrides and Western Ireland, which brought him into contact with people with a language steeped in the culture of the oral tradition - stories of that mysterious and beautiful creature, the ron, the selchie, the Grey Atlantic Seal, and its impact on the lives of all those, even in imagination, who inhabit or once inhabited, the Celtic world that glitters like a bright, but broken necklace round Anglo-Saxon England - and for those of us who are still "FAOI DHRAIOCHT AG CEOL NA FARRAIGE" - under the spell of the music of the sea.

PADDY'S LAMENT - IRELAND 1846 TO 1847 - PRELUDE TO HATRED, Thomas Gallagher, Poolbeg Press Ltd, 1988.

Thomas Gallagher, Irish American, son of a County Roscommon family, wondered as a child why the very name England engendered such hatred and loathing among the New York Irish. He was determined to find out. This he did, undertaking for several years in-depth research in the USA, England and Ireland. He concludes that one of the main effects of the Great Famine was genocide by default. It would have been hard for the Irish to draw any other conclusion when the emigrants to Liverpool, en route for the New World, had to share ship-board with the consignments of wheat, barley corn and cattle destined for the feeding of the English populace. The terrible conditions on the "coffin ships" defy description.

As the author said, "I was determined to bring the evidence into its glaring light as best I could. I would speak for the victim, avoid the role of propagandist and cling to the record." This he does most successfully, drawing heavily on contemporary sources. It sometimes makes horrific reading, but then it was an horrific time in our history. A compelling book that compares favourably with Cecil Woodham-Smith's epic work, "The Great Hunger."

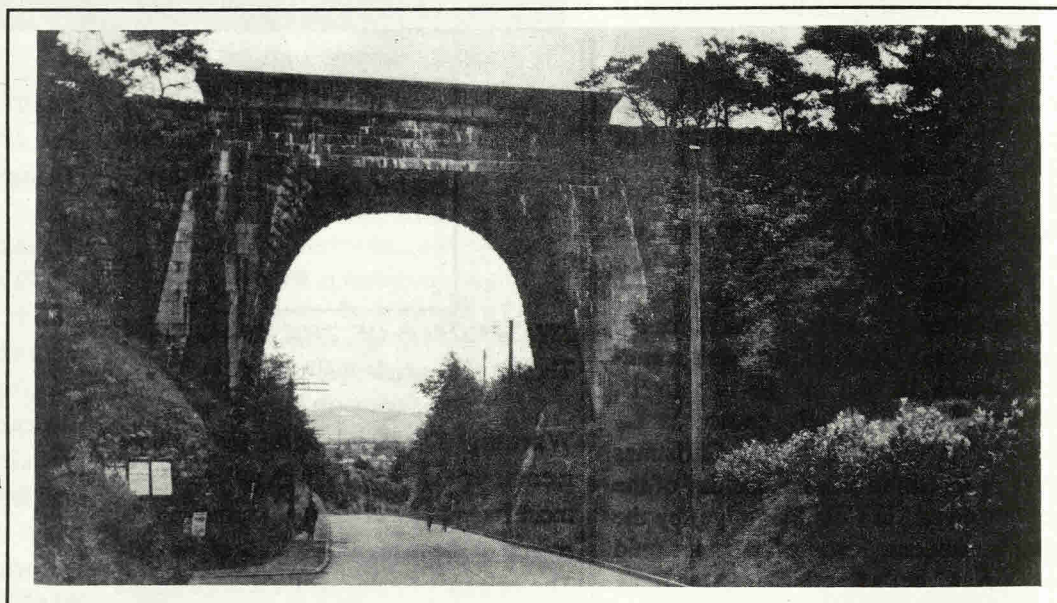


**From the
Séamas Morgan
Post Card
Collection**

Tipperary
Oifig an Phoist agus na Bancanna
i mBaile Tiobraid Arann.

The Egyptian Arch, Newry

Newry's old name in Irish was Iobhar Chinn Choiche Mhic Neachtain, where in Irish Mythology the Yew tree (Crann Naomha - Sacred Tree) grew in abundance for thousands of years. A Cistercian monastery was founded here in the 12th century; it was called Iobhar Chinn Traighe. The modern name in Irish for Newry is An tIúr.



Cork
Sráid an Rí i gCathair Corcaigh.

Some common first names and their Irish forms

by Séamus Morgan

A	D	George -Seoirse	Marcella -Mairsile	R
Abraham -Abraham	Dahy -Dáithí	Gerald -Gearalt	Margaret -Máighréad	Randolph -Rannulph
Adam -Adam	Daniel -Dónall	Gilbert -Gilbeirt	Maria -Máire	Raymond -Réamann
Agnes -Una	David -Daibhéid	Godfrey -Gothraidh	Marjory -Máille	Reginald -Ránall
Aidan -Aodhán	Davy -Dáithí	Grace -Gráinne	Marion -Muireann	Richard -Ristead
Aisling -Aisling	Deborah -Gobnait	Gregory -Gréagóir	Martha -Marta	Rita -Ríte
Alan -Ailéin	Declan -Déaglán	H	Mary -Máire	Roisin -Róisín
Albert -Ailbhe	Denis -Donncha	Harold -Aralt	Maud -Máda	Rona -Róna
Alexander -Alsandar	Dermot -Diarmaid	Harry, Henry -Anraí	Maureen -Máirín	Rosaleen -Róisín
Alice -Ailís	Dervilla -Dearbháil	Hector -Eachtar	Moirá -Máire	Rose -Róis
Allister -Alastar	Desmond -Deasún	Hilary -Ealáir	Miriam -Miriam	Ruth -Rút
Alma -Alma	Diana -Diána	Hilda -Hilde	Molly -Máirín	Robin -Roibín
Ambrose -Ambrós	Deirdre -Deirdre	Hugh -Aodh	Mona -Muanait	Roddy -Ruairí
Andrew -Aindriú	Dominic -Doiminic	I	Monica -Moncha	Ronan -Rónán
Angus -Aonas	Donald -Dónall	Imelda -Imelda	Muriel -Muireal	Rowland -Rólann
Anna -Anna	Don -Donn	Isabella -Isibéal	Malcolm -Maolcholaim	S
Anne -Aine	Doreen -Dóirín	Ita -Ide	Manus -Mánas	Sally -Sorcha
Anthony -Antaine	Douglas -Dúghlas	Ivor -Iomhar	Mark -Marcas	Sarah -Sorcha
Art -Art	Dudley -Dualtach	J	Martin -Máirtín	Sheila -Síle
Arthur -Artúr	Duncan -Donncha	Jacob -Iácób	Matt -Mait	Sophia -Sadhbh
Attracta -Athracht	Dymphna -Damhnait	James -Séamas	Matthew -Maitiú	Susan -Siobhán
Austin -Aistín	E	Jane -Sinéad	Maurice -Muris	Sylvia -Sílbhe
B	Eamon -Eamann	Jeffrey -Séafra	Melchor -Meilseoin	Samuel -Somhairle
Barbara -Bairbre	Edward -Eadbhard	Jeremiah -Diarmaid	Michael -Mícheál	Shane -Seán
Barney -Brian	Eileen -Eibhlín	Jerry -Diarmaid	Myles -Maolmhuire	Sidney -Séanna
Barry -Barra	Eilis -Eilís	Jimmy -Séimí	Moses -Maodhóg	Simon -Síomón
Basil -Breasal	Eleanor -Eilionóir	Joan -Siobhán	N	Sorley -Somhairle
Ben -Beircheart	Elizabeth -Eilís	John -Seán	Nancy -Nainsi	Standish -Ainéislis
Benedict -Beinidict	Ellen -Eibhlín	Joseph -Seosamh	Norah -Nora	Stephen -Stiofán
Benjamin -Beiniaimín	Emer -Eimhear	Josephine -Seosaimhín	Nuala -Nuala	
Bernadette -Bearnairdín	Emmet -Eiméid	Joyce -Seoighe	Neal -Niall	
Bernard -Bearnard	Emily -Eimile	Julia -Síle	Nessan -Neasán	
Betty -Beití	Enda -Eanna	Julian -Gilleán	Nicholas -Nioclás	
Bran -Bran	Eoghan -Eoghan	K	Noel -Nollaig	
Brendan -Breandán	Erskine -Arascain	Kathleen -Caitlín	Noah -Nóe	
Brian -Brian	Eugene -Eoghan	Katie -Cáitín	O	
Breeda -Bríd	Eva -Aoife	Kenny -Caimmeach	Oisín -Oisín	
Brenda -Breanda	Eveleen -Eibhlín	Kevin -Caoimhín	Olave -Amhlaobh	
Bridget -Bríd	F	Kieran -Ciarán	Olive -Oibhe	
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Carmel -Cairméal	Fergus -Fearghas	Laurence -Labhrás	Owen -Eoghan	
Catherine -Caitriona	Finian -Finnian	Lena -Eibhlín	P	
Cecil -Siseal	Finn -Fionn	Leo -Leon	Pascal -Pascal	
Charles -Séarlas	Finbar -Fionnbharr	Leonard -Leonard	Pat -Páid	
Charlotte -Séarlait	Finola -Fionnuala	Lewis -Lughaidh	Patricia -Pádraigín	
Christopher -Críostóir	Fiona -Fiona	Lile -Lile	Pauline -Póilín	
Clare -Clár	Florence -Bláthnaid	Lorna -Lorna	Philomena -Filimín	
Cloda -Clóda	Fintan -Fiontán	Lucy -Laoiseach	Phylis -Filis	
Colin -Coilín	Flan -Flann	M	Peggy -Peigí	
Colm -Colm	Frances -Proinséas	Madeleine -Madilín	Penelope -Fionnuala	
Colman -Colmán	Frank -Frainc	Madge -Muireann	Paul -Pól	
Con -Conn	Frederick -Feardorcha	Maeve -Méabh	Peter -Peadar	
Conall -Conall	G		Phelim -Féilim	
Conan -Conán	Gabriel -Gaibriél		Philip -Pilib	
Connor -Conchúir	Garrett -Gearóid		Pierce -Píaras	
Cora -Córa	Geraldine -Gearóidín			
Cormac -Cormac	Geoffrey -Séafra			
Cyril -Coireall				

If your first name is not mentioned and you would like the Irish form of it, send us 50p to cover stamp and packaging, and we will gladly post it to you where possible.

Trails of Tears

by Tom McAndrew

Chief Hollis Roberts, of the Choctaw Nation, Oklahoma, recently visited the Irish World Heritage Centre, Manchester. He presented the centre with several gifts including ceremonial feathers. This display will symbolise the continuing friendship between the Choctaw and the Irish which goes back to 1847 when the Choctaws, who themselves were recovering from a situation equally as bad, collected the huge sum of \$710 (today worth \$1,000,000) and sent it to the starving Irish.

The Doolough Tragedy

Doolough (Black Lake) is a long narrow lake between the Sheefrey Hills and the Mweelrea Mountains near Louisburgh in Co. Mayo. It was here that one of the saddest events of the Great Irish 'Famine' occurred in the Spring of 1849.

The people who lived in the area had no food and were dying of hunger. Six hundred made the journey to the town of Louisburgh hoping to find food and shelter in the workhouse there. The officer at the workhouse was not able to help but he told them that they should apply for help to the Board of Guardians who were to hold a meeting at Delphi House, some ten miles away, on the following day. They hadn't eaten for several days, they were poorly clothed and had nowhere to shelter. As it was late they lay down to rest on the streets till morning. Many died during the night. The next day four hundred began the ten mile journey to Delphi Lodge. They followed a narrow muddy track over the Glankeen River to their destination. When they arrived at the Lodge the Guardians were at lunch and couldn't be disturbed. The people sat down to wait. After their meal the Guardians agreed to meet them. They refused to allow them any relief or tickets of admission to the workhouse. The journey had been for nothing.

The exhausted and starving people began their sad journey back through a wild and bleak country to Louisburgh. It was dark with cold north blustery winds coming in from the Atlantic. When they arrived at a place called Stroppabue overlooking Doolough lake many were swept by the strong winds into the lake and were

drowned. Others crawled as far as the banks of the Glankeen River where, exhausted, they lay down and died.

In the days that followed more than two hundred bodies were found strewn along the narrow path, by the river banks and in the lake itself. Many were buried where they died. Others were taken to a small valley and buried, for them at least, the pain and the hunger of the famine were over.



Chief Hollis Roberts at the Irish World Heritage Centre, M/c. Photo Danny Claffey

The Choctaw link with the Irish 'Famine'. American Indians have suffered many injustices and great hardship ever since the first Europeans began to settle there in the sixteenth century. The Choctaw were a large Muskogean tribe who lived in southern Mississippi. They had a culture as rich and deep as the native Irish. Legend has it that they emerged from the depths of Nanih Waiya, a prehistoric mound, bringing a great affinity with the Earth, the source of Life. As more and more Europeans began to settle in America they needed ever more land. Over the years many Indian tribes were tricked into giving up their lands and moving elsewhere. Those who refused were often killed or moved by force. The

Choctaws suffered the same fate in Mississippi. In 1830 they were forced into an agreement called the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek. In this treaty they had to give up their ancestral lands in Mississippi and agree to be moved five hundred miles to Oklahoma.

Their Trail of Tears began in 1831. In cold wintry conditions they made the long journey to a barren and inhospitable region of Oklahoma. They suffered great hardship. Half of the tribe, about 14,000, died on the journey from cold, hunger and disease. Despite this great tragedy the Choctaws settled into their new surrounding and eventually prospered.

Sixteen years later, in 1847, their Chief Pushmataha heard of the suffering in Ireland caused by the 'famine'. His people held a collection in the Choctaw town of Skullyville, for these starving Europeans, and raised the staggering amount of \$710 which in today's terms would be nearly one million dollars. Only sixteen years after their own great tragedy they had done all they could to prevent a similar disaster in a country four thousand miles away.

The Choctaws Visit Doolough.

In May each year the Doolough tragedy is remembered by hundreds of people who make the ten mile walk from Doolough to Louisburgh. They make the journey, mainly, to bring attention to the many people who suffer from hunger and

injustice throughout the world today. On May 26th, 1990 the walk was led by the present Chief of the Choctaw Indians, Chief Hollis-Roberts. It was a reminder to us that suffering and pain still happens all over the world to all kinds of people. It was also a reminder of the kindness and generosity that many people show in times of great need.

(Editor's note: Archbishop TuTu has been asked to lead this years walk in April or May.)

The full story of the Doolough Tragedy can be read in "Tales of the West" by James Berry, while the story of the Choctaw's Trail of Tears can be read in "the Voyage of the Naparima" by Br. James Mangan (1982)

The Great Famine Project

By Don Mullin



The GREAT 'FAMINE' PROJECT

*'Let us
not do
unto others
the wrong
that was
done to
our own'.*

*AFrI Great 'Famine' Project
'The Cottage'
63 Harold's Cross Road
Dublin 6W
Ireland*

Dear Friends,

The so-called GREAT 'FAMINE' of 1845-1849 was a watershed in Irish history. Almost 2 million of our nation perished at home and on the high seas from hunger and disease. While people starved and fled Ireland as refugees, food and livestock were being exported in abundance from our shores.

The diaspora which followed the GREAT 'FAMINE' changed the course of Irish history and that of other nations, including the United States. Yet, in spite of its significance, no national memorial has ever been raised to the memory of Ireland's poor and dispossessed! Indeed, of the over 1¼ million who perished on the island of Ireland alone, where are they buried?

The answer is both simple and shocking. They lie now in hundreds of unmarked, forgotten and dishonoured mass graves. Even in death they have been denied dignity.

AFrI (Action From Ireland) is an Irish based 'Third World' organisation whose concern for the world's poor is powered by the memory of the great inhumanity and injustice suffered by our people throughout the 19th Century. We see many similarities between what happened then and the experience of the world's poor today.

Currently we are developing and animating an ambitious

programme of events to co-incide with the 150th anniversary of the GREAT 'FAMINE' which will occur during this decade. These include: publications; public events such as our annual GREAT 'FAMINE' Walk in Co. Mayo; the marking of the hundreds of mass 'famine' graves; worldwide television news items; television documentaries; films; lecture tours; the creation of an international GREAT 'FAMINE' Centre in the Louisburgh region of Co. Mayo; and a GREAT 'FAMINE' Symphony

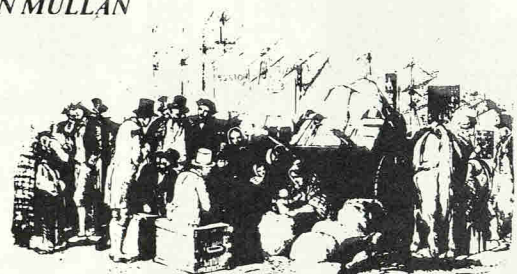
To realise these programmes we need the encouragement and support of the Irish at home and abroad. If you would like to know more about our GREAT 'FAMINE' PROJECT and ways that you can help, then please post a card to the address given.

Thanking you for your interest.

Yours sincerely

Don Mullin

DON MULLAN



On Ogham Stones

By Walter Cassin

The memorial stones known as Ogham (from Oghma or Ogmios, the Celtic god of writing) has this method of writing not only to commemorate notable people, such as minor kings, chieftains etc, and to mark boundary points, but also as a method of storing a vast web of complex knowledge, of which more anon. This method comprised a series of straight strokes, incised along the horizontal edge of a standing stone, and was based on the Latin alphabet, sometimes in bilingual form, i.e. in Irish and Latin. Perhaps the most famous example is the one found at Nevern, Pembroke in 1906, and believed to be the first ogham stone discovered which gave both languages side by side, and which must have been a great boon to scholars, helping, as it did, to provide a key to the ogham alphabet. It is now installed as a window-sill in the 6th century church of St. Brynach at Nevern. It reads thus:

Latin: Maglocuni Fili Cutor


and in Ogham: Maglicunas Maqi Clutari.

The meaning of both is: (The Monument) of Maglocunus (Maelgwyn) Son of Clutorius. The ogham inscription is in the Irish branch of the Celtic language, called Goidelic, then prevalent in parts of Wales.


Incursions from Ireland into Wales have a long history, with Claudius Ptolemy in the second century A.D. calling Lleyn the "Promontary of the Gargani"- a north-west Irish tribe. This long peninsula of Gwynedd, south west of Caernarfon, and pointing into the Irish Sea, has the same linguistic element as Leinster- from the Irish tribe the Laigeann (the Spear-men), again suggesting an early Irish settlement. In fact the Wicklow Mountains can be seen from atop the hill

above Aberdaron, itself the site of a Bronze Age settlement. The Déisi, too, from southern Ireland, in what is now Co. Waterford, colonised western parts of Britain, and most densely in south-west Wales and this is where most ogham stones are found. The Irish came primarily as raiders rather than as settlers, and there were frequent battles with their fellow Celts as well as with the remnants of Roman settlers. Some authorities believe that Patrick was taken as a prisoner on one of these raids, and this could have some credence as there is a St. Patrick's Bay on the Welsh west coast.

The use of ogham writing on stone was obviously a most clumsy means of conveying information and was not its prime purpose. There was a silent form too, like the modern deaf and dumb language, and performed by gesture and by placing the fingers across the nose, the palm of the hand, and the shin-bone to indicate the shape of the strokes. This ensured that only the learned, notably the bards and the filí- the historians and the poets - were cognizant of the complexities of the language, with its magical connotations. And one must remember that it took from twelve to twenty years to train as a druid, to learn all the druidical canons and laws. Another function of the druid was as a minister of religion- a religion of deep communion with Nature- that all things were part of 'It'- a credo that all rivers, trees, pools, animals, birds, even the weapons and implements they used, were possessed of an in-dwelling spirit. Indeed theirs was a deeply spiritual role. And just how complex ogham is can perhaps be gauged by a couple of examples. As aforementioned, it was based on the Roman alphabet and the Irish initial letter was for the name of a tree. Examples: the letter E

Ogham	Irish	English	Welsh
	edhadh,	aspen,	aethnen

And another example:
the letter B

Ogham	Irish	English	Welsh
	beith	birch	bedwen

But to further complicate, the first letter quoted, E, could be used to denote the name of a bird and/or a colour, e.g. ela, a swan and etc, red. And B for besan, a pheasant and ban, white.

Also the historian, the late Professor Seán O'Boyle, argued that the twenty ogham characters of the alphabet each represent a note on a twenty string harp. So it would appear that the inscription on the ogham stone in Freeley's Field, at Island, Co. Mayo,



Island Ogham Stone, Co. Mayo

which reads Cunalegi Avi Qunacanos (a name which might be translated as Cunalega, grandson of Qunacano) looks almost too simplistic!

Another form of standing stone in Ireland is known as a gallán, unmarked and usually higher than the ogham stone, about ten to twelve feet, and believed to be much older. They again are said to commemorate famous people, such as chieftains. An interesting exception to these is the trysting or 'marriage' stone, to be found on Oileán Chléire, off the coast of Co. Cork. (The islanders however have a different view of their location- they have a saying, in Irish, 'Tá Eire ar thosta thoir thuaidh Cléire', which states quite positively that Ireland is an island off the coast of Cape Clear!) This stone stands about 8 feet in height, with a neatly drilled and bevelled hole in the lower part, through which the couple would touch hands to signify union. The height of the hole, or rather the lack of it, is interesting. The couple would have to kneel before it.

Cape Clear Island is the most southerly place in Ireland and local legend has it that Ciarán brought Christianity here in 402 AD, that is, about 30 years before the arrival of Patrick. After studying in Tours and Rome, he returned a bishop and inhabited a cell in



Ogham Stone at Moyne, Killala Bay, Co. Mayo

Upper Ossory, around which grew the monastery of Saighir. An inscribed ogham stone has been found on the island in recent years but as yet has not been deciphered. There are over 300 of these stones in Ireland and about 50 in Wales. Perhaps the most unique of all is the one in St. Flannan's Cathedral, Killaloe, Co. Clare. It stands on a pedestal in front of the richly decorated and exquisitely carved Irish-Romanesque doorway of the Cathedral, and believed to be the only known example of a stone with a bi-lingual inscription in Irish Ogham and Scandinavian Runes. The Runic inscription on the face reads: 'Thorgrim carved this cross' and the Ogham writing on the sides reads: 'A blessing upon Thorgrim.' This



"Marriage Stone", (Left), with a Gallán (right), Cape Clear

stone, found in 1916 by Professor Macalister, was built into the wall which surrounds the Cathedral graveyard, and has a rough carving of a crucifix on the back, and is thought to date from about 1000 A.D. The stone was carved by Thorgrim himself, probably as an act of reparation for his part in the spoliation of churches and monasteries, as he was believed to be a Viking convert.

And, as to ogham stones, what a wealth of lore and loves, of life and death, of hopes and aspirations, of 'old, unhappy far off things and battles long ago' must lie behind the few cuttings on a bare stone in some forgotten meadow.

The great Dog Fair of Limerick

By Caoimhghín O'Brolcháin

I have always had a soft spot for West Limerick- I spent a good share of my boyhood at school there- and so it was with pleasurable anticipation that I opened my most recent purchase (Pádraig O Cearbhaill, BA BHEANNAUGHT A BHEITH OG) from the Four Provinces Bookshop. It was like stepping back in time. 'Gaedhilge blaísta na Mumhan'- music to the ears of the mind, good yarns, interesting historical notes and rollicking wit. I enjoyed every page. The rich grass of the Golden Vale and its stone walls by the Shannon side - swimming in that mighty river with the horseflies 'atein the backside off oo' when you came out, haymaking and súgán-twisting in the burning sun, mangel-snagging with the frost burning the fingers- it all came vividly back to me. A few years ago I visited my old college at Pallaskenry and went for a drink with an old teacher. He introduced me to a local farmer, saying that 'This man is after coming over for a holiday to us!' The farmer looked me up and down and then made his pronouncement ' If anny man comes on holiday to you father, let oo put a big dung-fork in his hands the minit he gets offa tha bus!'

The same quick, biting, humorous retorts are on every page of this lovely book. Of all the anecdotes to be found in it- and there is no shortage- the one which had me 'ag tuiteamh as mo sheasamh le neart gháire' (falling out of my standing with the laughing) was the tale of the 'Aonach Madraí' (the Fair of the Dogs) in Limerick long ago. Let me treat you to selections

from the author's own account.

'Is iomaí saghas aonaigh ann ach bheinn in amhras go bhfachthas riamh sa tír leithéid an chinn a bhí i gCaisleán Nua in Luimneach thiar- Aonach Madraí. Sea i mbaist- Aonach Gadhar...'

(There are many sorts of fair but I doubt that there was ever seen in the country the equal of the one that was in Newcastle in West Limerick- a Dog fair- Yes indeed- A Fair of Curs...)

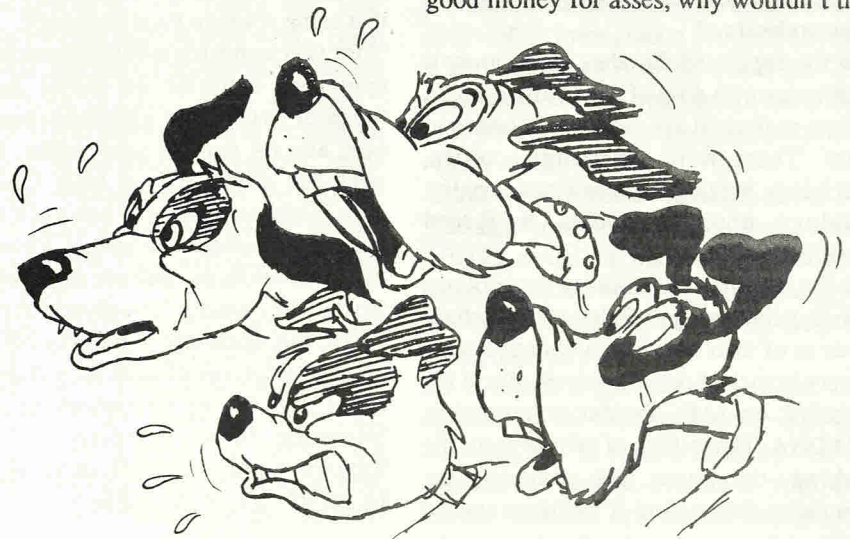
He proceeds to give the necessary background, scene-setting to this incredible event- it seems that the rumour spread that the English government was feeling the need to buy in donkeys for the transport of ammunition and supplies for some campaign they were engaged in in the Middle-East at the time. Perhaps it was that against the Turks in which Lawrence of Arabia became

embroiled- anyway, the word was treated with a good deal of scepticism by the country people. The result was that when the Fair Day arrived there were very few who came with asses to sell. The buyers were indeed there and good prices were paid due to the meagreness of supply. Well you can imagine the annoyance that such opportunity had been allowed to pass.

'Laistigh de bhliain ina dhiaidh sin d'fhógair callaire an bhaile go raibh madraí ó Rialtas Shasana chun na francaigh a dhíbirt ón Aifric Thiar, agus go mbeadh aonach madraí i gCaisleán Nua ar a leithéid seo de lá...'

(Inside a year after that rumour spread that the English Government had need of dogs to drive out the hordes of rats from West Africa and that there would be a Dog fair in Newcastle on such and such a day..)

Well by this the 'needs' of the English were well accepted to be eccentric for hadn't they their damn fingers in every pie round the world, and if they were willing to give out good money for asses, why wouldn't they



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Bhainfeadh sé an gcros de dhroim an asal leis an gcainnt.

He would talk the cross off an ass's back Is deacair damhsa nua a chuir roimh sean-mhadadh.

(It's hard to teach an old dog a new dance(trick)

Chomh mí tuama le muc ar leac oidhir, About as graceful as a pig skating on ice Cur síoda ar ngabhar ach is gabhair í gconai.

(Dress a goat in fine silks and he would still be a goat)

Ní féidir leis an gobadán an dá thrá a fheastal.

(Even the gobadán (sand-piper) cannot deal with two tides at the same time)

Má bhí spré ag an gcat is minic í phóghadh.

(If the cat had a dowry she would often be kissed)

Agus an ceann eile!

Na trí nithe is fuaire sa domhan *Srón madaí*

Broin aille

Tóin caillí.

Le buíchas do'n buachalláí i'na "Tabháirne Sheoirse", Currane.

do the same for dogs? If the last chance to make a few quid had been lost due to scepticism Begod this time it would be a different story!

'...ar an sprioclá tháinig siad ina dtainte le madraí de gach shaghas mianach méid, dath, déanamh agus aois, breis agus míle díobh. Bhí ann madraí caorach, sípéiri, madraí dúiseachta, madraí seilge, gadhar gunna, pocadáin, tarbhghadhair, cúnna, púdail, brocairí agus bastaird maistíní agus amhsáin...'

(On the appointed day they came in their multitudes with dogs of every sort, quality, colour, make and age, about a thousand of them. There were sheepdogs, collies, watchdogs, hunting dogs, gundogs, beagles, bulldogs, hounds, poodles, halfbreed mastiffs and curs...)

The list, and the all-embracing descriptions of their activities which Pádraig O Cearbhaill gives us of their activities at this gathering of very branch of dogdom, rivals that of the horsefair An tAth. Peadar composed in **SEADNA**. The sniffing of private parts, the **barking**, the biting, the snarling, the **scratching**, the howling- it's all there and the

cumulative effect is masterly. Truly the noise must have been dreadful. As he says himself, 'Bhí an áit bodhar acu...' (the place was 'deaf' with them...)

As the day drew on, unease began to spread, for there was, as yet, no sign of the buyers. At last it began to dawn on the sellers that no buyers would be coming at all- that they had been fooled and made laughing stocks of for the countryside to guffaw at. With this realisation came anger and a determination that some revenge must be sought.

'Mar sin chun nach mbeidis ina ndreoilíní spoirt os comhair an tsaoil agus go mórmór os comhair a gcomharsan scaoil cuid acu na madraí saor uatha, tuarim agus 500 díobh, ar fud baile Chaisleán Nua. Thóg an chuid eile acu gach cóngar agus cúlbealach abhaile i ngan fhios mar a mbeidis as radharc an phobail.'

(so that they wouldn't be objects of ridicule before the world and especially before the neighbours, some of them loosed the dogs, about 500 of them, throughout the town of Newcastle. The rest took every short cut and back way home, secretly until they would be out of sight of the public.)

I don't know how big Newcastle is now- my memories of it are of a smallish, friendly place, back in the forties- and also of a woeful beating we got in a hurling match. It is doubtless larger now but the effect of a surging wave of hungry dogs descending on the place and galloping women snatching their children in the doors- bolts and locks being hurriedly fastened, windows being slammed shut- shouts of alarm and the thunder of fleeing nailed boots. O, it must have been worth seeing as every morsel of food was grabbed and consumed, hens and geese slaughtered, shops and kitchens invaded.

It took some time before the men of the place set about combatting the plague, '...le bataí, le picí, le gunnaí, le gaistí agus le nimh...' (...with sticks, with pikes, with guns, with traps and with poison...) Truly worthy of an epic poem.

I am grateful to Pádraig O Cearbhaill on several counts. He has lightened a grey world with his humour, provided a rich diet of Munster idiom and vocabulary, but most of all he has given us a damned good read. **Bhíos lag leis an ngáire aige!**

IRISH DIMENSIONS IN HISTORY IN THE NEW NATIONAL CURRICULUM

By Nesson Danaher

The purpose of this article is to give the facts to the Irish community in Britain about the relevance of the new National Curriculum in History to us today and especially to future generations of schoolchildren and students.

At last, the Irish in Britain have the opportunity to learn about and actively promote their own history and cultural heritage within mainstream education. How often have we heard middle-age and elderly Irish parents bemoaning the fact that their offspring are either ignorant about their Irish background or, in some cases, ashamed of it even to the point of denying their Irishness!

When you've read the information below, you might like to consider how you can, as a positive, concerned parent (or teacher!) ensure that your son's or daughter's school responds positively to the opportunities presented. In our view, this is the best opportunity we've ever had as a community to place ourselves firmly on the educational agenda in this country. Let's ensure that we make the most of it by supporting this report in as many positive ways as possible.

Let us look at what is on offer in terms of topics; to what age groups; and how it can be resourced.

What is available to our youngsters?

Before looking at the actual details, let's look at the intentions of the report on history from the particular viewpoint of the Irish in Britain. The document clearly acknowledges that, among other groups, the Celtic migration added further languages to the amalgam we call Britain. It also clearly acknowledges migration within Britain and ethnic and religious grouping in Britain. It goes on to remark that the National Curriculum (NC) in Britain will provide a clear opportunity to move in the direction of recognising that British experience is not simply that of the English, and that "essential elements of Welsh, Scottish and Irish history have therefore been included in the programmes of study."

It would appear from analysing the history report that there is the potential for developing an Irish dimension at every key stage - should one wish to. The opportunities are especially numerous in terms of Key Stage 3 KS3 (for 12-14 year olds) and also KS4 (15-16 year olds). Perhaps it would be sensible to look at what might be done first at primary and then in secondary education.

Primary age pupils will be involved at KS1 (for 6 and 7 year olds) and at KS2 (8 - 11 year olds). The youngest group will consider such questions as "Who am I?" and "Where and when am I?" They will also look at their family history in the context of the last fifty years. Local history, ceremonies and anniversaries could be studies. All of these permit some simple examination of the backgrounds of the children and their parents. Visual history, such as listening to grandparents, is encouraged as part of the learning process.

There are further opportunities to develop the Irish dimension at KS2 (for 8 - 11 year olds). Without detailing the four main **History Study Units (HSU's)**, Irish related topics mentioned are: Celtic Christianity; Celtic missionaries in England; St Patrick and St Columba; Celtic Christian culture; place names and languages; stories from the Vikings in Ireland (and Scotland); Protestants and Catholics c 1600; Irish urban settlement in Victorian Britain; Irish immigration to Britain and emigration from Ireland; life in Britain c 1930 - 80 : this mentions ethnic patterns and could include the Irish experience in pre-war work, for example. (There are various interesting autobiographies by Irish migrants dealing with the 1950's onwards, such as Donall MacAmlaigh's; there is also the recent Virago Press book on women migrants, *Across the Water*.)

Is there anything for secondary age pupils?

The answer to this has to be resounding yes - there is a great deal of positive potential for an Irish dimension here. There are two approaches at KS3. There are four compulsory core units to start with. Three of the four topics offer possibilities and one of the three is particularly relevant : Strongbow and the Normans in Ireland are mentioned in the mediaeval realms, 1066-1500 unit; popular protest in Ireland and Irish immigration occur as topics in the unit called Expansion, Trade and Industry: Britain 1750 to 1990.

By far the greatest potential in core units, however, lies in the core unit called

The Making of The United Kingdom c 1500 - 1750. This covers the Anglo-Irish relationship throughout the period; the distribution of wealth from land in Ireland; religious tensions throughout the region in the period; the Ulster Plantation; the 1641

rising and the massacres at Drogheda and Wexford; the 1688 - 90 period.

Teachers at this stage can also choose four optional topics from a list of forty. One of these is entitled (HSU) number 19 - Culture and Society in Ireland up to the early 20th Century. There is obviously a tremendous amount here to work at and one would probably have to be selective. The novel aspect we feel is the fact that Gaelic culture is on the agenda as "essential information" At last the great modern sub-cultures of the Irish in Britain can come out of the educational closet. "Irish National culture in Gaelic and English" and "Gaelic traditions in music, sport and dance as part of Irish nationalism" give the green light to making a lot more feiseanna, fleadhanna choil and ceilithe for our young people.

To see these cultural manifestations being highlighted as part of the curriculum gives a sharper edge to the ethnic, social and psychological identity of the second generation Irish in Britain. Indeed, this is the time surely for national branches of Comhaltas, the GAA, Conradh na Gaeilge and similar cultural bodies to write to the authors of the report to express agreement and satisfaction with these new dimensions on offer. It is presumably wise to let the authorities know that the community has read the report and is reacting in a supportive manner, especially bearing in mind what was said earlier about Anglo-centric attitudes to history teaching in certain powerful quarters. With regard to the last two years of compulsory education for our children (KS4 for 15 - 16 year olds) there is a discernible Irish dimension in HSU number 32, **Britain in the 20th Century**, one of the two compulsory core units for the age group. Aspects covered include: Irish nationalism 1906-14; Home Rule and Ulster; Economic depression and its effects in Northern Ireland 1929 - 1939; Immigration 1960 - 69 (Ireland is not mentioned here but could be; Civil rights in Ulster and troop deployment 1960 - 69; the permissive society; Abortion laws reform and the "pill".

Are there published resources to call on?

The answer is most definitely yes. There is a wide range of material covering all topics. Extensive bibliographies are available, as are free catalogues from the Irish publishers

So I would argue that this is the best opportunity the Irish community in Britain has ever had to feature formally on the educational agenda. Whatever your own social, religious or political background, why not seize the opportunity and get stuck in?



Drawing by Joanna Kay, Liverpool

The Tailtean Games

by An Manchúineach

In these days there is much talk of World Cup football and the forthcoming Olympic Games, so perhaps it would be appropriate for us to reflect for a moment or two that we, the Irish, also had our very own ancient games. They were known as the Tailtean Games, named after the legendary Tailtiu, the wife of Eochu mac Eirc, the last of the Firbolg kings, the foster mother of Lug. She is regarded as having come originally from Spain. It was in response to her request, on her deathbed, that funeral games would be held every year in her honour, and thus began the ancient assembly known as Oenach Tailten, and held a fortnight before, and after, the celebrated Feast of Lughnasa (1st August). Oenach Tailten- the Fair of Tailtean (modern Teltown, Co.Meath) was situated on a high meadow in the loop of the River Blackwater, between Donaghpatrick and Martry, and a place of natural fortification.

Here was held the Fair, a place of lore and legend and recorded history, and in fact so regularly was it held that the year 873 was noteworthy in that no Fair was held then, but no reason given for its absence. There were the usual functions, apart from the Games, of buying and selling as in a market, for cattle trading, as a place of assembly and for proclaiming edicts from the High King, for law making, for settling legal disputes- here was held the Synod set up to censure Columba in 563 for his instigation of the war in the North which cost many hundreds of lives, and was the main reason for his exile. Paradoxically this was the site of

another battle, that between High King Finnseachta and Bécc Boichi, King of the Ulaídh, in 679. And naturally legends abound of this ancient place. One, recounted by the great historian John O'Donovan, tells of a spot called Doolough (dubh loch- the black lake) and tradition has it that, it is so black and forbidding because Patrick condemned the shade of Laoighaire to remain in it until the Day of Judgment. Fair enough, too, as Paddy was still a wee bit picqued at "yer man" King Laoghaire, attempting to have him ambushed on his way to Tara, and relations between them were a little strained'. It was a place to avoid as any disturbance of the water was said to bring forth a fearsome serpent, and the approach was known as 'an t-áithghean go h-Iffrionn'- the short road to Hell. There is a terse record which states: '668 Tailtiu burned' but with nothing of circumstances, and other notable dates were in 777 and 827 when 'disturbances' were recorded. As the oenach was famous for its feasting and drinking, there could be some link here. These, however, weren't always the fault of the populace, as Fogartach Mac Neill, King of Brega, is recorded as breaking up the fair in 717 AD. One is left wondering if he sounded a horn, and called 'Time gentlemen please' but then one doubts it! And then there was the matchmaking - and the curious custom known as 'an céilidheacht Tailtin'- the Tailtean marriage. This bond was sealed, for a year only, as a trial marriage, simply by touching fingers through a hole in a wall, down by Rath Dubh. The snag was that the wall was constructed with a different

level on each side so that the couple could not see each other, so it really was a Celtic lottery. However there were compensations to be had -no registrar's fee, no reception costs and, if things didn't work out, the following year to return to the Fair and, standing back to back, proclaim their own 'I've had enough of you, mate' statement, and the marriage was dissolved.

The games themselves, although only a part of the Fair, were an integral one and their origins go back to the legendary Fianna- and probably beyond. The national game of hurling has been a distinctive Irish pastime for at least 2000 years and the earliest references to it come from the very dawn of civilisation. And ball games have been played from antiquity. The Old Testament, the poet Homer and ancient Egyptian monuments, all show that ball games were known in Biblical times, in pagan Egypt, and in Imperial Rome. Arthurian Britain and Viking Scandinavia had their own type of ball games as had the ancient Persians, the North American Indians, the Aztecs and the Celts of Western Europe. At Tailtean the Games were comprised primarily of warrior games and sports, feats of strength etc, but also running, javelin throwing, ball games such as shinty, hurling and football, cavalry charges and horse racing from Cnoc Aidi, just north of Kells, to Tailtean. Horse racing, too, the length of the River Blackwater (anciently Bó Guaire) the steeds urged on by nearly naked riders, and it was considered necessary to wet the animals completely as precaution against disease.

There was wrestling too, and great emphasis was given to martial arts and warrior games. Hurley seems to have held a prime place in the games of the time, though, and elaborate provisions were made, under the Brehon laws, for compensation for persons injured or killed by a hurley or a hurley ball (camán and puc). These gaming articles were highly prized and, for example, King Cahir the Great, who died at Tailtean about 170AD, left 50 brass hurleys and 50 brass hurling balls. 300 years later a King of Ossory listed bronze hurleys among his most precious possessions. But sadly, the Annals give the last reference to Oenach Tailtean in 1170, for in that year the Normans came, at Diarmid Mac Murchadha's instigation, invaded Midhe and Breifni, plundered Clonard and burned Kells, Disert Ciarán, Dowth, Slane and Cill Tailtean (the church at Tailtiu). The Kingdom of Midhe, under its last King, Murchadh O'

Malseachlaionn, was no more and was treated as a conquered land. But wouldn't it be marvellous if the glory and magic of that great era in our history could be revived in a modern version of the Tailtean Games? And that is not such a far fetched notion as it would appear. In fact there is now a move afoot to attempt to do just that- a revival of those ancient games. This novel and exciting idea has come from Manchester-based Gerry Gallagher, who has already received moderately encouraging responses from Irish state departments, from Bórd Fáilte- and a lovely letter from the late lamented Tomas Cardinal O Fiach, just before he died - Go ndéantaidh Dia trócaire ar a n-anam dílse. Gerry would welcome any support, such as letters of encouragement, ideas etc. He can be reached on 061 256 3576.

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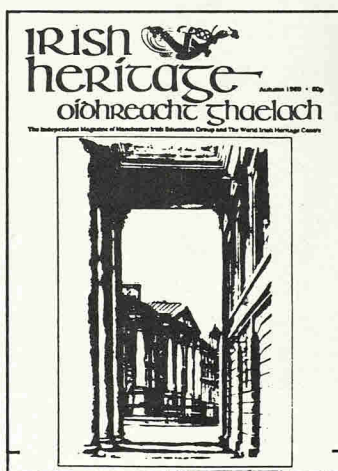
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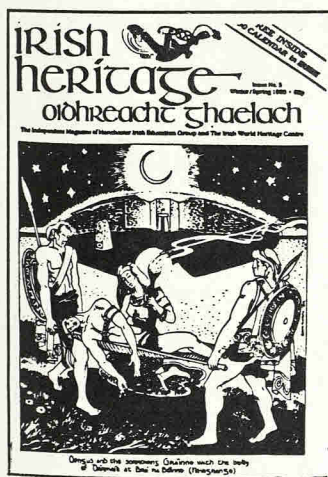
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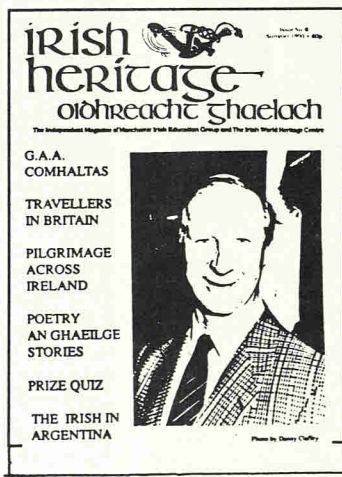
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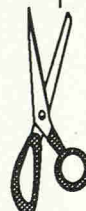
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