

Le Chêile

Community Magazine



February 2021

No. 391

EDITORIAL

This edition of Le Chéile marks the 47th year of the publication of a community magazine by Clane Community Council, having commenced in January 1974. Needless to say the virus has presented us with many problems over most of the past year. Most of the community groups with which we have worked have had to go into shut down. This covers a wide range of organizations including sports groups, residents associations, community activists and volunteers of every kind.

The Community Council AGM was held online on Monday 25th January:

Clane Community Council - Secretary's Report to the AGM for 2020.

Abbey Community Centre

The Abbey Community Centre remains a key amenity for the people of Clane. Traditionally we would hold our AGMs in the Abbey but in the last year we have become used to having to hold all of our meetings remotely.

Unfortunately, as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, we had to severely curtail use of the building. There were none of the usual musicals, plays or pantomimes by Clane Musical and Dramatic Society in 2020. We installed appropriate Covid-19 signage, sign-in sheets and contact free dispensers and we made efforts to keep the Abbey open for a while between lockdowns but only limited use was ultimately possible.

Routine maintenance on the Abbey was carried out, including recommissioning the emergency lighting. However, the need to substantially upgrade, refurbish and protect the Abbey building has been a priority for the Community Council in recent years and we require the assistance of rel-

evant experts and professionals to assess what work needs to be done to safeguard the building for the community. We applied to Kildare County Council to be selected for a national Community Facilities grant application. The Community Council was selected and the proposal was submitted through the Public Realm Project for the town.

An announcement earlier this month from Kildare County Council confirmed that a sum of €200,000 has been allocated to the Clane Public Realm Project. They indicated that from this total amount an allocation of between €35,000 and €45,000 (value yet to be confirmed) was made for the Abbey. The grant is for preparatory work to prepare the Abbey for eligibility for grant aid to implement repairs and upgrades to services. We would have to contribute €5,000 in matching funding. The full details of how and when the allocation will be available to us has yet to be confirmed.

Clane Tidy Towns

There was no national Tidy Towns competition and unfortunately no awards night. We continued to receive generous grants. Work started on the Community Biodiversity Action Plan, funded by a grant of €1,500 from Kildare County Council. The appointed consultants, Green Pine Consultants, have been finalising our Biodiversity Action Plan document based on our inputs, including three webinar sessions and other zoom meetings

EDITOR'S DEADLINE

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

Monday 22nd February

To 142 Loughbollard please.

Tel. 045-868474.

Get Le Chéile on www.clanecommunity.ie

contributed to by the committee. The Action Plan will be launched at an online celebration on February 10th.

The project includes:

- identifying biodiversity actions that could be taken in Scoil Bhríde.
- 900 native trees (bare-root whips) were received and they are temporarily heeled in at a bed in the Irish Wheelchair Association, ready to plant around the village in the coming weeks.
- A native holly hedge has been planted along the front of the Garda Station as part of the recent landscaping there.
- Plans are afoot to landscape the area at the entrance to the Clane Lawn Tennis Club.
- Volunteers from Tidy Towns and other residents have also been making progress, working individually or in small groups to remove overgrowth on the path along the Liffey, and removing litter from lanes and ditches around the village

Plenty of other work was done by the active Tidy Towns group, chaired by Tony McKenna, within the restrictions imposed by covid-19:

- Met with Clane Anglers group to discuss maintenance of the Stream, including removing vegetation and putting in larger stones to protect smaller fish.
- Planting of a border of yew at the 1798 memorial on the Kilcock Road.
- Beech saplings planted to fill gaps in beech hedge on Sallins Road.
- Washing and painting of black bollards and lampposts on Main Street.
- Launched campaign to highlight

problems of dog fouling. Free dog-poo bags handed out and posted in businesses on Main Street.

- Launched a Facebook page which is very active in promotion of the group's activities.
- Clean-up of Liffey walk, including cutting back vegetation and litter removal.
- Substantial work at Garda Station, including old hedges removed behind bus stop and new beech hedge planted at bus stop and anew holly hedge in front of the Garda station.
- Hedge cut back on Kilcock Road between Clongowes service entrance and main entrance to facilitate walking to Mainham Cemetery.
- Big litter clean-up on Capdoo Lane.

Clane and Rathcoffey Community Games

No competition this year. Apart from local Swimming Competition before shut-down.

Heritage

Plans are progressing to construct a stone wall near Alexandra Bridge on which the remaining Heritage signage will be installed. Text for a new Abbey Graveyard information sign has been finalised.

Clane Watch

John Daly was elected to County Kildare Joint Policing Committee on behalf of the Community Council.

Website & Communications

The website www.clanecommunity.ie contin-

ues to serve as our primary internet presence. We upgraded to //https to ensure that our website displayed as secure and trusted in peoples web browsers.

The map of Clane on www.openstreetmap.org is also being kept up to date. We continue to publish Le Chéile monthly. This is our community magazine edited by Tony McEvoy. Nine issues were published in 2020.(All except May)

A Walking Routes Map was added to our see website to illustrate some walking routes in and around Clane, including routes which have dedicated footpaths. An additional map was added to highlight cycling infrastructure in and around Clane.

Poster-Free Zone for Clane

The election poster-free zone initiative that started in 2018 was continued for the General Election in 2020. Results were mixed in terms of compliance by some candidates and parties but we received plenty of positive feedback on the idea.

The Development of Clane

The Community Council has continued to monitor planning applications for Clane, and made submissions on behalf of the community where we observed important issues of concern or opportunities for improvement. During 2020 our submissions to Kildare County Council and to An Bord Pleanála addressed the following:

Hemingway Park development: our submission focused on improving pedestrian access, especially to facilitate safe pedestrian and

cycling access towards the village and schools.

KDA-1 Brooklands Development: we made a submission focusing on ensuring that the proposed development complied with the overall Clane Local Area Plan.

Clane Christmas Lights

Clane Community Council again organised the installation of lights around the village for Christmas 2020. The lights were installed by a team of volunteers under the direction of John Power. The work is labour intensive and includes working at heights in winter weather but is ultimately very rewarding and lifted the town's spirits during a particularly difficult Christmas season at the end of a difficult year.

We set up a GoFundMe account and received generous donations for the Christmas Lights from businesses and residents. We note the very useful contribution of an aerial boom lift by Aerial Platform Hire.

This year the scheme included an extended section of lights at the Kilcock Road junction. The traditional Christmas Tree was put up on the Abbey Green.

Unfortunately, we could not hold our usual official switch-on ceremony at the Abbey and there was no Claonadh Award this year.

Autism Friendly Town

The Clane Autism Friendly Town initiative is taking Clane on a journey to make Clane

Autism Friendly. The group was formally made a sub-committee of the Community Council in 2020. A grant was received which allowed for the distribution of activity packs.

Clane Watch

Loughanure Area Text Alert Scheme received renewal subscriptions this year. The scheme is well received in the area. Subscription renewals were 126 this year which is down from the original membership of 150 (Covid-19 did not help with calling to houses). A message was sent out to members about COVID-19 and watching out for older people in the neighbourhood.

Finance and Administration

The substantial work summarised in this report would not have been possible without the financial contributions received by the Community Council. This includes several grants from Kildare County Council and other bodies, and generous donations from business and residents, as well as contributions from the Courts Service at Naas Court-house. Detail of the amounts received will be provided by our Treasurer in his report, which we will carry next month.

Finally, we continued to monitor our use of bank accounts to ensure efficient financial controls and minimal costs. We are working towards finalising an application for registration with the Charities Regulator.

I trust that this Report adequately reflects the variety and scope of work done by the Community Council in 2020.

Paul Carroll, *Secretary*,

Clane Community Council.

21 January 2021

St. Brigid's Chair, Table & Thimble

Archdeacon Sherlock, in a paper read before the Kildare Archaeological Society in 1892, recorded the existence some half a century previously of what was called St. Brigid's Chair and Thimble beside a stone said to bear the impress of her feet. These stood in an old stone quarry located some few hundred yards to the south of the Moat which is beside the Liffey Bridge in Clane. He suggested that they may have been an old cromlech and stated that they were ruthlessly broken up and used for road-metal a couple of generations previous to his address. This came to my attention in early 1980. I went to look at the site and spoke to Joe and Mona Noonan (R.I.P.) and the Harrington family, who lived on the Millicent Road and within a few hundred yards of the site. The stone quarry had in recent decades been used as a dump by Kildare County Council but had at this stage been officially closed in.

They reassured me that what had been said in the Sherlock report was totally wrong and that the ancient stones which were associated with St. Brigid and were located close to her well were never interfered with in this way and that Joe would take me down and show them to me. He did so but his focus was on the point where the entrance had been excavated into the old quarry. It is not surprising that the cromlech was not located precisely in this excavated area. On looking up the earliest Ordinance Survey Map (surveyed in 1837) I was intrigued to find that the map for this

area shows a small enclosed area within a lightly drawn oval line on the outer edge of the quarry where it edges out towards the roadside. There is no indication of what might have been contained within this area but it is part of a slightly larger area inside the roadside hedge which was not quarried. With help from Seamus Cullen I obtained a copy of Taylor's Map of Kildare (1783) which shows a similar enclosed area, again without comment or identification.

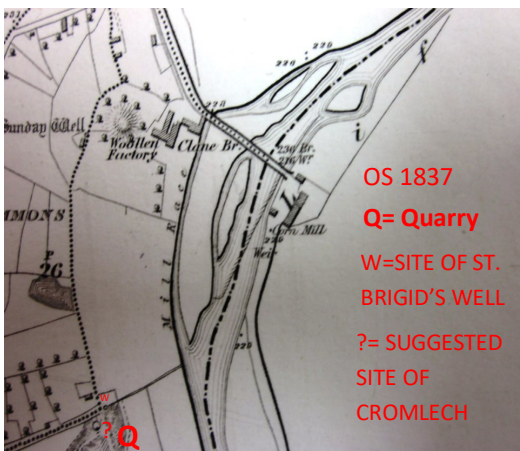
Mona Noonan and Mrs. Harrington as well as some other members of the Harrington family all have the same comment on the 'Chair', 'Thimble' and 'Table' –that they had played St. Brigid doing her sewing while seated there as young girls. They all identify the location as behind the roadside hedge and above the level of the road. They picked out this location without any sight of the maps. As the quarry has now been filled-in, what was the site of the suggested cromlech is now located within the front garden of a new bungalow which has been built there, well back from the road, but there is no sight nor sign of the "cromlough". When Joe Noonan was showing me the site as he imagined it we had our backs to this area and were looking towards the Liffey Bridge.

Note St. Brigid's Well is shown as a minute

circle in the bottom left corner of a rectangle at the end of the cul-de-sac in the OS 1837 map.

Taylor's Map shows the cul-de-sac as extending (with a dashed line) all the way to the river bank and on to the Bridge. This raises interesting questions: Was the stone for the building of this bridge in the 1390s and for its rebuilding in 1864 obtained from this quarry? Was the weir always in existence as a tapering outreach from the limestone strata in the quarry, extending almost to the Bridge? Was this the original ford in Clane? Back in 1980 I Crossed it wearing a pair of fishing boots. It was a difficult crossing on account of the distance involved and the number of water bursts through small gaps in the weir. These of course could have been tempered by blocking with stones. It raises the question: Why was it necessary to have another fording point at Castlesize, just short of Bodenstown Cross, which had to be accessed by the Millicent Road? Certainly the Castlesize crossing is much easier to negotiate.

It is interesting that the local residents use the standard anglicized pronunciation when referring to the Townsland of Carrigeen but invariably use the Irish pronunciation of "cárrigeens" when referring to St. Brigid's stones. Were the stones broken up as road metal during the active years of use of the quarry or were they simply pushed in when it came to close off the dump? The evidence we have is open to interpretation either way. However the local residents are very convinced that they had sight of their presence up until recent decades. In coming to any conclusion all aspects must be examined. Then, finally, there



the cromlech stones, which might have been kept vegetation free by earlier generations?

THE PALE

[This article was originally published in *Le Chéile* in March 1974.]

It is difficult to imagine that in the fifteenth century this double ditch on the lands of Clongowes and extending towards Clane and Rathcoffey represented the western limit of the British Empire. It is known locally as the 'Rampart' or the Pale. It has given rise to the expression "beyond the Pale". It was constructed by an Act of Parliament of Drogheda in 1488 to enclose the English lands of Dublin and part of Kildare and Meath. Its purpose was to keep out the wild Irish, in particular the O'Connors of Offaly, who made continuous raids on their cattle. In 1298, for example, they burned the village of Mainham and put the inhabitants to the sword.

The Pale is described as extending "from Merrion inclusive, to the water of the Dodder by the new ditch to Saggard, Rathcoole, Kilheel (Kilteel), Rathmore & Ballymore(-Eustace). Thence to County Kildare in Ballycutlan, Harristown and Naas and so thence to Clane, Kilboyne and Kilcock. From Kilcock it ran to Athboy and so ended at Dundalk. According to Poyning's Law (1494), it was to be "a double ditch of six feet high above ground on one side or part which mearath next to Irishmen. Every inhabitant, earth tiller and occupant within the Pale was to assist in its construction and was to be remitted one year's rent for his pains." The chain of castles close to the line of the Rampart at Maynooth, Rathcoffey, Clongowes Wood, Blackhall, Naas, etc., stood like sentinels keeping watch and ward against the Irish borders.

The word Pale means a fence and is still encountered in the term "paling post". There are three surviving parts locally. The first part runs from Capdoo to Clongowes, the second from Clongowes farmyard to the road which leads to Rathcoffey School and the third about one mile north of Baltracey Cross on the way to Kilcock. Here it is on the right hand side of the road and one or two fields in. A footpath runs along the top of the bank and was originally suitable for walking or travelling on horseback. For the most part this path is now impassable as the briars and other bushes from both sides have met up in the middle and closed off the path. In the early days of Clongowes Wood College (opened on 14th May 1814) the students used to travel along the Rampart to where they accessed the Capdoo Lane. This took them down to the Dublin Road. Use of the Rampart in this way would take continuous hedge clipping and maintenance. Sections of it were still negotiable into the late 1950s or 60s.

A section of the Pale retaining its original character is accessed down the road which takes one between the two churches and which passes the walled gardens on its left. It would not be fair or appropriate to frequent this area while the pandemic continues.

THE GIANT IRISH ELK FOUND AT CLONGOWES

[This article is taken from *Le Chéile* Dec. '78]

In 1947 James Noonan, who was a ploughman in Clongowes, was ploughing a low-lying field on the Rathcoffey farm when his tractor drawn plough began turning up an assortment of old bones and soon afterwards stuck in the antlers of what is popularly known as the Great Irish Elk. The field, which was being ploughed for the

first time ever, was traditionally known as the 'Decoy'. It was formerly the site of a pond used by Hamilton Rowan, who acquired the property in 1775, as a decoy for ducks and other wild fowl. It seems that the pond, which covers an acre or so, became dried out in the middle of the last century when drainage improvements were carried out on the Lyreen river. The Clongowes boys had skated here in the early years when hard winter frosts had frozen it over.

About four skulls or skull fragments were discovered, including one complete skeleton which was removed by the Natural History Museum. This was not the first find of 'Elks' in Rathcoffey. A skull with one antler was found in 1896 and is preserved in the College Museum. The most recent episode was the discovery in November 1978 in Rathcoffey of a skull of the Irish Giant Deer with broken antler stumps by John Behan of Painstown. An antler of the Red Deer was also found.

There is surely something remarkable about this field in the south of Rathcoffey townland which adjoins Clonaugh. Experts tell us that the Giant Irish Deer (*Megalervus Giganteus*) should not be called an Elk, a true example of which is the Canadian Moose. The Giant Irish Deer was a giant indeed and had an antler span of up to nine and a half feet. It has now been extinct for 10,000 years, but originally came southwards into Ireland across ancient land bridges - the seas were shallower in those days - with kindred North European forms such as the Reindeer and the Musk Ox. They arrived about 12,000 years ago as the last ice was melting during the second late glacial or subarctic period. With the spread of more temperate climatic conditions they moved to their present home in the far north, where many of them still survive, but the Irish Gi-

ant Deer had become extinct.

Fr. Brian McMahon, S.J., who was Prefect of Studies at Clongowes in 1947, put forward the very interesting suggestion that the 'Elk' like the present day Moose, was fond of succulent weeds growing under water at lake edges. To reach these, they put their heads completely under water, with the result that sometimes their vast spread of antlers became caught in the weeds and before they could extricate themselves, they were drowned. This would also explain the rarity of relics of the female. The female had no antlers and very few female skulls have been found. If true it would seem that the excessive development of the animals crowning glory proved its downfall.

In our next issue we will carry the Treasurer's Report for 2020, as well as Officers elected for 2020 and the sub-committees .