

**A
MILLSTREET
MISCELLANY
(10)**

Aubane Historical Society

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**edited
by**

Jack Lane

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To the memory of the late Michael Casey, Tooreenbane.

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FATHER MATHEW'S VISIT TO MILLSTREET, 1846



FATHER MATHEW IN MILLSTREET.

IMPORTANT PROCEEDINGS.

(FROM OUR REPORTER)

At the desire of the respected parish priest of this town, the Rev. Mr. Fitzpatrick, the Apostle of Temperance visited Millstreet on Sunday last. Despite the continued severity of the weather the town was from an early hour filled with expectant crowds, some of whom came from distant parts of the county Kerry, anxious to be present on this auspicious occasion, to accept or ratify that pledge of which they had heard or experienced such gratifying results. In addition to the local band Father Mathew was escorted to the Chapel, the place of the meeting, by the societies of Dromagh, Kanturk, Newmarket and other neighbouring districts, where he was received by the Rev. Mr. Fitzpatrick.

After the celebration of the Mass the very Rev. Gentleman addressed the congregation in aid of the funds for the completion of the spacious and elegant chapel which, owing to the generous zeal and religious enthusiasm of the people of Millstreet, has been erected within the last few years, but which yet requires a considerable expenditure before the internal arrangements can be completed. At the conclusion of an appropriate eloquent appeal, Father Mathew proceeded to address his auditory on the cause with which his name is so intimately and inseparably associated. He alluded to the zeal, the industry and religious spirit which prompted the people of Millstreet to erect so magnificent an edifice, devoted to the worship of the Living God; he admired the generosity, the charity which induced them to assemble there, but much remained to be effected, much to be done in the cause of religion. And how could that be accomplished in these times of scarcity, of general and prevailing distress? – he would suggest the plan. If the people of Millstreet, instead of resorting to the public house, instead of

wasting their means on inebriating and enervating liquors, instead of destroying their mental and physical capabilities, contributed that expenditure towards the funds of this chapel, towards the cause of religion and God, then would they see reared a temple worthy to be his house, an edifice rivalling in grandeur and beauty those structures which filled the land when it rejoiced in the holy appellation of "the Island of saints."

Nor was this exaggeration, for he thought that £2,000 might be considered the fair average for the yearly expenditure devoted to the purchase of intoxicating liquors in Millstreet (hear, hear), if that sum were appropriated for the purpose of religion, for the inculcation of morality and virtue, then they might speedily expect to see their chapel, the ornament and pride of modern Ireland. But there were many other inducements that ought compel them to refrain from intoxicating drinks; they were all anxious at the present moment to afford employment, to promote industry; they were solicitous to lessen the destructive effects of scarcity and want, which was only to be done by abstaining from inebriating liquors, by appropriating their means to the purchase of other articles, for they might not be aware that out of every pound which they laid out on whiskey and porter only four-pence went to the reward the labourer; only four-pence went to lessen the distress and famine of which such anxious fears were entertained, from which such melancholy results were anticipated.

To promote the prosperity of the Temperance cause was a mission worthy of the most devoted philanthropist, of the most ardent lover of his country, for who would not rejoice to see the reign of the Ribbonmen at an end; to see the end of secret societies cut short; and those objects could only effected by the spread of their societies (hear, hear). It was generally known that the Teetotaller was the only man refused admission to the secret meetings of their societies, for the demons who ensnared and deluded the simple people to be at their orgies, knew well that the teetotaller would be no party to their deeds of violence and blood, would discountenance their debasing and degrading proceedings (hear, hear). These were facts to which every clergyman would testify, to which every magistrate could bear witness, which the criminal calendars of this and previous years clearly proved, for the dock was

never filled or the scaffold ever trodden by the faithful and consistent teetotaller, his arm was never raised to commit the most bestial crime which could be contemplated, the murder of his fellow man (hear).

Pleased and gratified did he (Mr. Mathew) feel in again visiting the faithful teetotallers of Millstreet, pleased was he that the visit could occur on the first Sunday in Lent, an auspicious and appropriate occasion for commencing so praiseworthy a course for joining the ranks of teetotallers (hear, hear). And perhaps no season or period of the year was more disgraced by the sin of drunkenness than the season particularly appropriated for the services of religion; then it seemed the demon of drunkenness held free and unrestricted sway, but how different were the scenes that might at present be witnessed; how different the appearances which Cork presented at the present time from what it had been some seven years ago; how miraculous the change which converted the drunken brawl, the immoral shout, the unsteady gait into the quieter voice, the sober gait, the steady and gentlemanly demeanour (hear, hear). To occupy their time with arguments or proofs of what they knew and heard repeatedly would be unnecessary and useless, he would, however in conclusion, impress on parents and guardians, on relatives and friends, the necessity, the absolute necessity, of preventing, by word and example, the use of intoxicating drinks amongst their children, for such a course and such a policy it was that often brought the well-educated, the virtuous and moral child, to a death of poverty, of sickness, of desolation and want, that made pleasing and comfortable prospects miserable and wretched (hear, hear).

Father Mathew then descended from the altar, and began to administer the pledge. The first gentleman who presented himself was John O'Connell, Esq., J. P., of Grenagh, the brother of the Liberator, who came to renew the pledge which he had taken at the hands of the Apostle seven years previously. Upwards of six thousand persons were then enrolled, in addition to the number who renewed their vows.

The Rev. Mr. Mathew shortly after left the Chapel, and proceeded to the hospitable residence of the parish priest, where he remained until the appointed hour for the

FESTIVAL

arrived, which was held in the spacious rooms belonging to the Millstreet Temperance Society. The arrangements were of a very superior description, equalling in appearance and comfort the most superior of similar demonstrations in this city. The company began to arrive about 8 o'clock, amongst them were the following gentlemen: - John O'Connell, J.P., Grenagh; McCarthy O'Leary, J.P., Coomlegane; Eugene M'Carthy, Barrister, Rathroe; Michael Gallwey, Kilkerrin; Thomas M'Carthy O'Leary, Coomlegane; Rev. Mr. Tuohy, R.C.C., Millstreet; Rev. Denis O'Sullivan, R.C.C., Millstreet; Rev. Mr. Fitzgerald, P.P., Knocknacopil; Rev. James O'Sullivan, Roman C.C., Knocknacopil; Eugene O'Sullivan, M.D., Ascrea; Daniel O'Keefe, Clonbanin; Daniel O'Sullivan, Millstreet; Robert Swayne; John Justice, Mount Justice; Henry Webb; John Smith, Clover Hill, &c., &c. Owing to the illness of Rev. Mr. Fitzpatrick, that gentleman was unwillingly compelled to absent himself.

After the tea and confectionary, which were most plentifully supplied, had been removed,

JOHN O'CONNELL, ESQ., J.P.

was called on to take the Chair, and the Rev. Mr. Tuohy was appointed to act as Vice-President.

The Chairman expressed his sincere gratitude for the enviable distinction which had been conferred on him, and after eulogising the character and conduct of the Queen, proposed the customary loyal toasts, which were received with all the honors.

The Chairman in proposing the next sentiment, said – Mr. Vice-President, ladies and gentlemen – I feel most incompetent to propose the sentiment which devolves on me, which even if I had time for preparation I could not adequately nor appropriately preface, for I could not attempt to pourtray (sic) as I ought the character of that individual, or the blessings which his unceasing labours are producing in his and my native country. I am confident, Sir, this society anticipates the person whose name I am about to announce to you, (hear, hear); but Sir, I cannot do so without expressing my heartfelt gratitude as a resident of our country, as, I hope, a man who

wishes, sincerely wishes, for the prosperity of his country and the happiness of its people (hear, hear, and cheers); I cannot mention the great name to you Sir, without endeavouring to express the gratitude and respect which I feel for the Very Rev. Mr. Mathew – (hear, hear).

He has been called, Sir, and justly, the Apostle of Temperance, for his mission is truly apostolic and disinterested, bearing labour, fatigue and toil upon himself, exposing him to the severities and inclemencies of the weather, and yet after looking at his robust and healthy appearance, who amongst you could refuse to take the pledge, who could hesitate to become a teetotalter, after seeing the appearance, after listening for hours to the unbroken voice and convincing arguments of my very respected friend. Oh, Sir, when you reflect on the effects of this mighty movement, it is clear that it is not the work of man's hand, it is the work of the Almighty, whose protecting influence has long since earned for our unfortunate country the title of the island of saints; it is that Almighty power that gives our excellent friend the health, the vigour, and the mind to carry out the most useful movement that was ever thought of or brought before the Irish public (loud cheers).

I trust, Sir, he will live to see the day when millions of his countrymen will reap the benefits of his extraordinary labours. I hope he may live to witness the happiness which his teaching has disseminated, and with the consolation to him, when he goes before that Being, before whom we must all appear, to think that he at least has performed such a duty, has fulfilled such a mission, as no man who ever came before him has attempted. I could not, if I spent hours in eulogising him, if I possessed the eloquence of some persons with whom I am connected, pourtray (sic) as I ought the character, nor do justice to the merits of that gentleman; but I know that any praise, any eulogy is unnecessary. I know you will receive what I say with respect, and I know that you will with a hearty and unanimous cheer express your admiration of the sentiment of "Long life, health and happiness to our respected guest, the Very Rev. Mr. Mathew" (loud and long cheers).

The Very Rev. Mr. Mathew, after thanking the Chairman and company for the too flattering

terms in which he had been alluded to but he considered as directed to that cause with which his name was so closely identified, stated his unwillingness to occupy their time on a subject which he had spoken on previously that day. To the arguments which he had then used the appearance of that room and company was a valuable addition, for where except in a temperance room and in a society of teetotallers could they see such beaming countenances and happy faces, such innocent mirth and virtuous joy; where but in such a place could they experience such unalloyed, happy faces, such unembittered pleasure (cheers).

After alluding to the consistency and perseverance of the teetotallers of Millstreet, and the pleasurable sensations which he felt in seeing on so inclement a day the people of remote districts in attendance, Father Mathew, craved the Chairman's permission while proposing a sentiment.

He intended to propose for their acceptance the name of a gentleman whom they all revered and loved, whose public character and private virtue were generally known and as generally admired (hear). But it was not as a valuable member of the general community, as the respected head of a large family, as a landlord or a magistrate, he would propose that respected name; it was as a member of a society upon which no one ever conferred so great a benefit by his accession, whose example has induced, has strengthened and encouraged thousands to become members of their society, whose name was "a tower of strength" to their cause (cheers); with great pleasure he gave "the health and happiness of their eloquent chairman, of their illustrious countryman, John O'Connell, Esq., of Grenagh" (loud cheers).

The Chairman, in acknowledging the sentiment, said he felt difficulty indeed in expressing his gratitude for the compliment he had received. To have his name spoken of as it had been by an individual to whom all Ireland owed so much was truly gratifying. If in endeavouring at a very humble distance to follow the bright example which he had shown, if in the position in which he (Mr. O'Connell) was placed, if his becoming a member of the temperance society had anything like what Father Mathew had

attributed to it then he felt proud and happy indeed (cheers). He never wore a badge, he never received an honour he prized so highly as that which made him a member of the temperance society, a society which when carried out should confer happiness and comfort in this world, and given what was more material, a strong hope of receiving after death a merciful judgement (hear, hear). He would detain them no longer, not because his heart was not full of gratitude, but there were able and eloquent gentlemen who would be called on to address the meeting during the evening.

The Chairman again rose and begged the company's attention to a sentiment that would be well responded to; he called upon them to trust those that were the source of all power and influence, for what would the despotic monarch, the haughty peer or the aristocratic gentleman be were it not for the strength, the health, the sinews and exertions of the people (hear, hear)? Connected closely with the people, originating from the people, he (Mr. O'Connell) was truly identified with them, he deplored the neglect and misgovernment which they had endured; he admired the patient, the submissive spirit which they had shewn in these critical times – they stood out as a bright example to the rest of the world (hear, hear). Threatened with famine and desolation, deserted by their natural protectors, they remained, with a few exceptions, untainted by crime or disgrace (hear, hear). There were, to be sure, some unfortunate circumstances, there were some parts of the country which did not merit those eulogies, but they were a mere speck on the face of the country, a small fraction of the general population.

The Chairman, in conclusion, felt much gratification in alluding to his own county as a specimen of the general quiet in the country: in the County of Kerry, out of a population of 400,000 there were but two persons to be tried for felony in the approaching assizes (hear, hear), and with such a fact before them he was sure they would toast "the people" with all the honors which the sentiment so eminently deserved (cheers).

Counsellor M'Carthy responded to the sentiment in an eloquent address, in which he thanked Father Mathew for the improved appearance which the people exhibited, and

congratulated the temperance cause generally for the change which was created by the effects of that great movement.

The Chairman said a revered and respected friend had suggested, in proposing to them the sentiment of "Old Ireland," to couple with it a name dear to his warmest affections, the name of a man he believed they all thought well of, which was Daniel O'Connell (tremendous cheers). As the representative of the county of Cork he hoped he had given satisfaction to his constituents – he hoped he had fulfilled the duties imposed upon him in such a manner as would again enable him to go to what he called a foreign parliament, and endeavour there to assist others in working out measures for the benefit of that country to which he is devoted (hear). If another man had been associated with the sentiment of his country he (Mr. J. O'Connell) might perhaps detain them longer, but as the people had been connected with an individual, endeared to his family by every feeling of affection and respect, he would not occupy them longer. He was sure that society would welcome with a flattering reception the sentiment of "Old Ireland and Daniel O'Connell."

The Rev. Mr. Fitzgerald, having been called on the respond to the sentiment, said - It came to him with surprise that a priest from the bogs of Sleeverough, (sic) and a stranger amongst them, should attract their attention. Two obvious reasons occurred perhaps for having done so, the first was that he had taken opportunity on that day, which to him was a source of the greatest pleasure, of becoming connected with the Teetotallers of that district. That identification could not be productive of much benefit to the locality in which he resided, but as Father Mathew had remarked, the influence of the humblest individual was of advantage in the community.

Another, more important reason for calling upon him to speak to the toast that had been prepared, which they had only received in the manner it had deserved, was the fact that the Catholic Clergy of Ireland were closely identified in their exertions for the regeneration of their common country, and the amelioration of its people. If the catholic Clergy exhibited that ardour and patriotism which glowed in their bosoms, and that they make Daniel O'Connell the object of their political adoration, it was because they

believed that his patriotism was based on virtue, the only ingredient that could give lustre and durability to the structure. He would, in conclusion, thank them for the honour they had done him in calling on so inefficient a person to respond to so expressive a sentiment (cheers).

The Chairman again rose and said, he had to call their attention to a toast which he sure would be received with that respectful gratitude which it merited, not only from those he addressed, but from the people of Ireland. Amongst the many misfortunes that bad laws and bad government had entailed on the people of Ireland, they ever had one class to look to under perils and persecution, danger and disgrace; they have ever found a refuge at the hands of the Hierarchy and Second Order of the Catholic Clergy of Ireland (hear, hear). They were ever to be found the unflinching friend of the people, the firm advocates of their rights and the assertors of their wrongs; they were to be found teaching the people how to live by precept and example; they were ever to be found fearing neither pestilence nor dreading disease, affording to the dying sinner the inestimable blessings of religious consolation and edifying confidence in the mercy of the Creator. Without lengthened preface he would give for their warmest acceptance "The Catholic Hierarchy and the Second Order of the Clergy" – (enthusiastic applause).

The Rev. Mr. O'Sullivan, R.C.C, having been called on said – It was impossible for him to add more to what had been so eloquently urged by their talented Chairman. The Roman Catholic priests were at all times proud of being identified and associated with the people, for there was no country in which the people were more attached or more devoted to their clergy than the people of Ireland; ever anxious for their zeal, ever solicitous for their welfare, the people and clergy of the country exhibited a reciprocal affection and mutual good will which was unexampled and unequalled in any country or amongst any people (hear, hear).

The Rev. Mr. O'Sullivan after eulogising the character and conduct as a humane magistrate, a benevolent landlord, and accomplished gentleman, of Mr. M'Carthy O'Leary, begged the Chairman's permission while proposing the sentiment of "the health and

long life of their respected countryman and neighbour, Mr. M'Carthy O'Leary" (great applause).

Mr. M'Carthy O'Leary felt deeply grateful for the flattering and highly wrought compliment which the Rev. Mr. O'Sullivan had paid him, and the gratifying reception which that company had accorded to those eulogisms, but unworthy as he felt himself, he would at least claim the credit of anxiety for the welfare of their society, a desire to see principles generally adopted and strictly adhered to (cheers). And perhaps no one was in a better position to witness the excellent affect associated by such societies than magistrates, whose province it was to adjudicate on the bench, who formerly witnessed scenes of misery and melancholy destitution, who now rejoiced in their absence, for the sake of humanity and the preservation of decorum and regularity (hear, hear). He was glad to assure the meeting that his anxiety for their success was participated in by the gentleman associated with him, that they understood, admired and appreciated the exertions of Father Mathew, that they were determined to promote and influence the progress of the principles which he so zealously and disinterestedly advocated (cheers).

The Chairman would trespass on their attention for a few moments longer while proposing the health of a revered and respected individual whose absence they all deplored (hear, hear). He felt the anxiety of a warm friend for the gentleman whose absence they and he regretted, and he was confident they would join with heartfelt gratitude and sincere pleasure in expressing their admiration for the character and worth of the Rev. Mr. Fitzpatrick, the zealous pastor of their town (this sentiment was received with long and continued cheering).

The Chairman in proposing the next sentiment eulogised the character of the Reverend Mr. Tuohy, and alluded to his perseverance in

promoting the total abstinence cause and the service he had rendered to that society, particularly by his example, attention and indefatigable exertions (hear, hear).

The Rev. Mr. Tuohy, though having no anxiety to appear in the press, could not help returning his thanks for the kindness they had exhibited towards him. The cause of temperance was a principle which should secure the advocacy of every man solicitous for the welfare of his country and the welfare of its people, for perhaps in no town in Ireland was that happiness more signally experienced, was the contrast more forcibly witnessed than in the town and district of Millstreet. Previous to the dissemination of the principles of total abstinence, that locality was disgraced by drunkenness and its attendant evils, such sins as prevailed in every district before Father Mathew had summoned them to reject, to disenthral themselves from the vice which gained an unenviable notoriety for the Irish people (hear, hear). Since that period might be witnessed in that town and district a change as wondrous as it was gratifying, as glorious as it was beneficial, bringing comfort and joy, hope and consolation where these joys were known only by names, where their reality was never witnessed (hear, hear). Without further trespassing he would reiterate his acknowledgments for their kindness and generosity in the reception of his humble name.

The Chairman proposed, in appropriate terms, "the Press," and a few other incidental toasts, which having been severally responded to, Father Mathew and the other gentlemen retired, leaving the remainder of the company with light hearts and nimble heels to enjoy the lively reel and spirit-stirring jig, struck up by the enlivening strains of a true Milesian piper.

**Wednesday evening,
Cork Examiner, 4TH March 18**

BLACK '47 IN MILLSTREET

First hand accounts of the Famine/Holocaust in this area are very rare. The following is one by the Protestant Vicar, the Rev. J. C. Mongan, and a response to it. The item appeared in a rather unusual place, a British sporting paper, called '*Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle*.'

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We extract the following passages from a letter directed to Mr. Bishop of Bond-street, from the Rev. Charles Mongard, (sic) of Altamont, Millstreet, county of Cork:-

“My Dear Friend: You always told that the *Irish* treated you well, and in consideration of which I hope you and your worthy partner at Birmingham, Mr. W. Richards, will confer a most important benefit upon the inhabitants of my parish by soliciting a small subscription from each of your influential friends, in ‘aid of our present distress.’ Ours is a remote, wild, mountainous district, with only three or four resident landed proprietors. The people are now reduced to the lowest state of wretchedness and want.

Everything in the shape of native food has long since disappeared, and the price of foreign provisions has risen to such a height, that it is impossible they can obtain it. Oats are sold in our village for £2. 11s. per barrel of 33 stone, and ground oaten meal is 7d. per pottle (2 quarts, 1.9 litres, J.L.) – only the quantity sufficient to support one labouring man on 8d. a day wages, and having six, seven, eight, nine, and ten in family to maintain. Were I to attempt any description of our misery, I should be only repeating what you read in the daily papers, and add another page to the tale of woe, too shocking for human nature to listen to.

It is pitiable to see groups of famishing children, meeting together in a cold corner, all naked, perishing from cold, and screaming out for food; but how am I to describe the frantic feelings of the bewildered parents, listening to the children’s cries, unable to assist them, and fainting themselves from despair and want. Fever has set in with awful violence, and death and famine are our daily companions. If therefore, you will, in God’s name, exert yourself among your friends, you will do a national benefit, and do what you can *at once*, -Yours, &c.

Altamont, Millstreet, County Cork, Feb. 2

John C. Mongard (sic)
(7th February 1847)

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In the next issue the following item appeared:

APPROPRIATION

The following emphatic words closed the letter of the Rev. Mr. Mongan, of Altamont, Millstreet, county of Cork, inserted in our last : -

‘It is pitiable to see groups of famishing children, meeting together in a cold corner, all naked, perishing from cold, and screaming out for food; but how am I to describe the frantic feelings of the bewildered parents, listening to the children’s cries, unable to assist them, and fainting themselves from despair and want. Fever has set in with awful violence, and death and famine are our daily companions. If therefore, you will, in God’s name, exert yourself among your friends, you will do a national benefit, and do what you can at once.’

The painful truth of this pathetic appeal has been confirmed by others, and we are sure those who have entrusted us with the responsible duty of dispensing their contributions will not disapprove of the course we took on Sunday last (‘the better day, the better deed’) in forwarding to the Rev. Mongan twenty pounds, with the following letter:-

“Bell’s Life in London Office,
7th February, 1847

Sir:

Your letter, directed to Mr. Bishop, of Bond Street, has been submitted to me by that zealous and kind-hearted man, and you find it quoted in BELL’S LIFE IN LONDON (*a sporting paper*) this day. As Editor of that paper I have made an appeal to its readers in favour of our suffering brethren in Ireland and Scotland, the response to which has been most creditable to them and most gratifying to me. Within one week nearly £20 has been transmitted to me, from various quarters and classes, in small contributions.

And as the ‘first fruit’ of my humble exertions, I forward it to you *at once*, feeling that, amidst the horrors you so forcibly described, promptitude in the dispensation of charitable aid is our first duty. I am, of course responsible to those who have so humanely enabled me to take this step; and although I am sure they will all give me credit for honesty in the discharge of the duties of my stewardship, still I shall be obliged by your acknowledgement of the £20 you will find enclosed, as well as your assurance that even this small instalment, from ‘British Sportsmen,’ has produced its proportionate advantages.

I have the honour to be, sir, your faithful and humble servant, The Editor of Bell’s Life.

The Rev. J.C. Mongan, Altamont, Millstreet, Co. Cork.”

(14th February 1846)

BISHOP MILNER PASSES THROUGH

An extract from “An inquiry into certain vulgar opinions concerning the Catholic inhabitants and the antiquities of Ireland : in a series of letters from thence, addressed to a Protestant gentleman in England” (September, 1808) by the Right Rev. John Milner, D. D., bishop of Castabala vicar apostolic of the Midland District of England, F.S.A. London, and Cath. Acad. Rome.

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“Another much longer journey which I took from Cork, was to the far-famed Lakes of Killarney. I had a very kind invitation thither from the noble proprietor of the domain, when I was in Ireland last year, as I mentioned to you; which, however, it was not in my power to accept of. But the invitation being now repeated, I could not fail of accepting it; not, indeed, less for the sake of my fellow traveller, who is a virtuoso and an able draughtsman, than for my own sake. Few inland scenes are more beautiful than the valleys watered by the River Lee to the West of Cork. Bur dreary and rough is the road from Macroom to Millstreet, and from there to within a few miles of Killarney.

It is a succession of deep bogs, where not a tree is to be seen, except which grew upon the site of them a thousand years ago, and which since have been dug out of their bowels, and of craggy rocks, which seem to have been torn asunder, and hurled in various directions by an earthquake or a volcano. Still even this wild scene had its charms for me, especially in the number of Druidical pillars, cairns, circles, logans, and cromlechs, which I saw scattered over it. Indeed, no part of the United Kingdom, excepting Cornwall, seems to contain so many and such interesting remains of Celtic paganism as Ireland does, though they have, in general, been overlooked.”

EASTER SUNDAY COMMEMORATION, MILLSTREET, 2014

A Chairde,

It is a great pleasure to be asked to give this address today to commemorate the 1916 Rising and I am proud to do so.

In recent years there has been a concerted attempt to denigrate and disparage the 1916 Rising and the War of Independence. We are encouraged to have a bad conscience about them. There is rarely a comment on either these days without various qualifications about their merits and the methods used.

We are approaching the centenary commemorations of 1916 and it is pretty clear that the government, any government, will be going through the motions in the commemorations they are planning. Their heart will not be in it.

The Rising is painted in all kinds of negative colours - that it was a blood sacrifice, led by hopeless idealists, was a failure, was unnecessary, etc. A most typical critique of the Rising is that it was not democratic. Being a rebellion, or an insurrection, means it automatically was not democratic in the accepted sense. You cannot have a vote for a rebellion. You cannot advertise it.

But the Rising has to be put in its context – as has democracy itself at the time. Was there an alternative? Those who criticise it would not deny the case for having an independent state. But when they criticise the Rising they should therefore feel obliged to show a practical alternative at the time. Not in theory but in practical terms – what was the alternative?

We could all wish for other ‘nicer’ ways to have achieved independence. If wishes were horses we would all go for ride.

What was the state of democracy then? The fact is that what existed of parliamentary democracy in the UK at the time had broken down, had become a bad joke. And it had broken down over Ireland. And this is the context in which the Easter Rising must be judged.

How did this happen?

Home Rule, a fairly timid form of devolution had been debated for decades in Parliament. When passed by the House of Commons on two occasions it was rejected by the House of Lords. When the House of Lords could no longer prevent it a rebellion was organised in 1912 by the Unionists of Britain and Ireland to prevent it. An illegal army, the Ulster Volunteer Force, was formed; guns were imported from Germany and a Provisional Government was planned. This was a rebellion against the perpetrators’ own government. It was treason and the perpetrators made no bones about it.

The Government did not prevent any of this which meant it was a successful rebellion. When the British army refused to move against the rebels in the Curragh Mutiny, 100 years ago last month, it meant that this kind of action, rebellion, was the way to succeed with your political aims. The gun was back in Irish politics and it was winning.

Seeing this, the Nationalists in the South followed suit and formed the Irish Volunteers to guarantee Irish Home Rule. They wanted to help implement the law – not break it. They did not think a rebellion was necessary at this point. They believed that Parliament would deliver Home Rule.

So what was the turning point towards rebellion?

There was a very unusual event in 1915 that is little mentioned these days. In fact it is never mentioned. There was a new Government formed but without an election. This meant that by 1916 the British Government was not an elected government. Hardly democratic. In effect there was a parliamentary coup d'état.

The rule was that there should be an election within 5 years and as the last election was in 1910 a new election was legally obligatory in 1915. But an election would have been awkward for the government so it was abandoned under pressure from the Unionists on condition that they were brought into government. This element of democracy, a general election, was dispensed with. Instead there was a new government formed with Unionist leaders in the Government.

It was now as plain as the nose on one's face that there would be no Home Rule and there would certainly never, ever, be an Irish republic. It remained treasonous to even consider it.

The people who broke the law against their own government over Home Rule were now in government. The lawbreakers had become the lawmakers. This success set the obvious precedent on how to be politically successful at the time in the UK. Rebellion rules – OK!

These events laid the basis, the rationale, the logic for the 1916 rising. The 1916 rebels were simply doing the only thing that the Government would take any notice of.

Being a Rebellion it was naturally not supported by the majority at the time. But within two years it had got the overwhelming support of the electorate with the landslide victory for Sinn Fein in the 1918 Election.

And what did the Mother of Parliaments do when they got this totally democratic result? Nothing. This proved yet again that democracy did not matter at that time. When the elected representatives began to implement their policies on the basis of the election victory we got martial law, the Auxiliaries and then the Black and Tans. This confirmed yet again that democracy did not exist.

And this ignoring of the election result came immediately after up to 50,000 Irish had died fighting for what they believed was the 'freedom of small nations'. These poor Irishmen in a sense died twice. They died physically and their political ideals died when they were betrayed by the Government that they fought for. They were cynically betrayed. And this betrayal should be remembered when they are commemorated today. The Great War was a Great Fraud for them. But with all the talk about commemorations of WWI these days we never hear this pointed out loud and clear. And of course nobody in Ireland voted for that war.

So the Rising made sense in its time and place.

It is recognised and admired throughout the world especially by those countries that achieved their independence later and were encouraged by its success. When we commemorate its centenary the representatives of our 'gallant allies' and the other nations inspired by the Rising should be invited to take part. If we did there would be marvellous turnout – like a meeting of the United Nations. Instead we hear that the big idea will be to invite a member of the British Royal family. It looks like the commemoration planners have no imagination and lack the sense of occasion to do justice to the commemoration. Even John A. Murphy has described this as 'bizarre. 'The government can't see beyond London.

The Rising deserves a wholehearted commemoration without apology or reservation and I hope that it will continue be done in that spirit here and throughout the country and especially on the 100th anniversary."

Jack Lane
20 April 2014

UNVEILING THE MONUMENT TO KING MAHON

Letter and address from Conor O'Brien, The O'Brien, 18th Baron Inchiquin and 32nd direct descendant of Brian Boru.

Ó Briain
Thomond House
Dromoland Estate
Newmarket on Fergus
Co. Clare

18 April 2014

Dear Jack

I enclose a copy of the address that Moira has so kindly agreed to give on my behalf.

I really do appreciate your allowing me to use part of your notes - in fact a great deal of your notes - and I do hope that I suitably give you the due recognition for this.

If there is anything in this that you would like to change, add or take out please do so and I will not be offended at all. In fact, perhaps you could let us know who will be attending, any dignitaries that need to be mentioned at the beginning of the address.

I would like to say that I would like to help put Mahon's rock on the map so any photographs text and information you can put together after the event I would be pleased to put to Cashel to include on their list of events on the Group website, see below, as well as on our website.

I could not find any reference to any drawings or sculptures of Mahon, but I would be interested in more information about him. I am sure there will be many historians there who would be itching to write the history of Mahon and his descendants.

I wish you well with this event and will as I say visit the site later this year.

With Kind regards

Conor O'Brien

Conor O'Brien



Web Site: www.obrienclan.com

Failte roimh, a chairde.

My name is Moira O'Brien and I am a board member of The O'Brien Clan Foundation as well as on the Board of Clans of Ireland and I have been asked by Conor O'Brien, The O'Brien, to give this address today and pass on his sincere apologies for not being able to do so himself.

Distinguished guests, historians, ladies and gentlemen.

Firstly, I need to sincerely thank Jack Lane for the use of his detailed notes on the history behind these events being honoured today, a great deal of which is included in this address and without which I would have not been able to deliver such a detailed address.

As you know, this is a particularly historic year, the Millennium of the Battle of Clontarf and the death of the O'Brien progenitor Árd Rí, Brian Boru at this famous battle. I am sure you historians are well aware that historians are still out on the effects of the battle on Irish history and will I am sure keep you all busy for another 1000 years on discussions and findings.

There is no need to dwell too long on Brian because this event today is about his elder brother Mahon but perhaps it would be good to lay the groundwork on this family, which had risen so quickly in Irish history from relative small beginnings as the Dalcassians, a tribe in Clare, Limerick and Tipperary and it was Brian and Mahon's father who was King of Thomond. Their palace and Fort were at Killaloe on the west shore of Lough Derg. The Fort Beal Boru is still there and the palace was where the Catholic Church in Killaloe now stands.

However, the event we are commemorating here today is an event which if it had not happened Brian Boru would probably be but a footnote in our history and the Battle of Clontarf might never have happened. And the course of Irish history might therefore have been very, very different.

So what exactly are we commemorating here today with the unveiling of this monument to King Mahon?

The event happened in 976, 1038 years ago. So this takes us back over a thousand years, back to the Ireland that has been rightly described as the island of saints and scholars. There was nothing like an Irish state or nation as we know it today. Ireland was instead the centre of a distinct civilisation, Gaelic civilisation. This was the era of great centres of learning and art based on monasteries such as Clonmacnoise, Monsaterboice, Clonard, Kells, etc. It is the era that produced the Book of Kells, the Ardagh Chalice and other works of great art, which we know were produced by the few that have survived. It also produced the great historical works in the form of the various Annals and an elaborate and humane legal system in the Brehon Laws.

It was a civilisation that stood out in contrast to the Dark Ages of contemporary Europe. The contribution that the missionaries from this civilisation made to Europe's progress from that Dark Age is well recorded and acknowledged throughout Europe down to the present day. More honoured in Europe than it is here at the moment, unfortunately.

Robert Schuman, one of the founders of the European Union suggested that one of these missionaries, Columbanus, should be "*the patron saint of all those who now seek to build a united Europe.*"

In the political sense Ireland itself was a patchwork of Kingdoms and Clans with no real political or military unity. The people who led these Clans and Kingdoms were not saints or scholars. They had other imperatives. They had to be military/political leaders and there are never many saints among such people then or now. There simply cannot be and the leaders cannot be blamed for what they had to be in the

circumstances of their time.

Like all such people they were naturally in competition with each other for power and privilege and increasing their share of it.

In Munster, Cashel was the seat of power and the competing Clans here that were known collectively as the Eóghanachta. They had come to a *modus vivendi*, an arrangement, with each other on who should be top dog, or accepted as King of Munster. They had effectively agreed to alternate the Kinship of Munster between themselves. Somewhat like we see with the Lord Mayorship of some towns and cities being alternated among political parties today. A very civilised and sensible approach in the circumstances of the time over a thousand years ago.

A problem arose with the arrival of a new kid on the block – the Dál Cais from Clare. King Mahon was their most powerful leader and he conquered all round him, chiefly against the Danes. This made him entitled to have his turn as King of Munster.

He got his turn in 970 but he would not play the game as the Eóghanachta had learned to play it and expected him to do so. He gave every sign of not giving up the Kingship. Munster was now essentially divided into Thomond in the north under the Dál Cais and Desmond in the south under the Eóghanachta.

The latter looked on Mahon as a usurper and they planned to get rid of him and a conflict ensued. They reckoned they could not cope with him in open battle so they conspired to trick him by setting up ‘peace talks’ with the Bishop of Cork as mediator for a resolution of their differences. But the Bishop was only a pawn. Mahon was kidnapped at what he thought was just a negotiation and was brought here to be killed. The place was suitable for this as it was far away from Mahon’s home turf and located between the strongholds of his two killers. It was also out of the way then as it is now. Maybe it is still a good place to get try to get away with a murder!

But like many crimes there can be unexpected consequences. And this crime was no exception. Mahon had a younger brother who was an unknown quantity at the time, was a bit of a tearaway and not taken very seriously. But he set about avenging his brother’s death and succeeded in finally doing so two years later, in 978, at the battle of Bealach Leachta at the confluence of the rivers Sullane and Laney near Macroom. From there he went on to replace his brother as King of Munster and then went on to become High King of Ireland and as they say, the rest is history. This killing here was therefore a turning point in Irish history as it provided Brian Boru with the opportunity to begin his ascent to the High Kingship and it is most appropriate that it is commemorated in a proper manner.

We know where and how Brian ended his career. But this is where it really began.

How do we know it happened here? Where is the evidence?

Any event that happened such a long time ago can be disputed. But that it happened here has more than the usual amount of evidence to support it.

Firstly, there is the strong local tradition about the rock, which is the centrepiece of the monument. It has been known as Mahon’s Rock since time immemorial. In the past, people passing this way, to and from the bog for example, would make the sign of the cross on a stone nearby.

Secondly, there is the documentary evidence: in the *Dublin Annals of Innisfallen: in Foras Feasa ar Éireann* by Geoffrey Keating which is one of the most acclaimed and authoritative books on Irish history written around 1633: it is also noted by John O’Donovan in his magnificent production of *The Annals of the Four Masters* (1848): also by William Wenham Seward in *Topographia Hibernica*; and by Charles Vallancey in *Collectanea de Rebus Hibernicis* where he also convincingly refutes an alternative theory about the location of the killing.

Also, the fact that Brian Boru avenged the killing just a few miles away would indicate that the deed was indeed done here.

I am delighted that the initiative has been taken to honour Mahon with this monument. It is interesting that there are no statues to King Brian in Ireland and I have asked the Mayor of Ennis and the Mayor of Tipperary to consider putting up a statue to Brian Boru when the new bridge across the Shannon at Killaloe is built and the old bridge probably turned into a walkway. With certain funds available for this type of engineering project in the funding it would be an ideal opportunity to Honour Mahon's younger brother and perhaps in due course a statue to Mahon could be erected

There has apparently been a lot of work and dedication by many people to ensure that this unique monument has been erected. I am sure that someone else will thank them for the work they have done.

Finally, I have a suggestion that may help to put this historic rock on the map; the 4 groups that are heavily involved with the Battle of Clontarf Millennium Commemoration this year and the death of Brian Boru are:

Killaloe/Ballina
Cashel
Clontarf
Armagh

They have a website that has all the events that are taking place throughout Ireland this year many of which will be continued on an annual basis for Tourism and I am sure that Cashel would be prepared to allow notification of your unveiling to be included on their page. I will definitely put this up on our Clan website as an event of significant importance to Ireland's history in the 10th century.

Moira O'Brien is a photographer and will I am sure will take pictures of the unveiling and I will send these to Cashel and The O'Brien Clan website.

I wish you well with your celebrations today and again very much regret that I cannot attend myself but I do promise when this Millennium Festival has quietened down that I will visit the site.

I thank you all for this distinct honour to commemorate Brian Boru's worthy elder brother Mahon, a man of obvious great stature and presence, which was so cruelly cut off when he was in his prime.

I also thank Moira O'Brien for agreeing to deliver this to you all today.

ÓBriain

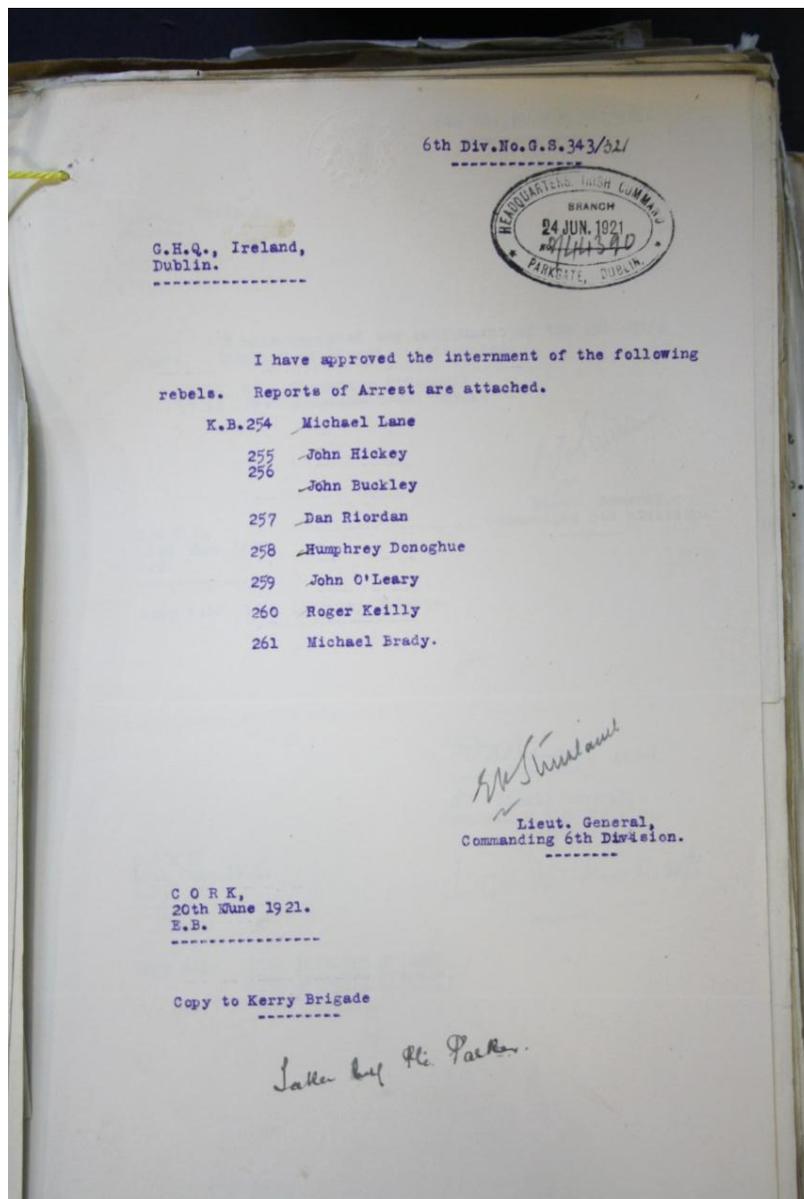
INSIDE FRONGOCH

Below is a transcription of a letter from Domhnall Ua Buachalla, the last Governor General, to his nephew, Con Buckley, in Cork from Frongoch internment camp where he was interned following his part in the 1916 Rising. On page 22 is the envelope, the censor's declaration and a postcard to his nephew.

I am grateful to Eileen A. Buckley, Con Buckley's daughter, for making these documents available.

Jack Lane

INTERNMENT ORDER FOR SOME MILLSTREET VOLUNTEERS



The detention order signed by General Strickland for the internment of eight Millstreet Volunteers in Spike Island. The reports of the arrests referred to in the document are not available.

TNA/WO/35/141

THE COMING OF THE RAILWAY

An extract from "The Irish Tourist's illustrated handbook for visitors to Ireland in 1852." (London, 1852)

*

From Dublin to Mallow the Great Southern and Western Railway and from Limerick to Tipperary the Waterford and Limerick Railway runs through the limestone plain which occupies so great a portion of the centre of Ireland. At Mallow the former line meets the schistose formation, in which it continues to Cork.

Mallow is at present the nearest railway Station to Killarney, but in a few months there will be a railway between these two important tourist-towns. A company to make the "Killarney Junction Railway" has been formed, and has had an Act of Incorporation since 1846 – the length of line authorised being thirty-nine miles, to extend from the Mallow Station on the Great Southern and Western Railway to Killarney. Various circumstances have delayed the formation of the undertaking; but its construction is now proceeding with the utmost vigour. The chairman is Mr. John Pennefather – one of the directors of the Great Southern and Western, (which company has the power to subscribe 100,000*l.*, to amalgamate with, lease, or purchase the Killarney Junction;) and Mr. George Roe, also a Great Southern and Western director, is the deputy – chairman.

It is to the discrimination, energy, and influence of Mr. Pennefather (son of the celebrated judge), that the present construction of the line is due. Though comparatively young in undertakings of this nature, he is daily evincing the highest qualifications for the direction and management of such enterprises; and there can be small question that in the railway future of Ireland the name he bears will figure as eminently as it has already in her judicial annals. He is fortunate in having allied with him, in the line we now speak of, a deputy-chairman of such deserved commercial celebrity, high social standing, and one so prominent in every attribute of exemplary citizenship, as Mr. George Roe, the proprietor of the greatest distilling establishments in the kingdom.

The Killarney Junction Line will be opened for traffic 1st of May 1853. It is constructing by William Dargan, the Peto or Brassey of Ireland, who, from small beginnings, has risen to be the foremost man in the material and practical progress of his country. He is about fifty years of age; has been deservedly a very successful man - one of remarkable liberality in all his transactions, whose extent may be judged by the fact that at one time he had as many as 50,000 men employed under him. He has been applied to by many numerous constituencies to represent them, but has in every case refused. He was the contractor for the first railway made in Ireland (the Dublin and Kingstown); and it is proof of the remarkable sagacity and clear-sightedness of the man, that one of the directors, being on some occasion pressed to know the cost of making the line, applied to Dargan, who gave him the figures in a few minutes. He adhered precisely to those figures when precise tenders were called for, and he got the contract some thousand pounds below any other person who tendered.

He has since constructed the principal portions of the Great Southern and Western, the Midland Great Western, the Belfast Junction, the Waterford and Limerick, &c. In fact, four-fifths of all railways constructed in Ireland have been made by him. The engineer of the line in question, Mr. Lefanu, is grand-nephew of Richard Brinsley Sheridan; but he fortunately combines the wit and racy talent of his ancestor that practical ability which is rapidly raising him to the highest position in his profession.

At present, good coaches run from the town of Killarney to Mallow, and complete the distance in about five hours. The road is not of a character to need description. Millstreet, a one-street town, is the only village of any pretensions along the line; and it is only to be observed from its situation, at the head of the glen which separates the Boghra and Cahirbarna mountains.

THE LIME-KILN FUSILIERS

Shure it was in 'sixty-six,' me boys, I struck for Mallow Town,
For I was sadly unemployed and in finance broken down,
I quickly joined the Labour Queue, Insurance Cards in hand,
And soon before the doctor, boys, in my birthsuit I did stand.
He told me bend and touch my toes, he tried my pulse and heart,
And tested all reactions to see if I was smart;
Then a beet-fork they stuck in my fist, as a voice roared '*Volunteers!*'
And 'twas Paddy Forde, who signed me on – the Lime-Kiln Fusiliers.

Oh! I left behind my mother dear, my bonhams and my sow,
Likewise my form for the 'dole' for I cannot draw it now,
And to Comhlucht Siúicre Éireann* my sinew, blood and bones,
Shure I freely gave to toil and heave in mountains of limestones.
My back was well nigh broken, and blisters smote my hands,
As on this poor ould body, boys, this work made fierce demands;
But foreman 'Mac' from Boher, cried: '*Get a move on there my dears,*
This is no Salvation Army, boys, 'tis the Lime-Kiln Fusiliers.'

But when the 'yellow' lights flash gaily and the kilns are packed up tight,
Shure I've oftimes paused to listen in the wee hours of the night,
To the factory's powerful humming and the thunderous roar of steam,
And the gay tones of Tom Singleton, as he rails his 'Pulp Floor Team,'
But my thoughts were oftimes shattered by the red lights mocking glare,
And those awful tones as 'Mac' roared out, '*them blooming kilns are bare!*'
Then with beet-fork flashing gaily, I'd breathe a silent prayer,
'*That the Lord above reserves soft beds for the Lime-Kiln Fusiliers.'*

We have Finnegan, God bless him, and also Ben O'Dea,
And there's Paddy 'Mac' McAuliffe from a place called Boherbue,
We have engineer John Gannon too, all watchful they maintain,
A constant vigil round the clock to keep those kilns aflame,
And there's stalwart Michael Murphy, from Meelin fair comes he,
And Maurice Daly motors in from the heights of Derryleigh,
Seán Dunne rakes out the fiery flames and longs for cool ice beers,
These are but some of those who serve, in the Lime-Kiln Fusiliers.

Upon this pen I must draw rein before it is too late,
To doff our caps at the lady clerks and typists at the 'Gate,'
To the guy who works the weighbridge, the girls in the canteen,
And strike me pink! the gallant nurse who for blisters gave me cream,
My God keep fit 'the bowling men,' the ladies football team,
Heinz-Erin Foods, the fitters, too, who keep up power and steam,

And of course, the electricians and the crew who oil the gears,
And may God keep income tax away from the Lime-Kiln Fusiliers.

Now I am sure it was Seán O'Reilly, this tall tale told to me,
Of a conference called by the 'Big Time Brass' of C.S.E.T.,*
There mellow wine flowed freely, and cigar smoke rolled,
'Til time the scene made mellower and men their minds unfold,
Up spoke each Manager his praise for his own factory,
When Mr. Conway's turn came he spoke out manfully,
'Did we realise 'til now my friends, throughout our whole careers,
That we never could exist but for – the Lime-Kiln Fusiliers.'

Dedicated to those who worked at the Mallow Sugar Factory by Bill Cody, Dromtarriffe, Co. Cork.

REPORTS ON THE 'OUTRAGE' AT SIR GEORGE COLTHURST'S WEDDING

Extract from "*The Letters of "Norah" on her our through Ireland, being a series of letters to the Montreal 'Witness' as special correspondent to Ireland*" by Margaret Dixon McDougall, Montreal, 1882.

"None but a rich city could afford the splendid buildings that are in Cork. The evening on which I arrived in Cork was signalized not only by the boat accident, but by a grand wedding, the wedding of a Sir George Colthurst in the splendid cathedral church just mentioned, and there was any amount of fashion, and high birth and young beauty gathered there. The bride was beautiful, the bride was "tall," and not yet, they say, out of her teens. She was dressed in white satin and silver cloth, Irish lace and orange blossoms, and wore no jewels. None but invited eyes were allowed to look at the grand ceremony which made the fair bride and the lord of Blarney castle one. Some tenants of the bridegroom got up a bonfire, had some barrels of beer given them to rejoice withal, and were dancing to the music produced by six fiddlers, when they were surrounded by a small army of disguised people, fired into, beaten and dispersed. The first accounts put the number of wounded at twenty, to-day they are reduced to five—perhaps that is the proportion of exaggeration in newspaper accounts of outrage generally. The newly-made bride and bridegroom went to see the wounded, leaving cordials and money at every house.....

As one instance of the exaggeration of reports concerning outrages, I see the disturbance in Cork that took place at the rejoicings about Sir George Colthurst's marriage advertised with the heading 20 men shot. The local report says five injured, one shot, but not fatally.....

All the people injured in the attack on the rejoicing at Sir George Colthurst's marriage are pronounced recovered to-day, except the one who was wounded by a shot; he is still in the infirmary. A dignitary of the Catholic Church (Canon Griffin, J.L.) who preached at Millstreet, where the disturbance took place, introduced into his sermon remarks on the state of society there, when his hearers became affected with coughing to such a degree that the rev. gentleman had to stop for a time and speak directly to his hearers. After the sermon most of the congregation left the church before mass— few remaining."

ELECTION LITERATURE, 1957

Some other publications from the Aubane Historical Society

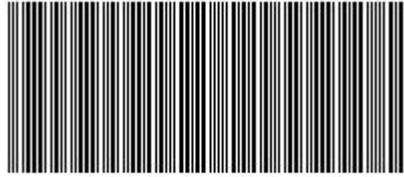
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Orders to:



Tom Goggin and Denis McSweeney at the unveiling of the King Mahon Monument in Finanefield on 19th April 2014

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