

Le Chêile

Community Magazine



November 2020

No. 388

EDITORIAL

We take this opportunity to keep in contact with readers, a contact which extends over forty six years and which has seen much progress and many achievements. Meeting the Covid challenge has to remain our primary motivation at this time and all else takes a step to one side. Contributors have not been asked to do the impossible and come forward with reports on happenings and events which could not take place in present circumstances.

Our principal focus has to be on doing our best to control and combat the pandemic while striving to protect our own health and that of the community. Social distancing, personal cleanliness, wearing masks in public situations, looking out for vulnerable members of the community and personal fitness have to be at the top of our list.

Our high regards have to be paid to those who are at the front line -the medical and health care workers, the staff in our schools, the staff in shops who are keeping us supplied with food and essentials.

It is inspiring to see the generally high regard which has been given to the rules and recommendations by the majority of the public. People have been more careful with litter and the generous volunteers have kept on top of shrubberies, flowerbeds and areas prone to go into weeds. It is greatly appreciated.

We welcome the following poem by local poet Jim Canning. It is a few years since we published one of Jim's

works or that of any other local poet.

"AUTUMN"

Declining tranquil day
Of autumn in repose
In hues of amber gold and crimson
Rose abounding.
I beg you
Share with me your gloaming.?
And as I stray among the leas,
I sigh,
In the shadow of your august sky,
And wonder at the splendours
Of billowing clouds
Guiding the sun to rest in blushes
Gathered from its daily quest.

Making divine Scenes
Your dying hours aspire,
Before you rest with Twilight's cosy fire.
Oh gentle day!
So beautiful so gay
Dawdle! Delay!
Or even slightly stray
To favour me
Before the shroud of Night Eternal
Wraps itself around your light.
Show me the lonely road,
Light me the way,
With flaming orb
And scintillating ray

EDITOR'S DEADLINE

The deadline for receipt of material for the December issue of Le Chéile is

Monday 23rd November

To 142 Loughbollard please.

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Get Le Chéile on www.clanecommunity.ie

Emblazoned high
 Against the darkening sky.
 Let fledglings fly with skill
 On feeble feathers:
 Soar with trembling trill
 To join migrating flocks
 For warm climes bound
 In arrow flight without a sound
 Except the flapping of a thousand wings
 Paralleling the wispy vapour strings
 Of spectral jet planes
 Across the firmament's wide azure plain
 Farmers harvesting the ripen corn,
 Make haste with endeavour,
 And portend
 Because the moon is nigh
 Encircled, rising slowly, shadowy
 With Venus twinkling colourfully,
 As shrieking children play hide and seek
 Among the scattered sheaves and ricks
 The ticklish chill of evening
 Glowing their cheeks
 Reminding all of winter dreary weeks.
 Farewell dear gentle day.
 The angry moon is rising haughtily.
 Glaring at unwelcome guests
 To hasten speedily,
 While the townhall's pallid clock
 Inside its tower
 Sounds eerie chiming out the hour.
 O'er pathways carpeted with leaves,
 Strangely silent,
 But murmuring to please
 And soothe the dirgeful trees
 Swaying in the breeze,
 As this peaceful autumn day
 Lies finally to rest.
 I stop and ask the reason
 Why this beauty ends
 Eclipsed by Darkness

In rain wind and snow
 Across Mother Earth;
 To allow the dawning
 In pristine light
 Of Winter's birth.

James A. Canning
 10th Oct. 2020

NORTH KILDARE MEALS ON WHEELS

North Kildare Meals on Wheels - Delivering a
 Vital Community Service During Covid.

One of the many tragedies of the Covid-19 crisis is that it has led to the closure of vital services just at a time when they were needed most. However, the North Kildare Meals on Wheels service has continued to supply a beautifully cooked two course meal to 45 local older people three days a week. This is thanks to the commitment of many individuals and organisations, says one of the Directors, Jean Hourigan.

'During the past six months, when the country faced a global pandemic of the coronavirus, the survival of our voluntary service was extremely important to us, as many of the recipients of our service found themselves even more isolated and alone than ever before' she said.

Soroptimist International North Kildare Meals on Wheels is a voluntary organisation that delivers meals to older and incapacitated people in the greater Clane area.

'Our service has weathered the storm and continues to operate in these difficult times. This has

been down to our wonderful volunteers and members of the community who have supported us, and we have a lot of people to thank. In particular we would like to thank our volunteer co-ordinators, Anne Giffney and Anne

Garry who have done tremendous work in ensuring that this much-needed service survives', she said.

'We would like to thank our volunteer drivers who give so much of their time. We thank Naas Hospital who stepped in to prepare and supply meals during the worst of the lockdown, Community Garda Shane Smyth and Clane G.A.A and Caragh G.A.A whose members offered huge assistance in delivering the meals while observing all the safety protocols. Finally, we owe a great debt of gratitude to Clongowes Wood College which has for over 20 years prepared and supplied the meals we deliver in the community and will shortly be resuming that role. We are committed to maintaining a valuable community service and ensuring it thrives in these difficult times'

For further details contact the Editor ; See contact details on page 2.

THE IRISH GAZETTEER

The reference to Clane in the Irish Gazetteer (3 vols.) is as follows: **The 19th century mansions in the vicinity of Clane.**

Blackhall - - property of P. Wolfe.

Millicent - - property of B. Molloy.

Sherlockstown - -property of Mr. Sherlock

Firmount- - property of R. Dease.

Fairs at Clane.

April 28th, July 25th, October 15th.

The nearest bog to Clane.

The nearest bog to Clane lies to the north – west. It occupies a valley at the chief watershed of the rivulets that run respectively towards the Boyne and the Liffey. It is semi-circular and measures 3 and 1/4 miles in length from horn to horn. It adjoins Hodgestown, Ballinafagh, Beataghstown and Prosperous. It measures over 2,000 Irish acres. Its average depth in the middle of the 19th century was calculated at 30 feet. To reclaim this

bog at that time was estimated at £8,867 18s 9d.

Area of the town of Clane.

Estimated at 25 acres . The population in 1831 was 216. In 1841 it was 335. There were 51 houses in the town in 1831.

Schools in the parish of Clane in 1831.

There were nine daily schools in the union, six of which were in Clane parish, one in Clongowes College in Mainham with a total population of students at 629; 332 males and 297 females.

The Protestant parish of Clane. The benefice of Clane consisted of Clane, Clonshamboe , Mainham and Killybegs, measuring 6x4 miles. In 1831 the population was 4,450. A house in Mainmam was used, in addition to the Church at Clane, as a place of worship. The Clane church consisted of a gallery, a vestry room, a school house (now Cash's) , seating 300.

The Catholic parish of Clane. The chapel has an attendance of 1,000 and is united to the chapels of Balrahan and Ballinafagh. Two other chapels are listed in the parish, namely that at Killybegs and at Mainham (Jesuits). Protestant population amounted to 98, Catholics 1,973.

The Barony of Clane. It is bounded to the west by Carbury, on the north-east by Ikeathy and Oughterany, on the south-east by Naas and on the south-west by Connell. According to Rawson's statistical survey the barony measures 18,736 acres; 6,845 acres are bog, 11,891 are arable. Its real area according to the Ordnance Survey is 32, 023 acres, 1 rood and 1 perch.. (English acres?) Of this acreage 123 acres 2 roods are water. The Bog of Allen is described as "repulsive". Towns in the barony are listed as Clane, Prosperous; the parishes are Ballinafagh, Brideschurch, Clane, Caragh, Downings, Killibegs and Timahoe. The population in 1831 was 8,356; in 1841 was 8,534. The other statistics were: Houses 1,421; employed in agriculture 1,143

(families); Trade and manufacture 237;
Other pursuits 127.

(First published in Le Chéile in Feb. '81)

THE BIG SNOW OF 1933

[Hoping readers will continue to excuse us for our reliance on the past in the present time of “Lock-down. This article was published by Le Chéile in Jan. 1989.]

The big fall of snow in February 1933 must be regarded as one of the heaviest snowfalls in the century in these parts. It began on a Thursday in late February, continuing through Thursday night and all day on Friday. It was small, fine dry snow, driven by an east wind ; it penetrated even through keyholes on doors of houses facing east. Almost everything was brought to a standstill and roads were impassable. Strange to say, roads running north/south were more affected than roads running east/west. With an east wind behind it, a good deal of the snow blew off the roads facing east while at the same time, it lay on all other roads.

If my memory is right the road from Clane to Dublin was passable, even on the following Saturday, so we were not cut off entirely. On other roads between the hedgerows, between the hedgerows, the snow lay to a depth of five or six feet. If the hedges were low or had been cut recently the line of road disappeared from view completely in places. Some time later, a lone horseman was seen going through Clane towards Naas. It was Christy Moloney (R.I.P.) from Mainham, riding a farm horse from Clongowes Wood, to collect mail and whatever else for the College. Between hopping and trotting, stumbling and falling he got there and back safely.

One evening a group of boys gathered outside the Hall on the College Road for a meeting which did not take place. They decided to make a snowman. It stood about twelve feet in height and covered more than half the road at the base. Later, when workmen from Clongowes Wood came along clearing the road with shovels (there were no bulldozers then, they decided to bypass the snowman by paring a bit from the side of him.

Eventually, with the days getting longer and brighter, there was no frost and most of the snow cleared away, except in places where it drifted, and this could still be seen up until the month of May. There was a good deal of sheep and cattle lost, especially sheep. If they had not been got in before it started, they had no chance of survival. In Clane and surrounding areas nobody was entirely cut off, and they lived to fight another day.

(Paddy McCormack Jan. 89.)

CLANE PAST

Trundling along the Capdoo Lane,
The stagecoach makes it's way to Clane.
With Robbers Corner safely passed,
The tall church spire's* in view at last.

Across the road from Kitterick's* Inn
The Post House is our first pull-in.
The Coach House and yard are to the rere-
Where we change the horses and drink a beer.

Then out the road to Nancy's Lane,
As it's commonly known if you come from Clane.
It is the road to Offaly,
And the coach goes on to reach Killeigh.

[The Bothar Bríd was an earlier name]
Then Butter Stream* and Donahue's Lane
Taking us up to Firmount Hill
And Killibegs on further still.

Palmerstown, Lucan, Celbridge, Clane
Kilmeague, Rathangan, P'tarlington

Were the stops she made along the way,
With Clonegowan and then Killeigh.

It was a different world you know.
Things were steady and things were slow.
Three fairs were held throughout the year
And Geoghan's* pub served up the beer.

In seventeen hundred and fifty one
An Act was passed and work begun.
This Turnpike Act of George II
Shortened the Limerick Road -it reckoned.

Instead of by Naas it went by Clane.
The horses were saved both miles and strain.
More level this road than by Rathcoole,
The Slieve Blooms too would test a mule.

Mosse's Road, starting from Irishtown bend,
Heads straight through flood plains bogs &
fens Plying millions of cartloads of gravel and
stone While keeping its level above the flood
zone.

Connecting Clane to Ballinagar,
Just twenty miles from Clane afar.
Past Edenderry three miles south,
But at Lullymore the steam ran out.

Though it never replaced the Limerick line
It was an epic of its time.
Canals and railways soon aspired
And our road ambitions were retired.

In 1780 Prosperous took root
And Allenwood was a further shoot.
With cotton in Prosperous & woollens in Clane,
The wheels of progress were in train.

In a few more years we'll all be gone,
But the memories of old will still live on.

- Tall Church Spire: Removal approved 1826 following damage in 1798.
- Kitterick's Inn: Now Manzors.

- Butterstream: Bothar an tSruthain: Road by the Stream.
- Geoghan's Pub: Later the Corner House.

HALLOWEEN

Some years ago I happened to come across a reference to Firmount written by Archdeacon Sherlock at the beginning of the century. He was writing about the St. John's Eve bonfires which were traditional in most parts of the country on the night of 23rd June. He stated that such fires were traditionally lit at two sites in the vicinity of Clane. One site was on the banks of the stream which flows through the present-day park and on by the side of the Naas Road. The other was at a wide roadside verge on Firmount Hill. The Archdeacon was writing more about their nuisance value than anything else, about unruly behaviour and the theft of loads of turf from the bogs in the days beforehand. Rightly or wrongly it raised the question in my mind: could the name Firmount be derived from "Fire Mount"? I have no great reason for saying so other than what I have already stated and the curious fact that both places mentioned were places where men continued to gather to play the legally proscribed game of pitch and toss on long summer evenings and on Sundays after Mass. This practice continued well into the fifties, The late Denny Colgan [see PEOPLE section], who lived into his nineties, once told me that his father used to get the Freeman's Journal at the Cross every evening (I think from a passing bus or some other form of transport) and read it for the assembled group, outdoors on

summer evenings or in the kitchen of his house nearby on winter evenings.

I looked up Taylor and Skinner's map of 1780 and found that instead of Firmount it was then marked Raystown. Could this come from Baile (R)Aodh, Aodh, being the Celtic god of fire? I know this is very tenuous and far fetched and should not be taken seriously. It did however spark for me an interest in the Celts and I bought a few books on the topic. It is interesting that the other traditional place for ceremonial fire and a gathering point to within living memory was the bank of the Stream leading out the Naas Road. Set into the side of the bank is a large stone, some tons in weight, containing a deep bowl permanently filled with water. It is classed as a Bullan stone such as was used by the Druids to offer sacrifice [see article on WART STONES] The Celts came to Ireland about 500 B.C. They were an advance group of a race which was by then settled far and wide across Europe having come, it is speculated, from the borders of India. They heralded the arrival of the Iron Age and a whole new culture. They were war-like and, it is said, uncouth. They had their own gods who were of two ranks. There were the ancestral gods, or Tuatha De Dannan. These lived in an underworld in the west, into which the sun descended each evening and to which all the spirits of the living went when they died. Chief of these gods was the Daghdha who was also known as Eochaidh Ollathair or, like Jupiter, the "Father of All". There were also the regional gods. These changed from country to country. These were more concrete and consisted largely of landscape features such as rivers and mountains, animals or birds. They were female. Examples were Life (Liffey), Badh Catha (the Raven of Battle), Medhbh (the Mare) and the Morrigan (the

Queen of Deamons).

There were four major feast days throughout the Celtic year which marked the seasons and related to the pastoral or agricultural cycle of life. Each was celebrated with fire and on each occasion the Druids choose a suitable mate for the Daghdha from amongst the regional goddesses. It was all about regeneration and fertility, as many of the customs which survive down to the present would suggest. Jumping through the fire meant marriage before the year was out. Likewise driving cattle or horses between fires ensured calves or foals. With the coming of Christianity every effort was made to lay a Christian veneer over such practices and to suppress the pagan elements.

Halloween, which heralded the start of winter, the dark and dead time of year, was to ensure the rebirth of the year in spring. It was replaced by the eve of All Saints. The 1st of February, or Feile Brid, marks the beginning of spring in the Celtic calendar. The Christian St. Brigid replaced the pagan goddess of the same name, who was the offspring of the Daghdha and the Morrigan conceived at the time of the spring fire. This celebration was meant to ensure the lambs and the opening of the buds.

The fire of Bealtaine heralded summer on the 1st May. It coincided with the putting out of the cattle on new grass, with the cessation of frosts. The mid-summer fire of St John's Eve on 23rd June was intended to encourage the sun to stay at its prime by burning the day into the night. Luanasa became replaced by the feast of the Assumption on 15 August. It was never celebrated much in Ireland, where our ancestors were pastoral farmers, as distinct from cereal, and has in fact recently been dropped by the Church. It is a big feast around the Mediterranean amongst the descendants of the grain growing Celts. These modern continentals still dress up in

their traditional costumes and play their traditional music on 15th August.

The Daghdha was a "good god", from the Irish 'dea' meaning good. This did not mean good as in the Judeo-Christian or even Greek traditions, i.e. one who exhibited exemplary qualities, but rather one who "came up with the goods, filled the barns or ensured the lambs. An approach to him was like making an offering to some of the characters coming up before our present day Tribunals.

MEDIEVAL RECORDS OF CLANE

In 1980 Prosperous celebrated its 200th anniversary, having been founded in 1780 around the cotton milling establishment of Robert Brook. In 1985 a whole series of canal towns, including Sallins and Robertstown, celebrated their 200th anniversaries. Clane, by contrast, is a town of great antiquity. Leaving its pre-Christian and Monastic periods aside, did you know that Clane had corporate town status under the Normans? From the rolls we find that on 14th March 1391 the King granted the Provost, Bailiffs and Commonality of the town of Clane, that for seven years they may take custom of goods coming to the town to build anew a certain bridge of the said town over the waters of the Analiffey. A Provost and Commons was the equivalent of a Mayor and Corporation. Letters 1417 and 1454 addressed to King Henry V and Richard Duke of York, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, respectively, are signed by the Portrieves and Commons of Clane. The letter of 1454 is preserved in the British Museum, together with its many pendant seals.

(From the March edition of *Le Chéile*, 1980)